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# THREAT ASSESSMENT

## New Zealand: Terrorism

Issued: 10 October 2014

134/14/TA

DMS0-163-515

This assessment is based on information drawn from a variety of domestic and international resources and open source data. The intelligence cut-off date for this assessment is **19 September 2014**. A Confidence Statement can be found at the end of the main body of this assessment. Threat definitions can be found on the last page.

### (U) Summary

- (R) CTAG has seen no credible intelligence to indicate New Zealand is an intended target for a terrorist attack. Nevertheless, the threat to New Zealand from Jihadist terrorism has increased.
- (R) CTAG therefore assesses the New Zealand terrorism threat level has increased to **LOW**; *terrorist attack is assessed as possible, but not expected*.
- (R) The main driver for the national threat level increase is developments to the global Jihadist terrorism threat since CTAG's last New Zealand Threat Assessment (105/12/TA of February 2013), including:
  - diversifying threat streams emanating from conflict zones in the Middle East;
  - an international trend towards technically unsophisticated terrorist tactics and a widening of target sets to include non-traditional areas;
  - an increased domestic threat to countries where nationals have returned from fighting in conflict zones.
- (R) This threat level could change at very short notice if credible information about specific attack plans is made available to CTAG.

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**(U) Introduction**

1. (R) This Threat Assessment focuses on the threat to New Zealand from Jihadist terrorism; it does not examine the terrorism threat to New Zealanders overseas. This assessment defines 'terrorism' as described in Section 5 of the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 (TSA). It departs from previous New Zealand Threat Assessments by focussing on Jihadist terrorism, rather than all forms of violent extremism.<sup>1</sup>
2. (R) New Zealand has never been subject to a terrorist attack. Several historical incidents commonly have been described as terrorist acts (such as the 1985 bombing of the Rainbow Warrior) but do not meet the definition of terrorism contained in the TSA. Given New Zealand does not have a history of terrorist attacks, this Threat Assessment draws on a framework of international trends and the experiences of Western partners. This framework indicates an attack in New Zealand is possible, although not expected.

**(U) Jihadist terrorism: the international context**

3. (R) The Arab Spring weakened autocratic regimes across the Middle East, and this reorder of the political landscape reignited Jihadist ambitions. The Syrian civil war then provided space for Jihadists to put their sectarian ideals into practice. This spreading intra-Muslim struggle, exacerbated by polarising violence, has created havens from which competing groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Qa'ida (AQ) have been able to broadcast a virulent anti-Western agenda to receptive global audiences. The Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre remains an important node of global terrorism, but it is the Sunni Jihadists' confrontation with so-called apostate regimes and the West that has re-reinvigorated the notion of global jihad.
4. (S FVEY) **Greater numbers of foreign fighters are involved (fighting and supporting) in violent jihad in conflict zones.** While CTAG is unable to corroborate the exact estimate ~~s6(a)~~ foreign fighters from Western countries are currently in the Syria/Iraq conflict zone, the number of Westerners participating is certainly unprecedented and growing. Most are men, but some are women. Some are immigrants to their country of citizenship, but some were born there. Some of the individuals in conflict zones are probably conducting genuine humanitarian work; however, many others are almost certainly engaged in fighting, which is far more likely to increase their exposure to extremist elements and foster radicalisation.
5. (R) **Terrorist tactics are diversifying.** Terrorist groups still aspire to conduct large-scale spectacular attacks, but there is a parallel international trend towards smaller operations requiring fewer resources and less technical skill to execute. The majority of recent incidents have been technically unsophisticated, but difficult to detect, 'lone wolf' attacks. Some terrorist groups have actively encouraged Western-based extremists to conduct these sorts of attacks (for example, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) conducted a "Just Do It" campaign in their English-language propaganda journal Inspire Magazine). Such lone wolf attacks are characterised by a person or persons (often self-radicalised) motivated to conduct a terrorist attack, but carrying out the attack independently from a centralised command structure or without material support from a wider group or organisation. Both the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing in the United

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States (US) and the 2013 murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in the United Kingdom (UK) highlighted the changing and developing threat presented by self-radicalised individuals or groups inspired by, but acting outside the direction or facilitation of, established extremist groups.

