



THREAT ASSESSMENT

REISSUE: New Zealand terrorism threat level remains at HIGH

Issued: 18 March 2019

134/19/TA

DMS6-14-357

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This assessment is based on information drawn from a variety of domestic and international resources and open source data. Threat definitions can be found on the last page.

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New Zealand
Terrorism - HIGH

Situation


1. (R) This Threat Assessment has been produced to provide an update on the threat environment in New Zealand following the 15 March terrorist attacks in Christchurch. The New Zealand terrorism threat level remains **HIGH**; *terrorist attack is assessed as very likely*.
2. (U) On Friday 15 March, a 28-year-old individual entered the Al Noor Mosque in central Christchurch and conducted an attack using firearms, killing 41 people. The individual subsequently attacked the Linwood Mosque where a further seven people were killed. Two further individuals have died in hospital and 50 people are injured. The perpetrator has been charged with murder and is currently in custody.

Threat Assessment

3. (R) There have been a range of threats since the Christchurch attacks. CTAG has sighted open source reporting indicating a broad range of threats have been made to various locations around New Zealand, motivated by both right wing extremism and rhetoric relating to retaliatory action. These have included threats of violence ^{s6(a)} [REDACTED] CTAG notes these threats have been as yet unsubstantiated.
4. (R) CTAG notes an increase in attack rhetoric is to be expected in the aftermath of a major terrorist attack. Most of this rhetoric is likely made by individuals seeking to capitalise on the heightened security environment and does not necessarily manifest as attack planning. We assess this is highly likely to continue for the foreseeable future as details of the attack emerge through the investigation and prosecution processes.

5. (C) CTAG assesses it is almost certain that there are self-radicalised individuals in New Zealand who have not yet come to the attention of Police or intelligence agencies. Investigation and analysis of a diverse range of information since the Christchurch attacks reveal the perpetrator had been developing plans for the attack for two years, and identified Christchurch as the target location three months before the attack.
6. (C) Similarly, there are probably individuals who have come to the attention of agencies for non-terrorism related matters and of which the extent of their radicalisation is not fully recognised. It is a realistic possibility that individuals, especially lone actors, could become radicalised and even mobilise to action without having come to the attention of intelligence or law enforcement agencies.
7. (R) Police have confirmed that the perpetrator conducted the attacks alone. CTAG is unsighted as to whether he received support in the planning of this attack or whether any individuals associated with him had prior knowledge.
8. (R) There are a number of public events related to the Christchurch shootings being held across New Zealand. These include vigils, which are likely to attract crowds, and VIP visits. Such events may present targets for groups or individuals intent on further, or retaliatory, attacks. International events have shown there to be an extant terrorist threat to places of mass public gathering, such as transport hubs, civil aviation, markets, large sporting fixtures and entertainment venues.

Right wing extremism

9. (C FVEY) §6(a): operational detail

CTAG judges that an increase of attack rhetoric is expected and, on its own, is not indicative of attack planning, although there is a realistic possibility activity may occur without coming to the attention of intelligence or law enforcement agencies.
10. (R) CTAG assesses it is more likely an inspired attack would be carried out by a lone actor, given the probable lack of central organisation, operational coordination and cohesion observed in groups holding an extreme right-wing ideology in New Zealand.

Islamist extremism

11. (C FVEY) CTAG is aware of reporting indicating individuals inspired by Islamist extremism have called for retaliatory attacks; however we have not seen evidence of actual attack planning. Online social media accounts supportive of ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) have been sharing images promising unspecified retaliatory attacks. CTAG notes one Jihadist group used an image of the Auckland Sky Tower in the background of a social media post calling for violence in response to the attacks.

Capability

12. (R) Reporting indicates that the perpetrator used two AR15 rifles, which had almost certainly been modified, a lever action 1918 firearm and two shotguns, one which was semi-automatic. CTAG notes the perpetrator has held a current New Zealand

firearms license since late 2017, and that he almost certainly acquired the weapons through lawful means. Additionally, he had assembled two improvised explosive devices. Although CTAG has no further information as to the viability of these devices, we do note this possibly indicates a higher level of sophistication in that he was attempting a mixed mode attack.

13. (R) CTAG assesses it is almost certain that weapons similar to those used in the Christchurch attacks are available in New Zealand, legally or illegally. While we have not seen any intelligence to indicate attack planning involving firearms or otherwise, we cannot rule out the possibility individuals with the requisite intent and capability may be inspired to conduct a similar attack.

