

**Letter of 14 November 2016 from the Minister of Security and Justice and the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment to the House of Representatives on the seventh progress report on the Integrated Approach to Jihadism and the 43rd Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN43)**

We are writing to reflect on the progress made in implementing the Integrated Approach to Jihadism over the past several months and to look ahead to future policy developments, on the basis of the 43rd edition of the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN43).

Enclosed with this letter is the promised progress report<sup>1</sup> on the implementation of the Integrated Approach to Jihadism,<sup>2</sup> in the form of a schematic overview (appendix 1).<sup>3</sup> In addition, we have enclosed a document detailing the status of the various outstanding motions and undertakings (appendix 2). A copy of DTN43 is being submitted to the House in parallel with this letter.

Jihadism remains the principal terrorist threat. Europe has recently been shaken by a number of attacks, which were claimed by ISIS. As a result, the threat to the Netherlands has become all the more tangible, given that neighbouring countries where attacks have occurred, or have been thwarted, generally have a similar threat profile to that of the Netherlands. It is therefore realistic to assume that the Netherlands could also become the target of an attack, although there are currently no concrete indications of this. This state of affairs is consistent with threat level 4, the current threat level.

The plan of action 'An Integrated Approach to Jihadism' is the government's policy response to the threat. The mix of preventive and reactive measures offered by the approach allows the government to adjust its efforts, within the existing policy framework, as the situation requires. Intelligence and security services, investigative agencies and multidisciplinary case management team partners – including municipalities, which play a coordinating role – work together closely to identify potential jihadist travellers, returnees and other individuals who might pose a threat, and then draw up risk assessments and take targeted measures. Investments are also being made to address the effects of terrorism. A number of

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the amended motion by MP Alexander Pechtold, 9 September 2014, Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives 2013-2014, 29 754, no. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Letter on the plan of action 'An Integrated Approach to Jihadism', 29 August 2016, Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives 2013-2014, 29 754, no. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Translator's note: these appendices exist only in Dutch.

enhancements have been made to the Special Interventions Division (DSI), and this process will continue in the future. By conducting exercises and maintaining up-to-date implementation plans, the government, the Defence organisation, the police, the Royal Military and Border Police and municipalities work together to ensure that, if an act of terrorism does occur, the response will be appropriate, focusing on limiting its impact to the greatest possible extent.

We attach great importance to evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of policy. Counterterrorism policy and operational practices are regularly examined and, if necessary, modified. In keeping with a previous undertaking given to the House, the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) has conducted a study to establish whether authorities within the immigration system are flagging instances of radicalisation, jihadism and recruitment adequately. This study is now complete and is being sent to the House in parallel to the progress report. The Minister of Security and Justice has also asked the Security and Justice Inspectorate to evaluate the plan of action, which was rolled out in August 2014. The Inspectorate will finish its evaluation sometime after summer 2017, and the results will be submitted to the House.

#### Pressure on ISIS could lead to an increase in the number of returnees

ISIS is under military pressure, which has led to fragmentation within the 'caliphate'. According to the DTN, this fragmentation could lead to the gradual return of Dutch jihadist travellers from Syria and Iraq. If this occurs, the principals of the current national approach to returnees will be adequate to deal with the situation. Interventions by intelligence-gathering and interventions under criminal, administrative and immigration law are part of this approach.

Every returnee identified as such will, upon re-entering the Netherlands, be apprehended for questioning and, where in the public interest, the Public Prosecution Service will initiate criminal proceedings when opportune. For their part, the police and the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) will carry out a threat assessment for every returnee and keep him/her under close surveillance when deemed necessary. The parties involved in multidisciplinary case management teams are also making preparations for the return of jihadist travellers, for instance by gathering information from people in returnees' social circles so as to be maximally aware of their movements and intentions.

Under international law every Dutch national abroad has the right return to the Netherlands. Consular support is provided to Dutch nationals who contact an embassy or consulate about

returning. However, the Dutch authorities will not collect Dutch nationals from conflict zones. Dutch nationals who are in a jihadist conflict zone are placed on the national sanctions list for terrorism.

