



**NATIONAL
ASSESSMENTS
COMMITTEE**

6 November 2014

**TERRORISM IN NEW ZEALAND: EXTREMISM AND FOREIGN
TERRORIST FIGHTERS
NAC 6/2014-15**

~~(SECRET NZEO)~~

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Intelligence assessments often deal not in statements of fact or precise calculations, but in judgements based on the careful weighing of information that may be incomplete, opaque or uncertain in its credibility.

Assessments issued by the National Assessments Committee, and by its constituent agencies, express this uncertainty by the deliberate and consistent use of language to convey probabilities. As used in assessment reporting, this language has precise meaning as defined by the following probability ranges.

Qualitative Statement	Associated Probability Range
Remote/Highly Unlikely	<10%
Improbable/Unlikely	15-20%
Realistic Possibility	25-50%
Probable/Likely	55-70%
Highly /Very Probable/Likely	75-85%
Almost Certain	>90%

The gaps between one probability range and the next are intentional, as a means of encouraging precision in judgements about probability.

The terms used here, and their associated probability ranges, are also used by some of New Zealand's overseas intelligence partners, and have been adopted here in order to promote consistency internationally.

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TERRORISM IN NEW ZEALAND: EXTREMISM AND FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

This paper presents an assessment of the current landscape of terrorism in, and affecting New Zealand, focusing on the impact of the Syria/Iraq conflict and the consequent increase in the Foreign Terrorist Fighter Threat.

What is happening?

- **(R) While al-Qa'ida (AQ) remains a central threat to the West, it has been overshadowed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as a source and driver of terrorism-related activity threatening the West. This shift is also characterised by the increasing importance of "Foreign Terrorist Fighters".**

What does it mean for New Zealand?

- **(S) New Zealand agencies are aware s6(a) New Zealand Foreign Terrorist Fighters who have travelled to Syria, although it is almost certain further individuals have travelled to, and returned from, Syria to fight without our knowledge.**
- **(S s6(a)) s6(a) New Zealand citizens are subjects of terrorism-related national security interest, including some who have been prevented from travelling to Syria by having their passports cancelled; of these, some are known to be conducting New Zealand-based extremist activities, while the remainder have no known current stated intent to act against New Zealand. We are also aware of others who ideologically and financially facilitate terrorism-related activities.**
- **(S) We assess the Syria/Iraq conflict will continue to be a major driver for Islamic-inspired extremism in the short to medium term, both in New Zealand and internationally. Given overseas trends, we assess it is likely there will be an increase in the number of radicalised individuals in New Zealand and New Zealand Foreign Terrorist Fighters, both attempted and realised.**
- **(S) We assess there is a realistic possibility a New Zealand military contribution against ISIL may incidentally increase the already-present threat to New Zealand from terrorist-related activity, but we also assess such a contribution would not increase the likelihood New Zealand would become the target of an externally planned terrorist attack.**

Introduction

1. (R) International and domestic terrorism is a growing concern for Western Governments, including New Zealand. Islamic-inspired terrorism is currently the most prominent terrorist threat; non-Islamic inspired terrorism remains a threat, although comparatively minor. Since the conflict in Syria escalated in mid-2012, the terrorism landscape has shifted; al-Qa'ida has fallen from dominance and has been overshadowed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. New Zealand agencies have also identified a rise in the number of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (see below) since the conflict escalated. As of October 2014 the Combined Threat Assessment Group (CTAG) assessed the likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring in New Zealand as "possible, but not expected". s6(a)

Global Context

2. (R) Islamic-inspired terrorism presents a significant, growing, and rapidly evolving threat to Western states, including New Zealand. While Western forces were engaged in major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the primary terrorist threat to Western states came from al-Qa'ida (AQ) and its franchises, such as al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), and al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The main threats from AQ were in the form of spectacular attack planning, and attempts to recruit Western financial support.

