

THIS THREAT INSIGHT PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF CTAG'S TERRORIST ATTACK CAPABILITY CONTINUUM

CTAG's criteria for defining a capability on the continuum of basic, intermediate or advanced is based on two key criteria. Once these two criteria are assessed, a capability level (basic, intermediate or advanced) can be assigned.

Although CTAG's continuum of three levels provides a clear framework, terrorist capability is inherently ambiguous and analysts will often not have a full picture. Analyst discretion is used to bridge remaining ambiguity where possible.

CAPABILITY CRITERIA

- 1 An analytical judgment is firstly made regarding the availability of the capability to the general public in the environment.
- 2 A judgment is then made regarding the degree (intermediate or advanced) of access, coordination, training or technology or any combination of these factors.

TERRORIST ATTACK CAPABILITY CONTINUUM

KEY NOTES

DEFINITION OF CAPABILITY

Capability is a threat actor's access to the knowledge and resources required to conduct harm.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE

When assessing capability, there is a complex relationship between resources and knowledge; terrorists usually require both to be successful, except in more basic attacks. For example, one may have advanced resources such as a missile but not have the requisite knowledge on how to operate the system.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ATTACK CAPABILITY AND ATTACK METHOD

Attack method is the way capabilities (resources and knowledge) are used in an attack against a target. For example a car (resource) is used to ram a crowd followed by a kitchen knife (resource) stabbing of several people. The method of this attack, which uses two basic capabilities, is a crowd ramming followed by a bladed weapon attack.

WHERE DO CERTAIN CAPABILITIES SUCH AS FIREARMS SIT ON THE CONTINUUM?

This is dependent on each capability and environment. Some capabilities may fit across multiple levels in different environments, for example firearms. Firearms are readily available in much of the Middle East, Africa and also in the United States, whereas access to firearms is restricted in other environments such as much of Western Europe and Australia. Some firearms are readily available to many New Zealanders whereas other firearms are restricted.

WHEN AN ATTACK INVOLVES CAPABILITIES FROM ACROSS THE CONTINUUM

In attacks where capabilities from different levels are used, we defer to the highest level of capability. For example, if an attack involved a car ramming (basic) followed by a sophisticated explosives blast (intermediate or advanced capability), we would refer to this level of capability as intermediate or advanced.

IED capability sophistication levels (Low, Medium and High) are defined by NZDF in NZ IED Threat Matrix. Low capability IEDs are constructed from readily-available means and fit within CTAG's basic capability level. Medium and High sophistication IEDs may be regarded by CTAG as intermediate or advanced depending on the system and employment of the weapon.

BASIC Alternatively: General, Readily-Available, Rudimentary, Unsophisticated

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES FOR MOST ENVIRONMENTS



Bladed weapons



Blunt force instruments



Vehicles



Some firearms and attachments



Incendiary device or fire accelerant



Low-sophistication IEDs (improvised explosive devices)

DEFINITION

Capabilities that are readily available to the general public in the environment

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE FOR MOST ENVIRONMENTS

Publicly available information enabling access to site, system or persons
Physical training, hunting and airsoft enabling basic tactics understanding
An understanding of rudimentary IEDs

EXAMPLES OF METHOD

Lone actor attacking several targets in one public location with a hunting rifle

or
Two perpetrators conducting a ramming attack at an intersection followed by a stabbing attack

INTERMEDIATE Alternatively: Moderate

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES FOR MOST ENVIRONMENTS



Firearms with restricted access or that require training



Emerging technologies including 3D printing, commercial drones



Medium and high capability IEDs, depending on employment*



Protective equipment



Communications

*(as defined by NZDF IED Threat Matrix)

DEFINITION

Capabilities in the environment that require an intermediate level of;

- access
- coordination
- training
- technology

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE FOR MOST ENVIRONMENTS

Access to a critical site, system or persons
Knowledge enabling an individual or group to bypass security measures
Military and law enforcement firearms and tactics training

EXAMPLES OF METHOD

Lone actor with access to license-controlled commercial explosives, attacks a location with a level of controlled access, with an IED

or
Two perpetrators with a degree of firearms training conduct a firearms attack at a public place using various firearms attachments, protective equipment and communications

ADVANCED Alternatively: Highly-sophisticated

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES FOR MOST ENVIRONMENTS



High end military capabilities



Chemical devices



Biological devices (CBRN)



Radiological devices



Nuclear devices



High sophistication IEDs, depending on employment

DEFINITION

Capabilities in the environment that require an advanced level of;

- access
- coordination
- training
- technology

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE FOR MOST ENVIRONMENTS

Technical expertise enabling physical harm through a cyber attack
Technical expertise which enables CBRN device to be constructed and employed

EXAMPLES OF METHOD

A terrorist cell with access to and training on a sophisticated missile system, shoots down a civil aircraft

or
An ideologically-motivated cyber expert with access to critical government infrastructure compromises a hydroelectric power plant releasing a torrent of water flooding a town