



# THREAT ASSESSMENT

## The New Zealand terrorism threat environment Issued: 16 January 2018

082/18/TA

DMS6-14-166

R // AUS CAN GBR NZL USA

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.

s6a: classification marking

### New Zealand Terrorism - LOW

#### Key Points

- (R) CTAG assesses the general terrorism threat level for New Zealand is **LOW**; *terrorist attack is assessed as possible, but is not expected.*
- (R) To date, New Zealand has not experienced a completed Islamist extremist terrorist attack and CTAG is not aware of any current and/or well advanced plan to conduct one. However, we emphasise that the LOW threat level does not mean there is no current threat of terrorism in New Zealand.
- (R) ISIL continues to be the predominant global terrorist actor. In spite of ongoing losses in Syria and Iraq, ISIL will continue to exert itself as a terrorist and insurgent group with international influence and reach.
- (C) ISIL's territorial decline has not had any marked impact on the New Zealand extremist environment to date. There continue to be individuals in New Zealand who have a radical interpretation of Islam. s6(a): specific details about counter-terrorism investigations
- (C) CTAG notes that ISIL, amongst other Islamist extremist groups, continues to use the internet as an influencing and enabling tool. Online consumption of extremist material is occurring in New Zealand. Several individuals have been charged and convicted with offences relating to objectionable extremist material.
- (R) s6(a): operational details about counter-terrorism targets

s6(a): classification marking

- (C) CTAG assesses there are also individuals in New Zealand for whom the extent of their radicalisation and mobilisation to violence may not be fully known by law enforcement and security agencies. There is a realistic possibility an unknown lone actor could move from radicalisation to action, without intelligence forewarning, and potentially in a short timeframe.

## Introduction

1. (R) This Threat Assessment is a scheduled biennial review of the New Zealand terrorism environment. It updates the previous New Zealand Threat Assessment, issued 5 August 2015.
2. (R) The assessment will address the following areas:
  - Major international and domestic terrorism developments since 2015;
  - The terrorism threat environment in New Zealand; and
  - Assessment and outlook to 2019.
3. (R) For the purposes of this assessment, terrorism holds the definition outlined in the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 (s.5).
4. (S FVEY) To date, New Zealand has not experienced a completed Islamist extremist terrorist attack. Whilst the threat level is currently LOW, there have been a number of incidents and developments that give rise to some concern into the next two years.  
s6(a): operational detail  
Several other events and occurrences in the past two years have required CTAG to actively consider increasing the national threat level. We expect this will continue through 2018 and 2019.

## Major developments since the 2015 threat assessment

### *International*

5. (R) ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) has experienced substantial territorial losses in Iraq and Syria throughout late-2016 and 2017, to the point of near defeat on the battlefield. In spite of this attrition, ISIL will almost certainly continue to operate in Iraq and Syria, transitioning to a more asymmetric style of operations after its defeat as a proto-state and military force. ISIL will very likely maintain its intent to inspire and enable external attacks from Iraq and Syria, although its capability to do so could be reduced. Official and unofficial ISIL propaganda will almost certainly continue to encourage lone actor attacks in the West.
6. s6(a), s6(b)(i): specific details about international intelligence assessments

7. (S FVEY) The siege of Marawi in the southern Philippines between June-October 2017 raised the possibility of an ISIL-aligned stronghold developing in the Southeast Asia region. The siege was effectively broken in October 2017 but ISIL will likely retain a presence in the southern Philippines. We judge this presence will be fragmented, rather than a global jihadist focal point in its own right, and will be centred around existing, sympathetic insurgent groups (and key leaders) in the ongoing separatist campaign.

*Domestic*

8. (S NZEO) In spite of the changing international situation, the overall level of support for ISIL among New Zealand-based Islamist extremists does not seem to have changed markedly. s6(a): operational detail

[Redacted]

9. (R) New Zealand continues to maintain a relatively low profile with Islamist terrorist groups, and has been specifically referenced on only two occasions, alongside more traditional 'enemies'.

- (R) On 20 April 2015, a New Zealand ISIL member in Syria uploaded a video to YouTube in which he called for New Zealanders and Australians to undertake violent activity during Anzac Day commemorations in both countries.
- (R) In November 2015, the New Zealand flag appeared in a piece of ISIL propaganda alongside the flags of numerous other nations involved in the Coalition against ISIL.

