



## **Terrorism and Counter-terrorism – A View from Europe**

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### **Abstract**

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In his presentation the author initially focuses on the emerging threats in the maritime domain, as well as terrorist attacks on land. He also provides a survey of counter-terrorism activities currently undertaken by the European Union and Germany and concludes his analysis with the Nine-Point Security Plan, as outlined by German Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel on 28th July, 2016 in Berlin.

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The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) is a private institute for research and consultancy. The ISPSW is an objective, task oriented and politically impartial institute.

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## Analysis

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### Preliminary Remarks

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to attend the Joint Conference organised by the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) on the subject of *Maritime Domain* and *Maritime Cooperation*. I would first like to extend my thanks to Dr. Norbert Eschborn, the Foundation's representative here in Yangon, and the MISIS for inviting me to this preeminent event.

My presentation *Terrorism and Counter-terrorism – A View from Europe* follows a request to treat both the emerging threats in the maritime domain, as well as terrorist attacks on land. I shall also provide a survey of counter-terrorism activities currently undertaken by the European Union and Germany and will conclude with the Nine-point Security Plan, as outlined by German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel, on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2016 in Berlin.

### The Maritime Threat

Allow me to begin with a definition of the *Maritime Domain*.

Maritime domain defines “all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on sea, ocean, or other navigable waterways, including all maritime related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, and vessels and other conveyances”.

In the maritime domain we presently face several threats ranging from maritime terrorism, piracy and armed robbery, territorial disputes in the regional seas, trafficking of illicit narcotics, trafficking of weapons, human trafficking, environmental degradation, and global climate change.

How does NATO Admiral Clive Johnstone view the potential maritime threats caused by terrorists? He recently expressed his concern that the so-called Islamic State (IS) is seeking to establish its own maritime force to spread its activities into the Mediterranean. These activities could include launching attacks against cruise liners, oil terminals, or container ships.

In this context we should not forget the plans of the Al-Qaida chief planner for maritime terrorism, Abdul Al Rahman Al Nashiri, also known as the Prince of the Sea, who was arrested in November 2002 in the United Arab Emirates. Nashiri had developed a strategy which included the following four elements:

- Ramming or blowing up medium-sized ships in the vicinity of other ships or in harbours;
- Attacking super tankers from the air with small planes, packed with explosives;
- Underwater attacks against ships using divers;
- Attacks against cruise liners and taking hostages

Maritime terrorism, like all forms of terrorism, stems predominantly from political, ideological or religious sources. Terrorists thus seek to identify and effectively hit industrial infrastructures.

They may focus their attention on those so-called choke points and mega-harbours which account for 75 percent of all international sea transport activities and that are sustained by around 50,000 ships that utilize 2,800 ports.



The strategically important Strait of Malacca is one such critical choke point. It connects the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea and the Pacific. It is the most significant trade route between the Far East, the Gulf States and Europe. Approximately 90.000 ships use the Strait every year and one third of the world trade, 80 percent of oil exports to East Asia and two thirds of LNG exports pass through the Strait of Malacca.

Should a super tanker be sunk in the Strait of Malacca it would block all traffic, thereby forcing shipping to fall back on the Indonesian Sunda and Flores Passage. This would result in a detour of at least 1.000 km and two extra days at sea. The resulting costs would increase by approximately \$ 8 billion per year.

As the largest of the world's ports are located in South and East Asia, terrorists focus their planning on such ports as Kobe, Tokyo, Yokohama, Pusan, Shanghai, Kaohsiung, Hong Kong and Singapore. Mega ports in the United States and Europe, such as Los Angeles and Rotterdam, may also range within terrorist focus.

Several successfully executed maritime attacks demonstrate terrorist intentions:

#### **October 2000**

A successful attack was carried out against the U.S. destroyer USS Cole in Yemen. Seventeen U.S. Sailors were killed, and 39 wounded.

#### **October 2002**

The French oil tanker Limburg was attacked off Ash Shahir by a terrorist group with connections to Al Qaeda. One member of the crew was killed and 90.000 tons of oil spilled into the Gulf of Aden. The monthly container traffic in Yemen shrank from 43.000 to 3000. The country's economy declined by 1% of GDP and 3.000 dockworkers were made redundant.