6. (R) This evolution of tactics now means relatively simple and small-scale events, for example those that cause serious bodily injury, will be widely perceived as a serious act of terrorism if they demonstrate an appropriate motivation. The emphasis being that the resulting actions still achieve the sensationalism of a fatal terrorist attack. The series of knife attacks by Uighur extremists in China, the attack on Fusilier Rigby, and the 2014 shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels all demonstrated terrorist attacks can be limited in scale and lack complexity, but still receive significant immediate international media coverage (on par with larger, multifaceted mass-casualty attacks). Nevertheless, many extremist groups, particularly those affiliated with AQ, still aspire to conduct attacks in Western countries of a similar scale and complexity to the 9/11 attacks.
7. (S FVEY) **A widening target set.** The target sets for terrorist attacks have also diversified and broadened. Traditional high-value but 'hardened' targets (that is, heavily protected entities such as embassies and government buildings) have been joined by 'soft' targets (such as malls, hotels, public events and open public spaces with gatherings of people) as being worthwhile and legitimate. The 2008 marauder attack in Mumbai and the 2013 al-Shabaab attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi are styles of attack many other groups aspire to carry out. Extremist propaganda readily available online (such as AQAP's Inspire Magazine) has suggested possible target locations for attacks, including: at a global level, Israeli, British and American companies, and tourist resorts where Israelis, Americans or Britons stay; in the UK, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Marks and Spencer stores and Thames House; and in the USA, Times Square, casinos and night clubs (in Las Vegas), oil tankers and trains, military colleges and academies, and General Atomics' headquarters.
8. (R) **Terrorist propaganda is becoming more effective.** ISIL, in particular, has displayed its deftness in exploiting social and other types of media for propaganda purposes. ISIL's military effectiveness on the ground in seizing large swathes of Iraqi and Syrian territory and proclaiming an Islamic Caliphate has been matched by an unprecedented use of contemporary media to hold the world's attention. ISIL's sophisticated coverage of its efforts via speeches and videos translated into multiple languages and transmitted on social media sites, such as Twitter and Instagram, has been a step change from earlier terrorist use of social media (even when compared to AQAP's YouTube videos) and has been very effective at encouraging/motivating younger audiences to travel to Syria and Iraq for jihad.
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(U) Jihadist terrorism: the New Zealand context

10. (S FVEY) ~~s6(a)~~ New Zealand ~~s6(a)~~ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ has previously been mentioned by an AQAP affiliate as an 'enemy'.<sup>2</sup> In addition, New Zealand has a number of factors in common with other Western countries which themselves have been specifically targeted, including:

- New Zealand and the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) have participated as part of broader coalitions in conflicts such as Afghanistan;
- The NZDF may become involved again directly, or in a support role, against the global jihad;
- New Zealand is seen as a Western nation;
- New Zealand has a close intelligence partnership with leading Western nations; and
- The New Zealand Government has taken action to prevent New Zealanders from travelling to fight with terrorist groups.

11. (S FVEY) **In the current international context, threat is less a function of intent and capability - it is more about intent.** As we have seen from the international context, low levels of capability are no longer a significant barrier for an effective terrorist attack. This is equally applicable in New Zealand, where an unsophisticated attack would be relatively easy to plan and implement, with materials readily available (such as a car and kitchen knives as in the case of the Fusilier Rigby murder). Moreover, online extremist Jihadist literature provides would-be attackers with step-by-step instructions to produce viable improvised explosive devices (IEDs). There is a considerably reduced likelihood of detecting a lone wolf attack compared to a large-scale, sophisticated attack by an established terrorist group. The former involves a person or persons and their innermost thoughts and intentions; the latter might involve communications and detectable support, command and control. Given that the plans and intentions of lone wolves are harder for law enforcement and intelligence agencies to detect, such attacks could occur with little or no prior indication.

12. (S FVEY) Although CTAG has seen no credible signs of a combination of capability and intention to conduct a terrorist attack in New Zealand, there may well be no overt signs that a person or persons have formed such an intention. ~~s6(a)~~ \_\_\_\_\_

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13. (S FVEY) Rhetoric from terrorist groups, addressed mainly to young people in the West to travel to the Middle East for jihad, has found an audience in New Zealand. \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup> Deceased Yemen-based AQAP external operations chief and ideologue Anwar al-Aulaqi delivered a lecture in 2004 in which New Zealand was mentioned—with Europe, the US, Canada and Australia—as an 'enemy'.

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14. (S FVEY) **In light of other countries' experiences, CTAG judges it a realistic possibility that returnees could pose a terrorist threat in New Zealand.** This threat could emanate either because the returnees have been specifically tasked to conduct attacks or because they have been radicalised to the point they would seek to conduct a self-organised attack in New Zealand and would have the operational experience to do so. s6(a)

[Redacted]

Indeed, in at least one case, a New Zealand citizen posted a video on the internet of him destroying his New Zealand passport – an act consistent with many other foreign fighters and designed to demonstrate their commitment to the ISIL-declared Islamic State.

