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THE TERRORISM THREAT TO NEW ZEALAND
NAC 12/2011-12

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THE TERRORISM THREAT TO NEW ZEALAND

This paper examines New Zealand's exposure to terrorism, both domestically and internationally. This is the first in a series of national assessments agreed by ODESC(G) and the National Assessments Committee to address the major national security threats – or “vectors of harm” – to New Zealand.

- **Overall, terrorism presents a relatively low threat to New Zealand, and New Zealanders are at greater risk of becoming inadvertent victims of terrorist attacks offshore than being directly targeted. (R)**
- **Compared to its Western partners, New Zealand has a relatively low profile with international terrorist organisations and has not been directly targeted for attack. New Zealand's alignment with the United States, however, could be a key factor in its attraction as a target in the future. (R)**
- **We are not aware of any terrorist groups actively operating in New Zealand, although limited coverage indicates some ideological and financial support for internationally-recognised Islamist terrorist organisations. (C)**
- **Islamist terrorism is likely to continue to be a significant threat to Western interests, at least in the medium term. Uncertainties and stressors stemming from local or international events (such as the current economic crisis) will likely lead to non-Islamist extremist groups becoming more prominent in the longer term. (C)**

Terrorism – the international context

1. Since the mid-1990s, international terrorism has been a major focus of Western intelligence and security agencies, including in New Zealand. Where once principally-secular political or nationalist ideologies dominated the terrorism landscape, Islamist extremism now captures the greatest attention. Al-Qa'ida (AQ), in concert with its affiliates and ideological allies, has built on precedents set by political and nationalist groups, using suicide attacks and targeting civilians in an attempt to bring about the withdrawal of Western influence from Muslim states and the institution of rule according to its interpretation of Islam. AQ's central message – its “single narrative” – portrays Islam as being permanently under attack, particularly by the West, and calls on all Muslims to take up arms in defence of their religion. It explains present perceptions of Muslim suffering and promises progress towards the restoration of rule according to Islamist principles. This narrative still motivates a range of Islamist extremist individuals and groups to undertake terrorist acts, despite the significant weakening of AQ's capability following the deaths of many of its most senior leaders and the lack of further spectacular attacks since 11 September 2001 (9/11). (C)

2. AQ has maintained its game-changing capability by inspiring the emergence of ideologically-aligned groups across the Middle East, Central Asia and north-eastern Africa. Five years ago, AQ provided training and direction for jihadis to carry out attacks on targets in Western countries already identified by its leadership; this model is no longer evident. Although AQ core can provide a limited amount of material support, it now predominantly encourages individuals and groups to carry out small-scale attacks under their own authority. This message to “attack the country in which you live” has been popularised in particular by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) English language *Inspire* magazine, widely available via the internet. International experience indicates there has not been a reduction in Islamist “terrorists” or the number of individuals wanting to be involved in global jihad, but instead an increasing emergence of “self-organised groups”. These groups of like-minded individuals source their own training, select their own targets and do not necessarily receive specific tasking from overseas. This combination of factors makes these groups less detectable and potentially higher risk. (S)

3. Although Islamist extremism likely still presents the greatest terrorist threat to the West, other ideologies can motivate individuals and groups to undertake terrorist acts, amply demonstrated by Anders Breivik's racially-motivated attack in Norway in July 2011. (C)

Terrorism in New Zealand

4. To date, New Zealand has not been the source of an international terrorist attack. A small number of individuals have engaged in activities within New Zealand that have been popularly labelled “terrorist acts” (see Appendix A), but these fall short of the definition of “terrorism” given by the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 (see Appendix B). These acts were carried out by individuals with personal and/or political grievances, but not to cause the “government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing

any act". The 17 activists arrested on 15 October 2007 are arguably, however, New Zealand's first example of a "home-grown" terrorist group. Their actions, by engaging in para-military training and planning to commit serious violent offences for political motivations, fit the definition of a terrorist act as set out in Section 25(1)(a) of the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002, which states, "a terrorist act is carried out if [there is] planning or other preparations to carry out the act, whether it is actually carried out or not". (R)

