National Counterterrorism Strategy

for 2016-2020

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This document, which is administered by the National
Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV),
sets out a comprehensive strategy that brings together
all government partners in a joint approach to extremism
and terrorism.

Executive summary

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

The National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2016-2020 brings together all government partners in a joint approach to extremism and terrorism in the Netherlands. The present strategy draws on the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015 and the subsequent evaluation of that strategy. The strategy is also based on the anticipated threat situation for the 2016-2020 period, as well as knowledge and experience gained by the authorities in recent years.

The strategy aims to offer a strategic framework for combating the terrorist and extremist threat to the Netherlands.

Extremism is defined as 'a phenomenon whereby individuals or groups who are motivated by a certain ideology engage in serious criminal behaviour or take actions that undermine the democratic legal order', while terrorism is defined as 'the perpetration of ideologically inspired acts of violence against people or of acts intended to cause property damage and calculated to result in social disruption, in order to undermine and destabilise society, create a climate of fear among the general public or influence political decision-making'.

THREAT

The threat posed by extremism and terrorism is variable and unpredictable. The threat from global jihadism is expected to continue to grow in the upcoming years ahead, in the form of transnational networks, foreign terrorist fighters (both jihadist travellers and returnees), individuals with a potential for violence and processes of rapid domestic radicalisation. Foreign terrorist fighters are increasingly involved with both national and international jihadist and criminal networks. The threat is also becoming more transnational in nature: international developments are having an ever more direct impact on security in the Netherlands, while threats emanating from the Netherlands can have an influence abroad.

In addition, jihadists are becoming more adept at using social media and obtaining materials for an attack. Other types of extremists – both individuals and groups – are also becoming more radical, threatening to carry out attacks and attempting to disrupt society. They too are driven by ideology and make use of similar networks, channels and resources for the purpose of communication, logistics and recruitment. Far-right extremism is the subject of particular attention in this regard.

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

Our strategic principles for the next five years are outlined below:

- Continuity and flexibility: maintaining a set level of policy, operational and administrative measures (fixed measures) that is complimented by specific measures (flexible measures) in response to current threats;
- A threat based approach: priorities are set based on current threat assessments, focussing on the jihadist threat, with due regard for other forms of extremism.
- A comprehensive approach: taking preventive, repressive and curative measures working together with relevant organisations and agencies.
- A local approach: we apply our comprehensive approach also at local level, in particular through multidisciplinary case management, active community engagement and efforts to keep vulnerable groups and individuals 'on the right path'
- Recognising that international and national security are intertwined: we effectively work together at international, national and local level to combat extremist and terrorist threats;
- Respond to the use of digital means: we respond adequately to extremists' and terrorists' use of digital means such as social media, the Dark Web and encryption.
- Practising effective public communication, both explicit and implicit: we communicate in deliberate,

nuanced and objective way. We aim to increase societal resilience and to promote social inclusion.

- Taking both a network- and individual oriented approach: we map networks and aim to disrupt them. At the same time we adopt a case by case approach to countering radicalisation because interventions work best if tailored to the individual person.
- Respect the rule of law: measures have a legal basis, are proportional and respect fundamental rights.
- Aligning with social strategies: we ensure coherence between our strategies to combat polarisation and promote social cohesion and our policy measures to fight extremism and terrorism.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In keeping with the evaluation committee's recommendations, the term 'pillars' will be replaced with 'areas of intervention'. The five areas of intervention allow for a dynamic response to an ever-evolving threat, whereby a strategic, policy-based approach must be hammered out through multidisciplinary cooperation. The five areas of intervention are complementary and also overlap to some degree. The first of these, 'Procure', also forms the basis of all the other areas.

The five areas of intervention are:

1. **Procure:** timely gather and assess intelligence about (potential) threats to our national security and our interests abroad.
2. **Prevent:** to prevent and disrupt extremism and to foil terrorist attacks.
3. **Protect:** protecting people, property and vital processes from extremist and terrorist threats (both physical and virtual);
4. **Prepare:** to prepare optimally for extremist and terrorist violence and its consequences;
5. **Prosecute:** to enforce the law in the face of extremism and terrorism.

ORGANISATION/IMPLEMENTATION

The evaluation of the counterterrorism strategy for 2011-2015 showed that a targeted, legitimate and robust approach to extremism and terrorism is best served through centralised coordination on the part of the national government. This coordination focuses on forging effective partnerships and optimising information-sharing practices.

In keeping with the evaluation committee's recommendations, a distinction will be made between *fixed* and *flexible* measures. The term 'fixed measures' refers to the set level of policy-related, operational and administrative measures that will be in place during the 2016-2020 period in order to address the anticipated threat. Fixed measures will be implemented in the form of policy-related, administrative and operational plans at local, national and international level.

The threat posed by extremism and terrorism is constantly evolving. Flexible measures are sometimes necessary to respond to these changes. Changes to the extremist and terrorist threats are described in the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN) and in specific scenarios. The DTN is based in part on information from the intelligence and security services, the police, public sources, foreign partners and on analyses by embassy staff. Flexible measures are formulated in interministerial programme and project plans with a set timetable. Eventually, flexible measures can themselves become fixed measures, provided that the instruments in question are capable of tackling the changed threat.

This is how we implement the evaluation committee's recommendation to use a mix of fixed and flexible measures, in order to ensure the authorities' intervention capability will remain optimal.

1   Introduction

This is the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2016-2020, which unites all government partners in a joint approach to extremism and terrorism in the Netherlands. The strategy offers a framework for effectively combating the extremist and terrorist threat. The focus is on the threat posed by extremist or terrorist groups or individuals wishing to disrupt the Netherlands' democratic legal order or national security by criminal – and sometimes violent – means. It provides for a system whereby local, national and international authorities work together with civil society organisations, the private sector and influential individuals ('key figures') to take preventive, repressive and curative measures. This combination of measures is known as the 'comprehensive approach' that has long been the basis of the Netherlands' counterterrorism policy.[1]

This document sets out the strategic framework for various policy-related, operational and administrative measures taken by Dutch government to combat extremism and terrorism in local, national and international contexts. Effectively combating extremism and terrorism requires a collective effort on the part of all counterterrorism partners. This is why the strategy makes a point of clarifying the role of civil society organisations, the private sector and key figures, for example in instances where the authorities have no part to play.

Together, we must protect the stability and quality of our country's democratic legal order and our open society. It is our mission to protect national security using the resources afforded by the law and the rules of our democratic system. As a result, the central objective of the National Counterterrorism Strategy is:

To provide a strategic framework for combating the terrorist and extremist threat facing the Netherlands.

The National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2016-2020 sets out strategic policy and implementation objectives for the comprehensive approach over the next five years. The strategy draws on the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015 and on the subsequent evaluation of that strategy.[2] It is also based on the anticipated threat situation for the 2016-2020 period, as well as the knowledge and experience the authorities have gained in recent years in the areas of policy, implementation and science.

The strategy emerges from the central government-wide National Safety and Security Strategy (SNV) and the International Security Strategy drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It also ties in with international strategies focusing on combating extremism and terrorism, such as the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2005), the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006) and the action plans they spawned.

1.1 SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

The focus of the strategy is on combating *extremism* and *terrorism*.

Extremism is defined as 'a phenomenon whereby individuals or groups who are motivated by a certain ideology engage in serious criminal behaviour or take actions that undermine the democratic legal order.'

There are a range of extremist groups in the Netherlands. They include right-wing extremists, left-wing extremists, Islamic extremists and animal rights extremists. The trait common to all these groups is that they are prepared to perpetrate *criminal* acts on *ideological* grounds. Such acts can undermine the democratic legal order, particularly if they occur frequently, with increasing scale and gravity.

