

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



EEAS

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NOTE

from: Counter-Terrorism Team - Global Issues VI.B.1

to: PSC-COSI

Subject: Non-paper: Syria Foreign Fighters: strategic engagement plan.

Non-paper

Syria Foreign Fighters

Strategic Engagement Plan

Threat

A significant proportion of those currently fighting in Syria come from outside the country. The number is currently estimated to exceed 10,000 from a range of nationalities: the vast majority (some estimate around 70%) come from Maghreb and Levant, with significant numbers from the Gulf, Russia and the Caucasus. Many European Foreign Fighters are with groups that subscribe to extremist ideologies, such as Jabhat al-Nusra (JaN), which has publicly associated itself with Al Qaeda; or Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS); or Ahrar a-Sham. On their return to their home countries, some of these Fighters – whether acting on their own initiative, or tasked by AQ and like-minded groups – may pose a significant and growing threat to Europe, as well as to regional stability.

Background

On 21 November PSC-COSI broadly endorsed the non-paper, Terrorist Threat Emanating from Syria: External Action (Council Doc. 16191/13). The non-paper was developed by the EEAS-chaired Syria FF (external) working group, and aims to complement the CTC's paper (Council Doc. 15955/13).

This Strategic Engagement Plan, developed in conjunction with CTC and Commission services, is intended to help put into effect the proposals relating to third country engagement. The strategic priority is to contain the threat – staunch the flow of new recruits; and that the threat does not bleed further beyond the Syria/Iraqi borders. The secondary goal is to lay the groundwork to defeat the terrorist threat within Syria. This Plan aims to:

- ensure that we engage systematically and comprehensively with significant source countries and those along key transit routes, including to enable project-based delivery;
- ensure that we engage systematically and comprehensively with those priority countries who can help us achieve our objectives ('multipliers').

It does not aim to be exhaustive – Syria Foreign Fighters will continue to be raised in all appropriate third country contacts. Rather, this Engagement Plan should be seen as covering priority, additional work. It is part of our wider efforts to counter the terrorist threat emanating from Syria, set in the broad context of EU-Syria relations. The Plan will need to be refreshed regularly.

Implementation

For this plan to be implemented effectively, we will need:

- Close co-ordination with wider related work, such as EU CT political dialogues, multilateral cooperation at UN/GCTF/G8, and wider Syria-related work. Identifying additional opportunities for engagement, as well as cross-cutting issues, will be essential.
- Active MS support: these proposals should be seen as complementary to actions by EU MS, not in place of them. COTER should act as a clearing house for co-ordinating activities or sharing information (e.g. reports of EEAS-Commission-CTC visits, updates on MS contacts), elevating to PSC-COSI as appropriate.
- Regular reporting and analysis of the situation on the ground. IntCen assessment, and regular MS input, will be essential.
- EU HoMs reporting on the issue, to refine and target our messaging.
- Informal brainstorming with CT/security actors, in particular with those currently active in Syria, to inform our picture and identify possible options.
- Implementation to be overseen by the Syria FF working group, chaired by EEAS and including CTC and Commission, updating COTER as appropriate.

Last updated: 8 May 2014

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Where	Why	What – priority asks	How	When
Neighbours				
Turkey <i>Priority 1</i>	Contain: One of the main transit routes for European FF into Syria. Recruitment hubs in major cities, and along border. Also home to large refugee camps, possibly source of some recruitment (as well as FF R&R).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued political engagement • Threat assessment • Enhanced operational co-operation, including single operational gateway on FF • Support to establish passenger information units/APIS • Support regarding aviation security • Joint counter-radicalisation/re-direction, including in N Africa • Enhance Turkish cooperation with Radicalisation Awareness Network • Enhanced co-operation with EUROPOL, EUROJUST, FRONTEX 	EEAS-Commission-CTC visit, core script	Visit April 2014
			CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission	11 February, follow up in Q2-Q3
			MS engagement	Ongoing
			Identification of possible EU (or other) funding streams: joint scoping visits as appropriate	Q2 2014
			EU-Turkey CT dialogue	June 2014
			EU-Turkey Political Dialogue	June 2014

Non-paper

<p>Syria Opposition <i>Priority 1</i></p>	<p>Defeat: Insight into the issue, identification of partners (and appropriate level for engagement), possible initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Identification of possible responses, undermine support for terrorist groups, develop targeted Prevent messaging 	<p><i>tbc</i></p>	
<p>Lebanon <i>Priority 1</i></p>	<p>Contain: Home to large numbers of refugees, as well as violent spill-over from Syria. Source of some recruitment (on both sides of the conflict), as well as FF R&R. Build on existing border security co-operation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Setting up of third land border regiment • Extension and deepening of current EU Integrated Border Management mission • Explore possible assistance in relocating high-risk prisoners from Rumieh prison • Support to elaborate national CT strategy and legislation, as well as training of judges and prosecutors 	<p>CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission</p>	<p>11 February, follow up in Q2-Q3</p>
			<p>EEAS-Commission-CTC visit</p>	<p>Visit March 2014</p>
			<p>Identification of possible EU (or other) funding streams: joint scoping visits as appropriate</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
			<p>EU-Lebanon Political Dialogue</p>	

