



# THREAT ASSESSMENT

## New Zealand Terrorism Threat Level revised to **MEDIUM**

**Issued: 17 April 2019**

154a/19/TA

DMS6-14-378

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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 - MEDIUM**

### Summary

1. (R) CTAG is revising the New Zealand terrorism threat level from HIGH to **MEDIUM**; *terrorist attack is assessed as feasible and could well occur*. CTAG judges the severity of factors that contributed to the raising of the New Zealand terrorism threat level to HIGH following the Christchurch attack has reduced.
2. (R) CTAG is revising the New Zealand terrorism threat level to **MEDIUM** based on our assessment that there are individuals in New Zealand supportive of an extreme right-wing ideology with the *probable* intent to conduct a terrorist attack. We continue to assess there are Islamist extremists with the *possible* intent to conduct an attack in New Zealand. We remain unsighted as to the impact of the Christchurch attack on other extremist individuals or groups in New Zealand.
3. (R) Immediately following the Christchurch attack, CTAG had significant information gaps regarding the attack and its impact on the New Zealand terrorism threat environment. CTAG now has a greater understanding of the environment, including:
  - a. (R) Our understanding of the Christchurch attacker, who we assess almost certainly prepared and acted alone with no assistance from or knowledge of others, and limited IED (improvised explosive device) capability.
  - b. (R) Our understanding of individuals and groups affiliated with the extreme right-wing in New Zealand. We have not sighted any reporting to indicate the *current* intent to conduct a terrorist attack in New Zealand.
  - c. (R) Our understanding of Islamist extremists in New Zealand following the Christchurch attack. CTAG continues to have high confidence in our understanding of Islamist extremists in New Zealand, and we have not sighted any change in intent to conduct a terrorist attack in New Zealand,

despite propaganda and statements regarding the attack that have been made by offshore Islamist extremist groups.

4. (R) CTAG notes that some information gaps remain regarding threats from both right-wing extremism and Islamist extremism in New Zealand. However, we have greater confidence in our understanding of the Islamist extremist threat environment. It will take time to fully understand any long term impacts on New Zealand's terrorism threat environment.
5. (R) We assess there is a realistic possibility that individuals inspired by various ideologies, especially lone actors, will become radicalised and mobilise to violence without coming to the attention of intelligence or law enforcement agencies.

### Introduction

6. (R) For a more detailed report at a higher classification, please contact CTAG.
7. (R) This assessment is one of several recent CTAG products on the terrorism threat environment in New Zealand. It should be read in conjunction with CTAG's TA 162 'Restricted: New Zealand terrorism threat environment following the Christchurch attack', issued 16 April 2019. Please note that CTAG continues to monitor the New Zealand terrorism threat environment, and a change in the New Zealand terrorism threat level could occur at short notice.
8. (R) On Friday 15 March, following the Christchurch attack, CTAG raised the New Zealand terrorism threat level from LOW to HIGH; *terrorist attack is assessed as very likely*. An update to this assessment was issued on 17 March and this re-affirmed the New Zealand terrorism threat level as HIGH. The terrorism threat level was raised and remained at HIGH in part due to the evolving situation and conflicting information surrounding the attack. This included whether other individuals were involved in the planning and carrying out of the attack, whether associates of the alleged attacker had prior knowledge of his plans, and the assessed IED capability of the alleged attacker. We also assessed there was a realistic possibility a retaliatory or copy cat attack could occur.
9. (R) CTAG assesses it is almost certain the alleged Christchurch attacker prepared and acted alone. We assess it is almost certain other individuals did not have prior awareness of the attack plan. Further, we assess the alleged Christchurch attacker possessed only rudimentary IED capability. We have also not sighted any information to indicate extremist groups or individuals with Islamist or right-wing extremist ideology have the current intent to conduct a terrorist attack. For these reasons, CTAG judges the severity of factors that contributed to the raising of the New Zealand terrorism threat level to HIGH following the Christchurch attack has reduced.
10. (R) We continue to assess there is a realistic possibility a retaliatory or copy cat attack could occur. The Christchurch attack was unprecedented in New Zealand and its full impact on Islamist extremism, the extreme right-wing and other extremist groups will not be known for some time. We are currently unable to assess the potential effects that the attack and associated media coverage, responses by the government, and reactions of the wider community will have. However, we now have a greater understanding of the right-wing and Islamist extremist threat environment in New Zealand than immediately following the attack.

11. (R) We also assess it is probable there are individuals who are not known to law enforcement or security agencies, or who are not known for terrorism-related issues, who may possess the intent and capability to conduct an attack.
12. (R) We remain unsighted as to the impact of the Christchurch attack on other extremist ideologies in New Zealand. We have not sighted information to indicate proponents of other extremist ideologies, including ethno-nationalist, separatist and left-wing extremism, have the intent to conduct a terrorist attack in New Zealand. We assess the Christchurch attack is unlikely to serve as a catalyst for such individuals or groups to mobilise to violence.