An important instrument for monitoring the travel movements of returnees is the recently published EU Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive 2016/681, which obliges EU member states to ensure that airline reservation and check-in data is forwarded to a dedicated passenger information unit. A legislative bill to this effect is currently being drafted, and plans are being made to establish such a unit. The bill will be presented to the House in early 2017. The aim is for the unit to be operational as of 1 January 2018, as a subdivision of a relevant implementing agency.

#### Mental health in relation to security issues

The attacks of summer 2016 confirm that lone attackers continue to pose a threat. Several of these attackers acted alone, but also received a certain amount of coaching from ISIS. A relatively large proportion of recent attackers (including those on suicide missions) are known to have had various personal issues, including mental disorders. Extremist groups can profit from such vulnerabilities and offer these individuals the prospect of a 'meaningful escape' from their problems. These types of people can be more susceptible than others to the overtures of ISIS 'coaches'. They form a category of perpetrators who are often not on the radar of the security services, but who may be known to other professionals, such as social workers or mental health practitioners.

The problems associated with this group underscore the importance of the case-based approach as embodied by the multidisciplinary case management teams at local level. These teams allow the relevant public authorities to study individual cases and agree on appropriate interventions that give due regard to the specific vulnerabilities in question. The case-based approach also includes the involvement of educational institutions, social work agencies and mental health services. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, we are currently exploring how the country's mental healthcare services can best be equipped to deal with this problem. In keeping with the undertaking given by the State Secretary for Security and Justice during his meeting of 3 November with the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Security and Justice on the subject of inmates of secure psychiatric institutions, special attention will be given to the possibly problematic issue of limited funding for diagnosis and treatment.

#### Resources for attacks

There is a certain overlap between terrorist networks and criminal networks on the one hand, and criminal networks and illegal arms trafficking networks on the other. This makes it easier for terrorist networks to obtain weapons. In light of this, the authorities are doing more to crack down on illegal arms trafficking and the possession and use of automatic weapons. The investigative network for illegal firearms and the Public Prosecution Service's national portfolio holder for illegal firearms are focusing on gathering additional intelligence that can form the basis for more probing investigations into the provenance of weapons and their availability to terrorists and potential terrorists. These efforts have led to more operational investigations and the confiscation of more stockpiles of weapons and explosives. Within the EU, the Netherlands will also continue to push for a more systemic focus on anti-firearms measures, as it did during its EU Presidency.

Partners within the security sector are also working on a protocol to enhance cooperation between operational services in the event of a violent incident involving drones. This protocol will be formally adopted and implemented in 2017. In October 2016 all relevant operational services took part in an exercise covering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons and explosives-related incidents.

#### Left-wing and right-wing extremism

The case-based approach is also applied to individuals on the extreme left and the extreme right. Here, too, the authorities use a mix of preventive and reactive measures. If an offence is committed, those responsible will be prosecuted and anyone suspected or convicted of a terrorist offence will be held in the dedicated terrorist wing. An example of this is the Bergden case: on 27 October 2016 five men were given long custodial sentences (up to four years) for throwing Molotov cocktails at a mosque in Enschede. In its judgment the court held that the men had acted with terrorist intent.

The Integrated Approach to Jihadism also entails preemptive measures, aimed at boosting social resilience in the face of extremism. These measures include initiatives that encourage self-reflection and critical thinking, and that seek to expose the limitations of black-and-white thinking. Besides jihadism, these initiatives also seek to address other forms of extremism, including left-wing and right-wing extremism. For example, a special fund has been set up to encourage alternative voices in society and thus reduce breeding grounds for extremism. The fund supports initiatives, including artistic initiatives, with the aim of establishing new connections and disrupting established patterns of thinking. In addition, a module has been developed for use in secondary vocational education which seeks to encourage discussion of extremist ideals and of radicalisation. Another relevant initiative is 'project Newsroom',

which teaches young people media literacy. It also advises teachers on managing difficult discussions about shared democratic values. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has set up a programme on governance and security to help local authorities deal with public security issues caused by polarisation and social unrest.

