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#### NOTE

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From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	14555/2/16 REV 2
Subject:	Update on the conclusions, recommendations and way forward on the INTCEN and Europol threat assessments mechanism

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The Standing Committee on Internal Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) is requested to endorse this paper, which was approved by the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) on 17 May 2017.

#### INTRODUCTION

1. With the overall objective to achieve a more comprehensive and future-oriented terrorist threat picture COSI, on 19 December 2016, endorsed a set of findings and recommendations on the basis of reporting from INTCEN and Europol<sup>1</sup>. The need to ensure the continuation of the future-oriented threat assessment reporting to the TWP and COSI by INTCEN and Europol each semester was confirmed. The procedure, as outlined in 8409/2/16 REV 2, will be evaluated by the end of the year.

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<sup>1</sup> 14555/2/16 REV 2

2. In line with the agreed way forward, INTCEN and Europol first presented their findings<sup>2</sup> at the TWP meeting of 18 January 2017. These latest reportings indicate that the overall picture has not changed significantly, especially due to the short time span from the two previous reports, issued in September 2016. While still valid, the findings from the previous exercise have been fine-tuned taking into account latest developments.
3. Due to the fact that the findings do not point towards any major new developments, the six recommendations agreed in December 2016 remain valid. In Annex, the Presidency has indicated actions undertaken to implement the recommendations endorsed.

## **FINDINGS**

- Daesh continues to represent the greatest terrorist threat to Europe and European interests around the world mainly due to Daesh's intent and capability to interact with individuals based in Europe and to encourage them to carry out attacks on European soil. The threat from Al Qaida, albeit secondary to that of Daesh, remains present as a result of the group's intent and to some extent capability to conduct operations within Europe.
- Daesh propaganda keeps calling for supporters to mount (less complex) attacks particularly against soft and opportunity targets in their own countries with the potential to cause mass casualties. This attack methodology makes it harder for competent authorities to detect and disrupt terrorist attacks. The organisation provides “lone actors” and small cells – arguably both with knowing and/or unwitting support structures – practical advice and best techniques on weapons, methods and targets’ selection. It remains capable of swiftly adjusting its *modi operandi* including conventional and unconventional warfare techniques used in Syria and Iraq.

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<sup>2</sup> INTCEN: EEAS (2017) 10081 of 17 February 2017 ("Six Monthly Assessment of the Threat from Islamist Terrorism: part 1 - Europe" (*EU CONFIDENTIAL*)).  
Europol: 5499/17 (EDOC #870884 – v3 ("An Outlook on Developments in Jihadist Terrorism" (*EU RESTRICTED*))).

- All major jihadist terrorist organisations continue to use social media for the purposes of communication, radicalization, recruitment and incitement of attacks. This provides both qualitative (targeted audience) and quantitative (vast audience) benefit. The main distribution tools for jihadist propaganda are freely available through encrypted communications software, also used for operational communication.
- Attacks outside of Daesh held territory have been committed by experienced fighters who have been dispatched to Europe from the conflict zone; “lone actors” inspired/recruited by Daesh media/propaganda; those who have contacts in conflict zones from whom they receive advice/direction; frustrated jihadists prevented from travelling to the conflict zone; and Daesh-recruited/influenced asylum seekers and those with refugee status.
- It is highly likely that when Daesh loses its strongholds in Syria/Iraq – in addition to the losses the group suffered in Libya - Daesh fighters may seek to move to other "theatres of jihad" or to relocate/disperse in the region. As a result of this Daesh might go further underground, similar to core Al Qaida, and still be capable of planning external attacks and inspire jihadists in the EU to do so.
- Some European fighters might want to return to Europe once Daesh suffers more losses and the ‘Caliphate’ ceases to exist in its current form. Moreover, non-European fighters might opt not to return home for fear of reprisals or more scrutiny and this may lead them to resettle elsewhere.
- In the light of high numbers of potential returnees, special attention should be paid to children born and/or raised in Daesh held territories, including identifying/institutionalizing a holistic approach to address the trauma suffered by these children. These children, if not carefully handled, might pose a threat in the long term.
- Under Daesh, there has been a game change in the role of women, especially in Islamist radicalisation activity. With the intensification of military pressure exerted by the global coalition to counter Daesh, it might consider involving women in terrorist activities. Furthermore, a substantial number of women (especially youths) have moved to conflict zones or joined Daesh, and many appear to be in favour of a greater operational role.