#### **February 2004**

The Abu Sayyad Group attacked a ferry in the Philippines, 116 people lost their lives.

#### **August 2005**

Israel's security service Shin Bet warned four Israeli cruise liners – en route to Turkey – about a possible terror attack, and redirected their ships to Cyprus.

#### **November 2008**

Ten members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamic militant organisation based in Pakistan, carried out a series of twelve coordinated shootings and bombing attacks across Mumbai which lasted four days, and resulted in 164 fatalities and at least 308 injured. The attackers travelled by sea from Karachi, Pakistan, across the Arabian Sea, hijacked an Indian fishing trawler, killed four members of the crew and forced the captain to sail to Mumbai. After murdering the captain, the attackers entered Mumbai on a rubber dinghy.

#### **July 2009**

Egypt's security authorities prevented an attack against the Suez Canal and the adjacent oil pipeline. According to sources in Cairo the terror group consisted of 24 Egyptians and one Palestinian.

#### **July 2010**

A suicide attack was carried out by the Abdullah Azzam Brigade (a militant group with connections to Al Qaeda) on the Japanese oil tanker M. Star in the Strait of Hormuz. One member of the crew was injured and the hull severely damaged.



In view of time constraints, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to focus here on the terrorist attacks in 2016. On August 5, Indonesia's elite counter-terrorism forces arrested six Indonesian men who allegedly plotted to attack Marina Bay in Singapore, using rockets launched from Batam Island, Indonesia.

On October 13, 2016, the U.S. military launched cruise missile strikes on three coastal radar sites in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen, in retaliation to failed missile attacks on a U.S. Navy destroyer.

Allow me to turn to the issue of land-based terrorist attacks.

### Land-based Terrorist Attacks

Devastating, coordinated attacks were carried out in Paris on the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015, which brought to mind the sophisticated terrorist attacks in Mumbai, in 2008. Three suicide bombers struck outside the Stade de France during a football match. This first attack was followed by several mass shootings, and a suicide bombing at cafés and restaurants. Gunmen carried out an additional mass shooting and took hostages at a concert in the Bataclan theatre, which culminated in a standoff with police. The attackers were either shot or detonated themselves when police raided the theatre.

During the attacks, executed by three, three-member groups, 130 people were killed, 368 injured, 99 of them severely. Seven assassins died at the scenes of their attacks. On 18<sup>th</sup> November, Abdelhamid Abaaoud (29), the presumed lead operative of the attacks was killed in a police raid in Saint Denis, along with two others. The IS claimed responsibility for the attacks.

On 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2016, Salah Abdeslam (27), one of the Paris attack suspects, was shot and arrested in a police raid in the Molenbeek district of Brussels following a four-month international manhunt. Abdeslam, a twenty-seven year-old French national raised in Brussels, fled Paris by car to Belgium, a mere few hours after the 13<sup>th</sup> November attacks in 2015. Police believe he also co-masterminded the logistics of the Paris attacks and escorted the three suicide bombers, who detonated themselves at the Stade de France.

On 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2016, the terrorist Nabil Fadli (28) walked up to a tour group visiting Sultanahmet Square in the historic centre of Istanbul and detonated himself, killing thirteen people including twelve Germans. Having eluded security measures at the time, Fadli entered Turkey from Syria on 5<sup>th</sup> January, and was registered and fingerprinted as a refugee. Fadli was a member of the IS.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2016, three coordinated suicide bombings occurred in Belgium: two at Brussels Airport Zaventem, and the third at Maelbeek metro station in central Brussels. A total of five attackers were involved. Ibrahim El Bakhraoui (29) and Najim Laachraoui (24) died in a suicide bombing at Brussels Airport. Mohamed Abrini (31) assisted them in the airport bombings. He was arrested on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

The younger brother of Ibrahim El Bakhraoui, Khalid El Bakhraoui (27), died in a suicide bombing at Maelbeek metro station. Osama Krayem (24) assisted him in the suicide bombing. He was also arrested on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2016.

32 civilians were killed in the attacks, and a further 300 people injured, 62 of them critically.