3. (R) Even as recently as 2013, the majority of terrorist attacks planned and/or committed in the West were at least inspired by AQ and its narrative. The perpetrators of the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombings – Chechen brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev – claimed not to be formally linked to any terrorist group, but used information published online by AQAP to construct their bombs. The Canadian rail bombing plot, also in April 2013, was linked to AQ elements based around the Iran-Pakistan border.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

(S) Also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Islamic State (IS), ISIL in its current formation was established by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2011. ISIL was originally affiliated with al-Qa'ida, but the two organisations separated as a result of tensions created by ISIL's modus operandi and unsanctioned creation of an Islamic State. ISIL is of particular interest to security agencies due to its success in inspiring Foreign Terrorist Fighters to join them, and its use of extreme violence and brutality. ■

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

4. (R) The escalation of the Syrian conflict since mid-2012 however, has led to a dramatic shift in the terrorism landscape. While AQ remains a central threat to the West, it has been overshadowed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL – see text box) as a source and driver of terrorism-related activity threatening the West. This shift is also characterised by the increasing importance of "Foreign Terrorist Fighters" (individuals seeking to travel outside their countries of residence to join and fight alongside terrorist entities and other groups in active conflict zones), with the number of such fighters increasing dramatically since 2012. In addition to increasing the direct capability of terrorist groups to conduct external

attacks, Foreign Terrorist Fighters who return to their countries of residence, or onwards to third countries, also present significant threats as they are likely radicalised, and may have had combat training and experience. Foreign Terrorist Fighters therefore present significant, complex and potentially long-term terrorism threats.

5. (C) Until mid-2012, the AQ network attracted the majority of Foreign Terrorist Fighters into countries such as Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since 2013, Foreign Terrorist Fighters have been almost exclusively entering (or attempting to enter) Syria and/or Iraq and joining ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) or groups aligned to either of these entities. The movement of Foreign Terrorist Fighters has occurred in conjunction with increased, and increasingly widespread, ideological and financial support for terrorist groups involved in the Syrian conflict, of which ISIL has become the most successful.

6. (C) Unlike other civil conflicts of the past two decades, the Syrian conflict has resonated more strongly and with a wider variety of audiences worldwide, including many without tangible links to the region. ISIL has used this resonance to increase its own support base, producing propaganda that actively targets particular Muslim subgroups in Western nations through dedicated websites, forums, and social media networks. This propaganda has generated an emotionally charged extremist rhetoric that resonates with both radicalised and non-radicalised groups, increasing individuals' desire to travel to Syria and/or Iraq to fight with ISIL, but also to conduct militant jihad for their own purposes.

7. (R) AQ attacks against Western targets were – for the most part – rigidly planned or at least sanctioned by al-Qa'ida Senior Leadership (AQSL). AQ did encourage and inspire lone actor attacks, but this was not their core objective. In contrast, ISIL strongly encourages Muslims in Western countries who are either unable or unwilling to join ISIL in Syria or Iraq to commit domestic terrorist acts without active ISIL direction. In September 2014, senior ISIL leader al-Adnani gave a major speech, directing such individuals to attack Westerners:

"The best thing you can do is to strive to your best and kill any disbeliever, whether he be French, American, or from any of their allies. If you are not able to find an IED or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of their allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him"

8. (C) We assess such public statements from ISIL encouraging violence have already inspired attack plans, will inspire new attacks plans by both groups and lone actors in the future, and will encourage those already planning attacks to speed up their preparations.

9. (C) In September 2014, Australia raised its national threat level from Medium to High. The decision was not in response to a specific threat, but rather to an overall increasing level of concern at the scale and scope of Islamic-inspired extremism within Australia. s6(a)

s6(a)

[REDACTED] An aspiring Foreign Terrorist Fighter prevented from travelling by the cancellation of his passport was also fatally shot in Melbourne in September 2014 after attacking two police officers.

10. (R) In early October 2014, UK authorities arrested four individuals believed to be involved in planning a terrorist attack in the UK; these individuals were also reportedly inspired by ISIL, s6(a)

New Zealand Situation

11. (U) The vast majority of New Zealand's population, including its Muslim population, does not demonstrate extremist or radical beliefs. New Zealand's resident Muslim community (approximately one per cent of New Zealand's total population) largely consists of Fijian-Indians and their descendants, and generally practices a moderate form of Islam. Recent migration from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Persian Gulf Arab states has increasingly led to the establishment of Salafist-orientated mosques and brought Salafism¹ into mainstream mosques.