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1   In the late 1990s the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) (then known as the Internal Security Service) laid the foundations for the comprehensive approach.

2   At a meeting on counterterrorism with the permanent parliamentary committee on security and justice on 10 March 2011, the Minister of Security and Justice pledged that the National Counterterrorism Strategy would be subject to periodic evaluation.

Terrorism is defined as 'the perpetration of ideologically inspired acts of violence against people or of acts intended to cause property damage and calculated to result in social disruption, in order to undermine and destabilise society, create a climate of fear among the general public or influence political decision-making'.[3]

In this definition of terrorism, several points stand out. Firstly, the acts of violence must be ideologically inspired. The ideology may or may not centre on religion. Secondly, there must be evidence of 'acts of violence against people' or 'acts intended to cause property damage and calculated to result in social disruption'. In other words, the intention is to cause human casualties or inflict property damage (for example on symbolic sites or structures) that is so substantial that it undermines social stability. Finally, the perpetrators must intend to cause 'social disruption, in order to undermine and destabilise society, create a climate of fear among the general public or influence political decision-making'. This presupposes a level of ambition that exceeds the mere desire to appear on the front page of the national newspapers. Such acts of violence aim to influence public debate and, consequently, political decision-making.

Combating radicalisation is an important part of our strategy. Radicalisation is a process that involves an increasing willingness to accept and act – perhaps violently – on even the most extreme implications of an ideology. Radicalisation can also be seen as the process by which individuals move from lawful *activism* towards *extremism* and, subsequently, *terrorism*. This strategy does not deal with 'activism' per se, since that term refers to forms of protest that stay within the bounds of the law.

Nor does it address ways of combating polarisation or social tensions. Obviously, social tensions can indirectly contribute to the growth of extremism and terrorism, and this calls for extra attention to policy on reducing polarisation and promoting social cohesion. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations are responsible for coordinating policy in this area. They work together closely with the Ministry of Security and Justice and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, local government and civil society partners. It is vital that their efforts align with counterterrorism policy as much as possible.

The strategy specifically focuses on combating extremism and terrorism that threatens *the Netherlands*. At the same time, national and international dimensions of the threat are becoming increasingly intertwined. The Netherlands is therefore investing in security and stability in other countries and regions, in order to minimise the breeding ground for extremism and terrorism. Examples of this type of investment include security sector reform (SSR), development cooperation, promoting human rights, and military missions (including capacity-building missions). Military deployments also have a direct link with terrorism: fighting terrorists and terrorist groups reduces the risk they pose to the Netherlands. Yet at the same time, military operations can also make the Netherlands a more attractive target for terrorists. This shows how international events can often have a major impact at national and local level. Conversely, events in the Netherlands can also have major impact at international level. This interlinkage between the domestic and international dimension was previously raised in the International Security Strategy (2011) and the subsequent policy letter of November 2014.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015, global jihadism was described as the foremost threat to the Netherlands' national security. The threat posed by extremism and terrorism is variable and unpredictable. We expect that the threat from jihadism will continue to grow, in the form of transnational networks, foreign terrorist fighters (both jihadist travellers and returnees), individuals with a potential for violence and rapid domestic radicalisation. The threat is also becoming more trans-national in nature: international developments are having an ever more direct impact on security in the Netherlands, while threats emanating from the Netherlands can have an influence abroad. Foreign terrorist fighters are becoming increasingly involved with international terrorist and criminal networks. In addition, jihadists are becoming more adept at using social media and obtaining materials for an attack.

Other extremist groups are also becoming more radical, in some cases threatening to carry out attacks and attempting to disrupt society. They too are driven by ideology and make use of similar networks, channels and resources for the purpose of communication, logistics and recruitment.

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3   This is the working definition of terrorism used for policy and strategic purposes in the Netherlands. For the legal definition of a terrorist offence,
     see article 83 in conjunction with article 83a of the Criminal Code.

The annexe to this document gives a detailed description of developments relating to the 2016-2020 threat situation.

The focus of the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015 was on preventing extremism and terrorism. This continues to be the guiding principle for the 2016-2020 period. Nevertheless, the authorities are acutely aware that, despite their best efforts, extremist incidents or terrorist attacks may still occur. As a result, we are also prepared for possible attacks and their consequences. This requires resilience of the whole country: from members of the public and civil society organisations to the business community and the authorities. The core of the strategy is the comprehensive approach (discussed above). To combat extremism and terrorism effectively, we must identify radicalisation processes and take lawful action at the earliest possible stage, protect society, take measures to minimise the consequences of incidents and attacks, and investigate, prosecute and convict extremists and terrorists. This is dealt with in more detail in chapter 2.

The evaluation report on the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015 stresses that circumstances surrounding the fight against terrorism will continue to be complex and unpredictable in the years ahead. Those involved in counterterrorism must therefore continually adapt. Developing and retaining expertise is a vital part of this. Responding to the constantly changing threat requires an approach that is flexible but also sustainable. The strategy for the next five years builds on the five pillars and four strategic priorities of the previous strategy.[4] In keeping with the evaluation committee's recommendations, a number of forward-looking elements have been added. This document describes the level of resilience in terms of strategic objectives within the five areas of intervention (formerly known as the five pillars). In translating those objectives into policy and operational measures, we will always base these measures on the given threat situation at that time. The nature and scope of the threat at hand will determine the nature of any flexible measures taken alongside the fixed measures. This system is dealt with in more detail in chapter 8.

1.3 STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES FOR 2016-2020

The strategic principles for the next five years follow from the evaluation of the previous strategy and trends relating to the threat situation. They are as follows:

- **MAINTAINING A SOLID FOUNDATION OF POLICY-RELATED, OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES.**
  The threat posed by extremism and terrorism is variable in nature and scope. Responding to this ever-changing threat requires an approach that is flexible but also sustainable. With this in mind we maintain a 'set level' of policy-related, operational and administrative measures, which can be supplemented with flexible measures as the threat warrants. Periodically, an assessment will be made as to whether the resources and measures being employed are sufficient to deal with the current threat. We will also determine whether all relevant parties have sufficient resources

- **A THREAT-BASED APPROACH**
  The greatest threat is expected to come from the global jihadist movement. Our policies and their implementation reflect this. The focus will be on preventing the movement's growth, disrupting threats and preventing attacks. We will address both foreign threats to the Netherlands and threats from Dutch nationals towards other countries, such as jihadist travellers. Other forms of extremism will also be monitored, especially far-right extremism. Terrorist attacks by jihadists can trigger an increase in far-right extremism, which in turn can provoke far-left and Islamic radicalisation.

- **'THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH'**
  We will maintain our comprehensive approach, focusing on preventive, represssive and curative measures. Early identification and intervention are key to preventing and combating radicalisation. It is also vital to work closely with individuals and organisations from a wide range of sectors. To this end, fixed consultation structures have been established at national and local level.

- **RECOGNISING THAT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL SECURITY ARE INTERTWINED**
  International, national and local threat dimensions are closely intertwined. The threat to the Netherlands is to a large extent determined by developments outside its territory. Within the European Union, and particularly the Schengen countries, very few internal borders remain. People can move freely throughout most of Europe. This includes people who intend to commit acts of violence. The EU's external borders must be protected, particularly from those who wish to infiltrate

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4   The five pillars are: Intelligence gathering, Prevention, Protection, Preparation and Pursuit. The four strategic priorities are: international jihadism, migration and travel movements, technology and innovation, and the continued development of the Surveillance and Protection System.

refugee flows for malicious purposes. This requires cooperation at all levels: local, national and international.