Text box 1: Operation Eight

On 15 October 2007, 17 individuals, including some Tuhoe activists, were arrested after an extensive investigation ~~ss(a)~~ following reports from hunters claiming to have discovered secret para-military training camps in the Urewera mountains. The ultimate aim of the group appears to have been the establishment of an independent Tuhoe tribal area in New Zealand. Members of the group discussed a wide range of possible actions using the threat of physical violence to settle long-standing grievances. The intended actions of the group were never concluded; possible actions included the assassination of Prime Minister John Key (then the Leader of the Opposition), bomb attacks and other unspecified attacks on Pakeha New Zealanders. Further intelligence revealed some individuals discussing possible attacks on critical infrastructure, while another individual attempted to purchase a small quantity of potassium nitrate, a base ingredient used in the manufacture of explosives. During searches, Police seized a hand-written note on constructing a thermite bomb. Based on a decision made by the Solicitor General regarding the evidentiary threshold required by the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002, terrorism-related charges were not laid against any of the individuals involved. (S)

5. New Zealand citizens have been killed in terrorist attacks targeting Western interests overseas (US, 11 September 2001; Bali, October 2002; London, 7 July 2005; and Jakarta, May 2009), but to date New Zealand has neither been singled out as a prime target for such attacks, nor are there currently any known terrorist groups operating in New Zealand. (R)

Extremism in New Zealand

6. Many intelligence organisations rely on adherence to an extreme ideology as an indicator to identify potential terrorists, and/or supporters of terrorism-related activities. Extremists are those who have been radicalised to the point they accept violence as a legitimate means to achieve their political, social or religious objectives. By definition all terrorists are extremists, although not all extremists become terrorists (see Appendix B). (R)

7. New Zealand's social policies and general inclusivity have long been touted as factors preventing the rise of extremism onshore. Overseas experience shows, however, that extremists can emerge from any and all sections of a community. Studies carried out in the United Kingdom (UK) have identified approximately 140 different indicators of extremism, yet none of these, in any combination, are reliable predictors of extremism leading to terrorism. (R)

8. We assess the key factors that could lead to individuals adopting extremist ideologies in New Zealand are: New Zealand's military involvement in conflict zones (e.g. Afghanistan); and New Zealand's economic, immigration and/or environmental policies. The first factor relates mainly to Islamist extremism, although it could also apply to

individuals and groups opposed to New Zealand's relationship with the United States (US). The second category potentially relates to a range of issue motivated groups, such as Maori Sovereignty Extremists, radical environmentalists, and extreme right and left wing groups. Neo-Nazi groups have experienced a resurgence in the US and Europe, as have nationalist groups, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and extreme right wing protest groups, like the English Defence League in the UK. (R)

Domestic Islamist extremism

9. New Zealand's Muslim community largely practices a moderate form of Islam inherited from Fijian-Indian practices. Later immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa have brought various forms of the faith to New Zealand, and inter-ideological mixing has resulted in a tolerant Islamic poly-culture being accepted in most major mosques. This culture does not, in general, condone support for extremism or terrorist groups, and individuals espousing radical ideologies have been socially isolated by the mainstream community. (C)

Text box 2: Former mujahidin in New Zealand

New Zealand's Muslim community includes a small number of individuals with experience fighting in various insurrections and civil wars, notably the former Yugoslavia. Because these individuals arrived relatively early in the development of the community (the early-to-mid 1990s) some now occupy leadership roles. These individuals have not exhibited extremist behaviour in New Zealand, and appear to have successfully integrated into New Zealand society without relying on their militant experiences to bolster their social credentials or gather followers. There appears to be an absence of grievance factors in New Zealand that would cause them to re-engage in radical or extremist behaviour. (C)

10. s6(a) a small number of individuals within New Zealand hold extreme Islamist beliefs. These individuals share the ideology of extreme Islamist groups (including designated terrorist organisations) and provide financial contributions in support of these organisations. s6(a)

The small number of extremists in the community is relative to the overall size of the community. As the Muslim population increases via immigration and conversion to Islam, we assess there will be a natural increase in the proportion of Islamist extremists; where now these individuals are largely isolated from each other, we may see the emergence of small groups of like-minded individuals and an associated increase in public espousal of extremist rhetoric and support for terrorist organisations. (C)

11. Radicalisation to Islamist extremism generally requires a charismatic individual with superior knowledge of Islam (although not necessarily an Imam), and a social group sharing similar beliefs. Although we have only limited coverage, given the small size of New Zealand's Muslim community we assess there is a relative absence of Islamist radicalisers acting within New Zealand. Overseas experience shows second-generation Muslim immigrants (principally 19 to 26 year-olds) can be particularly susceptible to radicalisation given their struggle to fit into their adopted communities whilst also maintaining their cultural and religious identities. We have not seen any indication of

radicalisation occurring in New Zealand's second-generation Muslim community, although we acknowledge this demographic is only now coming of age where radicalisation would typically occur. (C)

