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NOTE

from : EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator in close consultation with the services of the Commission and the EEAS

to : Council

Subject : Foreign fighters and returnees from a counter-terrorism perspective, in particular with regard to Syria

Jihadists travelling from Europe to Syria and other hotspots in great numbers are a serious problem for European internal security. Urgent action needs to be taken. As requested by the Council in March, this note sets out orientations which would help to address the problem and could be priorities for action¹.

The Council is invited to consider agreeing on the following orientations :

¹ In March 2013, the implications of Sahel / Maghreb on EU internal security were discussed at the Council (6752/13). The Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (CTC) was requested to take work forward in particular on foreign fighters. A first analysis and suggestions for measures - taking into account contributions from the Commission services, EEAS, relevant agencies and Member States - are set out in document 9036/13. The document was discussed in PSC, in the COSI support group and in COTER.

1. Invite the High Representative to task IntCen to provide a monthly overview of the armed groups active in Syria (secular, Islamist, Salafist and Jihadist groups), their composition, objectives, relations with the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and their proximity with Al Qaida.
2. Ask Europol to improve within the Counter Terrorism Analytical Work File, by the end of June 2013 the knowledge of recruitment and facilitation networks, how foreign fighters' travels are organised and financed.
3. Invite the Commission to facilitate a risk analysis exercise to identify the major security risks for the EU from foreign fighters and possible mitigation measures to be presented to the Council in December.
4. Invite the Commission to continue to share the expertise of the Radicalisation Awareness Network with Member States to assist them with the set up of concrete counter- and de-radicalisation projects (dissemination of counter-narratives, support to family and community members, training of frontline staff, etc.) and possibly also provide funding to some of the projects.
5. Ask Member States to reinforce by November 2013 their contributions to Check the Web hosted by Europol, and to explore the possibility for Europol to extend its activities to the monitoring and analysing of social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) with regard to foreign fighters.
6. Invite the High Representative and the Commission to provide a factsheet in all relevant languages on how the EU is supporting the population in Syria in terms of development assistance and humanitarian aid to facilitate communication by EU institutions and Member States to their domestic audiences.

7. Invite the Commission to convene by the end of June 2013 a meeting with the relevant EU and Member States' services and NGO's to explore how to quickly launch humanitarian aid projects in which youngsters that want to help the Syrian population can assist. Such projects would offer viable and credible alternative ways for those that want to go to Syria out of humanitarian conviction.
8. Invite the High Representative, in close collaboration with Member States communication experts (including the network of CT communicators) to draft specific lines to take on EU policy towards Syria to overcome as much as possible the perceived discrepancy between our support for the Syrian opposition and our efforts to prevent individuals from going to Syria, and to underline that travelling to fight is an ineffective way of providing support to the Syrian population.
9. Invite the High Representative to appoint by the end of 2013 an Arabic speaking EU spokesperson to reach out more effectively to Arab media and audiences.
10. Invite the Netherlands to present to PSC/COSI if possible in November the result of the study it plans to launch in cooperation with other partners to analyse the existing systems of monitoring or alerting about suspicious travel movements and to identify possible gaps that have to be closed.
11. Invite COTER and TWG to establish a new workstream on foreign fighters to coordinate future activities.
12. Invite the Presidency to reach out, before the end of June, to the European Parliament to highlight the importance to establish an EU PNR system in order to allow Member States to detect suspicious travel movements.
13. Instruct the Working Party for Schengen matters to make suggestions by November 2013 for an increased and harmonised use of the SIS alert system.

14. Invite Eurojust to present a report to the Council by November on the outcome of its ongoing work on foreign fighters, in particular the adequacy of the legal framework in the Member States, the criminal policy response, the use of administrative sanctions and strengthening information exchange in the context of investigations and prosecutions, and present specific recommendations.
15. Invite Frontex to provide input and generic analysis to a mapping of the various routes used by foreign fighters and to contribute to a planned handbook with 'risk indicators' for detecting foreign fighters.
16. Invite the High Representative to task the EEAS to carry out high level demarches to priority third countries (Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, GCC countries, Russia, Central Asian Republics, Western Balkans) to
 - stress the importance of addressing the issue of foreign fighters by the country concerned
 - identify, with the support of the Commission and the CTC concrete and practical measures to step up the cooperation and information exchange between the Member States and the third countries, including among police and justice officials
 - discuss and identify potential capacity building needs
 - discuss the role that satellite TV and Internet play in the radicalisation process and how the countries concerned can address this.
17. Invite the High representative to explore, in cooperation with the Commission, whether and if so which capacity building assistance, workshops etc could be provided quickly, either by re-orienting existing programmes or by launching new projects (this is particularly important with regard to the Maghreb, the Western Balkans and Turkey).
18. Invite the High representative to set up, via the EU delegations, regular exchanges among liaison officers of the Member States, either country or regional based.

19. Invite the High representative to organise, in cooperation with the CTC and the Commission, a series of ad hoc meetings in Brussels with government experts from the various regions (Maghreb, Western Balkans, Gulf, Russia/Central Asia, Middle East as well as with the Arab League) to discuss the security situation, the measures taken by the various countries and concrete steps for further cooperation, including with EU agencies.
20. Invite the High representative to produce Heads of Mission reports on the situation with regard to the relevant third country and measures which could be taken to step up cooperation, information exchange and capacity building.
21. Invite the Presidency and the Commission to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation and information exchange with the US at the upcoming JHA ministerial on 13/14 June in Dublin.
22. Invite the CTC, in close consultation with the Commission and the EEAS, to present a report on the implementation of these measures to a joint meeting of COSI/PSC in November in preparation of a follow up discussion at the December JHA Council.
