THE DUTCH TERROR PLOT: A CULTURAL MOTIVE
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KEY EVENTS

It can be argued that the motive for the Dutch terrorist plot is identity based, conducted in response to the perceived anti-Islam stance of the Dutch government. The motive behind the plot allegedly stems from a cultural conflict between the Dutch people and Muslims living in the Netherlands. Suspects have claimed they were conducting a deed against the Dutch government. The seven men suspected of plotting an attack were arrested in the Netherlands. The planning of the attack appeared to be in its advanced stages when the men were arrested, classifying the preparations as a level four threat. It appears that the suspects planned to use rifles, bomb vests, and were prepared to detonate a vehicle. The leader of group is suspected to be Hardi N, who has been convicted of attempting to join ISIL. Hardi N allegedly belonged to a group of Arnhem jihadists, a radical Islamist group in the Netherlands.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

This briefing note will cover the following issues: What is the potential motive behind the Dutch terror plot? Are there similarities to other attacks and terror plots in Europe and Canada? What is the relevance to Canada, particularly the West coast?

BACKGROUND

The current security dilemma focuses on an era of transnational violent crime and non-state actors where attacks are less likely to be conducted in retaliation to the state, but towards groups who identify differently and create a marginalized division between cultures. It can be argued that people who do not identify with a specific culture or identity can feel displaced. In this case a perceived anti-Islamist stance by a government, including statements or competitions which mock Islam could cause greater divergence between majority and minority cultures. The minority may choose to identify more with Islamist culture and ideologies if they feel the government has created a divide between cultures within a state. This may then lead some individuals to further identify with Islamist extremist groups, such as ISIL, out of a feeling of shared values and or a search for acceptance. The Dutch plotters may have a better sense of belonging with Islamist groups, than they do with the Dutch people.

On Thursday, September 27 police arrested seven men in the Netherlands who were suspected of plotting a terror attack. Police raided properties in Arnhem and Weert. The men ranged in age from 21 to 34. Hardi N. who is believed to be the ringleader was arrested as well. Hardi N. is a 34-year-old Iraqi man allegedly belonging to a group of Arnhem jihadists and was convicted in 2017 of attempting to join ISIL. Two of the other suspects arrested by police were also previously convicted of traveling overseas in

an attempt to join extremist groups. The seven men live in the Netherlands but identify with Islamist ideology and culture. They identified their plot as a 'firm deed against the Dutch government' arguably because the Netherlands supported the US in the fight against ISIL. The men arrested claimed the attack would take place at a major event in the Netherlands and would involve many victims. This event can be classified as a form of 5th generation warfare as the motives behind the plot appear to have stemmed from a cultural identity clash with the Dutch government.

The current threat level identified by this attempted attack is a threat level four, meaning the chances of the attack occurring were highly likely. Police found five guns and a white van when conducting the raids. Allegedly, the suspects were attempting to obtain AK47 assault rifles, handguns, bomb vests, grenades, and bomb making materials. Prosecutors claimed the suspects were planning to train with these weapons and had 'advanced preparations' of plotting an attack. The suspects allegedly planned to use assault rifles, bomb vests, and detonate a car when carrying out the attack. The location of the planned attack cannot be identified yet.

A similar incident took place in the Netherlands weeks before where comparable motives and identity conflict were present. An attack involving a 19-year-old Afghan with German permanent residence took place in the Netherlands in August 2018. The suspect in this attack claimed that Islam is frequently insulted by the country. The suspect stabbed two American tourists in an Amsterdam railway station. It is arguable that in these two incidents the suspect's motive to attack was nearly identical. It is important to note that prior to the occurrence of this attack, the Dutch politician Geert Wilders held a cartoon drawing competition where participants could submit caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad; a plan which angered many Muslims in the country.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION AND WEST COAST PERSPECTIVES

Violence appears to remain unorganized and mostly individual; therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint connections to a wider strategy or organization. It can be argued that the purpose of these seemingly random attacks is to alienate other individuals or groups who do not identify in the same way as the assailant. Planned violent attacks are arguably a product of the current social environment where identity conflict appears to be on the rise and is causing individuals and groups to seek radical solutions to solve perceived issues. Furthermore, one can postulate that the formal ties linking individuals or groups to larger organizations or states are becoming more difficult to determine. It can therefore be argued that fifth generation warfare identity conflict is a new security concern which intelligence agencies must combat.

There has been a rise in attacks in the east coast of Canada, specifically Ottawa and Quebec, and these incidents are moving closer to B.C., with the most recent occurring in Edmonton. Arguably, it is not unreasonable that terror plots, similar to the Dutch terror plot, could occur or are currently occurring in B.C. The RCMP has previously investigated the Canada Day bomb, involving John Nuttall and Amanda Korody who allegedly placed pressure-cooker bombs on the lawn of the B.C. provincial legislature in Victoria. The two had been found guilty of conspiring to commit murder, possession of an explosive substance, and the placement of an explosive substance in a public place on behalf of a terrorist organization. The couple has since been released with the terror charges dropped; however, the fact still remains that a plot was in place and ready to be acted upon.

The fact that a known active terror plot in B.C. has already been under investigation raises the following questions: What initiatives can the RCMP take on to prevent or deter active terror plots in B.C.? In anticipating active terror plots, what efforts can be made to protect the Canadian public from this type of group on group conflict? What efforts can be made by the provincial and federal governments to limit the possibility of creating identity conflict between Muslim culture and Canadian culture? If there currently is a cultural divide, what can be done to avoid the likelihood of conflict and shrink that divide? Are the current deterrent methods for radicalization effective?

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