

12th January 2018

Assessment of the terror threat to Denmark

Summary

CTA assesses that the terror threat to Denmark is significant. The threat is primarily posed by militant Islamism and comes from men as well as women. The conflict in Syria and Iraq and the group calling itself Islamic State (IS) are the most important factors in the threat picture.

Attacks with simple means and short planning are the most likely form of terrorist attack in Denmark. The military efforts in Syria and Iraq have reduced the capability of IS to direct large scale, complex attacks in the West and to recruit foreign fighters. Many foreign fighters will stay and fight, but some will seek towards Europe. The access to Europe is, however, restricted by increased security measures, such as intensified control of EU borders. Only a limited number of Danish foreign fighters are expected to return.

IS and other militant Islamists will continue to support and inspire simple terrorist attacks against the West through propaganda and in other ways. The number of attacks in the West has increased in 2017. CTA assesses that radicalization as a result of militant Islamist ideology and propaganda will continue to affect the threat picture regardless of the situation of IS in Syria/Iraq.

The terror threat to Denmark is primarily posed by individuals or small groups which are located in Denmark or a neighbouring country. The threat may emanate from radicalized individuals within Islamist milieus, from refugees and migrants or from other groups. Due to their proneness to violence the radicalization of prison inmates or persons in criminal milieus with access to weapons is particularly worrying.

CTA assesses that attacks in Denmark may target unprotected civilians, including crowded places and transport infrastructure, security authorities and other authorities, perceived violators of Islam and Jewish targets.

CTA assesses that the terror threat posed by political extremist milieus in Denmark is limited, but that the threat from persons with right-wing extremist sympathies has increased. The threat can be directed towards religious minorities, asylum centres, refugees, migrants and towards select politicians as well as related authorities.

Developments in the global threat picture

The global threat picture is still very much affected by foreign militant Islamist groups.¹ The conflict in Syria and Iraq, and the group calling itself Islamic State (IS)² remain the key factors in the threat picture.

The military efforts against IS in Syria and Iraq has reduced the groups capacity. The aim of territorial control of larger areas and a "caliphate" has not been abandoned, and IS will continue to attack local opponents in the region. The "caliphate" takes on a more abstract form, and militant Islamist propaganda encourages support of the "caliphate" by committing attacks in one's home country, particularly in the West.

CTA assesses that the capability of IS to direct large, complex attacks in the West, such as those in Paris in 2015 and Brussels in 2016, is reduced. However, IS is still able to direct and support attacks in the West, and the group's propaganda can still inspire individuals and groups in the West to commit acts of terrorism.

Many European foreign fighters will stay and fight for IS or other militant Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq, but the military pressure means that a growing number will seek to leave the conflict zone. CTA assesses that they will seek to join militant Islamist groups in countries such as Afghanistan, North Africa or Southeast Asia or return to their home countries, which can increase the terror threat in Europe. However, leaving the conflict zone is difficult.

IS has used the flow of refugees and migrants to bring persons to Europe to commit acts of terrorism in Europe. CTA assesses that this has become more difficult due to increased security measures, such as intensified control of EU borders. At the same time, CTA assesses that travel to Europe is still possible, for instance via third countries using stolen or forged travel documents.

Al-Qaida (AQ) still has ambitions to attack the West. AQ's capability primarily lies with groups in North, West and East Africa and in Yemen, which primarily have a local focus. AQ has also established a significant presence in Syria, which may pose a threat to the West.

Militant Islamists use encryption technologies to disseminate propaganda and communicate

¹ For an in-depth review of the elements of the global threat picture affecting the foreign-based terror threat, see the Intelligence Risk Assessment 2017 from the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) on <http://fe-ddis.dk>.

