



THREAT INSIGHT

PMVE reactions to Wellington protest clearance

Issued: 4 March 2022

22-37-TI

(R) This Threat Insight assesses potential reactions **over the next 14 calendar days** from New Zealand-based Politically Motivated Violent Extremists (PMVE)¹ to the 2 March 2022 clearance of protestors in Wellington [‘the clearance’]. This assessment excludes areas outside the CTAG mandates of terrorism² and violent protest³, such as foreign interference and non-violent protest activity – including non-violent but unlawful or disruptive protest action.

(R) CTAG has medium confidence in our assessments due to the developing situation and our emerging insight into the reactions of New Zealand-based violent extremist actors. This assessment was prepared in consultation with New Zealand Police, New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, and National Assessments Bureau.

Key Judgements

1. (R) To date, we are not aware of any specific, credible threats of violent extremism connected to the clearance.
2. (R) The clearance is almost certain to be used by PMVE ideologues to reinforce pre-existing narratives of government ‘tyranny’ and political ‘rejection’.
3. (R) PMVEs in New Zealand are highly likely to continue to seek to exploit legitimate, peaceful protest to spread extremist rhetoric and promote acts of violence.
4. (R) A small number of PMVEs likely have the intent to conduct an act of violence in reprisal for Government action, or from a belief that past protest action has been ineffective.
5. (R) A PMVE act of violence in New Zealand would highly likely involve an inspired lone actor or small group, using a basic capability, directed at authority figures or Government buildings.

¹ **Politically-Motivated Violent Extremist (PMVE):** promoting the use of violence to achieve change to or within an existing political system [20-229-TI *Violent Extremist Ideologies Framework* refers].

² **Terrorism:** Under New Zealand law, a terrorist act is defined as an ideologically, politically, or religiously motivated act – including, but not limited to, those causing death or serious bodily injury – intended to intimidate a population, or to compel the government to do or not do certain things. (see also New Zealand’s *National Strategy for Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism*).

³ **Violent Protest:** a premeditated decision or agreement by a group of protestors to commit violence against people or significant damage to public or private property, as part of their protest activity. This includes acts of sabotage, which may be conducted outside formal protest activity, for ideological reasons. [21-25-TI refers]

Background

6. (R) On 2 March 2022, New Zealand Police undertook enforcement action against protestors ("Freedom Convoy 2022") occupying the vicinity of the Parliament Buildings in Wellington. CTAG assesses that the actions of some protestors to this action meets our threshold for violent protest, including the use of pre-planned weapons and projectiles.

Threats

7. (R) To date, CTAG is not aware of any specific, credible threats of violent extremism connected to the clearance. We note, however, that threatening rhetoric on social media – particularly pseudo-legal 'trials' of political figures and public servants – have been present throughout, and prior to, the "Convoy" protest and continue to manifest following the police action [22-23-TI and 22-32-TA refer].

PMVE narratives

8. (R) CTAG assesses the anti-authority nature of the protest continues to resonate strongly with PMVE adherents in New Zealand.
9. (R) We note that established PMVE ideologues and their adherents are already referencing the clearance in their rhetoric, and we judge it has almost certainly reinforced pre-existing PMVE narratives around government 'oppression', including:
 - a. (R) the inherently 'tyrannical' nature of government, with police 'brutality' as a mechanism to suppress dissent and stifle freedom of expression;
 - b. (R) the 'rejection' of protestors by the political system, with no support from Members of Parliament.
10. (R) We assess the clearance is almost certain to continue to feature in PMVE rhetoric throughout the assessment period. We do not anticipate a change in the nature of this rhetoric, which has already escalated to incorporate calls for the violent overthrow of the Government.

"Antifa"

11. (R) As of 3 March, individuals associated with the protests have claimed that "Antifa"⁴ was responsible for violence during the clearance. CTAG has seen no indication of the presence of violent extremist actors in New Zealand claiming affiliation with the "Antifa" movement.

14-Day Outlook

12. (R) CTAG assesses that PMVEs in New Zealand are highly likely to continue to seek to exploit legitimate, peaceful protest to propagate violent extremist rhetoric and promote acts of ideological violence. We assess it is highly likely these efforts will continue to resonate with a small minority of individuals within the anti-authority community.

⁴ **Antifa:** a contraction of "anti-fascist", "Antifa" is a decentralised network of individuals opposed to fascism, racism, and other related ideologies, sometimes through the use of violence.

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13. (R) We assess it likely a small minority of individuals in New Zealand have or will develop the intent to carry out an act of extremist violence in relation to the clearance. We assess this would likely be either in direct reprisal for the clearance, or out of a need to compensate for a perceived lack of 'success' from the protests.
14. (R) CTAG continues to assess the most likely scenario for a PMVE act of violence in New Zealand remains a lone actor or small group, inspired by threatening rhetoric, conducting an attack using a basic capability⁵. We cannot dismiss the possibility that any attack could manifest with little or no intelligence forewarning.
15. (R) A PMVE attack related to the clearance is almost certain to target representations of authority, including:
 - a. (R) Political figures;
 - b. (R) Police;
 - c. (R) Critical infrastructure;
 - d. (R) Government buildings;
 - e. (R) Media;
 - f. (R) Public servants involved in COVID-19 mitigation programmes.
16. (R) CTAG continues to assess the national terrorism threat level for New Zealand as **MEDIUM**; *terrorist attack is assessed as feasible and could well occur*. New Zealand currently does not have a national threat level for violent protest.

Intelligence cut-off date: 4 March 2022

⁵ **Basic capability:** a capability readily available to the general public in the environment. In New Zealand, this includes bladed weapons, blunt force instruments, vehicles, some firearms and low-sophistication improvised explosive devices. [21-80-TI *Terrorist Attack Capability Continuum* refers]

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CTAG Threat Definitions

Likelihood Assessment	Threat Level
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is expected	EXTREME
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as highly likely	HIGH
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as feasible and could well occur	MEDIUM
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as a realistic possibility	LOW
Terrorist attack, or violent protest, or violent crime is assessed as unlikely	VERY LOW

Probabilistic language

<< Lower likelihood		Even chance		Higher likelihood >>	
Remote/Highly unlikely	Unlikely	Realistic possibility	Likely Probable Probably	Highly likely	Almost certain

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