10. s6(a), s6(b)(i): specific details about counter-terrorism investigation

[Redacted]

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

[Redacted]

s6(a): classification marking

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12. (S NZEO) In late-July 2017, a Christchurch youth was arrested following a violent incident at a shopping mall in the city. Reporting indicates that the individual was radicalised and that he went to the mall with the specific intention of carrying out an attack, ostensibly using a motor vehicle. Following a dispute with a family member, who refused to hand over keys to a vehicle, the individual went into the mall in an agitated state. He stole and damaged property and made a generalised threat to kill staff and shoppers in the mall. s6(a): operational detail

13. s6(a), s6(b)(i): partner assessment

14. (S NZEO) Support for Islamist extremism in New Zealand is a largely disorganised and frequently solitary activity. s6(a): specific details about counter-terrorism investigations

15. s6(a), s6(b)(i): specific details about international counter-terrorism investigation

16. s6(a), s6(b)(i): specific details about international counter-terrorism investigation

s6(a): classification marking

The terrorism threat in New Zealand

17. (S) At any given time during the assessment period there have been around 30-40 individuals who are of particular security interest to NZSIS in relation to terrorism. This includes individuals in New Zealand and offshore. s6(a): specific details about counter-terrorism investigations

18. (S) Many of the individuals currently under investigation in New Zealand s6(a) lack organisation, cohesion, direction, and leadership. Often, where radicalisation and subsequent extremist activity is online, there is no overt manifestation of extremist activity in real life.

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

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

(U) Radicalisation in NZ prisons  
Source: Department of Corrections

(R) Prisoner radicalisation in New Zealand is assessed as rare. s6(a): operational detail

The extent of radicalisation is difficult to measure s6(a): operational detail

Some individuals espouse violent extremist rhetoric while incarcerated, however, the motivations for doing so are often dubious and can cease upon release.

s6(a): operational detail

s6(a): operational detail

21. (S) Since 2014, s6(a) individuals are known to have left New Zealand and travelled to conflict zones, joining or supporting ISIL or other terrorist groups. s6(a): operational detail  
Some Islamist extremists of security interest to NZSIS have indicated a continuing desire to

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s6(a): classification marking

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travel to a conflict zone to conduct militant jihad.

22. s6(a): specific details about counter-terrorism targets

23. (S OC) There are s6(a) New Zealand nationals of security interest currently in Iraq and Syria. This number includes both fighters and associated family members. It is likely that children eligible to seek New Zealand citizenship have been born in this theatre of conflict.

24. (S) New Zealand does not knowingly host any returned terrorist fighters from Syria or Iraq, nor is NZSIS aware of any New Zealand citizens (or dual nationals) in Syria or Iraq currently planning imminent travel to New Zealand.

s6(a), s6(b)(i): intelligence assessments about ISIL supporters

Although becoming increasingly difficult, the return of such individuals, or those from other countries, cannot be entirely ruled out.

25. (C) Returning terrorist fighters that are able to reach New Zealand could have combat training and experience that might impact on the domestic threat environment. Returnees with logistical and organisational capability, leadership, media skills and the ability to influence or radicalise others could also have a disproportionate effect on the New Zealand threat environment. The specific level of threat posed by any returnee will be dependant on a range of considerations, including the particular experience of the individual and the environment into which they return.

26. (S) CTAG believes it is almost certain that there are self-radicalised individuals in New Zealand that have not yet come to the attention of Police or intelligence agencies. Similarly there are probably individuals who have come to the attention of agencies for criminal or other 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.

27. (S NZEO) s6(a): operational detail

CTAG notes low-capability (or 'low-sophistication') attacks have increased in frequency overseas. Where these attacks target places of mass gathering they have the potential to kill and injure large numbers of people. Such attacks are possible in New Zealand.

28. (C) Since 2014, changes to Australia's counter terrorism legislation have widened the eligibility criteria for New Zealand citizens to be deported from Australia.

s6(a): detail about Australian threat environment

s6(a): classification marking

s6(a): detail about Australian threat environment

29. (R) Open source reporting indicates the popularity of far-right ideology has risen in the West since the early 2000s. Since 2014, the 'new' right-wing movement has been strengthened by opposition to refugee settlements and Islamist extremist attacks in the West, especially in Europe and Scandinavia.
30. (R) New Zealand's traditional far-right environment centres on s6( ) recognised groups. s6(a): operational detail
- While their actions can be provocative to mainstream society and often result in counter-protest activity, CTAG has not sighted any reporting to indicate NZ far right groups has the intent or capability to promote their ideology by an act of terrorism. As has been evidenced in similar jurisdictions to New Zealand, an extreme right-wing lone actor attack remains a possibility, albeit a remote one.
31. (R) CTAG is not aware of any intelligence relating to specific threats of domestic terrorism by other issue-motivated groups or ideologies.