² The group is also referred to as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) and ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), while the Arabic abbreviation Da'esh is also used.

about attack planning. Propaganda from IS and AQ is increasingly supplemented by propaganda from sympathizers with no official affiliation with the groups. At the same time, calls are made for attacks on still more types of civilian targets by means of new attack methods, including methods tested in a conflict zone. This poses a challenge to the authorities in terms of setting up counter-measures. Militant groups, and IS in particular; seek to give an inflated impression of their capability by claiming responsibility for attacks in the West which they are not behind.

The ongoing propaganda, the possibility of more foreign fighters returning and the lack of areas to which militant Islamists can travel, have increased the pressure from terrorism on Europe and the West. The number of completed attacks in the West by militant Islamists is higher in 2017 than in 2016. In 2017 there were on average more than six attacks and attempted attacks pr. month. Attacks are primarily aimed at civilian targets and security authorities. Militant Islamists still consider international air traffic, including airports, a particularly attractive target.

Attacks in Europe are overwhelmingly committed by lone individuals who have not been to a conflict zone. The attack in Barcelona in August 2017 showed that there is also capability in Europe to establish attack cells that can operate without being detected by the authorities. In some attacks, the planning was done in another country. Attacks that are planned in one country but executed in another can be particularly difficult to prevent.

In many cases, the perpetrators of attacks in Europe were previously known to the security authorities for sympathizing with militant Islamism. In some instances, individuals went through a rapid radicalization process or had mental or other personal problems. Since the autumn of 2015, a number of persons who entered with the flow of refugees have been involved in attacks, including rejected asylum seekers.

Within right- and left-wing extremist milieus in Europe, there is a will to use violence. Since 2015, a number of attacks, threats and acts of violence against refugees, asylum centres, religious minorities and political opponents have been perpetrated by people with extreme right-wing sympathies.

The terror threat to Denmark

CTA assesses that the terror threat to Denmark remains significant. This means that there are individuals with intent and capability to commit terrorist attacks in Denmark. Terrorist attacks can take place without prior intelligence-based indications. The risk of falling victim to a terrorist attack in Denmark remains limited.

CTA assesses that the terror threat to Denmark mainly emanates from individuals sympathizing with militant Islamism. They are motivated by a belief that Islam is under attack from the West and that Denmark is a legitimate target due to Denmark's active foreign and security policy, including the Danish participation in the international coalition against IS, and perceived insults to Islam, such as the cartoon case.

CTA assesses that the terror threat is primarily posed by individuals or small groups located in Denmark or in a neighbouring country. Attacks with simple means after short planning are the most likely forms of attack. However, the threat of complex attacks in Denmark directed by militant Islamist groups abroad remains, although it is reduced.

Radicalization

Notwithstanding the situation of IS in Syria and Iraq, CTA assesses that militant Islamist ideology and propaganda will have an on-going influence on the threat picture as a consequence of the radicalizing effect it may have.

Socially marginalized and vulnerable young people, including people who have entered Denmark as refugees, may be particularly vulnerable to radicalization. Certain group formations within Islamist milieus, in both physical and virtual communities on social media and in the form of criminal gangs, may also provide a breeding ground for radicalization in a militant Islamist direction. Under some circumstances, militant Islamism may strengthen an existing counterculture and increase the risk of some people turning to violence. In this context, radicalization of individuals within criminal milieus with access to weapons is particularly worrying.

CTA assesses that there will be an enhanced risk of radicalization of inmates as a growing number of people will be serving sentences for terror-related offences in the coming years, and can thus influence fellow inmates in a militant Islamist direction.

Individuals and milieus in Denmark

CTA assesses that individuals and groups within Islamist milieus in Denmark actively seek to promote a militant Islamist agenda. This is done i.e. through dissemination of propaganda, radicalization and recruitment of new individuals to their milieus. Such activities typically take place in closed forums, mainly based in or around major Danish cities and on the internet. There are also people in Denmark who are involved in the facilitation of financial means and equipment to conflict zones.

CTA assesses that support for IS within Islamist milieus in Denmark is less noticeable than previously. AQ has been overshadowed by IS but still meets support among individuals in

Denmark. The support for AQ may increase as IS weakens.