12. s6(a) a disproportionately-large number of Islamist extremists are converts (also referred to as reverts) to Islam. Reasons for this over-representation could be that converts often devote themselves to learning as much as they can about Islam and in the process can be easily influenced by extremists within the community. Islam becomes their main identity and, combined with their limited knowledge of the culture surrounding the religion, a convert's interpretation of the Qur'an can be prejudiced by their personal grievances or those of the individuals around them. Nevertheless, we assess New Zealand's Muslim converts generally present no higher risk to New Zealand's security than the rest of the Muslim community. (C)

s6(a): specific details about counter-terrorism investigation



13. s6(a)
s6(a)
s6(a)
New Zealand's isolation from major Islamic countries, and absence of experienced Islamic religious teachers, may increase the risk of self-radicalisation as individuals look to the internet for their education. Nevertheless, the overall risk may be lower as there is a lack of leaders/peers to reinforce radical and extremist messages in the local community. We assess there is a moderate risk of individuals in New Zealand self-radicalising via the internet, although we acknowledge the popularity of the internet as a radicalising tool may diminish should charismatic radicalisers emerge in the community. We have not seen any intelligence to indicate the emergence of "self-organised groups" in New Zealand. (C)

Domestic non-Islamist Extremism

14. There has been a notable increase in groups across Europe espousing hard-line nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric, and we assess such groups may come to greater prominence in New Zealand in response to the effects of the global economic crisis. Policies adopted by New Zealand which affect the economy (e.g. taxes and benefits) and immigration could stir extreme right wing and/or nationalist groups to protest against perceived increasing inequalities and lead to the adoption of more violent methods to affect political change. Anarchists or extreme left wing groups may become more

prevalent in response to increased right wing activity or due to the economic crisis directly. Eco-terrorism could also emerge to counter environmental policies. (R)

15. Targets in New Zealand are unlikely to be of significant interest to international terrorists, but they may prove attractive to home-grown terrorists that lack the capability and/or intention to act internationally in support of extremist agendas. While we assess the risk of such attacks is currently low, we acknowledge stress factors could increase the risk of terrorism-related activity by groups and "lone wolves". s6(a)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (C)

Text box 4: Right Wing Resistance
On 22 November 2011 a group calling itself the *Right Wing Resistance* stormed into a Labour Party political gathering to express their opinion on the state of New Zealand's current political leadership. Members of the group wore military-style camouflaged clothing and balaclavas covering their faces. People attending the political gathering described the *Right Wing Resistance* as "intimidating". (U).

New Zealand as a source of international terrorism

16. Based on our limited coverage of the community, we assess the risk of extremism in New Zealand contributing to international terrorism and/or terrorism-related activities is low. s6(a)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED], New Zealand may be seen as an ideal place from which to plan, train for, and launch attacks against larger targets (e.g. Australia), although we are unaware of any such activities. (C)

Text box 5: Example of the potential for New Zealand to be used as a base for terrorism planning
Media reporting from 2000 indicates a group of three Auckland-based Afghan males (s6(a) [REDACTED]) were suspected of having knowledge of, or being involved in, potential planning for an attack on the south Sydney-based Lucas Heights nuclear reactor. Police began investigating the above individuals in relation to immigration fraud, but discovered what appeared to be tactical maps of Sydney with potential targets highlighted. s6(a) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (S)

17. NZSIS is aware (and has previously reported on) a small number of New Zealand citizens suspected of travelling to conflict zones to train for and engage in violent jihad. s6(a) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (S)

s6(a): specific details about counter-terrorism investigations



18. We assess terrorist organisations may also seek to obtain New Zealand passports (legally or illegally) to facilitate travel of operatives to and within Western countries. New Zealand passports attract very little attention in Western countries, thus affording the holder greater access and freedom of travel. (C)

19. Overseas experience shows terrorism financing and espousal of extremist rhetoric can be precursors to engagement in terrorist activity. s6(a)

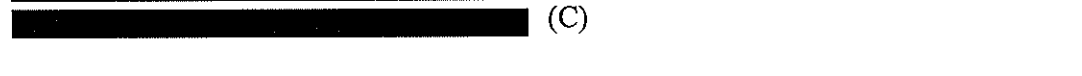


Individuals from New Zealand are known to have provided financial support to internationally-designated terrorist organisations and/or individuals linked to terrorist organisations. s6(a)