On the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016, 85 people were killed and 308 injured when a cargo truck was deliberately driven into crowds celebrating Bastille Day on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, France. The driver, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel (31), was a Tunisian national resident in France. The terrorist was finally shot in the ensuing gun battle with police. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack.



In the month of July, Germany was confronted with several terror attacks.

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 2016, a seventeen-year-old Afghan refugee, Riaz Khan Ahmadzai, also known as Muhammad Riyad, severely injured four tourists from Hong Kong with a knife and hatchet on a regional train near Würzburg. A fifth person was injured outside the train once it had been stopped when the attacker sought to flee the scene. He was later shot by a Special Forces Commando. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2016, eighteen-year-old Ali David Sonboly, of dual nationality (Iranian-German) carried out a shooting in the vicinity of the Olympia shopping centre in Munich. Ten people were killed, including the perpetrator, and 35 others were injured. He was located by police approximately one kilometre from the shopping centre where he then killed himself. Though not motivated by the IS, Sonboly had psychological problems, and admired people who committed amok-attacks.

And, finally, my last example: On 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, a twenty-seven-year-old Syrian asylum seeker, Mohammad Daleel, detonated himself outside a wine bar in the German town of Ansbach. He had been refused entry to a music festival after failing to show an entrance ticket. Fifteen people were injured in the blast, four of whom remain in serious condition. The perpetrator had been denied asylum a year earlier, and had a history of suicide attempts. Police found a video on the bomber's phone showing his declared support for the leader of Islamic State, Bakr al Baghdadi.

Security sources in Germany are convinced that the perpetrator in Würzburg and Ansbach had been in contact with the so-called Islamic State "at least for a period of several weeks", and that they had been issued with detailed instructions by members of the IS up to the execution of their respective attacks.

The arrest by Leipzig police of terrorist suspect and Syrian refugee Jaber Albakr on Monday, October 10, 2016 underlines the terrorist threat in Germany. Albakr planned to execute a terrorist attack at Tegel Airport, Berlin, and was equipped with the necessary explosives. On Wednesday, October 12, he committed suicide in his cell.

A few facts – dating from December 2015 –illustrate the terrorist threat posed by European foreign fighters who join the IS in Syria and Iraq.

In its European Union Terrorism Situation Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2016, the European Police Office (Europol) estimated that in 2015 over 5,000 Europeans (now 7,800) travelled to Syria and Iraq. In 2015, 151 people died and over 360 were injured as a result of terrorist attacks in the EU. A total of 1077 individuals were arrested in the EU on terrorism-related charges.

In August 2016, European Security Services determined that seventeen followers of the so-called Islamic State entered Europe disguised as refugees.

German sources claim that by the end of 2015 more than 780 individuals travelled from Germany to Syria and Iraq to join the IS and other terrorist groups as fighters or supporters (in August 2016, more than 800). One-hundred and twenty German nationals have been killed in combat, while 300 returned to Germany, many of them traumatized. Others have acquired combat experience and represent a potential threat to my country.

Radical Islamists in Germany are also actively trying to win over to their cause newly arrived refugees. The German Domestic Intelligence Service (BfV) is aware of more than 340 attempts by conservative Salafists and other Islamists to recruit refugees, especially unaccompanied minors. Approximately 1100 individuals in Germany have been classified as potential terrorists.



## Counter-terrorism Update

The EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) plays an important role in combating international terrorism.

In December 2015, Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, appointed Dr. Gerhard Conrad as Director of the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) at the European External Action Service (EEAS).

Among his chief tasks are the strengthening of cooperation between European intelligence services, and the provision of valuable strategic analyses to EU decision-makers, including topics in and around international terrorism.

Issuing papers, however, will not be enough. Attending meetings of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) as often as possible is also necessary. Among the PSC's key functions is the close auditing of the international situation, along with assistance in policy definition within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the CSDP. I am confident that ambassadorial level intelligence briefings at such meetings will prove fruitful. Furthermore, INTCEN is to be bolstered by an increased staff of over 100 personnel, including "hybrid warfare" analysts.

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) at Europol, under the aegis of the European Council, initiated its activities in The Hague. The ECTC is to function as a reinforced central information hub by means of which member states will be in a position to increase and enhance information-sharing and operational coordination.