The Islamist milieus are in general less visible than previously. Recruitment for these milieus takes place across ethnic groups and mainly involves young men. There are, however, also women who play an active and independent role in Islamist milieus in Denmark, and who may have a radicalizing influence on other women, men and their own children.

CTA still assesses that a terror threat emanates from individuals with affiliation to Islamist milieus. This threat may take the form of attacks carried out by an individual or a small group of individuals. CTA assesses that people in Denmark with contact to individuals abroad who have capability and intent to commit acts of terrorism may become involved in planning activities or feature as operators or support network in connection with attacks. The threat to Denmark may be enhanced by the presence of individuals with local knowledge of Denmark within militant Islamist groups abroad.

Furthermore CTA assesses that there may be individuals among refugees and migrants who have arrived in Europe and Denmark who can pose a terror threat either because of a direct link to militant Islamist groups abroad or due to radicalization. This threat to Denmark may also emanate from refugees and migrants in countries other than Denmark.

Rejected asylum seekers have been involved in several attacks in Europe. CTA assesses that the denial of asylum may contribute to a potential radicalization process or be a triggering factor for the use of violence which may take the form of terrorism.

Travellers to and returnees from Syria/Iraq

CTA estimates that the number of people who have left Denmark for Syria/Iraq since the summer of 2012 in order to join militant Islamist groups is at least 150. This number may be higher. The number of people who leave for Syria/Iraq has been declining since 2014, and only very few have left within the past year. CTA assesses, however, that there are still individuals associated with Islamist milieus in Denmark who wish to leave for conflict zones.

The vast majority of those who have left for Syria/Iraq are young men, but a growing number of women have left within recent years. Women now make up one in seven of the total number of Danish travellers and almost half of those currently in the conflict zone. Some of the women have brought their children to the conflict zone, and some have had children while there.

The number of returnees to Denmark from Syria/Iraq continues to decline. CTA assesses

that more than a third of those who have left have returned to Denmark. Roughly one fifth is still in the conflict zone. At least a quarter of the travellers are presumed dead. The rest are located in various third countries.

The military pressure on IS also increases the pressure on Danish travellers. Many radicalized travellers are assessed to want to stay and continue the fight, but the current development has resulted in more people wanting to return to Denmark or travel to other countries. However, CTA assesses that it is difficult to leave the conflict zone and get to Europe. A number of the travellers no longer have their passport or residence permit, and returning to Denmark has become less attractive due to the prospect of criminal prosecution. CTA assesses that a limited number of the Danes who are currently in the conflict zone will return to Denmark.

The vast majority of those who have left Denmark have been in Syria/Iraq for more than two years. CTA assesses that individuals who have been with militant Islamist groups like IS have gained a capability to commit acts of terrorism and can be particularly radicalized, brutalized and prone to violence upon their return. This is especially true of men, but also applies to women. CTA assesses that even a few returnees may pose a terror threat to Denmark. It may also increase the threat to Danish interests abroad if such individuals travel to other countries. Returnees to other European countries may also pose a threat to Denmark.

CTA assesses that returnees may contribute to the radicalization of individuals and milieus in Denmark and of fellow inmates if serving a prison sentence.

CTA assesses that the threat from returnees may become apparent within a short time frame, but it may also lie dormant and not appear until later, for example following a triggering event. This may also be the case in relation to minors who together with their parents have stayed with militant Islamists in the conflict zone.

Targets and capability

Militant Islamist calls for attacks against random civilian targets in the West also affect the terror threat to unprotected civilian targets in Denmark such as crowded places and events where many people are gathered and transport infrastructure, including aviation. In addition, CTA assesses that militant Islamists will continue to attempt to attack symbolic targets, primarily security authorities but also other authorities or public officials, individuals, institutions and events that may be perceived as offensive to Islam as well as Jewish targets.