- **A LOCAL APPROACH**

  One of the cornerstones of an effective approach to extremism and terrorism is successfully translating the comprehensive approach to the local level. A vital part of this comprehensive local approach is examining specific cases in multidisciplinary consultations. It also involves actively working to foster community engagement and keep vulnerable groups and individuals 'on the right path'.

- **RESPOND TO THE USE OF DIGITAL MEANS**

  Digital resources are becoming ever more widely used, exerting a greater influence on both the jihadist movement and other forms of extremism. Recruitment, propaganda and incitement are increasingly happening online. The traditional role of civil society as the voice of specific minority groups is continuing to diminish. We will continue to monitor all the ways, old and new, in which extremists and terrorists use digital resources like social media, the dark web and encryption.

- **EFFECTIVE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION**

  The tone and content of government communication have an influence on the level of social resilience. They also influence how susceptible certain vulnerable groups are to extremist messages. Government policy is itself a form of communication: the scope of measures and their visibility go a long way in determining how a given issue is perceived by the public and politicians. We are aware of this, and for this reason our focus will be on fostering the type of communication that promotes social inclusion.

- **TAKING A NETWORK- AND INDIVIDUAL ORIENTED APPROACH**

  Extremist and terrorist networks could plot to carry out attacks in the Netherlands. They appeal to certain individuals and exert an influence on radicalisation processes. These networks will be identified and undermined. Tackling radicalisation requires a tailored approach. With this in mind, our anti-radicalisation efforts are tailored to each individual case and based on our knowledge of the networks and the individual in question. Particular attention will be paid to potential 'lone actors': individuals with a grievance towards society and the potential for violence.

- **THE RULE OF LAW**

  Safeguarding the democratic legal order is a primary task of government. This is why we protect national security using all the resources afforded by the law and the rules of our democratic system. The measures taken must have a legal basis, be proportional and respect fundamental rights.

- **ALIGNING WITH SOCIAL STRATEGIES**

  Social tensions and polarisation can indirectly contribute to extremism and terrorism. In the coming years, more work will be done to enhance coherence between policy that focuses on combating polarisation and promoting social cohesion, on the one hand, and policy that focuses on combating extremism and terrorism, on the other.

2   Strategic framework

2.1 COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The core of the strategy is the comprehensive approach. The emphasis will be on preventive, repressive and curative measures. The comprehensive approach is structured along the lines of a strategic framework consisting of five areas of intervention: Procure, Prevent, Protect, Prepare and Pursue.

Individuals, groups or networks must be prevented from perpetrating terrorist acts. This means identifying and tackling radicalisation early on, before someone actually becomes an extremist or a terrorist. It also means working closely with other sectors in a multidisciplinary approach: intelligence services, local government, security services, police, the private sector, youth care workers, mental health services, and the education and health sectors. These partnerships must be fast and flexible; they cannot be obstructed by national borders or differing competences. The particular challenge facing the Netherlands' counterterrorism policy is to identify potential terrorists before they can carry out an attack. It must also neutralise the ongoing latent threat posed by terrorism. It is necessary to work with all partners who can contribute effectively to these aims.

2.2 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Over the next five years, the counterterrorism landscape will remain complex. This strategy enables the authorities to optimise their intervention capability. In keeping with the evaluation committee's recommendations, a distinction is made between *fixed* and *flexible* measures.

Fixed measures constitute the 'set level' of resilience for Dutch society, based on the anticipated threat in the 2016-2020 period. This strategy will be implemented in the form of policy-related, administrative and operational plans at local, national and international level.

Flexible measures are dictated by changes in the extremist or terrorist threat. These *fundamental uncertainties* are described in the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN) and in scenarios. If a change in the threat necessitates flexible measures, these measures will be set out in supplementary policy or implementation plans. Flexible measures are only effective when fixed measures are working properly.

The National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015 presented five pillars for combating extremism and terrorism. The present strategy puts forth a new model that more accurately represents the dynamics, interdependence and complexity of counterterrorism efforts. In keeping with the evaluation committee's recommendations, 'pillars' will henceforth be known as 'areas of intervention'. The five areas for intervention allow for a dynamic response to an ever-evolving threat, whereby a strategic, policy-based approach must be agreed through multidisciplinary cooperation. The five areas of intervention complement one another and partly overlap. The first of these, 'Procure', also forms the basis of all the other areas.

The five areas of intervention are:

1. **Procure:** timely gather and assess intelligence about (potential) threats to our national security and our interests abroad;
2. **Prevent:** to prevent and disrupt extremism and to thwart terrorist attacks;
3. **Protect:** protecting people, property and vital processes from extremist and terrorist threats (both physical and virtual);
4. **Prepare:** to prepare optimally for extremist and terrorist violence and its consequences;
5. **Pursue:** to enforce the law in the face of extremism and terrorism.

The following diagram shows how the five areas
of intervention are interconnected.
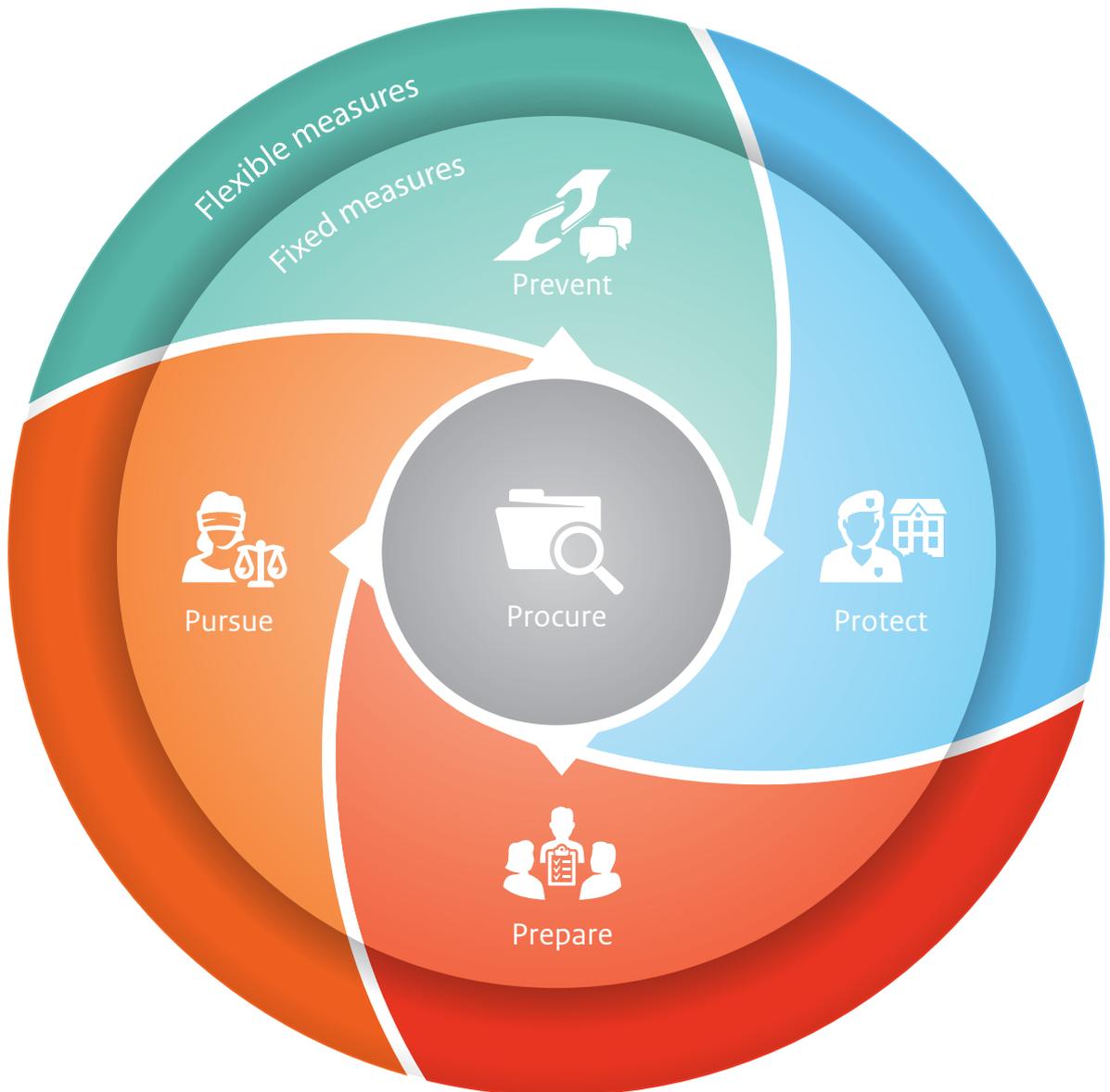
The strategic objectives of each area of intervention
are dealt with in the following chapters.

