



Terrorism and Counter-terrorism – A View from Europe

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Abstract

In his statement at the 1st Germany-Indonesia Strategic Dialogue in Jakarta the author focuses on several terrorist attacks carried out on European Union territory by the so-called Islamic State. He provides a counter-terrorism update, and concludes with a brief survey of the current situation.

About ISPSW

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Analysis

Preliminary Remarks

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to attend the 1st *Germany–Indonesia Strategic Dialogue 2017* in Jakarta. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Jan Senkyr, representative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Indonesia, and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Indonesia for inviting me to this high level conference.

It is a pity that Dr. Brauksiepe, Parliamentary Secretary of State at the German Ministry of Defence, had to cancel his participation on short notice due to urgent obligations in Berlin. He was scheduled to give a lecture in Session 6: *Counter-Terrorism: Lessons from Europe and Southeast Asia – A German View*. I shall thus include in my presentation, and especially in the discussion period some aspects of terrorism and counter-terrorism relating to the terrorist attacks in the Federal Republic of Germany.

When discussing counter-terrorism it is important to first take a closer look at the specific threats. Bearing this in mind, my presentation focuses on a few terrorist attacks carried out within the European Union as were instigated by the so-called Islamic State. I shall proceed with a counter-terrorism update, and conclude with a view remarks on the present situation.

The Threat

On the anniversary of the terrorist attacks in Brussels on March 22, 2017 Belgium commemorated the victims by holding a one-minute silence. At 7.58 a.m. the time of the first explosion one year later, the bereaved families, premier Charles Michel and the Belgian royal couple Philippe and Mathilde observed one minute's silence in the departure lounge of Brussel airport. At 9.11 a.m., the time of second detonation in the underground, one further minute of silence was observed in the metro-station Maelbeek.

On 22 March, 2016, three coordinated suicide bombings occurred in Belgium: two at Brussels Airport Zaventem, and a third at Maelbeek metro station in central Brussels. A total of five attackers were involved. Ibrahim El Bakraoui (29) and Najim Laachraoui (24) died in a suicide bombing at Brussels Airport. Mohamed Abrini (31) assisted them in the airport bombings. He was arrested on 8 April 2016.

The younger brother of Ibrahim El Bakraoui, Khalid El Bakraoui (27), died in a suicide bombing at Maelbeek metro station. Osama Krayem (24) assisted him in the suicide bombing. He was also arrested on 8 April 2016.

Thirty-two civilians were killed in the attacks, and a further 300 people injured, 62 of them critically.

On the evening of 14 July 2016, 85 people were killed and 308 injured when a cargo truck was deliberately driven into crowds celebrating Bastille Day on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, France. The driver, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel (31), was a Tunisian national resident in France. The terrorist was finally shot in the ensuing gun battle with police. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

The fact that terrorism has arrived in Germany can be seen by the attack on December 19, 2016 when the terrorist Anis Amri hijacked an articulated lorry and murdered the driver before plunging it into an assembled crowd at the Gedächtniskirche Christmas Market in Berlin. Twelve people died at this attack, 55 were wounded, some of them critically. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack.



On the first anniversary of the attacks in Brussels, March 22 2016, a terrorist attack was carried out on London's Westminster Bridge and in the immediate area around the parliamentary buildings in the governmental district.

Fifty-two-year-old Khalid Masood, born in England, drove the rental vehicle he was driving into crowds on Westminster Bridge killing several people. A short time afterwards, he then rammed his vehicle into the fence of Westminster Palace. Masood vacated the vehicle, leapt over the fence around the site and stabbed to death forty-six-year-old policeman, Keith Palmer. The assassin was then shot and killed by two plain-clothes policemen. The attack resulted in a total of four dead and forty wounded.

On 7 April 2017, a hijacked truck was deliberately driven into crowds in Stockholm along Queen Street before crashing into the front of a department store. Five people were killed and fifteen pedestrians were injured, nine critically.

On 8 April, the suspect Rakhmat Akilov, a 39-year-old construction worker from Uzbekistan, was arrested by Swedish police forces. They claimed that Akilov had expressed sympathy for extremist organisations, among other things, the IS.

I would now like to cite a few facts – dating from December 2015 – to illustrate the terrorist threat posed by European foreign fighters who join the IS in Syria and Iraq.

In its European Union Terrorism Situation Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2016, the European Police Office (Europol) estimated that over 5000 Europeans travelled to Syria and Iraq. In 2015, 151 people died and over 360 were injured following terrorist attacks in the EU. A total of 1077 individuals were arrested in the EU for terrorism-related offences.

Counter-terrorism Update

I would now like to turn to some of the EU counter-terrorism activities by way of an up-date. In combating international terrorism, the EU Intelligence Centre (INTCEN) plays an important role.

In December 2015, Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, appointed Dr. Gerhard Conrad as the new Director for the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) at the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The latter has formerly held high-ranking posts in the German Foreign Intelligence Service (BND), speaks fluent Arabic and holds a doctorate in Islamic studies. He assumed his post in January 2016.