## Intent

### *Right-wing extremism*

13. (R) There is no agreed definition of right-wing extremism, but it is used as an umbrella term to encompass a broad set of ideologies that include, but are not limited to, white supremacy, anti-Semitism, National Socialism, anti-immigration, anti-Islam, anti-left-wing, and ethnic-nationalism.
14. (R) CTAG assesses there are individuals in New Zealand supportive of an extreme right-wing ideology with the probable intent to conduct an attack. However, we have not sighted any reporting to indicate specific imminent attack plans or the current intent to conduct a terrorist attack. We assess it is probable there are individuals with the intent and capability to conduct an attack who have not come to the attention of security agencies. We have low confidence in our assessment of the intent of extreme right-wing individuals in New Zealand to conduct an attack.
15. (R) We assess it is highly likely individuals with intent to conduct an attack will operate alone or in very small groups. This assessment is based on the fragmented nature of extreme right-wing ideology in New Zealand and the possibility that an individual or small group could mobilise to violence without the awareness of law enforcement and security agencies.
16. (R) CTAG assesses extreme right-wing ideology in New Zealand is fragmented and consists of a spectrum of motivations. Known and organised extreme right-wing groups in New Zealand have distanced themselves from the Christchurch mosque attack, openly condemning the violent actions.

### *Islamist extremism*

17. (R) CTAG is aware of a small number of individuals in New Zealand who are supportive of Islamist extremist ideology, some of whom are supportive of the use of ideologically-motivated violence. CTAG's previous assessment of the intent of those supportive of Islamist extremism in New Zealand, which was assessed as possible intent to conduct an attack, has not changed since the Christchurch attack.
18. (R) CTAG is aware of official and unofficial ISIL (Islamic and State of Iraq and the Levant) and AQ (al-Qa'ida) media outlets condemning the Christchurch attack and issuing calls for revenge. We assess these statements and propaganda have almost certainly raised the profile of New Zealand among supporters of these groups internationally. However, CTAG has not sighted any information to indicate

propaganda following the Christchurch attack has resonated with New Zealand-based Islamist extremists.

19. (R) We continue to assess there are individuals in New Zealand for whom the extent of their radicalisation and mobilisation to violence may not be fully known to law enforcement and security agencies, and that there is a realistic possibility an unknown lone actor could move from radicalisation to action, without intelligence forewarning, and potentially in a short timeframe.

## Capability

### *Right-wing extremism*

20. (R) CTAG assesses it is almost certain there are known and unknown individuals supportive of an extreme right-wing ideology with the capability to conduct an attack in New Zealand.
21. (R) CTAG assesses it is almost certain there are New Zealand-based individuals supportive of an extreme right-wing ideology who hold firearms licenses and have legitimate access to, or ownership of, firearms, including semi-automatic weapons. We further assess it is possible some such individuals have illegitimate access to firearms.
22. (R) We assess it is likely such individuals possessing firearms licenses and firearms have undertaken some form of firearms training and thus have familiarity with handling firearms. ~~s6(a): operational detail~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ We also assess the availability of information online regarding attack methodology and tactics enables individuals and groups to develop their capability.
23. (R) We assess that individuals supportive of an extreme right-wing ideology also possess the capability to conduct a low-sophistication attack, using rudimentary weapons, such as a vehicle or knife.
24. (R) ~~s6(a): operational detail~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ CTAG notes the devices in the possession of the Christchurch attacker were incendiary devices rather than advanced IEDs. We are unsighted as to the extent of connections of individuals holding an extreme right-wing ideology to New Zealand-based gangs or criminal elements. However, we note any links to such groups could increase capability, especially as some gangs are known to possess IED and firearms capability.

### *Islamist extremism*

25. (R) CTAG assesses it is almost certain individuals who are supportive of Islamist extremist ideology have access to rudimentary weapons, such as knives and vehicles, and are capable of low sophistication attacks. CTAG has not sighted any information to indicate a change in the level of capability among known Islamist extremists in New Zealand since the Christchurch attack.
26. (R) ~~s6(a): operational detail~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ We assess it is possible Islamist

extremists could gain access to firearms either directly or indirectly through associates, based on the prevalence of firearms in New Zealand.

### Conclusion

27. (R) CTAG no longer assesses there to be high terrorism threat environment in New Zealand due to our understanding of the Christchurch attacker's lack of associates and capability; and our increased understanding of the wider terrorism threat posed by right-wing extremism and Islamist extremism in New Zealand. However, we assess the terrorism threat environment remains elevated compared to the environment prior to the Christchurch attack, and assess that a terrorist attack is feasible and could well occur.
28. (R) CTAG assesses there are individuals in New Zealand supportive of an extreme right-wing ideology with the probable intent and almost certainly the capability to conduct a terrorist attack. Despite statements and propaganda made by Islamist extremist groups following the Christchurch attack, we continue to assess Islamist extremists possibly have the intent to conduct an attack and almost certainly have low sophistication capability. We remain unsighted as to the impact of the Christchurch attack on other extremist individuals or groups in New Zealand.
29. (R) Our understanding of the full impact of the Christchurch attack and associated reactions on New Zealand's terrorism threat environment continues to evolve. CTAG continues to monitor the New Zealand terrorism threat environment and will update customers as required. We note a change in the New Zealand terrorism threat environment could occur at short notice.

### Threat Level

30. (R) CTAG has therefore revised the New Zealand terrorism threat level from HIGH to **MEDIUM**; *terrorist attack is assessed as feasible and could well occur.*

s6(a): author information

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Intelligence cut off date: 16 April 2019

**CONFIDENCE STATEMENT**

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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.

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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"> <li>• Unless otherwise stated, all threat levels in CTAG's Threat Assessments reflect the country-specific threat level</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Please advise CTAG of events or developments that relate to our threat warning function</li> </ul>		