



The European Union and Its Counter-Terrorism Strategies

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Abstract

The statement takes a detailed look at the spectrum of terrorist threats to European targets. The author provides, furthermore, a brief outline of EU counter-terrorism strategies before concluding with some comments on future terrorism trends.

About ISPSW

The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) is a private institute for research and consultancy. The ISPSW is objective and task oriented and is above party politics.

The increasingly complex international environment of globalized economic processes and worldwide political, ecological, social and cultural change, brings with it major opportunities but also risks: thus, decision-makers in the private sector and in politics depend more than ever before on the advice of highly qualified experts.

ISPSW offers a range of services, including strategic analyses, security consultancy, executive coaching and intercultural competency. ISPSW publications examine a wide range of topics connected with politics, economy, international relations, and security/ defense. ISPSW network experts have worked – in some cases for several decades – in executive positions and thus dispose over wide-ranging experience in their respective fields of expertise.



Analysis

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure and honor to once again return to Kuala Lumpur. I still vividly remember the interesting and fruitful discussions of October 13-14 of last year. I would also like to thank Jan Senkyr, the representative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Malaysia, for inviting me to this high-level Germany-Malaysia Security Dialogue.

On June 11 this year, General Bornemann, Colonel Thiele and I had the opportunity to continue this dialogue and exchange views on various security-related matters with a delegation from Malaysia at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation main office in Berlin.

Since last year, we have been observing an increase in crises throughout the world along with all their attendant brutality. I refer here to Boko Haram¹ in Nigeria and its terror attacks in neighboring countries, to the so-called Islamic State (IS), or in Arabic Da'esh in Iraq, Syria and in other North African States, and the turmoil in the Middle East.² Extremism continues to fuel barbaric violence across the region.

Today's presentation centres on the threat caused by international terrorism, and focuses especially on "Islamic State" and the European Union's counter-terrorism strategies. I will close my statement with a few observations based on the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2015.

The Threat

On June 2015, the Federal Minister of the Interior, Dr Thomas de Maizière, and the President of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), Germany's Domestic Intelligence Service, presented the 2014 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution.³ Europe continues to be the target of Islamist terrorism.

That the terrorist threat in the EU remains high is demonstrated by the following attacks:

On May 24, 2014 a gunman opened fire at the Jewish museum of Belgium in Brussels killing four people. Three died at the scene, while a fourth was taken to hospital and later succumbed to his injuries on June 6.

On May 30, 2014, Mehdi Nemmouche, a 29-year-old French national of Algerian origins, was arrested at Marseille in connection with the shooting. He is believed to have spent over a year in Syria and had links to radical Islamists. A number of items were recovered from a bag he was carrying while being detained which contained a Kalashnikov rifle, a special revolver – approx. 350 rounds of ammunition for each weapon – gun parts, cameras, clothing, and a gas mask. On July 29, 2014, Nemmouche was extradited to Belgium.⁴

On January 7, 2015, two brothers, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, forced their way into the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. Armed with assault rifles and other weapons, they killed

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram

See also: Yossef Bodansky, The Islamic State in West Africa – Boko Haram Up-Date III, issue no. 368, in: International Relations and Security Network (ISN), Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich, August 2015.

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=193192>

² Christoph Reuter, Die schwarze Macht. Der »Islamische Staat« und die Strategen des Terrors, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, München, 2015.

³ <http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2014-summary.pdf>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Museum_of_Belgium_shooting



eleven people and injured eleven others in the building. When exiting the building they killed a French National Police officer outside the building. The gunmen identified themselves as belonging to the Islamist terrorist group, of the Al-Qaeda branch in Yemen, which took responsibility for the attack. On January 9 the police located the Kouachi brothers in a building approx. ten km away from Paris-Charles-de-Gaulle Airport. When the brothers ran out of the building and opened fire on the Special Forces, they were gunned down.⁵

Several related attacks followed on January 8 and 9. The terrorist Amedy Coulibaly, a member of a Jihadist group in contact with the Kouachi brothers, killed five people and wounded eleven. He was gunned down by police forces on January 9.⁶

On January 15, 2015 Belgian police forces carried out a raid on premises in Verviers, Belgium. The raids formed part of an anti-terrorist operation against Islamist radicals. Two suspects died in the raids, which involved heavy gunfire, and a third was seriously wounded.⁷

On February 15, 2015 shootings occurred in Copenhagen, Denmark. Two victims and the suspected perpetrator were killed while five police officers were wounded.⁸

The first shooting took place on February 14 at a public afternoon event entitled “Art, Blasphemy, and Freedom of Expression” at a cultural centre, where a gunman killed one civilian and wounded three police officers.