CTA assesses that individuals in Denmark may be inspired by terrorist attacks committed in other Western countries to carry out similar attacks in Denmark, both in terms of choice of target and method. CTA assesses that a successful attack in itself may contribute to inspiring others to carry out attacks and that multiple attacks within a short period of time may enhance this influence. In addition to people with militant Islamist sympathies, others – such as mentally unstable individuals – may also be influenced to commit acts of violence that could be characterized as terrorism.

CTA assesses that the terror threat is primarily posed by men, but that women can also play an operational role in terrorist attacks. CTA assesses that attacks carried out by women in other Western countries may inspire female militant Islamists in Denmark.

People without experience from a conflict zone who are inspired by militant Islamist propaganda or supported by militant Islamists tend to carry out simple attacks using easily accessible means following a short planning phase. These attacks are often carried out by a lone actor or a small group within the local area of the perpetrators. New simple methods are continuously put to use in the attacks. Attacks involving multiple attackers and targets can also occur in Denmark.

CTA assesses that individuals who have gained capability in Syria/Iraq or, for example, from criminal milieus, can carry out simple attacks with greater impact and serial attacks, in which one person or a group carries out consecutive attacks. Strong radicalization and brutalization of the perpetrator may add to the brutality of a terrorist attack.

CTA assesses that individuals in Denmark have the capability to carry out terrorist attacks using easily accessible weapons, such as bladed weapons and small arms, through arson and with small improvised explosive devices or through the use of other readily available means. Such simple attacks can be carried out spontaneously or after a short period of planning. Attacks in a number of European cities, where lorries and other vehicles have been used against large crowds, illustrate how simple attacks can cause major damage.

CTA assesses that militant Islamists in Denmark may carry out attacks using simple chemical substances such as corrosive liquids. Through knowledge-sharing and instruction, militant Islamist groups may enhance the capability of individuals in the West to commit terrorist attacks using chemical substances that are produced from accessible components. CTA assesses that there is still limited capability in Denmark to carry out terrorist attacks using actual chemical warfare agents such as chlorine gas and sarin.

CTA assesses that there is very limited capability to carry out terrorist attacks using biological and radioactive material. CTA assesses that there is no capability to carry out terrorist attacks in Denmark using nuclear material.

CTA assesses that there is capability in Denmark to use drones for simple attacks, for reconnaissance or for intimidation purposes, whereas the capability of militant Islamists to cause serious harmful effect through the use of drones is limited.

CTA assesses that militant Islamist groups do not have the capability to carry out targeted and destructive cyber attacks against IT and telecommunications infrastructure at a level where it would affect Danish society, but that they are attempting to acquire such a capability. CTA assesses that militant Islamist groups will continue to use simple cyber harassment and hacking to give an exaggerated impression of their capability.

In all these areas, the capability to commit terror may be enhanced if sensitive information and/or access are obtained through recruitment or radicalization of key individuals.

Other terror threats

CTA assesses that the political, ethnic and religious dimensions of the conflicts in countries such as Syria and Iraq may lead to potentially violent confrontation between individuals affiliated with the affected groups in Denmark. However, CTA assesses that the terror threat to Denmark emanating from such confrontation is limited.

There are left- and right-wing extremist milieus in Denmark that are prepared to use violence to advance their political agenda. CTA assesses that these milieus are influenced by radicalizing propaganda i.e. on social media and by contact with and through groups abroad. CTA assesses that the terror threat emanating from individuals in left- and right-wing extremist milieus is limited.

There is among persons with right-wing extremist sympathies a continuous focus on the refugee situation and immigration in general. CTA assesses that there amongst persons with right-wing extremist sympathies in particular is an enhanced capability and/or access to weapons as well as intent to use violence, and that the threat emanating from individuals with sympathy for right-wing extremism has increased. CTA assesses that the threat can be directed at religious minorities, asylum centres, refugees, migrants as well as certain politicians and related authorities.