Among his chief tasks are the strengthening of cooperation between European Intelligence Services, and the provision of valuable strategic analyses to EU decision-makers, including topics in and around international terrorism.

Issuing papers, however, is not enough. Attending meetings of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) as often as possible will also be necessary. Among the PSC's key functions is the close auditing of the international situation, and assistance in policy definition within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the CSDP. I am confident that ambassadorial level intelligence briefings at such meetings will prove fruitful. Furthermore, INTCEN is set to be bolstered by an increase in staff to over 100 personnel, including "hybrid warfare" analysts.



Information provided by the Foreign and Domestic Intelligence Services of the EU Member States to the INTCEN has the following advantages:

- Intelligence information from different intelligence and security services with various capacities is pooled;
- The overall knowledge- base is extended;
- The perceived threat is uniformly monitored;
- The common analysis process is fostered and joint political decisions are supported.

INTCEN maintains further ties with the European Union Satellite Centre (EUSC) Torrejon in Spain, with the European Police Office (EUROPOL) in The Hague, with EUROJUST also in The Hague, the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in Paris, the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) in Heraklion, Crete, with its expertise for Cyber Security. Furthermore, INTCEN is also in close liaison with the Foreign Offices and the Ministries of the Interior of the EU Member States and can draw on the expertise of the Special Representatives in the relevant regions.

On 25 January 2016, the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) at Europol, under the authority and direction of the European Council, initiated its activities in The Hague. The ECTC is to function as a reinforced central information hub by means of which member states will be in a position to increase and enhance information-sharing and operational coordination.

The ECTC's objective is to endorse trust and awareness among the various EU's counter terrorism authorities, and to maximize existing capabilities. Its focus is on tackling the problem of foreign fighters, sharing intelligence and expertise on terrorism financing, online terrorist propaganda and extremism, as well as illegal arms trafficking.

The ECTC, led by Mr. Manuel Navarrete Paniuaga – a high-ranking officer of the Spanish Guardia Civil with extensive practical counter terrorism experience – is to be increased, initially by forty personnel.

Allow me to include a few remarks with respect to the use of military means for countering threats issuing from the so-called Islamic State. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw held from the 8 to the 9 of July 2016, the Alliance agreed to enhance its support for the Global Coalition of 60 plus states: "countering ISL is to be implemented by way of providing direct NATO AWACS support to boost the coalition's situational awareness. The support is scheduled to commence this autumn".

With their powerful radars, the AWACS planes will operate in international and Turkish airspace, thus enabling them to monitor airspace extending some hundreds of kilometres into Syrian and Iraqi territories. The planes may also be converted into command posts for coordinating bombing raids and other air operations. The AWACS planes commenced operations in October last year.

Germany also sent six Tornado reconnaissance jets and a tanker aircraft to Incirlik late 2015 as part of the fight against Islamic militants. Furthermore, on 29th January 2016, the German Parliament approved Germany's participation in a training mission for Iraqi armed forces and Kurdish Peshmerga. Up to 150 German troops are to be deployed for this mission.



Conclusion

Surveying the outlined terrorist attacks, I conclude that terrorists acting in the name of the so-called “Islamic State” are in a position to plan and execute complex attacks. Furthermore, the scale, impact and type of “lone wolf” actors are increasing, as noted in the use of hijacked cars as a weapon for killing innocent people. In some cases, however, lone wolf acts are not entirely autonomous cells so-called, since the IS instructs them by phone directly through to the execution of the attack.

However, there are also self-motivated radicalized actors who are not associated with known extremists, and who are not known to intelligence and security forces – a circumstance that causes significant challenges to the above-mentioned institutions.

Since 2016 and 2017, the IS has persisted in propagating terrorist attacks on EU territory by any means available, which continue to prompt action among radicalized individuals. Although training possibilities for the IS are believed to be decreasing in Syria and Iraq following heavy military pressure by more than 60 countries engaged in counter terrorism activities, so long as the IS remains a factor in Syria and Iraq, and even should they be defeated there, the organization will continue to encourage and plan terrorist attacks on EU territory

While EU Member States have achieved a considerable amount in combating international terrorism, serious security gaps still exist, and must be closed as soon as possible.

In the struggle against international terrorism, Ladies and Gentlemen, anxiety is a bad counsellor; here, NATO’s motto, namely, “Vigilance is the Price of Freedom” can be of greater help to us.

I thank you for your attention, and look forward to further fruitful and interesting discussion.

Remarks: The opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

This paper was presented on the occasion of the joint conference at the 1st Germany-Indonesia Strategic Dialogue in Jakarta, 22-23 May 2017, organized by the office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) in Indonesia and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta.



About the Author of this Issue

Dr Peter Roell has been President of the Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) in Berlin since January 2006. His former post was Senior Advisor for Foreign and Security Policy at the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU in Brussels. While in Germany, he served the German Government as Director of the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa (Sub-Sahara) Department and at German embassies in the Near-and Middle East, and in Asia.

Dr Roell studied sinology and political sciences at the universities of Bonn, Taipei and Heidelberg. He gained his Ph.D. from the Ruprecht-Karls-University, Heidelberg.

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