12. (R) There are Muslims in New Zealand who hold radical interpretations of Islam, with a range of New Zealand agencies reporting varying levels of support for terrorist groups among New Zealand's Muslim population. Those who espouse support for extremist groups tend to have limited formal knowledge of Islam, and rely largely on the internet or their Imam for religious interpretation. This makes them vulnerable to radicalisation, including by radical preachers.

13. (R) The role of the internet has been unprecedented in the production and propagation of Islamic-inspired extremist material. Currently, extremist propaganda can be easily accessed through the formal media presence of designated terrorist groups, such as ISIL and JN, who disseminate their messages via official websites, Twitter, and publications, including ISIL's Dabiq magazine. Online social media and networking allows this material to be disseminated almost indiscriminately, increasing the range of sources New Zealand citizens and residents can obtain this material. Practical guidance on how to conduct a terrorist attack, including how to build explosives and obtain funding is also freely available online.

14. (R) The volume of extremist material available online makes it possible for New Zealand citizens to self-radicalise exclusively via the internet. Given the difficulties of detecting and tracking online activity, such as posts on forums and

¹ (U) Salafism is an approach to Islam that attempts to emulate early Muslim practices. The emphasis on violence in some Salafi teachings is of concern to intelligence agencies as an indicator for possible future radicalisation. Most Salafis are simply religious conservatives, however, and are not prone to violent extremism. Nevertheless, Salafi theology generally forms the basis of Islamist extremist groups who do wish to restore an Islamic order to society, and who view violent jihad as a legitimate means of achieving that aim.

other social media, New Zealand security agencies are probably aware of only a small percentage of extremist activity that occurs online by New Zealand citizens and residents.

15. (S s6(a) We are aware of a small number of individuals involved in extremist activities in New Zealand. NZSIS is aware of s6(a) New Zealand citizens who we assess have almost certainly travelled to participate in the Syrian conflict: s6(a)

[Redacted]

16. (S) New Zealand's small absolute number of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (both realised and attempted) makes it difficult to identify demographic trends. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

[Redacted]

17. (S) While we do not have a comprehensive understanding of the size or the extent of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter issue in New Zealand, we assess it is almost certain individuals have travelled to, and returned from, Syria to fight without our knowledge. Foreign Terrorist Fighter returnees – both known and unknown – are likely radicalised and combat-trained to at least some degree. s6(a)

[Redacted]

18. s6(a)

[Redacted] New Zealand's assessed terrorism threat levels are subject to change and can do so at very short notice should new information arise.

19. (S s6(a) In addition to the s6(a) Foreign Terrorist Fighters s6(a) [Redacted] New Zealand citizens are subjects of terrorism-related national security interest s6(a) [Redacted]. Some are known to be conducting New Zealand-based extremist activities, while the remainder have no known current stated intent to act against New Zealand s6(a) [Redacted]

[Redacted] We are also aware of individuals who do not intend to travel to Syria or other conflict zones themselves, but are ideologically and financially facilitating the travel of others

² s6(a) [Redacted].

through actively encouraging others to travel offshore to engage in fighting, and/or providing funds to aspiring Foreign Terrorist Fighters.

20. (S) As with New Zealand's known Foreign Terrorist Fighters, the individuals discussed above do not demonstrate clear demographic trends: they include a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, both native Muslims and converts to Islam, first-, second- and third-generation New Zealand citizens, and varying socio-economic statuses. s6(a)

21. (R) The known Foreign Terrorist Fighter numbers together with the individuals of national security interest described above mean New Zealand has a surprisingly large overall number in comparison to some other Western states, in relative population terms. The reason for this has not yet been explored.

Effects of New Zealand Government Action

22. (C) The changing Islamic-inspired extremist and terrorist threat to, and within, New Zealand represents a new and difficult challenge for the New Zealand Government. Broadly, governments can act against domestic extremism and terrorism in two ways: counter-radicalisation³ and de-radicalisation⁴ programmes aimed at moderating and/or managing extremism in overall populations; and specific actions against known or suspected extremists. To date, the New Zealand Government has had little to no experience with formal counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation processes, although New Zealand Police has had some success with its community outreach and Maori, Pacific and Ethnic Service (MPES) programmes.