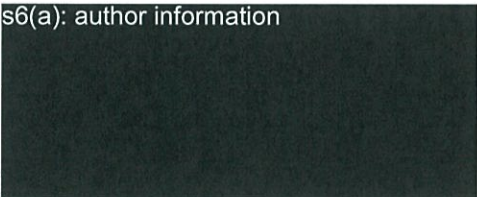
Opportunity

14. (R) CTAG assesses there is a realistic possibility the Christchurch attacks may act as an inspiration for aspiring extremists, irrespective of their motivation or ideology, due to the demonstrated success of these attacks, coupled with the international media attention garnered. The perpetrator live-streamed the attack and this video is still available online. The viewing of this and other extremist rhetoric could act as an enabling tool for other extremists. We assess this applies to both individuals inspired by right wing extremism, aspiring to carry out 'copy-cat' attacks, and individuals inspired by Islamist extremism, with a desire to conduct a retaliatory attack.

Threat level

15. (R) CTAG continues to assess the New Zealand terrorism threat level remains **HIGH**; *terrorist attack is assessed as very likely*. This is due to the intelligence gaps we have regarding the perpetrator's associates and any involvement or knowledge they may have had of the attacks, and our assessment that there is a realistic possibility this attack could inspire others in New Zealand.

s6(a): author information

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Intelligence cut off date: 17 March 2019

Released by the Director-General of Security

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(R) This Threat Assessment draws on intelligence from a range of sources on whose reliability we comment in the main text where appropriate.

(R) This Threat Assessment draws on intelligence from open source and classified reporting, in which we have moderate confidence.

(R) This Threat Assessment has drawn on intelligence open source and classified and reporting, which often do not reveal the totality of activity of those being investigated.

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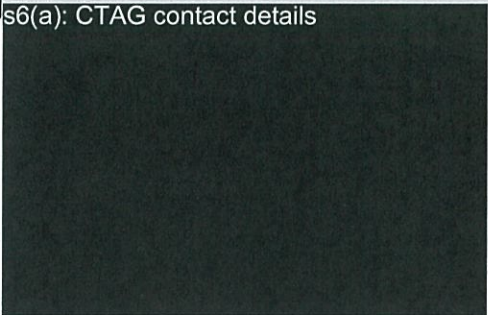
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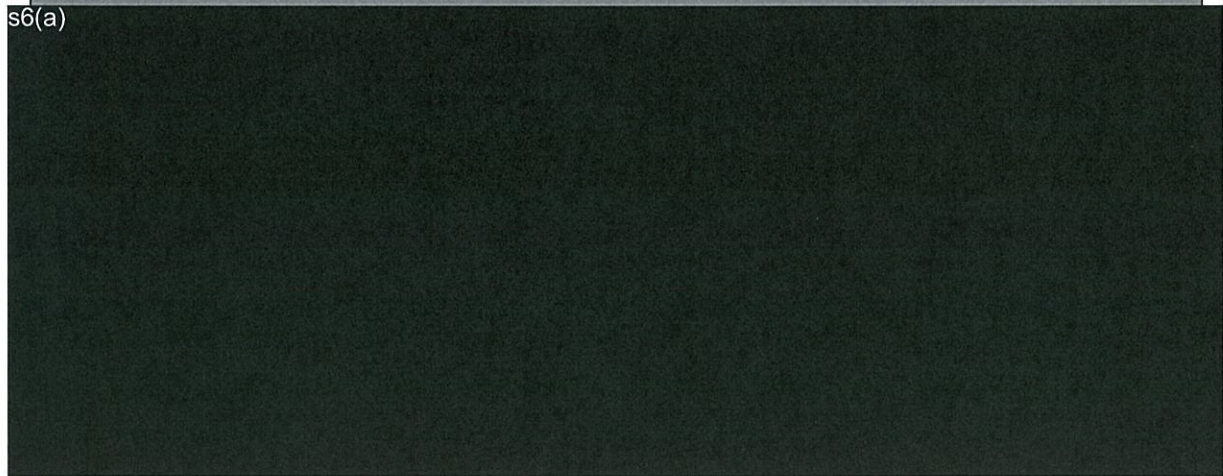
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CTAG THREAT DEFINITIONS

Threat Level	Definition	Qualitative Statement
Negligible	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as very unlikely	Remote / Highly unlikely
Very Low	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as unlikely	Improbable / Unlikely
Low	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as possible, but is not expected	Realistic possibility
Medium	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as feasible and could well occur	Probable / Likely
High	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is assessed as very likely	Very probable / Highly likely
Extreme	Terrorist attack, violent protest activity or violent criminal behaviour is expected imminently	Almost certain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless otherwise stated, all threat levels in CTAG's Threat Assessments reflect the country-specific threat level • Numbers of New Zealanders in overseas countries are provided by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade based on a voluntary registration system. The numbers do not include non-registered New Zealanders • Please advise CTAG of events or developments that relate to our threat warning function 		