3 Procure

Objective: *timely gather and assess intelligence about (potential) threats to our national security and our interests abroad.*

Intelligence and information (hereafter collectively referred to as 'information') from domestic and foreign sources form the basis of threat analysis and interpretation. Such analysis and interpretation provides insight into the nature and scope of the threat and helps determine how the Dutch authorities respond to extremism and terrorism. Information is vital for targeted interventions, effective surveillance and protection, an appropriate response and law enforcement. 'Procure' (i.e. intelligence gathering in the broadest sense of the term) thus forms the basis for all efforts within the other areas of intervention. In the interests of the comprehensive approach, information is shared as freely as possible with the relevant public authorities. It is important that all stakeholders realise that information they hold may also be of interest to others. This is the only way we can keep the comprehensive local approach effective and disrupt processes of radicalisation in a timely manner.

Information is gathered directly by counterterrorism partners and indirectly by parties operating in policy areas not related to extremism and terrorism. The latter is known as contextual information. Furthermore, academic research is a vital source of knowledge and insights. These three aspects of collecting information are described below.

3.1 DIRECT INFORMATION-GATHERING

Counterterrorism partners gather information on all types of extremism and terrorism that pose a threat to the Netherlands and to Dutch interests abroad. Obtaining, analysing and interpreting this information is done at local, regional, national and international level and involves a range of disciplines: intelligence agencies, investigative agencies, prosecution services, the armed forces, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) and the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V). Wherever possible, this is done in a multidisciplinary context, so that the disciplines reinforce

one another. Information is shared with national and international counterterrorism partners in a variety of ways, including joint databases.

Direct information-gathering involves obtaining, analysing and interpreting a variety of different types of intelligence:

- Information from national and international sources about preparatory acts and violent plots against on targets in the Netherlands and Dutch interests abroad;
- Information relating to potential extremists and terrorists, both at home and abroad (this includes information about individuals' identity, whereabouts, intentions and actions);
- Information about extremist and terrorist movements, networks and organisations, the methods they use and the resources they have at their disposal (firearms; explosives; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons; cyber capabilities);
- Information relating to the travel movements of potential extremists and terrorists;
- Information relating to terrorist financing, financial networks and financial transactions;
- Information relating to how vulnerable certain groups or individuals are to radicalisation;
- Information relating to recruitment by extremist and terrorist groups;
- Information relating to global terrorist movements and the threat they pose to the Netherlands.

In order to ensure optimal gathering, analysis and interpretation of information, the following prerequisites need to be in place:

- Greater awareness and training for professionals working for local and national partners, and development of high-value expertise on extremist and terrorist threats, modi operandi and radicalisation processes.
- Expertise on the digital resources (including social media, the dark web and encrypted networks) used for disseminating propaganda, recruiting new members and covertly communicating plans for an attack.

- The use of cutting-edge technical applications and innovations (e.g. big data, web crawlers and data analytics) to ensure high-quality interpretation and analysis, support information-sharing, expedite incident response time and facilitate criminal prosecution.
- Optimising the interoperability of information-sharing systems. When legislation is amended, questions of interoperability vis-à-vis systems like the Visa Information System (VIS), Schengen Information System (SIS) or EURODAC) will always be looked at in advance.

3.2 USING CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Information from parties outside the security sector can also be relevant for combating extremism and terrorism and for increasing the public authorities' intervention capability. This includes:

- Information from local networks and contacts working in the mental health, education, social services and healthcare sectors.
- Information from the immigration network.
- Information relating to social trends that could lead to serious tensions or even upheaval.
- Information received through Dutch engagement abroad: development cooperation, the network of foreign missions, non-operational police cooperation, military deployments and Frontex.
- Academic or journalistic trend analyses, phenomeno-logical studies and norms in global geopolitical developments.

3.3 RESEARCH

Academic insights and knowledge play a valuable role in combating extremism and terrorism. In order to stay ahead of a continually changing threat, we seek to build on the research conducted both nationally and internationally over the past 15 years and commission new studies by universities and research agencies. Topics of interest include: the nexus between contemporary terrorism and the criminal world (including organised crime), the implications of a possible further growth of jihadism, the role of digital resources in radicalisation and recruitment, and the influence of sociocultural factors within jihadist networks. In addition, the Dutch government is seeking to invest in expanding its knowledge about far-right extremism and new forms of extremism. Research into both these areas is vital if we want to remain well-informed about any future threats. Finally, there is a need for research into other, potentially new ideologies which feed on social discontent and which could present a violent threat in the future.

4 Prevent

Prevent: to prevent and disrupt extremism and to thwart terrorist attacks.

The various partners work together closely to minimise fear, prevent the recruitment of new extremists or terrorists and curb security risks posed by individuals and networks. A distinction is made between:

- Preventing fear: preventing fear of extremism and terrorism in society.
- Preventing recruitment: preventing groups from gaining followers.
- Disrupting threats: weakening groups and undermining their activities.
- Thwarting attacks: warding off attacks and violence in time.

The aim is to ensure the authorities' intervention capability is comprehensive, threat-focused, tailored to the situation at hand, and sustainable. This translates to:

1. Comprehensive policy and implementation, with a wide range of interventions (local, national, international, administrative, operational, civil, military, investigative, prosecutorial) by a wide range of partners (including operational services, mental health services, youth care, municipalities, the education sector and the armed forces).
2. Targeted interventions towards people, groups and modi operandi which pose the greatest threat according to threat analyses.
3. A tailored approach, because each case of radicalisation is unique, dynamic and multifaceted.[5]
4. Choosing sustainable policy and implementation practices.

4.1 PREVENTING FEAR

Terrorists seek to instil fear among the general public. The authorities carefully monitor how counterterrorism policy and government communication practices affect public perceptions. It is our intention to prevent fear and social division. Taking visible measures and actively communicating about official measures, both visible and less visible, can unintentionally increase fear among the public, playing into the hands of extremists and terrorists. This means that at times of a more serious threat, the government must communicate in a well-considered, nuanced, objective way; sometimes this means going 'against the flow'.[6] The government studies the public's perceptions and need for information and regularly measures the effect of language and tone. In this way the government seeks to communicate clearly and foster social unity. Government communication also focuses on expectation management. The message is that government cannot guarantee 100% security.

