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Subject : Terrorist activity in the European Union: situation and trends

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1. At its meeting of 20 September 2001 the Council approved the production of an open document on the terrorism situation and trends in Europe. After approval by the Council the document will be sent to the European Parliament and made public.
2. The first document covering the period September 2000 – September 2001 drawn up by Europol as amended and agreed by the Article 36 Committee at its meeting of 19 December 2001 is annexed. The annexed document also integrates amendments presented by the French delegation to the Presidency at this meeting.
3. Coreper is invited to forward the present document to the Council for approval and subsequent transmission to the European Parliament and publication.

# **TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: SITUATION AND TRENDS**

**September 2000 – September 2001**

During the year 2001 terrorism has been confirmed as one of the major concerns for the European Union owing to its enormous impact on the European Union, the Member States, the economy and society. Existing groups continued their terrorist activities. The number of incidents showed a small decrease, whereas the scale of the attacks increased dramatically.

The decrease in the number of terrorist incidents is however gratifying. Police services were on number of occasions very successful, for instance in Spain and in Ireland, in arresting terrorist cells and seizing terrorist paraphernalia.

On the political side it is worth noting the progress in the Northern Ireland peace process. Subsequently, cease-fires in Corsica and in Northern Ireland, except in the case of dissident groups, have been maintained by the main players.

Important from a global point of view is the fact that the European Union is not only a target for terrorist attacks but also an important area for preparatory and logistic purposes in the widest sense. In the aftermath of the 11 September attacks in the United States of America, it became clear that a number of the suicide hijackers allegedly prepared their activities in the European Union.

## **1. SEPARATIST TERRORISM**

### **1.1. Spain/ France**

#### ***1.1.1. General situation***

The summer campaign of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) against Spain's tourist interests was of importance.

The techniques used varied from shooting victims in the back of the neck to car bombs, also using letter bombs and booby-trapped explosive devices. **ETA's** favourite explosive is dynamite. **ETA** stole quantities of these explosives from a depot in France (Grenoble).

During a "cease fire" period that finished in December 1999, **ETA** discovered how effective the staging of violent public disorder was in terrorising the Basque population. Juvenile groups linked to **ETA** have been more frequently used in arson attacks against automatic cash dispensers, public transport (buses), train stations, car dealers and shops and houses owned by members of the Popular Party and Socialist Party of the Basque Country. **ETA** selects future activists from among these youths.

#### ***1.1.2. Law enforcement and judicial activity***

Spanish law enforcement agencies have been very successful in their fight against terrorism throughout the year 2001. The **ETA** cells in Barcelona, Madrid, and Donosti (San Sebastian) were dismantled. The dismantling of the Donosti cell was especially relevant, with the arrest of 38 people.

**EKIN**, an **ETA** support organisation, was declared illegal, and the leaders of **Haika**, a juvenile organisation, and of the pro-amnesty association **Gestoras Pro-Amnistia** were arrested by order of the Spanish National Judicial Authorities. The three organisations are closely affiliated with **ETA**. Another association called **XAKI** that worked as a bureau for international relationships for **ETA** was also closed.

#### ***1.1.3. International cooperation:***

Since 1 January 2001, thirty members of **ETA** have been detained in France and nineteen have been imprisoned; eight **ETA** activists have been extradited to Spain and one has been expelled.

In its communiqués **ETA** now places France and Spain on the same footing and issues threats against the authorities of both countries. However, its major terrorist acts have been committed only in Spain.

## 1.2. Northern Ireland

### 1.2.1. *General situation*

On 6 August 2001, the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) reported that agreement had been reached with the **Provisional IRA (PIRA)** on a method to put its arms completely and verifiably beyond use. On 23 October 2001, the IICD confirmed that it had witnessed a quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives being put completely beyond use. It also confirmed that contact would be maintained with the PIRA representative. As a result David Trimble, the First Minister in the devolved Northern Ireland Executive returned to his post from which he had resigned in July because he was unhappy with the lack of PIRA progress on decommissioning.

