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To the President of the House of Representatives of the States General  
P.O Box 20018  
2500 EA THE HAGUE

Date 17 December 2012  
Subject Summary of the National Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands 31

Dear Madam President,

Enclosed please find a summary of the 31st edition of the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN31) of December 2012. The threat level remains limited.

Technically, the period covered by DTN31 runs from 1 July 2012 to 30 September 2012. However, events occurring as recently as November 2012 have also been included in the analysis.

The DTN is drawn up four times a year by the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) and covers, in principle, a three-month period. It is primarily intended for the Cabinet Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services. The DTN is also discussed with the House's Intelligence and Security Services Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Ivo Opstelten  
Minister of Security and Justice

## **Summary of the National Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands, December 2012 (DTN31)**

### **Threat level**

The threat level in the Netherlands remains for the time being 'limited'. This means that the chance of a terrorist attack is slight, but cannot be ruled out. The threat level is thus unaltered since November 2009. The threat to the Netherlands is still primarily jihadist in nature. Nevertheless, over the past 18 months the security authorities have also regularly identified other types of threats in parts of Europe, such as 'lone wolves' and extreme rightwing terrorists. Although there are no indications of these threats spreading to the Netherlands, there does appear to be a change of the overall terrorist threat to Europe, at least for the time being.

The situation in the main jihadist conflict zones remains a cause for concern: there are now more jihadist hotspots than previously and more interest in them among individuals in the Netherlands. In Afghanistan, the drawdown of Western troops in 2014 means that the security outlook for Afghanistan, especially the south and southeast, is less positive than expected. In Iraq, the number of fighters and attacks has doubled since the US withdrew its troops at the end of last year. The conflict in Syria could have an impact on the threat to the West: a new jihadist 'magnet' is developing there, drawing jihadists from the Arab world but also from Europe. Egypt, too, is becoming more popular as an alternative for the traditional jihadist destinations. There are also concerns that the northern part of Mali could continue to consolidate its position as jihadist safe haven. At present, the threat to the Netherlands from the various conflict zones is limited and mostly indirect. At the same time, it should be noted that a deterioration of the security situation in the various conflict zones could also have repercussions for the Netherlands. The threat to the Netherlands stems largely from the wider international threat.

An additional factor is the ongoing presence of a jihadist threat in Europe and the perception of the Netherlands as an attractive target for jihadists. However, domestic networks in the Netherlands are still relatively weak and are focused primarily on the jihad in the Islamic world, as is evident from recent travel to jihadist conflict zones. At present, however, there is no specific threat from known jihadists returning from these parts of the world.

There is still a high level of resistance to extremism among the Dutch public, including Dutch Muslim communities. Eleven years after 9/11, significantly less attention is being paid to issues surrounding radicalisation and terrorism in Dutch society. This is a natural trend, given that the threat level has remained consistently limited for several years, but at the same time it may cause people to be less alert to potentially negative developments in this area.

### **International context**

Reactions in the Islamic world to the anti-Islam film *Innocence of Muslims* have shown just how easily radical Muslims are able to mobilise their co-religionists. In more than 20 countries, large crowds of demonstrators took to the streets to express their antipathy towards the US and the West. Jihadist forces also tried to capitalise on people's anger at the film, and in the future, they might be able to

call on a sizeable group of supporters to engage in violent protests and social unrest.

**Datum**  
17 December 2012

### **International threat – developments in jihadist conflict zones**

The outlook for the al Qa'ida core's home base is mixed. First of all, al Qa'ida core was driven out of Afghanistan long ago. The transfer of power from the international forces to the Afghan authorities is currently being disrupted by increasing attacks by Afghan soldiers on ISAF personnel. The withdrawal of over 30,000 US soldiers who were brought in a few years ago to boost to the anti-Taliban campaign is now also taking its toll. The aim was to defeat the Afghan Taliban in certain areas, and the 'surge' troops were meant to create the right conditions for the Afghan government to safeguard security. On both fronts the results achieved are below target.