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Jordan <i>Priority 2</i>	Contain: Home to large refugee camp, probable source of some recruitment (as well as FF medical, rest and recuperation, etc). Extensive community of Syrian refugees living in host communities in difficult economic situation. Increased social unrest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Support to enhance legal and judicial framework • Expansion of ongoing IcSP project to promote the Amman message. • Joint counter-radicalisation work 	CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission	11 February, follow up in Q2-Q3
			EEAS-Commission-CTC visit	Visit March 2014
			Identification of possible EU (or other) funding streams: joint scoping visits as appropriate	Q2 2014
			MS contacts	Ongoing
Iraq <i>Priority 1</i>	Contain & Defeat: Requested assistance on CT. Suffering from FF overflow. Regional instability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Support in drafting CT element of National Security Strategy, including promotion of Prevent-based approach. • Exploring ways to improve security along Iraq-Syria border. 	CTC-EEAS visit	Initial visit, 8-12 Dec '13; return visit, April '14
			CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission	11 February, follow up in Q2

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop targeted Prevent messaging 	MS contacts	Ongoing
			Identification of possible EU (or other) funding streams: joint scoping visits as appropriate	Q2 2014
Significant non-EU source countries				
KSA <i>Priority 2</i>	Defeat: Significant source of FF recruitment. Influential with Syria Opposition. Private funding of extremist groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threat assessment Identification of possible responses, to include joint counter-narrative development, and counter terrorist financing (private fund-raising) Discussion of satellite TV broadcasts that encourage engaging in the Syrian conflict 	EEAS, CTC visit	Initial visit Jan '14. Follow-up visit Feb '14
			EU-KSA CT dialogue	May 2014
			MS contacts	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UAE Kuwait 	Defeat: Significant source of FF recruitment. Influential with Syria Opposition. Private funding of extremist groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued political engagement, in particular with Qatar 	EEAS, CTC visit to Qatar	Initial visit, Feb '14
			EU-UAE CT dialogue	Q1 2014

Non-paper

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qatar <p><i>Priority 2</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Identification of possible responses, to include joint counter-narrative development, and counter terrorist financing (private fund-raising) 	MS contacts	Ongoing
<p>W Balkans</p> <p><i>Priority 2</i></p>	Contain: Proximity and ease of access to Europe. Around 450 FF from the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Enhanced engagement with EUROJUST , EUROPOL and FRONTEX • Enhanced engagement on Prevent 	<p>CTC-EEAS initial scoping visit to FYRoM and Serbia.</p> <p>High-level regional attendance at Hedayah CVE Strategy workshop</p> <p>Possible regional workshop on Prevent</p>	<p>Initial visit Jan '14</p> <p>Jan '14</p> <p>Q2-Q3 '14</p>
<p>Tunisia</p> <p><i>Priority 2</i></p>	Contain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Access/support to allow joint scoping Prevent work. • Explore what is possible in the content of the peer review and the mobility partnership 	<p>CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission</p> <p>EEAS-Commission-CTC visit</p>	<p>11 February, follow up in Q2</p> <p>Q2 2014 (tbc)</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border management/security (in particular alongside EUBAM) 	MS contacts	Ongoing
Egypt <i>Priority 2</i>	Contain: Home to significant facilitation networks. Risk of becoming destination for FFs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Identification of possible responses, to include joint counter-narrative development, and terrorist financing (private fund-raising) 	CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission	11 February, follow up in Q2
			EEAS-Commission-CTC visit	Q3 2014 (tbc)
			MS contacts	Ongoing
Libya <i>Priority 2</i>	Contain: Significant source and transit country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Identification of possible responses, to include joint counter-narrative development, and targeted border security 	CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission	11 February, follow up in Q2
			MS contacts	Ongoing

Non-paper

Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria • Morocco • Central Asia <i>Priority 3</i>	Contain: source of FF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Identification of possible responses, to include joint counter-narrative development, and terrorist financing (private fund-raising) • Enhanced engagement with EUROJUST , EUROPOL and FRONTEX (mainly for Algeria and Morocco) • Enhanced engagement on Prevent 	CTC-EUSR visit to Algeria	Q1-Q2 2014
			CTC-chaired informal meeting with MENA countries co-organised with EEAS and supported by Commission	11 February, follow up to be hosted by Morocco in Q2
			EU-CA CT working group; EU-CA Security Dialogue	24 April; end May '14
<i>Multipliers</i>				
UN <i>Priority 2</i>	Multilateral engagement regarding Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness • Integrate into CTITF and CTED work plan • Credibility of action • Review of implementation of UN Global CT Strategy in particular on prevention of terrorism 	Official review of implementation of UN Global CT Strategy	June 2014
			EU-UN CT dialogue	

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<p>GCTF <i>Priority 2</i></p>	<p>Multiplier, engaging like-minded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate (non-EU) partners responses; establish best practice • Agree a toolkit for international action 	<p>GCTF initiative on FF co-chaired by The Netherlands and Morocco</p>	<p>February '14 Follow-up May '14</p>
<p>US <i>Priority 1</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Joint contingency planning • Identification of complementary workstreams, in particular terrorist financing • Discussion of joint work on Hezbollah 	<p>EU-US Working group on art. 18 EU-US PNR (DG HOME/EEAS with DHS/FBI)</p> <p>EU-US CT political dialogue</p> <p>US/EU TF seminar</p>	<p>Continuous</p> <p>May '14</p>
<p>Russia <i>Priority 1</i> Review in light of wider developments</p>	<p>Prevention and CVE key theme; potential domestic threat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment • Joint contingency planning 	<p><i>tbc</i></p>	
<p>Other:</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat assessment 	<p>EU-Australia CT dialogue</p>	<p>Q3 2014</p>

Non-paper

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australia• Canada• FATF <p><i>Priority 3</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint contingency planning	EU-Canada CT dialogue	June 2014
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