15. (S FVEY) While returned fighters pose a potential threat to their home countries, there remains the possibility they might conduct attacks in other countries. The attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels on 24 May 2014, conducted by French national Mehdi Nemmouche, who had recently returned from Syria, highlights this threat. Open source reporting indicates Nemmouche likely guarded captives previously held hostage by ISIL in Syria. Given the similarities between his attack and the methodology espoused by ISIL it is assessed as feasible that Nemmouche received guidance from ISIL to conduct his attack.

16. (S FVEY) Additionally, some of the foreign fighters from Western countries currently in the Syria/Iraq conflict zone will likely have access to passports which entitle them to a visa waiver for entry to New Zealand. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

[Redacted]

17. (S FVEY) **Many of the preferred targets identified for an attack offshore can also be found in New Zealand.** As such, New Zealand may be viewed by external terror groups as a 'softer' environment for attacks against more desirable targets such as embassies or an international event. s6(a)

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## Conclusion

18. (R) The global terrorism threat environment is diversifying and this has ramifications for New Zealand. Large numbers of Western nationals have travelled to fight in foreign conflicts, such as the Syria/Iraq conflict, often joining groups such as ISIL and Jibhat al-Nusra which are committed to conducting global jihad. Returned fighters from the Syrian conflict present a threat due to their likely exposure to Jihadist indoctrination and enhanced skills associated with fighting in these theatres.
19. (R) Further, extremist groups have taken advantage of the global reach of the internet to publicise their activities, and radicalise and recruit susceptible populations. Even if they have not participated in overseas conflicts, there is a possibility New Zealand Jihadists (whether radicalised online or via direct contact with other Jihadists) might conduct lone wolf style attacks. Recent, less technically sophisticated lone wolf attacks have achieved an immediate shock factor similar to traditional terrorist attacks. In addition, the target set for such terrorist attacks is widening to include relatively softer targets such as malls, hotels and public places and events as opposed to relatively harder, and more 'state centric', targets. This evolution of attack methods and target sets, requiring less planning and preparation, has likely decreased the ability of intelligence and security agencies to detect such threats.
20. (R) While there is no current reporting to indicate actual attack planning targeting New Zealand, the global developments described above lead CTAG to assess the threat of Jihadist terrorism occurring in New Zealand has increased.
21. (R) CTAG assesses the New Zealand terrorism level has increased to LOW; *terrorist attack is assessed as possible, but not expected*. This threat level could change at very short notice if credible information about a person or group's intent to realise specific attack plans is made available to CTAG.

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**(U) Confidence Statement**

(S FVEY) This Threat Assessment draws on intelligence from a range of sources on whose reliability we comment in the main text where appropriate. Our judgement that targets in New Zealand have not been specifically targeted for attack is based on all source coverage. However, it is possible that activity may occur that has not been detected by our sources. Activity from lone actors or self-organized groups may have little or no 'intelligence footprint', resulting in the potential for opportunistic attacks with little or no warning. s6(a)

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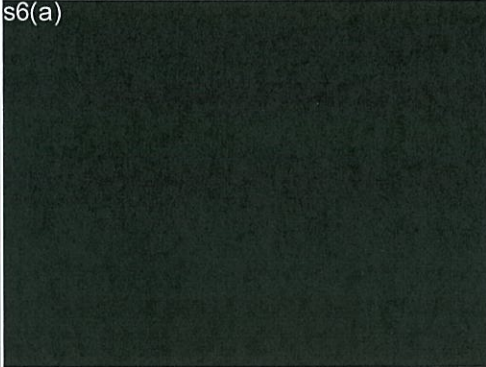
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**CTAG Contact Details**

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CTAG DEFINITIONS

Threat Level	Definition	Uncertainty Yardstick	
		Qualitative Statement	Associated Probability Range
Negligible	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as very unlikely	Remote / Highly Unlikely	<10%
Very Low	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as unlikely.	Improbable / Unlikely	15 – 20%
Low	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as possible, but is not expected.	Realistic Possibility	25 – 50%
Medium	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as feasible and could well occur.	Probable / Likely	55 – 70%
High	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is assessed as likely.	Highly / Very Probable / Likely	75 – 85%
Extreme	Terrorist attack, or violent criminal behaviour, or violent protest activity is expected imminently.	Almost Certain	>90%

- Unless otherwise stated, all threat levels in the Threatscape 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.