Irish republican dissident terrorist groups continued to carry out attacks in Northern Ireland and, in the case of the Real IRA (RIRA), in Great Britain as well. High-profile attacks by RIRA in Great Britain this year have included three car bombs. Two were in London at the BBC Television Centre in March; and in Ealing Broadway, a commercial and leisure area, in August (seven injured). In November RIRA mounted another car bomb attack in a commercial and leisure area in Birmingham. On this occasion the device failed to detonate fully.

Loyalist terrorists groups in Northern Ireland continued with their feuds with each other and to carry out attacks on Catholics. One Loyalist group, the Ulster Defence Association, was responsible for violence in connection with protests at the Holy Cross Catholic primary school in a loyalist district of Belfast.

### 1.2.2. *Law enforcement and judicial activity*

Police services in Ireland and the United Kingdom continue to investigate and disrupt the activities of dissident republicans.

These investigations have resulted in the seizure of significant amounts of explosives and firearms which has brought us to the position where a number of activists are serving prison sentences, and others are in custody awaiting trial.

The investigation into the Omagh bomb continues on both sides of the border. The current position is that the trial of one person charged with conspiracy to cause explosions is ongoing before the courts.

### **1.3. France/Corsica**

#### ***1.3.1. General situation***

The **FLNC Reconstitué** has officially maintained its ceasefire, although it continues to carry out what it calls "accompanying" actions, particularly against police and gendarmerie installations, and against property, to protest against "repression" and "speculation".

The underground group **Armata Corsa** announced on 22 March 2001 that it was suspending violent action, while at the same time planting a car bomb (without a detonator mechanism) in Paris to demonstrate its capabilities.

The assassination of its leader in August 2001 undermined Armata Corsa, which has a small and mixed membership and appears unlikely to establish a lasting presence.

Responsibility for the two bomb attacks on police barracks carried out in July 2001 was claimed by a new "anonymous" underground group which, in its statement, criticised the Matignon process and announced that it would henceforth be using military methods.

### ***1.3.2. Law enforcement and judicial activity***

No further details.

## **2. ISLAMIC EXTREMIST TERRORISM**

### **2.1. General situation**

Extremist Islamic terrorist groups have continued to threaten the security of the European Union. Arrests in the European Union clearly demonstrate the existence in the European Union and the potential danger of terrorist attacks by these groups.

The European Law Enforcement agencies engaged in important activity against Islamic extremist terrorist groups, both before and after the attacks on 11 September in the USA.

### **2.2. Law enforcement and judicial activity before 11 September 2001**

#### ***United Kingdom***

On 16 February 2001 six people were arrested in London after police conducted searches under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and were subsequently charged with the possession of terrorist paraphernalia and associated deception offences.

#### ***Spain***

In June 2001 the Spanish Police arrested an Islamic activist, a key person of the Al Qaeda network. Last September the Spanish Police also arrested a cell of the **Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat**. In total 11 persons were arrested.

## *France*

French authorities carried out a number of actions against Islamic fundamentalist groups:

- On 7 February 2001, the trial of 28 Islamic activists suspected of being involved in an international network based in Bosnia started in Paris. A few weeks later, another trial was started in Roubaix, for some robberies using military weaponry that had been carried out in 1996.
- In June 2001, the trial of five Algerian-born Islamic activists, allegedly members of the **Groupe Islamiste Armé (GIA)** began.
- French authorities expelled an Islamic activist on 9 November 2001. The man, one of the main persons responsible for the logistic support of the Algerian **GIA**, was expelled to Algeria.