- Investigations into recent attacks have shown that a certain number of the attackers had gone through a very fast radicalisation and had a criminal background which makes it easier for them to exploit their former contacts for terrorist purposes (e.g. buying weapons or forging documents). However, this is not necessarily indicative of an organisational link between terrorist groups and criminal networks.
- The exploitation of irregular migration movements by jihadist terrorist organisations is of continuous concern but so far there is no apparent systematic exploitation of migration flows from terrorist networks. Incidents of terrorists resorting to document fraud to enter the EU have been identified.
- Jihadist terrorist organisations are trying to exploit irregular movements/migration flows to recruit and radicalise migrants along the journey or upon arrival in Europe. This is a concern for the longer term, since social marginalisation and frustration about prospects for the future might lead to radicalisation. There is a risk of polarisation and worrying evidence of an increase in right wing extremism, with the potential for violence against migrants which could in turn lead to further marginalisation/radicalisation.
- A number of terrorist attacks involving aspiring jihadists have been thwarted/foiled by EU CT authorities. Despite this success, given the heightened terrorist threat surrounding Europe, it is to be emphasised that preventing every planned terrorist attack is a real challenge.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

4. The six recommendations agreed in December 2016 remain valid. The matrix in Annex 1 provides a state of play of the implementation.

Recommendations from doc. 14555/2/16	Implementation/future work
<p>1. With a view to improve detection of terrorist suspects (and in particular foreign terrorist fighters), ongoing work on exchange of information and interoperability as well as on the (national) cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence authorities needs to be continued.</p>	<p>A. The Presidency is continuing the work of the previous Presidencies in taking forward the actions of the Roadmap on Information Exchange and Information Management.</p> <p>B. In December 2016, the Commission issued an interim report of the High Level Expert Group on information systems and interoperability setting out the three main aspects of interoperability: the single search interface/ European Search Portal; Shared Biometric Matching Service and the common repository of information. Additional to these main points the notion of data quality and the use of a universal message format to be used as the medium for systems to communicate with each other were also presented. This report constitutes the basis for the future development of EU-wide information systems, infrastructure and interoperability. The final report is envisaged the end of April.</p> <p>C. At the Informal JHA Meeting of January 2017, Ministers agreed that the European Search Portal (SSI) and the shared Biometric Matching Service are viable tools in tackling issues related to the query for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorism and serious crime from mala fide persons who may exploit irregular flows (see 6717/17 "security checks in case of irregular immigration - mapping exercise).</p> <p>D. On 21 December 2016, the Commission issued an evaluation report of the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II)<sup>3</sup> and presented new</p>

<sup>3</sup> COM(2016) 880 final, 21.12.2016.

Recommendations from doc. 14555/2/16	Implementation/future work
	<p>proposals to reinforce the SIS, notably for counterterrorism purposes<sup>4</sup> which are currently being discussed in the relevant Council working parties.</p> <p>E. On 7-8 February 2017, European Police Chiefs met in Berlin to enhance the coordination of European police efforts to fight against terrorism, through information exchange and use of Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC).</p>
<p>2. To address the issue of returnees it is necessary to further work towards a common EU approach for returnees, taking into account the situation in the EU Member States. Building upon the paper of the CTC<sup>5</sup>, the discussions in the G15 and ongoing work by the Commission services, the EEAS and the Radicalisation Awareness Network, a discussion in the JHA Council could give guidance to COSI and relevant working parties to come with concrete operational recommendations or proposals.</p>	<p>A. The CT/Security expert in the EU Delegation in Ankara will convene a meeting of Member States' liaison officers to identify challenges, shared best practices and possible need for political support in cooperation with Turkish authorities as regards coordinated efforts against FTFs pursuant to UNSCR 2178 (2014) ; Further engagement on returnees with neighbouring countries is being prepared.</p> <p>B. Military battlefield information to be shared with law enforcement through Europol; expansion of existing information sharing arrangements with the US, upcoming deployment of Europol personnel to "Operation Gallant Phoenix".</p> <p>COSI meeting in May 2017 will include Interpol and EUNAVFOR representatives for the breakfast meeting. Outcome of the COSI-PSC Breakfast to feed into the Defence-JHA Ministerial meeting on 18 May.</p> <p>C. A future joint COSI/CATS meeting to consider a common EU approach on bringing Daesh to Justice, eg. how to deal with evidence gathered outside the EU, in the battlefield, and where to deal with it/conduct trials;</p>

<sup>4</sup> COM(2016) 881, 882 and 883 final, 21.12.2016.

<sup>5</sup> 14799/16 (CTC-paper on foreign terrorist fighter returnees to be discussed at the JHA-Council on 8-9 December 2016).