The ECTC focuses on tackling the problem of foreign fighters, sharing intelligence and expertise on terrorism financing, online terrorist propaganda and extremism, as well as illegal arms trafficking.

After having surveyed the situation on sea and land allow me to include a few remarks with respect to the use of military means in the air for countering threats posed by the so-called Islamic State. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw, held from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 2016, the Alliance agreed to enhance its support for the Global Coalition of 60 plus states: countering ISL is to be implemented by way of providing direct NATO AWACS support to boost the coalition's situational awareness.

The support is scheduled to commence in October 2016. With their powerful radars, the AWACS planes will operate in international and Turkish airspace, thus enabling them to monitor airspace for hundreds of kilometres into Syrian and Iraqi territories. The planes may also be converted into command posts for coordinating bombing raids and other air operations.

Germany also sent six Tornado reconnaissance jets and a tanker aircraft to Incirlik towards the end of last year as part of the fight against Islamic militants. In April this year, German defence officials revealed plans for a 65 million Euro investment in the airbase. Scheduled for completion in 2017, the proposal included an air control tower, accommodation for troops and combat headquarters.

Furthermore, on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2016, the German Parliament approved Germany's participation in a training mission for Iraq armed forces and Kurdish Peshmerga. Up to 150 German troops are to be deployed in this mission.



### Chancellor Merkel's Nine-Point Security Plan

To conclude allow me to cite the Nine-Point Security Plan as outlined by German Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel, at a Press Conference on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2016 in Berlin.

1. Early Warning System: One goal is to create a system whereby government agencies are able to take immediate action when detecting early signs of radicalization among refugees.
2. Security Personnel: The Federal Government should be authorized to hire additional security forces and acquire advanced equipment "wherever necessary".
3. Decryption Agency: A central agency will be tasked with the decryption of online communications for national security purposes.
4. German Army: The time has come for soldiers of the German Armed Forces to receive the necessary training for deployment in large-scale counter-terrorism operations.
5. Research/Prevention: Research on Islamist terrorist organizations and radicalization is to be bolstered and, in some cases, expanded.
6. Information Sharing: The European Member States should begin sharing intelligence on terrorist suspects at the earliest possible date.
7. Gun Control: It is incumbent upon the European Parliament to legislate restrictive measures relating to the ownership of and trade in firearms at the earliest possible date. At a national level, the online sale of weapons is set to be criminalized in the near future.
8. Intelligence Agencies: Cooperation between allied intelligence agencies should be strengthened and information sharing accelerated.
9. Expulsion: Efforts to expel failed asylum seekers from Germany to safe countries will be accelerated, and the threshold for expulsion lowered

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you very much for your attention, and I look forward to fruitful and interesting discussions.

### Appendix for the discussion: 11 Recommendations

1. States should analyse the ways in which respective intelligence and security services and other Institutions could improve cooperation.
2. Develop a watch list and establish priorities to analyse present and future threats relevant for the country and the region.
3. Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) could strengthen the knowledge base.
4. Bundling information could be a key to success.
5. Analyse Internet websites, e-mail traffic and other means of communication of potential terrorists.
6. Improve information-sharing between selected countries in Asia, the European Union, the United States, Latin America and Africa chiefly by way of foreign intelligence and security services.



7. Use regional expertise on information regarding the maritime domain and other issues on “trade information” with foreign services.
8. Bolstering resources to counter intelligence.
9. Improve encryption systems.
10. Increased involvement of the private sector.
11. Enhance awareness among decision-makers in politics, the armed forces, the business sector and among public about potential threats in the field of economics and industrial espionage, including threats in the maritime domain.

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**Remarks:** The opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

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### About the Author of this Issue

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Dr Peter Roell has been President of the Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) in Berlin since January 2006. His former post was Senior Advisor for Foreign and Security Policy at the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU in Brussels. While in Germany, he served the German Government as Director of the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa (Sub-Sahara) Department and at German embassies in the Near-and Middle East, and in Asia.

Dr Roell studied sinology and political sciences at the universities of Bonn, Taipei and Heidelberg. He gained his Ph.D. from the Ruprecht-Karls-University, Heidelberg.

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