**Assessment – terrorist threats to 2019**

32. (R) To date, New Zealand has not experienced an Islamist extremist terrorist attack. CTAG assesses there are a number of possible factors that contribute to this. These factors may include: an absence of prominent radicalising figures or rallying personalities; an absence of attack precedent in New Zealand; the country's pluralism and general scarcity of expressed religious or ethnic disharmony; and our mainly liberal welfare and social policies. Whilst potentially explanatory, these factors do not preclude an attack from occurring in New Zealand in the future.
33. (R) CTAG has not sighted any intelligence to indicate any current and/or well advanced plan to conduct a terrorist attack in New Zealand by known extremist individuals.
34. (R) CTAG assesses there are individuals in New Zealand for whom the extent of their radicalisation and mobilisation to violence may not be fully known by law enforcement and security agencies. There is a realistic possibility an unknown lone actor could move from radicalisation to action, without intelligence forewarning, and potentially in a short timeframe.
35. (C) If a terrorist attack were to occur in New Zealand, it would most likely involve a lone actor (or very small group) using rudimentary weaponry such as knives or blunt force weapons, or vehicles, or a combination thereof. It is possible, but less likely, that an undetected individual or small group could conduct an attack using more advanced capability, such as firearms or explosives. Firearms or explosives could be stolen or acquired from a legitimate source. s6(a): operational detail
36. (R) International events have shown there to be an ongoing terrorist threat to places of mass public gathering, such as transport hubs, markets, large sporting fixtures and entertainment venues. Attacks targeting these locations, using basic weapons such as knives and vehicles, have increased in frequency overseas, particularly in Europe.

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37. (C) A terrorist attack, or publicly-announced attempt, in New Zealand would almost certainly have an effect on the country's threat environment. It would establish a precedent and possibly an inspiration for aspiring extremists and could lead to the perception that further attacks are more permissible. We also note that Islamist extremist attacks in other Western countries have provoked retaliatory attacks from individuals with other ideologies, such as extreme right-wing groups. CTAG assesses this could occur in New Zealand following any terrorism incident.
38. (R) CTAG assesses the terrorism threat level for New Zealand as **LOW**; *terrorist attack is assessed as possible, but is not expected*. CTAG will continue to monitor all elements influencing the New Zealand threat level and notes that this can result in a change to the threat level at short notice.
39. (C) ISIL's decline, or military defeat in Syria or Iraq, does not signal the group's total demise. CTAG s6(a) judge that ISIL, and Islamist extremism more broadly, will continue to adapt and evolve both geographically and tactically. The likelihood is that ISIL-core elements will continue to enable and inspire terrorist attacks globally, and ISIL-affiliated regional groups will carry out asymmetric and insurgent campaigns. The latter may draw foreign fighters, possibly including New Zealanders, in a similar way that Iraq and Syria have. We also cannot rule out travel to other conflicts or theatres in support of al-Qa'ida or other extremist groups.
40. (R) CTAG assesses that there remains a higher general likelihood of a New Zealander being harmed in a terrorist incident offshore than in New Zealand. s6(a)
- Whilst we have no intelligence to suggest New Zealanders will be specifically targeted, given the number of travellers and residents in these countries, we judge that incidental impact is likely in the next two years.

s6(a): author information

Intelligence cut off date: 12 January 2018

s6(a): classification marking



## CONFIDENCE STATEMENT

### R // AUS CAN GBR NZL USA

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

(R) CTAG's determination of the threat level for New Zealand represents our best understanding of the intent and capability of known or potential terrorist actors in New Zealand. It is intelligence-based and is subject to continual monitoring and revision.

(R) CTAG has HIGH confidence in our assessments that:

- CTAG has not sighted any intelligence indicating any current, well-advanced plan to conduct an attack in New Zealand.
- internationally, ISIL will continue to advocate for terrorist attacks to further its ideological objectives.
- an attack could occur without intelligence forewarning.

(R) CTAG has MODERATE confidence in our assessments that:

- Islamist extremist lone actors are the most credible current and foreseeable threat in New Zealand and are likely to remain so out to the next iteration of this assessment in 2019.
- there are self-radicalised individuals based in New Zealand whom law enforcement and security agencies are unaware of, or who have come to the attention of agencies for criminal or other non-terrorism related matters.
- the most likely form of an attack – should one occur in New Zealand will be an attack by a lone actor or small group using knives – other bladed or blunt-force weapons, vehicles, or a combination thereof.

(R) It is possible that activity might have occurred or may occur that has not been detected by our sources.

(R) A partner releasable version and a lower classification (Restricted-level) version of this report will be prepared in early-2018.

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## CTAG THREAT DEFINITIONS

Threat Level	Definition	Qualitative Statement
Negligible	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as very unlikely	Remote / Highly Unlikely
Very Low	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as unlikely.	Improbable / Unlikely
Low	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as possible, but is not expected.	Realistic Possibility
Medium	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as feasible and could well occur.	Probable / Likely
High	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as very likely.	Highly/Very Probable/Likely
Extreme	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is expected imminently.	Almost Certain

- Unless otherwise stated, all threat levels in CTAG 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.