The second shooting took place later that night – after midnight and therefore on the 15th – outside the city’s Great Synagogue in Krystalgade. A gunman killed a Jewish man on security duty during a *bat mitzvah* celebration, and wounded two police officers. Later that morning near Nørrebro station, the police, who had been tracking the suspects, returned fire and killed a man after the latter opened fire on them while attempting to enter a location under police surveillance. According to a police statement, the man was identified as Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein, who had been responsible for both attacks.

The son of Jordanian-Palestinian parents, born and brought up in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Jordan, the 22-year-old man was well-known to the Danish Intelligence Service.

European citizens are also targets for assassination beyond European Union territory, and I would like to give you two examples. On March 18, 2015 three gunmen attacked the Bardo Museum Tunis city centre, killing 21 people including 18 foreign tourists from six European countries as well as Japan, Russia and Australia. One Tunisian woman and a Tunisian army soldier were also killed. Two gunmen were killed by police forces, and the third suspect has been arrested by the Italian police on May 20 near Milan. Da’esh claimed responsibility.⁹

A mass shooting took place on June 26, 2015 at a tourist resort about 10 kilometres north of the city of Sousse, Tunisia. Thirty-eight people, mostly western tourists, the majority of whom were from Britain, were killed by an armed gunman, and further 40 were injured. The ‘Islamic State’ militants claimed responsibility; the attacker was killed in an exchange of gunfire with the army and police forces.¹⁰

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Hebdo_shooting

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amedy_Coulibaly

⁷ Bruno Waterfield, Two killed in Belgium police anti-terror raid in Verviers, The Telegraph, 15 January 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/belgium/11349110/Casualties-in-Belgium-police-anti-terror-raid-in-Verviers.html>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Copenhagen_shootings

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bardo_National_Museum_attack

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Sousse_attacks



My final example is the spectacular 2015 Thalys train attack of August 21, 2015. The high speed train was on its way from Amsterdam to Paris when the suspect, Ayoub El Kahzzani, opened fire in a train carriage before being subdued by passengers. Four people were injured including the assailant, but there were no fatalities.¹¹

The EU Counter-Terrorism Strategies

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris on January 7, 2015, EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove¹², participated in the discussions on enhancing the EU's counter terrorism response, both from internal and external perspectives.¹³ On 19 January 2015, the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers agreed that the following action should be taken to:

- Improve the exchange of security information with partners
- Reinforce cooperation with Arab and Mediterranean countries
- Increase efforts to deal with open conflicts and crises¹⁴

On March 16, 2015, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted a regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat. The overall objective of this strategy is to counter the threat posed by Da'esh and other terrorist groups to regional and international stability, and to simultaneously create the conditions for an inclusive political transition in Syria and lasting stability, both in Syria and Iraq, as well as in refugee-hosting countries in the region, while at the same time alleviating the human suffering caused by ongoing violence and displacement.

The Elements of this Strategy:

1. The promotion of regional engagement in security support and long-term peace
For example: Sustained high-level EU diplomacy in the region, especially with the Gulf States, Egypt, Turkey and Iran.
2. The isolation and defeat of Da'esh as a military force and as a terrorist organization, and countering its ideological influence
For example: Engage the Global Coalition of more than 60 countries to counter Da'esh forces by air strikes as well as the supply of lethal and non-lethal equipment, training and intelligence support to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Kurdish Peshmerga and, insofar as is practicable, to moderate opposition in Syria.
3. The prevention of regional spill-overs and enhancement of border security to stem the influx of foreign terrorist fighters, funds, and arms to Da'esh
For example: support to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan to enhance border security
4. The provision of life-saving humanitarian aid and international protection
For example: to continue to be the leading international donor in response to the Syrian crisis with more than EUR 3.3 billion.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Thalys_train_attack