In Yemen – which is another jihadist conflict zone used in the past as a base for threats against the West – the situation is unchanged. Although the influence of jihadist groups has been reduced since May 2012, the security situation in Yemen is still fragile. Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is still focused on launching attacks in the West. Dutch jihadists may also be interested in waging jihad in Yemen. In Somalia, too, there is little cause for comfort. Although al Shabaab's territorial losses and talk of internal divisions would suggest the movement is in decline, it has not yet been defeated. Al Shabaab still controls parts of rural southern and central Somalia, and violence is still being directed at Somali government targets and foreign forces in the country. In Iraq, the US withdrawal in late 2011 sparked a resurgence in the activities of al Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI). The number of jihadist fighters and the number of attacks have more than doubled. It is thought to be unlikely that AQI is capable in carrying out attacks abroad, for it has no capacity to do so. In Syria, the conflict between the regime and the militant opposition is ongoing. What began in March 2011 with peaceful demonstrations has now descended into a bloody conflict involving many different parties of various persuasions, from strictly apolitical and secular to nationalist and jihadist. The conflict may also affect the threat to the West because a new jihadist theatre of operations appears to be developing in Syria, drawing jihadists from both the Arab world and Europe. The jihadist movement in Syria – which includes a number of fighters from the Netherlands – is still limited in terms of its size and capability, and the jihadists are not directly targeting Europe. Egypt also appears to be becoming a popular alternative to the traditional jihadist destinations. In northern Mali various jihadist groups led by al Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have created a safe haven. In connection with a likely international military intervention in future, there are concerns that northern Mali could consolidate its position as a jihadist safe haven.

### **International threat – Europe**

There is still a jihadist threat to Europe, which takes different forms, depending on the country involved. In Belgium, there have been several arrests involving terrorist suspects planning to join the cause in Somalia and Syria, while in Germany there are concerns about a new domestic Salafist offensive.. In France, the police made several jihad-related arrests in early October, fuelling concerns about domestic jihadism. These followed a small-scale attack on a Jewish shop in a Paris suburb.

On the non-jihadist front, there are concerns in Germany about extreme rightwing terrorism. The German government is taking account of the possibility that the investigation by the criminal justice authorities into the National Socialist Underground (NSU) and its supporters could increase the threat level. Neo-Nazi individuals and cells could start targeting people of non-Western origin, politicians, police officers, public figures and Jewish institutions.

**Datum**  
17 December 2012

### **Threat to the Netherlands**

The Netherlands' military involvement in Islamic countries like Afghanistan has helped to raise the country's international profile. Furthermore, jihadists consider the Netherlands in their perception as a country where Islam and the prophet Mohammed are regularly insulted. The Netherlands came into the spotlight once again during the unrest and protests sparked by the controversial anti-Islam film *Innocence of Muslims*, when certain jihadist websites and Middle Eastern mainstream media suggested that the film was a Dutch production.

As has been the case for a number of years now the domestic networks in the Netherlands are relatively weak. There are no inspirational leaders or strong, organised groups. For the most part, Dutch jihadists concentrate on the jihad elsewhere in the world. This assessment remains unaltered. At present, there is no indication of any specific threat from known (Dutch) jihadists returning from conflict zones.

### **Violent radicalisation and polarisation**

During the Dutch parliamentary election campaign in September 2012, Islam, immigration and integration played much less of a role than in previous election campaigns over the past ten years. It remains to be seen whether or not this is a lasting trend. That said, the fact that politicians and the media are paying less attention to Islam has not lessened resistance among some Dutch citizens to public religious expression on the part of Muslims. The construction of new mosques is often a sensitive issue at local level, as has recently been the case in Groningen, Veghel and Zoetermeer, for example. Remarkably little was heard from Sharia4Holland in the period under review.

Extreme leftwing and rightwing activity shows the ability of certain groups or individuals align with current political developments. On the left, no major developments have occurred in relation to asylum rights extremism. The daubing of slogans on the house of the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Asylum Policy is a sign that the extremist wing of the asylum rights movement is widening and becoming more radical. Such activities should also be seen in the light of the various tented camps in the Netherlands inhabited by failed asylum seekers. On the right, there are now fewer extremists in the Netherlands than at the beginning of the last decade. In the period under review there were no instances of violence involving traditional neo-Nazi circles. This contrasts with the situation across the border in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, where the number of criminal offences involving extreme rightwingers has grown in recent times.

### **Resistance**

Resistance among the Dutch public to extremism and ideological violence remains high. This applies equally to Dutch Muslim communities. Often, Muslims not only voice opposition to extremism but also call on their co-religionists to demonstrate

political and social commitment. Eleven years after 9/11, significantly less attention is being paid to issues surrounding radicalisation and terrorism in Dutch society. This is a natural trend, given that the threat level has remained consistently limited for several years, but at the same time it may cause people to be less alert to potentially negative developments in this area.

**Datum**

17 December 2012

In terms of countermeasures, the arrest of convicted and jailed Samir A. in his prison cell on suspicion of plotting an attack after his release has neutralised a potential future threat.