Left-wing extremist violence may be directed at political opponents as well as organizations and companies to whom these milieus ascribe a symbolic value. CTA assesses that actions

from right-wing extremists may lead to a backlash, mainly from people within left-wing extremist milieus in Denmark.

Social media are increasingly used for making threatening and hostile comments, for example against public figures, and for disseminating rumours and fake news. While the majority of these comments do not lead to actual attack planning, CTA assesses that such commentary may lead people who are mentally unstable or easily influenced to commit violence that could constitute acts of terrorism.

The terror threat to Danes and Danish interests abroad

CTA assesses that there is a terror threat to Danish interests abroad. This is particularly true in non-Western countries or regions where militant Islamists have capability, have declared their loyalty to IS or AQ or have a special focus on Denmark. A growing number of returnees for countries in the Middle East, North and West Africa as well as Central, South and Southeast Asia may increase the threat to Western interests in these countries. Militant Islamists abroad may increasingly focus on attacking local Western, including Danish, targets as it becomes increasingly difficult to travel to conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq.

CTA assesses that the threat may be aimed at Western interests such as diplomatic representations, companies, NGOs, journalists and tourists. Attacks in recent years against hotels and other tourist destinations illustrate that tourists and locations where Westerners congregate remain of interest to militant Islamists. CTA assesses, however, that the terror threat to Danish tourists does not differ from the threat to other Western tourists.

Danish diplomatic representations and other Danish presence abroad, including employees at Danish companies, may be seen as symbolic targets, providing an opportunity to target Denmark without actually carrying out an attack in Denmark. Danish representations may also become targets of terrorist attacks because they may be perceived as less secure than, for example, the representations of other larger Western countries. Moreover, Danes may be hit randomly by terrorist attacks abroad when visiting places that may constitute local terrorist targets, such as large crowds, certain tourist destinations or special public buildings. This also applies to stays in Western countries.

CTA assesses that the terror threat to Danish interests abroad may change on short notice in situations where circumstances or actions in Denmark are exploited by militant Islamists or others to draw negative attention to Denmark. Social media can play an essential role in the rapid, global dissemination hereof.

CTA assesses that the threat of kidnapping associated with the threat of terrorism is most

significant in areas where militant Islamist groups are active, including conflict zones and neighbouring areas. Kidnappings are part of militant Islamist group’s financial foundation as well as propaganda. The risk of kidnapping may increase in situations where militant Islamist groups, such as IS in Syria and Iraq, lose other sources of funding.

CTA assesses that attacks against Danish targets abroad may be carried out using simple and easily accessible means but that large and complex attacks, including bomb attacks, may also occur, particularly in countries where militant Islamist groups have the capability for such attacks.

Information on country-specific risks is provided via the travel advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark on www.um.dk.

Selected key concepts in the Assessment of the terror threat to Denmark

Islamism is a political ideology with a vision of a society based on Islamic values. An Islamist is a person who professes this ideology.

Extremism is a term used to describe radical behaviour or views, particularly within politics or religion.

Radicalization is a dynamic process in which an individual increasingly accepts the use of violence to achieve political, religious or ideological ends.

Types of attacks

Inspired: The perpetrator is inspired by militant Islamism and plans an attack on his own.

Supported: The perpetrator is in contact with one or more people who incite, guide or in other ways support the attack plans.

Directed: An attack is sanctioned and/or planned close to the senior leadership of a terrorist group.

Militant Islamism is an interpretation of Islamist ideology which legitimizes the use of violence to achieve political, religious or ideological ends.

Threat levels

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <u>Very significant</u> | | Significant |
| There is a specific threat. There is capability, intent, planning and possibly initiation. | | There is a known threat. There is capability, intent and planning. |
| <u>General</u> | | Limited |
| There is a general threat. There is capability and/or intent and possibly planning. | | There is a potential threat. There is limited capability and/or intent. |
| <u>None</u> | | |
| There are no indications of any threat. There is no known capability or intent. | | |