¹² <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/counter-terrorism-coordinator/>

¹³ Didier Bigo, Evelien Brouwer, Sergio Carrera, Elspeth Guild, Emmanuel-Pierre Guittet, Julien Jeandesboz, Francesco Ragazzi, Amandine Scherrer, The EU Counter-Terrorism Policy Responses to the Attacks in Paris: Towards an EU Security and Liberty Agenda, in: CEPS Paper Liberty and Security in Europe, no. 81, February 2015.

¹⁴ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2015/01/19/>



5. To strengthen local resilience capacities in Syria, Iraq and the affected neighboring countries

For example: The basic rule of law, provision of basic services and economic activities should be re-established rapidly in regions liberated from Da'esh, both in Syria and Iraq, to avoid Da'esh gaining any further appeal and to create minimum conditions for the voluntary return of displaced persons and refugees in safety and dignity.¹⁵

The Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) of the European Union also plays a key role in the struggle against international terrorism.¹⁶ German Intelligence sources estimate that more than 3000 Europeans joined the IS-Forces in Syria and Iraq, 1200 from France, approx. 300 to 400 from Belgium and 700 from Great Britain. Since 2012, 740 Islamists have travelled from Germany to Syria and Iraq. 120 of these have been killed, 234 have returned to Germany, many traumatized and with psychological problems, while others are well-trained and have acquired combat experience.¹⁷

Since January 2011 the Intelligence Analysis Centre of the European Union has been part of the European External Action Service (EEAS, and is under the aegis of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Mrs. Federica Mogherini, Italy's former Foreign Minister.

As this slide shows the EU INTCEN comprises two divisions:

- The Analysis Division is responsible for providing strategic analyses based on input from foreign and security intelligence services of the EU Member States. It is composed of various sections each of which deal with geographical and thematic topics.
- The General and External Relations Division focuses on all legal and administrative questions relating to information technology (IT), internal and external communication respectively, as well as with the open source office responsible for Open Source Analyses.

At INTCEN around 70 personnel evaluate and observe developments on a 24-hour basis. The present Director of the EU INTCEN is Ilkka Salmi, former Head of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service.

In this framework, OSINT and strategic intelligence information regarding international terrorism are of importance for decision-makers in the European Union.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to sum up my statement with some observations based on the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2015.¹⁸

1. The overall threat to EU Security is likely to increase, especially for EU citizens in conflict areas.
2. In Syria and Iraq it is likely that Da'esh will continue to execute western hostages or use them as bargaining chips.
3. Da'esh and al-Qaeda- affiliated groups will continue to use their capabilities and resources to carry out terrorist attacks against the EU and the West.

¹⁵ In the annex see the conclusion on the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat as adopted by the Council on 16 March 2015. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2015/03/16/>

¹⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EU_Intelligence_Analysis_Centre_\(EU_INTCEN\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EU_Intelligence_Analysis_Centre_(EU_INTCEN))

¹⁷ Ashley Kirk, Iraq and Syria: How many foreign fighters are fighting for Isis?, The Telegraph, 12 August 2015.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11770816/Iraq-and-Syria-How-many-foreign-fighters-are-fighting-for-Isil.html> Further information were gathered from radio reports and interviews with government authorities.

¹⁸ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2015>



4. The tendency for home grown groups to join together under the common objectives of the 'Global Jihad' is likely to continue.
5. Attacks carried out by lone actors and the encouragement of small-scale attacks is and will continue to be on the increase.
6. Highly professional English-language extremist media productions by terrorist groups encourage western nationals to conduct attacks against civilians in their home countries. This trend will continue.

Thank you for your attention.

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

This statement was presented at the 4th *Germany-Malaysia Security Dialogue* in Kuala Lumpur on October 5, 2015. The conference was organized by the Malaysia Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in cooperation with the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia.

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, Dr Roell 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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