4.2 PREVENTING RECRUITMENT

The aim is to prevent recruitment by:

1. *Increasing the resilience of vulnerable groups and the communities they live in.* Using our knowledge about which individuals or groups are susceptible to radicalisation, we are taking and encouraging initiatives, mainly at local level, in order to increase resilience to extremist or terrorist ideologies and recruitment practices.
2. *Intervening in radicalisation processes at an early stage.* Knowledge and expertise about radicalisation will be used to flag worrisome behaviour early on and address it. Sharing knowledge, information and best practices with national and local partners is crucial in this regard. Educational institutions, government agencies, associations, community groups and professionals will all have the knowledge and expertise needed to flag worrisome behaviour and radicalisation early on and tackle them.
3. *Undermining extremist and terrorist propaganda.* To do this, civil society must possess the right resources.

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5   Radicalisation is always dependent on a number of factors, such as age, level of education, gender, religion, ethnicity and geographical location.

6   Even when the threat level is relatively low (and the corresponding focus on counterterrorism has diminished), we will seek to maintain 'default' levels of counterterrorism resources and expertise.

We work closely with our partners to monitor extremist and terrorist propaganda. This includes monitoring social media, private channels of communication and the dark web. We also encourage and facilitate voices articulating alternative messages.

Multidisciplinary case meetings: Municipal officials and local partners frequently meet to discuss individuals who are showing signs of radicalisation. At these 'multidisciplinary case meetings', they consider the information they have on the person and draw up tailored action plans to prevent possible further radicalisation. Case meetings are a way of ensuring effective cooperation and knowledge-sharing, in a setting where partners can come together to make plans within the scope of their own authority and under the guidance of the municipality. The purpose of the multidisciplinary setting is to synthesise the relevant knowledge and expertise.

4.3 DISRUPTING THREATS

Threats will be undermined by:

1. *Disrupting access to means of attacks and financial resources.*
   - Means of attacks: blocking access to and the use of firearms; explosives (home-made or otherwise); and CBRN materials.[7] Cargo will be checked at the national borders for weapons, chemicals and other materials that could be used for terrorist purposes. We are alert to new means and methods used to carry out attacks, such as drones, 3D/4D printing, electromagnetic pulse radiation, robotics, biotechnology and lasers.
   - Terrorist financing: freezing the assets of terrorists and potential terrorists in order to combat terrorist financing. This requires the authorities to work closely with banks, insurers, notaries and lawyers. Liquid assets are being checked at the border in order to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Under the EU Internal Security Strategy, other sources of terrorism financing will also be monitored, such as the illegal trade in drugs, wild animals and art.

2. *Stopping potential extremists and terrorists from travelling.* To do so, the Dutch authorities will work with airlines which will provide access to information held in their reservation, departure and control systems. We will employ new technology and keep our knowledge and expertise up to date, with a view to detecting unusual behaviour at the border (among other things).

Those seeking to travel to jihadist conflict zones will be prevented from doing so. Individuals returning to the Netherlands from these conflict zones will be arrested and made to follow a customised supervision programme upon arrival. Particular attention will be paid to children aged under 18. Support will provided, in some cases by child protection agencies, to limit the effects of trauma and combat the threat of violence. We will also focus on preventing the abuse of the immigration system. At European level, we will press to further strengthen border controls.

3. *Disrupting the online dissemination of extremist and terrorist ideologies.* Those disseminating digital propaganda will be identified, and the channels they use will be disrupted. Working with internet service providers (ISPs) and social media outlets, we will aim to take down websites and disrupt hate speech and activities by extremists and terrorists. At international level, our primary focus is on combating the spread of violent extremist narratives. Those disseminating such narratives will be held to account and, where possible, prosecuted.

4. *Disrupting extremist and terrorist networks.* By continually monitoring extremist and terrorist networks, we will disrupt gatherings, recruitment, hate speech, fraud and the abuse of public forums. This will help prevent the further professionalisation of these networks. We will work together with our international partners to undermine the activities of international network.

5. *Disrupting the threat posed by individual extremists or terrorists.* The threat posed by individual extremists or terrorists will be addressed by means of administrative measures, deradicalisation programmes, reintegration programmes for offenders who have served their sentences, and preventive use of criminal-law measures. We will share our experiences with other countries, and vice versa. This will ensure the approach is continually improved.

6. *Combating the threat posed by individuals with a potential for violence.* Identifying individuals with a potential for ideologically motivated violent behaviour early on and determining their readiness to commit acts of violence is no easy task. Identifying and tackling these individuals is primarily a local responsibility, entailing close cooperation between mental health services, the police, and intelligence and security services. We will study the causes of this type of threat and explore tangible ways to detect potentially violent individuals at an earlier stage.

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7   Chemical, biological, radiological and/or nuclear means.

4.4 THWARTING ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE

We will thwart attacks based on information suggesting that specific individuals or groups are plotting violence. We do this by working with the intelligence and security services and the Special Interventions Division (DSI), and by promoting international data-sharing and optimal coordination between intelligence agencies, investigative authorities and prosecution services. In order to prevent attacks, information must lead to decisions and actions as quickly as possible. The main sources of information are the police, the intelligence and security services and our foreign partners.

5 Protect

Objective: protect people, property and vital processes from extremist and terrorist threats (both physical and virtual).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Counterterrorism partners protect society from extremist and terrorist threats, in both the physical and digital worlds. They do this by monitoring and protecting property, people, and vital services and processes. One important component of this work is 'forward defence': the deployment of Dutch assets in military and civilian missions abroad. In the virtual domain, partners are anticipating an increase in ideologically motivated cyberattacks.

5.2 PHYSICALLY PROTECTING NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

When it comes to protecting national security interests in the physical world, we must strike a balance between the need for sufficiently strong measures and the duty to maintain a free, open society. Proportional security measures will be taken, based on threat and risk assessments. These measures will be subject to ongoing evaluation. Particular attention will be paid to 'soft targets', i.e. places that are difficult to protect and which tend to draw large numbers of people, meaning a high number of potential victims. Experience has shown that groups or individuals that are prepared to use violence are increasingly setting their sights on these soft targets.

The priorities for the National Surveillance and Protection System over the next five years are:

1. *Improving national cooperation.* There will be a focus on conducting exercises and liaising with and equipping national and local services (operational or otherwise), with a view to ensuring physical protection for Dutch security interests.
2. *Promoting and improving international cooperation.* In light of the transnational nature of the current threat, we must endeavour to promote and enhance international cooperation. This entails sharing best practices, establishing expert trainer exchange programmes and conducting joint training courses with other countries.

3. *Making use of new technology.* New technology will be used to apply security strategies more effectively and flexibly. Ideally, this will mean increased resilience, without the need to subject the person at risk to intrusive security measures.

PROTECTING CIVIL AVIATION

Civil aviation is confronted with terrorist threats relatively often. As a result, the protection of civil aviation merits particular attention from the authorities. Broadly speaking, this means preventing attacks on aircraft or at airports, hijackings, forms of sabotage with potentially fatal consequences, and the use of aircraft in terrorist attacks. The priorities for the next five years are:

- *Risk-based protection instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.* In the future, security checks will be conducted in a more risk-based and less predictable way, with the help of a security system that can be flexibly configured. By configuring security checkpoints in such a way that different forms of screening can be applied to different groups of passengers, the system will become more robust (i.e. capable of responding to new threats) and flexible (i.e. able to be scaled up quickly in the event of acute threats).
- *Greater focus on automated security checks at airports.* Thanks to emerging technologies, many security processes can be automated. Greater automation does not mean that the human element will be eliminated from the process entirely, on the contrary: the human factor will remain key; what it does mean, however, is that security processes will be more stable and costs will decline.
- *Non-intrusive security checks.* Security checks must be carried out with due respect for passengers' integrity and that of their belongings. This will ensure greater effectiveness, capacity and passenger-friendliness.
- *Continuing to build a 'culture of security' outside Europe.* The Netherlands wishes to promote a culture of security concerning civil aviation outside Europe by working with other governments, providing expertise to international working groups, participating in audits and offering training courses.

