Assessment of the terror threat to Denmark

March 2020
The assessment of the terror threat to Denmark is the overall assessment of the terror threat to Denmark and Danish interests abroad by the Centre for Terror Analysis (CTA).

The assessment is based on a considerable number of underlying CTA analyses, the majority of which are classified, ranging from the threat to specific individuals, locations and events to broader trend analyses and assessments of phenomena with an impact on the terror threat to Denmark and Danish interests abroad.

The assessment mainly describes the terror threat from militant Islamism and, to a lesser extent, from right and left-wing extremism. However, it also points to a number of other threats which may be of importance to the overall assessment of the terror threat. Finally, it contains a separate section on the terror threat to Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

The assessment is based on intelligence that has been processed before 1 March 2020.

CTA is a fusion centre comprising staff from five Danish authorities (the Danish Security and Intelligence Service, the Danish Defence Intelligence Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Emergency Management Agency and the National Centre of Investigation).
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*Cover photo:* Christiansborg Palace Square, anti-terror barriers, The Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces.
SELECTED KEY CONCEPTS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF THE TERROR THREAT TO DENMARK

**Concepts**

**Foreign fighter:** an individual who has travelled to or returned from a conflict zone (such as Syria/Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan or Yemen) and whose aim was to take part in the conflict.

**Intent:** will/intent to employ a certain capacity against a certain target or group of targets.

**Capacity:** the accessible means (personnel, technology, equipment etc.) combined with the ability (training, skills, logistics etc.) to use these means to the fullest in a potential attack.

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

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

**Extremism:** the will to use violence or commit other illegal acts in order to change existing social conditions.

**Radicalization:** a dynamic process in which a person increasingly accepts the use of violence to achieve political, religious or ideological ends.

**Lone actor:** a person who attacks on his own. The person may have been in contact with other militant individuals or groups.

**Terror threat levels**

- **VERY SIGNIFICANT**
  - There is a specific threat.
  - There is capacity, intent, planning and possibly initiation.

- **SIGNIFICANT**
  - There is a known threat.
  - There is capacity, intent and planning.

- **GENERAL**
  - There is a general threat.
  - There is capacity and/or intent and possibly planning.

- **LIMITED**
  - There is a potential threat. There is limited capacity and/or intent.

- **NONE**
  - There are no indications of any threat. There is no known capacity or intent.

**Types of attacks**

- **Inspired:** The perpetrator is inspired by militant Islamism or political extremism and plans the attack on his/her 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.
1. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE TERROR THREAT TO DENMARK

CTA assesses that the terror threat to Denmark remains significant. According to PET’s definition, this means that there is a known threat, capacity, intent and planning\(^1\).

Militant Islamists remain the largest terror threat to Denmark, and this threat is significant (see section 2). The threat mainly emanates from sympathizers of the group calling itself Islamic State (IS). These are primarily individuals with links to certain Islamist milieus in Denmark where activities take place that may have a radicalizing effect on the people involved and may lead to individuals or small groups committing acts of terrorism. Individuals or small groups outside these milieus who have in other ways been subject to a radicalization process, for example through various online activities, may also pose a terror threat. Furthermore, a terror threat may emanate from individuals who are or have been located in the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq and from radicalized prison inmates, once they are released. The threat comes from individuals in Denmark as well as individuals from other countries, including the countries neighbouring Denmark.

However, based on the development in the global threat picture, CTA assesses that the terror threat to Denmark from IS has declined. The war in Syria has entered its ninth year, and IS has not abandoned its fight to establish a “caliphate”. However, as a result of the territorial losses suffered by IS in Syria/Iraq, the capacity of the group to carry out complex, directed attacks in the West, including Denmark, has been reduced. The official IS propaganda machine is also weakened, and the quantity as well as the quality of the propaganda have decreased considerably.

Al-Qaeda maintains its ambitions to hit targets in the West, but the organization does not have the same capacity as previously.

Developments in the global threat picture are reflected in CTA’s statistics covering attacks in the West. As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of militant Islamist terrorist attacks in the West has significantly declined since the autumn of 2017\(^2\). In 2018, there was an average of 2.4 foiled or successful terrorist attacks per month compared to 6.7 per month in 2017. The downward trend continued in 2019 with an average of 1.8 foiled or successful attacks in the West per month. The number of foiled and successful attacks is now approaching the level for the years prior to IS establishing the “caliphate” in Syria/Iraq.