23. (S) Our Five Eyes partners have all had significant legislative reforms or amendments within the past five to six years to address the new terrorism landscape.⁵ In contrast, the New Zealand Government response to individuals' terrorist-related activities relies primarily on the Terrorism Suppression Act (TSA), which, despite the significant evolution in the terrorism threat both domestically and internationally, has not been updated since it was enacted in 2002. In addition, the TSA has not been tested in regards to prosecuting an individual in court for a terrorist act, and has significant gaps in regards to both facilitation and Foreign Terrorist Fighters.

³ (U) A package of social, political, legal, educational and economic programmes specifically designed to deter disaffected individuals from being radicalised.

⁴ (U) A process generally directed against individuals who have become radical with the aim of re-integrating them into society or at least dissuading them from violence.

⁵ (U) For example, the Australian "Foreign Fighters Bill" (Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Bill 2014), the Canadian Bill S7 Combating Terrorism Act 2012 (enacted April 2013), the American USA PATRIOT Amendments Act 2009, and the United Kingdom Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 and Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Order 2009.

24. (U) Given the current legislative framework, the primary means by which the New Zealand Government can prevent Foreign Terrorist Fighters who are New Zealand citizens from travelling is by the Minister of Internal Affairs cancelling (or refusing to issue) their passports. Unlike in Australia, the New Zealand Government cannot cancel, or prevent the use of, a legitimate foreign passport by a New Zealand citizen or resident.

25. (S) While cancelling an individual's passport can prevent the long-term threat they may pose to New Zealand and international security, given trends observed overseas we assess such action may also increase the domestic threat in the immediate term. In addition to the Melbourne shooting in September 2014, on 20 October 2014, a Canadian aspiring Foreign Terrorist Fighter whose passport had been revoked killed a police officer in a deliberate hit-and-run incident. Two days later, another Canadian extremist (who had expressed a desire to travel to the Middle East, but did not have a passport) attacked Parliament in Ottawa after shooting a soldier dead at the National War Memorial.

26. s6(a)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

27. (S) The New Zealand Government also currently has limited options to respond to non-New Zealand citizens who present national security threats; for example, almost all residence class visa holders must be granted entry permission at the border and the New Zealand Government cannot quickly cancel a residence class visa, even if that person poses a national security threat. Refugee and protected person status may also add further complications. As such, understanding the demographic context of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter issue in New Zealand will be critical to developing strategies for responding to extremist non-New Zealand citizens in the future.

Looking Forward

28. (S) In the short-to-medium term, we assess the activities of ISIL and JN, and the Syria/Iraq conflict in general will continue to be a major driver for Islamic-inspired extremism, both in New Zealand and internationally. Given overseas trends, we assess it is likely there will be an increase in the number of radicalised individuals in New Zealand and New Zealand Foreign Terrorist Fighters, both attempted and realised.

29. (S) We assess there is a realistic possibility any future New Zealand contribution to military action against ISIL will incidentally increase the already present threat to New Zealand from terrorism-related activity in the short-to-medium term, both domestically and to New Zealand interests and New Zealanders offshore where ISIL has at least some support. Such a New Zealand military deployment could lead to increased terrorism-related activity by already radicalised New Zealand-based individuals. s6(a)

[REDACTED]

s6(a)

30. (S) Retaliation in New Zealand could include a New Zealand-based attack, or an increase in the number of individuals within New Zealand motivated to become Foreign Terrorist Fighters. We assess there is also a realistic possibility individuals susceptible to radicalisation, yet not currently radicalised, could become more extreme in response to a New Zealand military deployment into Syria and/or Iraq.

31. (R) Steps taken domestically to undermine extremism, and steps taken abroad to contain and degrade ISIL will likely, however, have a longer-term payoff in mitigating the threat ISIL poses to international and New Zealand security.

32. (S) We do not assess that New Zealand military action against ISIL would increase the likelihood of New Zealand being the target of an external attack, as New Zealand would continue to rank below a range of other Western states as a target for groups capable of such action.

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