



Counter-terrorism and the Importance of Intelligence

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Abstract

In his statement, the author focuses on three large-scale terrorist attacks and the threat to the European Union posed by the so-called "Islamic State" between November 2015 and September 2016. He then proceeds with a counter-terrorism update and concludes with the Nine-Point Security Plan as outlined by German Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel on July 2016, in Berlin.

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Analysis

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to attend the Technical Exploitation Conference and Workshop in Oslo, organized by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment/Norwegian Naval Special Operations Command. I thank you for inviting me to this high-level conference.

When the former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson was asked what NATO required to meet the security policy challenges of the 21st century, he answered “capabilities, capabilities, capabilities”. Allow me to supplement his comments – especially respecting EU international counter terrorism strategy – by simply adding: intelligence, intelligence, intelligence.

When discussing counter-terrorism and the importance of intelligence, one must take a closer, more specific look at the threats. Thus, my presentation initially focuses on three major terrorist attacks and the threat to the European Union issuing from the so-called Islamic State between November 2015 and September 2016. I shall proceed with a counter-terrorism update, and conclude with the Nine Point Security Plan, as outlined by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, on 28th July 2016, in Berlin.

The Threat

Devastating, coordinated attacks were carried out in Paris on the evening of 13th November 2015. Three suicide bombers struck outside the Stade de France during a football match. This first attack was followed by several mass shootings, and a suicide bombing at cafés and restaurants. Gunmen carried out another mass shooting and took hostages at a concert in the Bataclan theatre, which culminated in a standoff with police. The attackers were shot or blew themselves up when police raided the theatre.

During the attacks, executed by three, three-member groups, 130 people were killed, 368 injured, 99 of them severely. Seven assassins died at the scenes of their attacks. On 18th November, the presumed lead operative of the attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud (29), was killed in a police raid in Saint Denis, along with two others. The IS claimed responsibility for the attacks.

On 18th March, 2016, Salah Abdeslam (26), one of the Paris attack suspects, was shot and arrested in a police raid in the Molenbeek district of Brussels following a four-month international manhunt. Abdeslam, a twenty-six year-old French national brought up in Brussels, fled Paris for Belgium by car a mere few hours after the 13th November attacks in 2015. Police believe he also co-masterminded the logistics of the Paris attacks and escorted the three suicide bombers, who blew themselves up at the Stade de France.

On 12th January, 2016, the terrorist Nabil Fadli (28) walked up to a tour group visiting Sultanachmet Square in the historic centre of Istanbul and blew himself up, killing thirteen people including twelve Germans. Fadli entered Turkey from Syria on 5th January, and was registered and fingerprinted as a refugee. At the time, his name had escaped security alerts. Fadli was a member of the IS.

On 22nd March, 2016, three coordinated suicide bombings occurred in Belgium: two at Brussels Airport Zaventem, and the third at Malbeek 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 8th April 2016.



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

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

On the evening of 14th 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.

In the month of July, Germany was confronted with several terror attacks.

On 18th July 2016, a seventeen-year-old Afghan refugee, Riaz Khan Ahmadzai (17), also known as Muhammad Riyad, severely injured four tourists from Hong Kong, two critically, with a knife and hatchet on a regional train near Würzburg. A fifth person was injured outside the train once it had been stopped as the attacker sought to flee the scene. He was later shot by a Special Forces Commando. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

On 22nd July, 2016, eighteen-year-old Ali David Sonboly, of dual nationality (Iranian-German) carried out a shooting in the vicinity of the Olympia shopping centre in Munich. Ten people were killed, including the perpetrator, along with 35 others who were injured. He was located by police approximately one kilometre from the shopping centre where he killed himself. Though not motivated by the IS, Sonboly had psychological problems, and admired people who committed amok-attacks.

And, finally, my last example: On 24th July, 2016, a twenty-seven-year-old Syrian asylum seeker, Mohammad Daleel, blew himself up outside a wine bar in the German town of Ansbach after being refused entry to a musical festival, since he was unable to produce an entry ticket. Fifteen people were injured in the blast, four of whom remain in serious condition. The perpetrator had been denied asylum one year earlier, and had a history of suicide attempts. Police found a video on the bomber's phone showing his declared support for the leader of Islamic State, Bakr al Baghdadi.