Recommendations from doc. 14555/2/16	Implementation/Future work
	<p>D. On 14 March 2017, COSI will discuss the particular challenges of returning children from Daesh-controlled territory, on the basis of the outcome of the questionnaire of the CTC (6900/17).</p> <p>E. The Radicalisation Awareness Network is continuing work with a view to prepare a manual of returnee interventions (including practical advice and guidance to practitioners) to be presented in June 2017 (see also actions under point 4 related to the network of prevent policy makers).</p> <p>F. On 15 March 2017, the TWP/SIS/SIRENE will discuss post-hit procedures.</p>
<p>3. Explore possible areas of practical cooperation between the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG) and Europol, while fully respecting the sole competence of Member States for national security. Lessons learned from recent attacks clearly show that (efficient national)_cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence actors is needed, maintaining a clear distinction between criminal intelligence and security intelligence. For further strengthening of cooperation between intelligence and law enforcement efforts at national level are crucial.</p>	<p>A. In January 2017, the CTG held a second ‘fact-finding’ mission at Europol premises.</p>

Recommendations from doc. 14555/2/16		Implementation/Future work
4.	<p>Prepare a discussion at the political level on various aspects of terrorist travel, for example exploitation of illegal migration networks by terrorists' travel, exploring whether there is a need to exchange information on criminal antecedents of foreign terrorist fighters and how to prevent violent radicalisation, focusing on priority areas, <i>inter alia</i> in asylum centres.</p>	<p>A. The guidelines for the EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism<sup>6</sup> will be reviewed and updated where appropriate in order to reflect the changes in the terrorist environment and ensure effective action at national and EU level. [A first draft will be submitted to the TWP on 15 March and subsequently to COSI and to the June JHA Council for endorsement].</p> <p>B. The Commission launched the Network of national Prevent policy-makers. Discussions on a number of policy aspects mentioned in this assessment <i>inter alia</i> the radicalisation of youths, polarisation between different societal groups as a consequence of the migration crisis, the threat from far right groups, the radicalisation of asylum seekers and the impact on radicalisation by returnees are envisaged for the coming months.</p> <p>C. The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) is working to tackle <i>inter alia</i> the challenges of polarisation and radicalisation among migrant communities (work under the RAN roadmap on polarisation including e.g. the development of practical approach for police and schools to tackle and prevent polarisation and possibility for follow up workshops).</p> <p>D. A political discussion on the aspects of terrorist travel should build on the upcoming presentation by INTCEN report on irregular movements by jihadist terrorist organisations (to be presented to TWP on 17 May), as well as Europol and Frontex risk analysis.</p>

<sup>6</sup> 13469/1/14 REV 1.

Recommendations from doc. 14555/2/16	Implementation/Future work
	<p>E. On 8 December 2016, the Commission presented an Action Plan to strengthen the European response to travel document fraud<sup>7</sup>. Council conclusions will be submitted to the March JHA Council<sup>8</sup>.</p> <p>F. In the framework of the hotspot approach, Frontex and Europol are providing support with the systematic registration, fingerprinting and where necessary secondary security checks (with the support of Guest Officers).</p> <p>G. On the basis of the paper titled ‘IT Systems for Border Management and Security’ discussed during the Informal JHA Council of January 2017, COSI will do a mapping exercise of security checks in case of irregular immigration to create common standards for minimum security checks and consultation with appropriate databases (6717/17).</p>

<sup>7</sup> COM(2016) 7902 final, 8 December 2016  
<sup>8</sup> 6965/17

<b>Recommendations from doc. 14555/2/16</b>		<b>Implementation/Future work</b>
5.	The question of possible links between organized crime and terrorism needs to be further analysed, including the use by terrorists of human smuggling networks and access to illegal weapons.	<p>A. While the reporting by Europol and INTCEN does not indicate any systematic organisational link between organised crime and terrorism, a more detailed analysis could be useful, such as a specific presentation to inform discussions in the TWP with a view to identify possible further actions.</p> <p>B. The exploitation of irregular movements by jihadist terrorist organisations will be further addressed through an INTCEN report which will be presented to the TWP on 17 May 2017.</p> <p>C. Europol and INTCEN to look into the procurement routes, acquisition and possible use of explosives precursors by terrorists. The outcome of such an analysis could then feed into the review of Regulation 98/2013 by the Commission in consultation with the Standing Committee on Precursors.</p>

Recommendations from doc. 14555/2/16	Implementation/Future work
<p>6. In accordance with efforts underway within the EU Internet Forum, Member States are encouraged to second experts to the EU IRU, in order to increase the volume of referrals to deal with terrorist use of the internet. Member States are also encouraged to cooperate closely with and complement relevant EU initiatives such as the European Strategic Communication Network and the EU Civil Society Empowerment Programme.</p>	<p>A. Currently, the IRU has only three SNEs from Member States. More are needed. The volume of referrals continues to increase (over 23 000) whilst ensuring that Member States' online operational and analytical needs are met.</p> <p>B. As a follow-up to the 2nd ministerial of the EU Internet Forum, the Civil Society Empowerment Programme will be launched with a kick-off event in March 2017, setting the ground for networking, partnerships and training for over 400 civil society partners throughout the EU on providing alternative narratives on multiple online platforms.</p>

