

*The following is summarised information from a Security Intelligence Report. Where possible, excerpts of the original document have been used. Some details are withheld under section 6(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 as release would prejudice national security. The individual responsible for the Christchurch Mosque attacks is referred to as "the attacker". References to the individual's manifesto have been withheld under section 6(c) of the OIA as the document has been classified as objectionable material by the Chief Censor and therefore release would prejudice the maintenance of the law.*

## **Christchurch mosque attacks undertaken by probable lone actor white nationalist**

Report Date: 3 April 2019

Report No: DMS6-15-749

### **Summary**

- On 15 March 2019, an Australian national shot and killed 50 people at two Christchurch mosques.<sup>1</sup> The attacker almost certainly planned and carried out these attacks alone, apparently in support of his white nationalist ideology.
- The attacker's planning was extensive, and he reportedly intended to continue his attacks at other mosques in the Christchurch region. Despite his support for and contact with various extreme right-wing groups and causes, it is unlikely the attacker acted under the direction of any existing extremist group. The attacker was reportedly under financial stress prior to the attacks.

### **The Christchurch mosque attacks**

- On 15 March 2019, an individual shot and killed 50 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. A further 50 people were injured. The attacker was arrested the same day and has been charged with murder. The attacker was not known to NZSIS prior to 15 March 2019.
  - Between 1333 and 1345 hrs, the attacker arrived in his vehicle at the Deans Avenue mosque (AKA Masjid al-Noor) in central Christchurch between 1333 and 1345hrs. The attacker shot multiple people at Deans Avenue before driving to the Linwood Islamic Centre, where he shot several more people.
  - The attacker was apprehended by New Zealand Police shortly after he left the Linwood Islamic Centre in his vehicle. He appeared in court on 16 March 2019 and was charged with one count of murder. Further charges are expected.
  - During the attacks, the attacker reportedly used two AR-15-style semi-automatic rifles, a semi-automatic shotgun and a pump-action shotgun. He also had access to a lever-action rifle and a bolt action rifle. The attacker wore a military-style tactical vest and helmet, the latter of which was fitted with a camera he used to livestream to Facebook part of his attacks.
- Shortly prior to the attacks, the attacker sent a document to a number of local and international media outlets and New Zealand parliamentary email addresses. He also

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, this number was later revised to 51, as the final victim died on 2 May 2019.

shared links to the document on social media. In the document the attacker attempts to justify his attacks and expresses various radical and extreme views, especially on immigration. The document, which has been described in open sources as a manifesto, mixes the attacker's ideological views with obscure Internet memes and possibly ironic content.

## Analysis

- **The attacker reportedly planned to continue his mosque attacks.** The attacker was stopped by police before he could travel to a third destination, likely a mosque in Ashburton. Judging from the attacker's plans and preparations he likely would have continued to target mosques in the Christchurch region until he was stopped or ran out of ammunition. He likely also intended to set fire to mosques if possible, judging from the presence of petrol canisters in his vehicle and his statements to police.
  - In an interview with New Zealand Police after his arrest, the attacker indicated he had hoped to continue to Ashburton for a third attack, but knew he was unlikely to succeed.
  - The attacker's vehicle contained a possible crude incendiary device comprised of petrol cans with matches and flammable items attached. The attacker possibly intended to use petrol cans found in his vehicle to set fire to targeted mosques.
- **The attacker originally intended to begin his attacks in Dunedin or Invercargill.** The attacker's plans reportedly evolved over time. In his police interview the attacker stated he originally intended to target a mosque in Dunedin. The attacker also told police his original plan was to begin his attacks in Invercargill before travelling to Dunedin. He abandoned this plan because it became too complex and he believed he would be stopped by police before he could reach Dunedin.
- **The attacker almost certainly planned and conducted the mosque attacks alone.** Although the attacker indicated others were or would be involved, no additional attackers have been identified. NZSIS has no information indicating any of the attacker's associates were involved in the planning of the attack, although it is possible some had knowledge of his intentions and almost certain some aware of his extreme and violent views.
  - In his police interview, the attacker indicated he was not alone in the attacks, and implied that nine other 'brothers' were involved in plans that were underway. The attacker refused to provide any further detail, including whether he meant worldwide or in New Zealand.
  - New Zealand Police arrested three other suspects in Christchurch on 15 March 2019, but all have since been released after police concluded they were not involved in the mosque attacks.
- **The attacker's planning for the attack was extensive.** Between December 2017 and April 2018 the attacker purchased at least five firearms and more than 7000 rounds of ammunition. He prepared detailed checklists and obtained information about the layout of mosques from social media. The attacker also conducted online and real-world reconnaissance using a drone and drive-pasts—both in his vehicle and virtually on Google maps.

- In his interview with police, the attacker said he intended to arrive at the Deans Avenue mosque at 1345 hrs, so he could attack worshippers during prayers. However, he arrived a few minutes early, while people were still arriving at the mosque, which the attacker said caused significant disruption to his plans.
- In November 2017, the attacker acquired a standard A-Category New Zealand firearms license which allowed him to own and use 'sporting configuration' firearms. Police interviewed the two New Zealand referees for the attacker's firearms license; both claimed to have had minimal contact with the attacker over the past six months.
- The attacker legally purchased the firearms used in the attacks from New Zealand firearms dealers. The attacker separately purchased large capacity magazines that were not lawful for use with the semi-automatic AR-15s.
- **The attacker appears to have undertaken his attacks in support of a racist ideology rooted in white nationalism<sup>2</sup> and his perception of Muslim New Zealanders as invaders.** The attacker exhibits racist, authoritarian and white nationalist views.
- **It is unlikely the attacker conducted the mosque attacks under direction from, or in support of, any particular extremist group or individual.** The attacker appears to have been a loner who had limited offline contact with like-minded individuals in New Zealand.
  - In his police interview, the attacker repeatedly described himself as a 'partisan' and claimed to be a 'legal uniformed combatant' at the vanguard of a growing worldwide movement of like-minded people. He refused to provide further detail. This movement is likely a reference to the like-minded individuals the attacker encountered online, rather than a specific organised group.
  - Although not a member of any group, the attacker made financial donations to extreme right-wing groups.
- **The attacker was reportedly under financial stress in the months leading up to his attacks, which possibly contributed to his decision to attack the mosques.** The attacker appears to have been unemployed in New Zealand. Prior to his attacks, the attacker had spent the inheritance he received following his father's death and was reportedly against seeking employment.
  - Prior to his attacks, the attacker was selling personal belongings, had not renewed his rental agreement, had requested that rent from a joint investment property be transferred to him weekly instead of monthly, and planned to change online account passwords or give them to others.

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<sup>2</sup> In this report, white nationalism means any racist ideology focused on the separation of 'biological races' into ethno-states. Unlike white supremacists, white nationalists typically do not claim that the 'white race' is biologically or spiritually superior, and do not advocate for the ethnic cleansing of non-white races.