### Combating radicalisation

In August 2016 the government agreed to do more to support youth workers in combating radicalisation by helping them develop their knowledge and know-how. The National Government Training Institute for the Prevention of Radicalisation (ROR) is therefore developing customised courses for professionals working in youth care and mental health services. Investments are also being made to enhance the links between the security domain and the social work and healthcare sectors. These investments are being made in collaboration with parties in the field. For example, the national employers' association for the youth care sector has taken the lead in putting the issue of radicalisation on the agenda within this sector.

In connection with enhancing the local integrated approach to jihadism, the same 20 'problem municipalities and regions' that received support in 2016 were again given the opportunity to request additional funds for 2017. Investing in networks of key figures and in professionals' knowledge and know-how strengthens the effectiveness of the person-specific approach. A number of promising new initiatives are also being rolled out at national level, such as an empowerment programme for mothers.

### International context

The terrorist threat in the Netherlands is inextricably linked to developments abroad. In the international arena, too, Dutch policy consists of a combination of preemitive and reactive measures.

One of the most important issues on the international front is the need to promote information-sharing between the EU and third countries. In the months and years ahead, efforts will be made to implement the agreements set out in the roadmap designed to enable European member states to stay on top of terrorists' travel movements. The roadmap was adopted during the Netherlands' EU Presidency, and the Netherlands will continue to press for its full implementation. In August 2016 the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) made additional agreements with the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center (TSC) on exchanging information regarding people suspected or convicted of terrorist offences. These agreements were then appended to the existing memorandum of

understanding from 2012. The National Police is responsible for fleshing out and implementing these agreements. Once the agreements have been worked out in full, the House will be informed in greater detail.

The military operations of the anti-ISIS coalition, of which the Netherlands is a member, are pushing ISIS into a corner in Iraq and Syria. Dutch military personnel are currently training Iraqi and Kurdish ground troops. Besides its military operations, the anti-ISIS coalition also serves as a platform for discussing issues like the international approach to terrorism financing and jihadist travellers/returnees. An information-sharing exercise was held in Turkey in October under the auspices of the working group on foreign terrorist fighters, of which the Netherlands is co-chair.

As co-chair of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the Netherlands is committed to promoting the dissemination of practical information among professionals like teachers and neighbourhood police officers. To this end, a 'lifecycle toolkit'<sup>4</sup> has been developed, which makes this kind of information available through an online platform. The toolkit was presented at the GCTF ministerial meeting on 21 September. Another priority for the Netherlands is the further expansion of the cooperation within the Counter Terrorism Group.

Bilateral and EU-level cooperation with Europe's neighbours – especially Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan – is vital. These countries are key partners in dealing with the refugee crisis, and they are on the frontline in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Counterterrorism is high on the agenda of talks and European dialogues with these countries. Since early 2016, the Netherlands has been in talks with Turkey about terrorism-related expulsions from Turkey to the Netherlands. These talks are aimed at codifying current working practices and making additional agreements.

The Netherlands is also investing in cooperation and exchanges of knowledge and experience with administrators and policymakers in like-minded EU countries. A good example of this is the meeting held on 13 September between Dutch and Belgian mayors, the NCTV and Belgium's Coordinating Unit for Threat Analysis (OCAD/OCAM). The purpose of the meeting was to share knowledge and experience with regard to combating radicalisation and to discuss the role local authorities can play in this regard.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://toolkit.thegctf.org/>

No guarantees can be given that the Netherlands will be spared a terrorist attack. This is why it is so vital that the government and society as a whole work to anticipate and counteract the impact and effects of such an attack.

In order to combat polarisation, division and fear, it is necessary to condemn the radical views of violent groups. Time and again, individuals who treat their fellow citizens with intolerance and hatred must be denounced and called to account.

Our security and way of life are based on more than laws alone. Resilience and a sense of solidarity are also key factors. This can be threatened by radicalisation, whether in relation to jihadists or members of extreme right or extremeleft. Yet in the end, it is our common responsibility to determine how we treat one another and how strong our society is.