## *Germany*

In December 2000, the German Bundeskriminalamt arrested a terrorist cell based in Frankfurt (Germany). One of the alleged terrorists managed to escape, but was subsequently arrested in June 2001 in Alicante (Spain). Subsequent joint investigations of the German and United States authorities linked this group to another suspect, who had already been arrested at the end of 1999, while trying to smuggle 60 kilos of explosives from Canada into the US, with the alleged purpose of attacking the Los Angeles airport. On July 2001 an Algerian national, living in the United Kingdom, was accused by the US federal prosecutor of being linked to the Frankfurt cell and being one of the masterminds behind this plot.

## *Italy*

In April 2001 Italian authorities arrested a cell integrated in the Al Qaeda network. This cell had connections in France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

### **2.3. Law enforcement and judicial activity after the 11 September attacks**

#### ***Belgium/The Netherlands***

During a joint operation against a suspected radical Islamic extremist terrorist group, eight people were arrested in Belgium and the Netherlands on 19 September 2001.

The US Embassy and other United States interests in France were the alleged targets of this group.

#### ***Germany***

Three of the hijackers (Mohammed ATTA, Marwan ALSHEHHI and Ziad JARRAH) have lived at least temporarily in Hamburg. The investigations so far have led to hints of the involvement of other perpetrators during the planning and preparation, international links to Islamic ideological leaders and world-wide financial transactions. International arrest warrants for suspicion of involvement in a terrorist organisation, thousands of homicides as well as other serious crimes have been issued against three suspects (Said BAHAJI, Ramsi BINALSHIB und Zakariya ESSABAR).

#### ***United Kingdom***

In the United Kingdom arrests were made in September 2001. These arrests were related to the 11 September attacks and the arrests made in Belgium and The Netherlands during the joint operation of 19 September 2001.

#### ***Italy/Spain***

Arrests were made related to the 11 September attacks.



### **3. OTHER TERRORIST RELATED INCIDENTS**

#### **3.1. General situation**

##### **3.1.1. *Anarchist terrorism***

First signs of the possible resurrection of left wing terrorism viz. anarchist terrorism were visible in the second half of 2001. Under an umbrella name "International Solidarity" attacks were carried out in the southern part of the European Union. The attributed attacks were in solidarity with imprisoned anarchists and against prison regimes. As left wing and anarchist web-sites in the Northern European countries cover this situation in depth, the possibility of resurrection of left wing and anarchist terrorist groups exists, in which the southern terrorist activity might function as an example.

Italy has suffered other terrorist attacks by anarchist groups this year, viz. against the Palazzo di Giustizia (law courts) in Venice, the headquarters of the Lega Nord in Vigonza (Padova), a church in Agrigento and a building of the municipality of Catanzaro.

On 10 April 2001, a powerful bomb caused material damage to the outside of the buildings housing two non-governmental organisations in Rome (Italy). Responsibility was claimed by the group Nucleus for Proletarian and Revolutionary Initiatives. The same night another explosive device was found in Turin outside a former office of FIAT. Police dismantled this bomb by a controlled explosion before detonation.

On 26 August 2001, a letter bomb exploded in the Tourist Information Office of the municipality of Catanzaro.

##### **3.1.2. *Eco-Terrorism***

Radical environmentalist and animal rights movements have maintained a limited campaign. Nevertheless, the material damage they caused was extensive.

### **3.2. Law enforcement and judicial activity**

#### *Italy*

In Italy, sixty members of the Italian anarchist group Solidarietà Internazionale were arrested on 18 September 2001. They were allegedly preparing terrorist attacks against Milan's cathedral and other targets in the same city.

### **4. RESUME**

The September 11 attacks in the USA have marked a new era in the fight against terrorism, as well as in the terrorist theatre. The developments in the so-called war on terrorism against the ruling Taleban regime in Afghanistan and the Al Qaeda network will be of extreme importance for the future of combating terrorism in the European Union and globally. At the moment Islamic extremist terrorism could be regarded as the main threat against the European Union. However it would be dangerous to focus only on this phenomenon, as other European terrorist groups still remain active, with all possible consequences.