5.3 CYBERSECURITY

The digital domain is changing rapidly. There is a need for vigilance, particularly when it comes to jihadists acquiring and using hacking skills or exploiting others' skills and knowledge in this area. The fact that the digital domain can be both a target and a weapon for extremists and terrorists means that the cyber threat must be continually monitored. The government maps out this threat periodically in the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN) and the National Cybersecurity Assessment (CSBN).

The combination of vigilance and resilience is a major part of the policy based on the DTN and CSBN. The same applies to the government-wide approach for protecting our vital infrastructure. As part of this approach, periodic assessments are carried out to see if the physical and digital measures being taken to prevent disruptions to service are still robust enough.

6 Prepare

***Objective:** to prepare optimally for extremist and terrorist violence and its consequences.*

Attacks or incidents can occur any time. It is therefore vital to be optimally prepared for extremist and terrorist violence and its possible consequences. This calls for decisiveness in times of crisis, a responsive outlook, effective emergency assistance, (crisis) communication, training and exercises (including at international level) and follow-up. It also requires interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary cooperation between the partners involved and good links between local, regional, national and international authorities.

6.1 PREPARING FOR EXTREMIST AND TERRORIST VIOLENCE

In the event or an incident or attack, the Dutch crisis management organisation will take swift action. The Minister of Security and Justice acts as the coordinating minister. We want to be able to respond quickly and flexibly to any crisis, with particular attention to:

- *Monitoring* the social impact of the terrorist and extremist threat;
- Using *crisis scenarios* premised on conceivable events and the principles, processes and roles of each party involved in the crisis;
- Being prepared for key *decisions:* using scenarios to reflect on decisions, solutions and chains of command;
- Strengthening the network of *vital partners* that have a role to play during a crisis;
- *Giving training courses and staging exercises* with local, national and international partners in areas such as information-sharing and cooperation during crises;
- *Communicating during crises* in a way that limits social unrest and increases social resilience. Since media coverage of attacks can greatly affect the public's sense of security, government communication following an attack must be nuanced and objective, with an emphasis on de-escalation and reducing polarisation.

Public perceptions and attitudes will be continually monitored and analysed, so that we can continue to respond effectively. The authorities will also provide practical information on what to do in the event of an attack or a suspicious situation. Our joint preparations focus on coordination, the division of responsibilities, agreeing on specific actions and timing, and limiting the impact of an attack.

6.2 RESPONDING TO EXTREMIST AND TERRORIST INCIDENTS

Any response to an actual or imminent extremist or terrorist threat will affect public order and the democratic legal order. As coordinating minister for counterterrorism, the Minister of Security and Justice has the power to take measures that would ordinarily lie within another minister's remit (e.g. deciding to deploy special intervention units).[8] Teams from the Special Interventions Division (DSI) are able to respond quickly and flexibly to all types of violent threats, in accordance with the threat situation at any given time. Routine assessments of the DSI are carried out to ensure that it has sufficient resources and equipment. Even when the threat level is low, the DSI is expected to uphold a certain standard of preparedness.

During and immediately after an incident or attack, the primary focus is on emergency assistance, preventing subsequent incidents, saving lives and dealing with initial emotions and reactions. It is at that point that all the agreements and training undertaken during crisis management preparations are put into practice. The Ministry of Defence provides military support to the civil authorities.

***Renegade procedure:** Renegade is an agreement between the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg for providing military assistance to protect Benelux airspace and deploying military assets against air-based terrorist threats. The agreement has been signed by all parties, but has yet to be ratified.*

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8   Royal Decree of 14 December 2005, Bulletin of Acts and Decrees 2005/662. If a situation presents such a significant threat that rapid action is necessary and normal decision-making procedures would be too time-consuming, the Minister of Security and Justice can assume powers that, under normal circumstances, would fall under the authority of other ministers.

6.3 FOLLOW-UP

Following an attack or violent incident, social partners have an important role to play in limiting social disruption (including reprisals and counter-attacks) and increasing social cohesion and resilience. Media coverage of attacks can greatly affect the public's sense of security. Following an attack, government communication must emphasise de-escalation and reducing polarisation. Particular attention will be paid to victims, their families and vulnerable groups. Following an incident or attack, it is vital to launch investigations and prosecutions as quickly as possible. Finally, it should be borne in mind that attacks and incidents of extremist violence can have a profound impact on the employees of operational services.

7 Pursue

Objective: *to enforce the law in the face of extremism and terrorism.*

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Enforcing criminal law is a vital part of combating extremism and terrorism. Criminal investigation, prosecution and trial can have both a preventive and repressive effect. The authorities can use the powers afforded them under criminal law to intervene early on in order to stop preparatory acts. The priority is preventing a terrorist offence from being carried out. If extremists and terrorists break the law, the criminal justice authorities will respond appropriately.

Terrorists want to instil fear among the general public by carrying out attacks (including suicide attacks). Those who are prepared to commit such violence are not usually deterred by the threat of a long custodial sentence. Criminal prosecution is also about stopping terrorists before they can carry out acts of violence. Action will be taken while acts of violence are still in the planning stage.

Yet proactive intervention to prevent an attack can also diminish the chance of mounting a successful prosecution. Prosecution can therefore be a part of a larger intervention strategy on the part of the authorities. It need not be an end in itself. In addition to taking repressive measures under criminal law (e.g. detention), we will also focus on supervising and monitoring suspects and offenders.

In recent years, a significant amount has been invested in adding to the legal instruments that can be used for counterterrorism. Between 2004 and 2009, parliament passed several bills to this effect. The new laws prohibited engaging in preparations for an act of terrorism or participating in terrorist training; they allowed the authorities to examine witnesses without revealing their identity; and they increased the range of options for investigating and prosecuting terrorist offences. In 2013 the Criminal Code was amended to reflect the fact that terrorism financing had been made a criminal offence.[9] The extent to which new legislation is needed to combat extremism and terrorism is a subject of ongoing discussion.

Decisions about whether to take action under criminal law are taken in accordance with the discretionary principle. This means assessing each case against the principles underlying the relevant policy and its own specific circumstances. Counterterrorism efforts always respect the rule of law and citizens' fundamental freedoms.

7.2 CRIMINAL-LAW MEASURES

Acting in a timely and lawful manner, the Public Prosecution Service and the police will investigate, prosecute and try persons suspected of preparing or carrying out terrorist or extremist offences, including cybercrime.
Our focus will therefore continue to be on:

- The criminal justice system's ability to investigate, prosecute and try persons suspected of extremist or terrorist offences and to place those who have been convicted of such offences in special detention, if need be. Even if the threat should decrease, the required capacity and knowledge will be maintained. That way, if the threat flares up again, they can be rapidly redeployed;
- Making use of the full range of possibilities offered by the law, disrupt extremist and terrorist acts – including preparatory acts – and to prosecute those suspected of committing them;
- Investigating and prosecuting persons suspected of financing terrorism.
- Increasing and retaining knowledge and expertise within the criminal justice system regarding extremism and terrorism;
- Further strengthening information-sharing practices and cooperation between intelligence and security services and investigative agencies;
- Preparing for the social reintegration of former suspects and offenders who have served their sentences by having them participate in deradicalisation programmes, for instance as a special condition of their release.