Security sources in Germany are convinced that both the perpetrators in Würzburg as well as in Ansbach had been in contact with the so-called Islamic State "at least for a period of several weeks", and that they were issued with detailed instructions by members of the IS up to the execution of their respective attacks.

I would here 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 as a result of terrorist attacks in the EU. A total of 1077 individuals were arrested in the EU for terrorism-related offences.

To date (August 2016), European Security Services have determined that seventeen followers of the so-called Islamic State entered Europe disguised as refugees.

German sources claim that by the end of 2015 more than 780 persons travelled from Germany to Syria and Iraq to join the IS and other terrorist groups as fighters or supporters (in August 2016, more than 800). One-hundred and twenty German nationals have been killed in combat, while 180 returned to Germany, many of them traumatized. Others have acquired combat experience and represent a potential threat to my country.



Radical Islamists in Germany are also actively trying to win over to their cause newly arrived refugees. The German Domestic Intelligence Service (BfV) is aware of more than 340 attempts by conservative Salafists and other Islamists to recruit refugees, especially unaccompanied minors. Approximately 1100 individuals in Germany have been classified as potential terrorists.

Counter Terrorism Update

I would now like to provide you with an update regarding counter-terrorism in the EU.

The EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) plays an important role in combating international terrorism.

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 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 will be 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, will not be 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 to be bolstered by an increased staff of over 100 personnel, including "hybrid warfare" analysts.

The INTCEN maintains close ties with the European Union Satellite Centre in Torrejón, Spain; the European Police Office in The Hague; the European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit, also in The Hague; the EU Network and Information Security Agency in Crete; the EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris as well as EU foreign ministries. The INTCEN also has at its disposal the expertise of Special Representatives, which covers a wide range of countries and subjects.

On 25th 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 so-called Islamic State. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw held from the 8th to the 9th 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 for 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.

Germany also sent six Tornado reconnaissance jets and a tanker aircraft to Incirlik late last year as part of the fight against Islamic militants. In April this year, German defence officials revealed plans for a 65 million Euro investment in the airbase. Due for completion in 2017, the proposal included an air control tower, accommodation for troops and combat headquarters.

Furthermore, on 29th January, 2016, the German Parliament approved Germany's participation in a training mission for Iraq armed forces and Kurdish Peshmerga. Up to 150 German troops are to be deployed in this mission.

I conclude my contribution by way of a Nine Point Security Plan as outlined by German Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel at a Press Conference on 28th July, 2016 in Berlin.

1. Early Warning System: One goal is to create a system whereby government agencies are able to take immediate action when detecting early signs of radicalization among refugees.
2. Security Personnel: The Federal Government should be given the freedom to hire additional security forces and acquire better equipment "wherever necessary".
3. Decryption Agency: For national security purposes a central agency will be tasked with the decryption of online communications.
4. German Army: The time has come for soldiers of the German Armed Forces to receive the necessary training for deployment in large-scale counter-terrorism operations.
5. Research/Prevention: Research into Islamist terrorist organizations and radicalization are to be supported and in some cases expanded.
6. Information Sharing: The European Member States should begin sharing intelligence on terrorist suspects at the earliest possible date.
7. Gun Control: It is incumbent upon the European Parliament to pass legislative restrictions relating to the ownership of and trade in firearms at the earliest possible date. At a national level, the online sale of weapons is set to be criminalized in the near future.
8. Intelligence Agencies: Cooperation between allied intelligence agencies should be strengthened and information sharing accelerated.
9. Expulsion: Efforts to expel failed asylum seekers from Germany to safe countries will be accelerated, and the threshold for expulsion lowered.



Allow me to conclude by citing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) maxim:

Vigilance is the price of freedom.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you very much for your attention, and I look forward to fruitful and interesting discussions.

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

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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 in Heidelberg.

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