(S)

20. Individuals planning to travel offshore to engage in terrorism-related activities may discuss their intentions with family and close associates. s6(a)



(C)

New Zealand as a target of international terrorism

21. New Zealand has not gone unnoticed by foreign terrorist organisations and has been mentioned by prominent Islamist extremists. s6(a)

Anwar al-Aulaqi, the recently-deceased public face of AQAP, delivered a lecture in 2004 in which New Zealand was mentioned (along with Europe, the US, Canada and Australia) as "an enemy". Our relationship with foreign governments, s6(a) makes New Zealand a target by affiliation, although we assess the probability of a targeted attack against New Zealand and/or New Zealand interests overseas remains low. We further assess New Zealand citizens are at greater risk of being caught up in terrorism-related activity offshore than in New Zealand. (S)

s6(a)

22. Nevertheless, despite our engagement with like-minded Western nations in combating terrorism, New Zealand has, thus far, maintained a relatively low international profile compared to the US, UK and Australia. New Zealand's commercial and consular global footprint is likely to expand in the future, although on its own this is unlikely to significantly raise either our profile or our appeal as a key target amongst terrorist organisations. Any change in the number of New Zealand casualties from terrorist acts is likely to reflect an increase in the number of New Zealand citizens based in high-risk areas

s6(a)

(C)

23. s6(a)

(C)

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Appendix A: Examples of actions popularly labelled “terrorist acts”

Waterfront Dispute

30 April 1951 - During the New Zealand waterfront dispute a rail bridge was blown up near Huntly. Train drivers were warned in advance and the bombing severely disrupted coal supplies. (U)

Neil Roberts

18 November 1982 - Anarchist Neil Roberts carried out a bomb attack against a Wanganui facility housing the New Zealand Police’s main computer database. The computer system was undamaged but Roberts was killed in the explosion. (U)

Trades Hall bombing

27 March 1984 - A suitcase bomb, left in the foyer of the Trades Hall in Wellington, exploded and killed the caretaker, Ernie Abbott. The Trades Hall was the headquarters of a number of trade unions and it was assumed they were the target of the bombing. (U)

Rainbow Warrior

10 July 1985 – Two bombs ripped through the Greenpeace flagship *Rainbow Warrior*, killing Portuguese-born crew member and photographer, Fernando Pereira. French Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur (DGSE) agents planted the bombs to prevent the Rainbow Warrior from disrupting French nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll. (U)

Graeme White

1999 - Graeme White was found guilty and jailed for tunnelling into an abortion clinic in a failed attempt to blow it up. He claimed he wanted to create room for discussion on abortion law. (U)

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Appendix B: Definitions

Terminology relating to terrorism and the extremist radicalisation process can be complex and nuanced. For clarity, definitions of the key words used in this report are outlined below:

Terrorism (in accordance with the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002)

- an act which is intended to cause:
 - the death of, or serious bodily injury to one or more people;
 - a serious risk to the health or safety of a population;
 - destruction of, or serious damage to, property of great value or importance, or major economic loss, or major environmental damage;
 - serious interference, or serious disruption to, an infrastructure facility, if likely to endanger human life;
 - introduction or release of a disease-bearing organism if likely to devastate the national economy.

- And is carried out for the purpose of advancing an ideological, political, or religious cause, and with the following intention:
 - to induce terror in a civilian population; or
 - to unduly compel or to force a government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act. (U)

Radicalisation

The process by which an individual begins to believe the current political system lacks legitimacy, and disengages from mainstream society. The alternative ideology that the individual takes up varies depending on their background, circumstances and personal beliefs. Certain radical ideologies (for example, Islamist extremism) advocate the belief that violence is justified to change the current system. In severe cases a radicalised individual may act on that belief by engaging in terrorist activity. (U)

Extremism

The far-end point of the radicalisation spectrum at which an individual moves from 'radicalised' views to adopting 'extremist' beliefs and accepting violence as a legitimate means to achieve ideological ends (including political, social or religious objectives). Many radicalised individuals do not become extremists. (U)

Islamic Fundamentalism

The following of the *sunna* closely as an act of devotion. The *sunna* is the collection of examples, actions, and traditions practised by the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime, which are considered to be the ideal example for Muslims to follow and emulate. Prominent examples include the way Muhammad prayed, performed ablutions, and dressed. Holding a fundamentalist viewpoint does not necessarily imply a willingness to use violence. (U)

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