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9 Amendment of the Criminal Code, including the Criminal Code of Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba, and several other laws in relation to making terrorism financing a criminal offence.

8 Implementation and organisation

8.1 EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY FOR 2011-2015

The National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2016-2020 sets out the strategic framework for Dutch counterterrorism policy over the next five years. In chapters three to seven we describe the default level of resilience to the extremist and terrorist threat for that period. In this regard we take our cue from the comprehensive approach (see chapter two) and the strategic principles (see chapter one). In terms of both substance and organisation the present strategy draws on the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015 and the subsequent evaluation of that strategy, which was completed in May 2016.

The latter was the result of the government's pledge to evaluate national counterterrorism policy every five years.[10] In the evaluation of the 2011-2015 period, five trends were identified as having a negative effect on the authorities' intervention capability:[11]

1. The strategy's broad outlook can unintentionally create the conditions for *selective attention*.
2. Social partners and security partners tend to *drift apart*, particularly at times when the threat is deemed a less urgent priority.
3. When the threat is less evident, the national partners' *capabilities* fluctuate strongly.
4. The *integrated local approach* is a potentially powerful tool, but the capabilities of local partners are also prone to fluctuate.
5. The parties value *the coordinating role played by the NCTV*, but the need for the NCTV to mediate and sometimes choose between political and implementation interests is a recurring issue.

The evaluation showed that, when the terrorist threat was low, the authorities' intervention capability fluctuated in terms of *efficiency and legitimacy*. Once the threat level was raised in March 2013, the authorities' intervention capability did increase, however. By late 2015, efficiency and legitimacy were back at adequate levels. Between 2011 and 2015, the authorities' intervention capability could have been more robust.

These five trends have been incorporated into the strategic principles set out in chapter one. Cohesion between policy and implementation, and close cooperation and information-sharing between local, national and international partners prevents selective attention and keeps social partners and security partners from drifting apart. We are keen to further strengthen multidisciplinary cooperation and information-sharing, both *within* and *among* local, national and international partner organisations. Although our system of institutions is complex, their powers and responsibilities often complement each other. This complexity is exactly why there needs to be coherence between the various chains of command, responsibilities and interests in play.

The strategy cannot be implemented without subnational authorities, particularly in relation to social policy with the potential to prevent extremism and terrorism. These authorities must be able to make their own policy decisions. This is why a 'top-down' command structure has been rejected in favour of horizontal coordination, which strengthens the impact of the integrated local approach. As counterterrorism is a prime example of a dynamic policy area, it is vital that subnational partners

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10   During the parliamentary committee meeting on counterterrorism in the House of Representatives on 10 March 2011 the Minister of Security and Justice pledged that the National Counterterrorism Strategy would be subject to periodic evaluation.

11   Intervention capability: the joint ability of the Dutch authorities and their partners to contribute to the strategy's objectives. The intervention capability must be:
   • effective: parties must make an effective and efficient contribution to the strategy;
   • legitimate: parties must respect the rule of law and receive support from partners for their contribution;
   • robust: parties must retain the freedom to modify their plans and must be resilient enough to act effectively and with legitimacy in the face of changing circumstances.

are regularly consulted on their policy measures. These measures can then be modified in light of new developments and insights, in consultation with the relevant parties.

Municipalities that are more experienced with the integrated local approach will be paired up with less experienced municipalities in order to promote the exchange of knowledge, methods and expertise. The authorities always base their actions on specific information on threats and trends in certain areas or regions. The NCTV plays a vital role as a knowledge and experience broker. In the years ahead, the Netherlands will enhance the integrated local approach by investing in knowledge about all forms of extremism, by making agreements on structural cooperation and by providing clarity on issues relating to privacy.

8.2 COORDINATION

The evaluation of the counterterrorism strategy for 2011-2015 showed that a targeted, legitimate and robust approach to extremism and terrorism is best served through centralised coordination at national government level. These coordination efforts centre on forging effective partnerships and fostering optimal information-sharing. Centralised coordination is essential for ensuring cohesion between assessment, policy and implementation. The guiding principles are:

1. *Support:* we maintain an ongoing dialogue with the parties involved, who are co-owners of the strategy.
2. *Clarity:* clear agreements will be made on roles and responsibilities, cooperation, information-sharing and decision-making.
3. *Fixed measures:* all social partners and security partners have a role to play in combating extremism and terrorism, even when the threat is limited.
4. *Learning capacity:* we maintain continuity of knowledge and expertise relating to extremism and terrorism. New insights are incorporated into implementation practices quickly and effectively.

The NCTV coordinates national counterterrorism policy. In the coming years, the NCTV will continue to build on the integrated partnership that was formed in the period from 2011 to 2015. Every player in the counterterrorism sector remains responsible for its own policy area. The NCTV initiates and facilitates information-sharing and cooperation. It also coordinates the relevant high-level governmental consultation and decision-making structures.

One of the recommendations from the evaluation of the National Counterterrorism Strategy for 2011-2015 which we have adopted is to listen more to '*quieter voices*'. To that end, our partners – including the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (at national level), and youth care and social services (at local level) – are an integral part of counterterrorism policy. The optimal combination of measures will continue to be applied, whatever the threat level may be. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and other relevant parties will always be consulted on counterterrorism activities abroad.

The evaluation of the strategy for 2011-2015 also warned about 'conflicting roles'. In order to prevent this, a balance must be struck between a focus on achieving progress (with a view to parliamentary accountability) and the need to address all the multifarious aspects of this complex issue and the lack of measurable effects that tend to characterise counterterrorism policy. In reports and policy plans this dilemma will be dealt with by being transparent and realistic about the progress made and the possible need for additional measures.

8.3 METHODOLOGY

A significant number of the strategic commitments set out in chapters three to seven are already part of our set of fixed measures. Periodic assessments will be conducted to see to what extent additional policy measures and operational measures should be taken in order to maintain this set level. The results of these 'system assessments' will determine what quality- and capacity-related commitments are to be made by the network of counterterrorism partners. The full package of policy-related and operational measures and supplementary commitments at local, national and international level required to maintain the default level of resilience is laid down in interministerial policy and operational plans. Obviously, they also form part of this strategy.

It is difficult to predict how the extremist or terrorist threat will develop. Since changes in the threat can greatly affect national security, it is vital to anticipate them and seek to maximise preparedness. This is why we use scenarios: they allow us to work out, in detail, the ways in which fundamental uncertainties could evolve in the near future. The scenarios form the basis for real-world exercises and help determine what government body is responsible for taking which measures.

Unanticipated changes to the nature and scope of the extremist or terrorist threat are periodically reported in the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN). The DTN is based in part on information from the intelligence and security services, the police, public sources, foreign partners and on analyses by embassy staff.

Based on the DTN, the NCTV reassesses – and where necessary, alters – the threat level.[12] Together, the scenarios and the DTN are used to determine the flexible policy-related and operational measures that are required to address changes to the threat. Flexible measures are formulated in interministerial programme and project plans with a set timetable. Eventually, flexible measures can become fixed measures, provided that the instruments in question are capable of tackling the changed threat.

This system ensures a combination of fixed and flexible measures, as recommended by the evaluation committee, which guarantees the authorities optimal intervention capability.

