

Summary of NZSIS and NZP Counter-Terrorism Tabletop Exercise

Introduction

On 5 October 2018, New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) and New Zealand Police (NZP) counter-terrorism teams held a counter-terrorism (CT) table top exercise.

The exercise was limited to NZP and NZSIS investigators, Combined Threat Assessment Group analysts, and technical and operations staff.

Participants were asked to consider incoming intelligence and events, and advise on processes, coordination, collaboration and recommendations to bring an investigation to conclusion.

The exercise considered two challenging, fast-paced scenarios. One of the scenarios tested was an extreme right-wing attack outside a mosque in Christchurch. This scenario assumed a terrorist attack, with a vehicle hitting pedestrians leaving a mosque.

The objectives for the exercise were focused on

- increasing the understanding of agencies' processes and procedures during the response to a terrorism scenario; and
- identifying gaps in collaboration, processes, procedures, or the understanding of agencies' respective capabilities, remits and responses.

Key lessons / recommendations

The following were identified as the key lessons and recommendations from the table top exercise.

- Governance arrangements and meetings should be put in place early on following an incident, and can be increased or decreased as required.
- Agencies should ensure arrangements for the communication of classified materials are in place and understood.
- A Joint Intelligence Group should be convened early to share intelligence and ensure essential information (including classified information) is available for decision-makers.
- Post-incident scenarios would be led by homicide/District Command, with National Security Intelligence Teams working in the background to establish the terrorism-nexus.
- Co-ordination of information requests to other agencies is vital to ensure efficiency and a single-point of contact.
- Post-incident Situational Reports would be required to be published regularly (every 12 hours).