The following diagram shows how strategy, assessment, and fixed and flexible commitments are connected:

| Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020 |

| Periodic system assessments | → | Policy-related measures (fixed) | ← | Policy-related measures (flexible) | ← | DTN Scenarios |
| Periodic system assessments | → | Operational-related measures (fixed) | ← | Operational-related measures (flexible) | ← | DTN Scenarios |

12   There is no separate threat level for extremism. The extremist threat is also discussed in the DTN.

Annexe:
Context and threat
for 2016-2020

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE THREAT

Late 2010 saw the start of what was to be the 'Arab Spring'. The people of various countries in North Africa and the Middle East protested against the dictatorial regimes then in power. In the chaos and power vacuum that followed, terrorist groups were able to gain a foothold in many of these countries. They included ISIS, which in 2014 declared a 'caliphate' in Syria and Iraq. Since late 2012, tens of thousands of foreign fighters have joined terrorist groups in order to fight for a new Islamic state. They come from across the globe, including the Netherlands. European security services immediately recognised that this situation would lead to an increased terrorist threat to the West. Terrorist groups are not only fighting to gain territory, but also training members to carry out attacks in the West. Successful attacks prompt aspiring jihadists to make the journey to the conflict zones, and in this way the cycle repeats itself. In light of this, in 2013 the NCTV raised the threat level from 'limited' to 'substantial'. Between 2014 and 2016 terrorists used the Middle East as a base from which to plan attacks on the West. Dozens were killed and hundreds wounded in attacks in France and Belgium.

Between 2011 and 2015, the terrorist threat in Europe was not purely jihadist in nature, however. It also came from the far right. In various European countries, fear of immigrants, Islam and further attacks has led to an increase in support for the far right. Far-right groups and individuals committed acts of violence against a variety of targets, including refugees, Muslims and reception centres, including in the Netherlands. In response, the Dutch far left has once again become more active. They actively seek out confrontation with anti-Islam and anti-asylum groups.

DEVELOPMENTS WITH REGARD TO THE THREAT SITUATION FOR 2016-2020

The threat has been assessed on the basis of relative certainties, i.e. developments that can reasonably be expected, given the current context and past experiences. Fixed measures are determined on the basis of these relative certainties. There are also *fundamental uncertainties*. These are factors that are unpredictable enough as to require the use of speculative scenarios. It is on the basis of these scenarios that we devise supplementary, flexible measures (see chapter eight). It is difficult to predict how the extremist or terrorist threat will develop. Experience has shown that the threat can fluctuate significantly, requiring constant vigilance and optimal intervention capability. It is highly likely that the severity of the threat will increase in the short and medium term. We address the main developments in the bullet points below.

- As long as the situation in the Middle East and North Africa fails to improve, terrorist organisations will continue to have free rein. New attacks in Europe – including in the Netherlands – by ISIS or al Qa'ida cannot be ruled out.
- The Netherlands and other European countries, some of which are part of the anti-ISIS coalition, are a potential target for jihadists. The expectation is that some Dutch jihadists are prepared to commit acts of terrorist violence in Europe and against European interests elsewhere. Foreign terrorist fighters (including returnees from Syria and Iraq) form the biggest threat.
- There are some terrorist networks present in the Netherlands, while others have links to the Netherlands. It cannot be ruled out that there are terrorist operatives in the Netherlands, or individuals who are willing to hide or provide support to such operatives. Dutch jihadists are taking part in terrorist combat in Syria and Iraq. In addition, they could form a threat to the Netherlands' security. They could also be used to carry out attacks in other European countries.
- Terrorist groups learn from mistakes made in failed or less than successful attacks. Attacks in the West appear to be becoming more deadly.
- Terrorists have more targets in their sights. Vulnerable and easy-to-access targets are the most obvious. Examples of such 'soft targets' include public events or public transport, where there could be many potential casualties.
- Even if ISIS is defeated in Syria and Iraq, the group controls other regions. Furthermore, other terrorist organisations (e.g. al Qa'ida or one of its branches, such as Jabhat al-Nusra (JaN) and al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)) could take over ISIS's leading role within the global jihadist movement. There is also an expectation that, even if the 'caliphate' fell, ISIS's ideological appeal and violent philosophy would endure.
- The collapse of the 'caliphate' could also herald the return of a significant number of trained and experienced foreign terrorist fighters to Europe. Upon their return, some could decide – perhaps even years later – to carry out attacks or acts of violence in Europe. Indoctrinated and exposed to violence from an early age in Syria and Iraq, the children of jihadists could also pose a threat as they grow older. Women are, in theory, not trained and deployed in armed combat. However, as they too are confronted with violence and trauma, they could also – in time – commit acts of violence.

- Terrorists make use of all resources available to them. In the Middle East, this includes chemical weapons.
- In the Netherlands, there are still significant levels of radicalisation. This also represents a threat. Some radicalised youth have a history of mental health problems. In addition, there is an increasingly blurred boundary between ideological and other motives. These motives, which may include a search for meaning, identity, justice, or simply thrill-seeking, can be intertwined or coexist in parallel.
- Extremist and terrorist organisations use social media in a highly professional way, in order to recruit and influence young people. In addition to using open channels, they are making increasing use of private, encrypted networks.
- Jihadists are expected to become even smarter, more professional and more organised in their use of the digital domain. They will make greater use of the digital domain for propaganda, recruitment, fund-raising, internal communication and gathering information to aid with preparations for real-world attacks (including 'doxing'). General IT skills and knowledge, relating to the use of social media, secure digital communication or search engines, are often sufficient for these purposes. In other cases, however, hacking skills can be useful or even indispensable, such as when illegally gathering information from databases. This increasing professionalism can also lead jihadists to target the digital domain itself, by carrying out attacks on internet infrastructure, or to use it as a weapon, by carrying out cyberattacks on vital infrastructure. Such activities require hacking skills and knowledge, which others could make available to jihadists (perhaps unwittingly) or which jihadists themselves could acquire.
- The influx of refugees into the West and the suspicion that terrorists could pose as genuine refugees and carry out new attacks could increase fear and unrest in Europe. This in turn fans the flames of the far right. There could also be an increase in acts of violence from this quarter, in a bid to inflict casualties and instil fear among the general public. Such violence can therefore be categorised as terrorist in nature.
- The increase in far-right activity may also lead to reprisals by the far left. Violent confrontations could cause the situation to escalate further.
- The terrorist threat posed by animal rights activists, asylum activists or environmental activists is expected to be limited. However, extremist/criminal forms of protest would not be unexpected, since this has long been a modus operandi for some of these protesters. This could include making threats, staging 'home visits' or committing acts of vandalism.
- It cannot be ruled out that an individual with a potential for violence who is not on the radar of the security services, care providers or local networks could decide to commit acts of extremist or terrorist violence.
- It also cannot be ruled out that followers of other ideologies that so far have posed no extremist or terrorist threat will decide to commit acts of violence. Security services are highly alert to such 'new threats'.

Several factors can indirectly contribute to the terrorist threat:

- *Conflicts, poverty and population growth:* achieving stability in various countries and regions in the Middle East and North Africa remains a difficult prospect. Terrorist groups reap the benefits of this ongoing instability. Ongoing violence in these countries and regions sends new waves of refugees travelling to Europe. This increases tensions that already exist in Europe and can further contribute to the rise of far-right and far-left groups. Poverty and dramatic population growth in some parts of the world can also be a contributing factor, exacerbated by climate change and resultant extreme weather conditions.
- *Religious, ethnic and political divisions in the Middle East:* there are increasing divisions between Sunnis and Shiites in the Middle East and, consequently, between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran and their respective allies. Extremist religious groups, on both sides, are benefiting from these divisions. Tensions between religious and ethnic groups can lead to increased tension between migrant communities in Europe, including in the Netherlands.
- *The influence of other countries on migrant populations in the Netherlands:* foreign governments are exerting increasing influence over migrants living in the Netherlands. Changes to the domestic political agenda in these countries can heighten tensions between ethnic and religious groups. In the worst cases, this may lead to extremism and violence.