"However, based on the development in the global threat picture, CTA assesses that the terror threat to Denmark from IS has declined.”

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1. The threat to Denmark may be kept at “significant” with no planning in progress, as Denmark has previously been the target of attacks, attempted attacks or attack planning.
2. It should be noted that data on the number of foiled and successful terrorist attacks may vary depending on the method used for assessing the data and the available information.
Figure 1: Foiled and successful attacks in the West from 2012 to 2019.

Figure 2 shows that the number of fatalities in terrorist attacks in the West has fallen notably since 2017 and is approaching the level prior to the IS “caliphate”. One reason is that all terrorist attacks in 2018 and 2019 were committed by lone actors, who were inspired, but not directed or supported, by militant Islamist groups such as IS.

Figure 2: Fatalities from attacks in the West from 2012 to 2019.
The majority of the approximately 5,000 foreign fighters from Europe who have joined IS or other militant Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq since 2012 have since returned to the countries they left, have died or been captured. Those captured are mainly detained in camps and prisons located in north-eastern Syria. This is for example the case for approximately half of the remaining adult travellers from Denmark with Danish citizenship.

Despite the general improvement in the global threat picture and the reduced terror threat to Denmark from IS, CTA still assesses that there are individuals in Denmark and abroad, including the countries neighbouring Denmark, who sympathize with militant Islamism and who may pose a terror threat to Denmark. This is for example illustrated by the coordinated arrests made by PET in cooperation with relevant police districts on 11 December 2019, as a result of which seven individuals were remanded in custody on suspicion of violation of Section 114 of the Danish Criminal Code.

In addition, some uncertainties with a considerable impact on the assessment of the terror threat to Denmark remain. These mainly concern the strategic intent of IS following the group’s loss of territory in Syria/Iraq, especially the group’s intent and capacity to carry out directed attacks in the West, potentially anchored in the group’s sub-branches/”external provinces”. Furthermore, there is some uncertainty with regard to the effect perceived insults to Islam may have on the terror threat to Denmark.

Militant Islamists believe that Islam is under attack from the West, and due to Denmark’s active involvement in military operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan, among other places, including the Danish contribution to the military operation against IS in Syria/Iraq, militant Islamists still consider Denmark a legitimate target. Since the cartoon case, Denmark has also had a reputation for offending Islam, and although Denmark is rarely singled out in militant Islamist propaganda, Denmark’s reputation as a “nation of offenders” may become an issue again if circumstances or actions in Denmark or abroad which can be perceived as insulting to Islam spread nationally and/or internationally.

The threat from militant Islamists has become more fragmented in recent years. It remains the assessment of CTA that the most likely form of a militant Islamist terrorist attack in Denmark is an attack carried out after a short planning phase by a lone actor or a small group inspired by militant Islamist propaganda. Attacks carried out by a person with no prior contact to other militant Islamists or militant Islamist groups can be difficult to uncover and prevent. This is particularly true if the attack is carried out spontaneously.

The most likely target of a militant Islamist terrorist attack in Denmark is an unprotected civilian target, such as a public crowded place or an event where a lot of people are gathered, or a “symbolic target” – primarily individuals, institutions and events that may be seen as offensive to Islam. Other possible targets include Jewish targets, police and military – particularly in connection with guarding duties – certain public authorities and selected politicians. Militant Islamists still focus on attacking transport infrastructure, especially international air traffic. The most likely modus operandi of a militant Islamist terrorist attack in Denmark is the use of easily accessible means, which mainly include knives, striking weapons, arson and vehicles. Attacks carried out using firearms or IEDs are also possible.
Militant Islamists pose a terror threat to Danish interests abroad, particularly in countries and regions where al-Qaida (AQ) and IS have sub-branches and are able to train and plan attacks. In recent years, however, militant Islamist networks with no direct link to IS or AQ have also carried out attacks elsewhere against Western interests in countries outside Europe.

The terror threat to Danish interests abroad is aimed at protected targets, such as diplomatic representations, as well as less protected targets, such as companies, NGOs and tourists. The threat does not generally differ from the threat to interests of other Western countries, and Danes, like other Westerners, are at risk of falling victim to attacks directed at Western or local interests. This is for instance illustrated by the killing of a Danish tourist in Morocco in December 2018 and the attack in Sri Lanka in April 2019, which claimed the lives of three Danes. As mentioned, however, Denmark still has a reputation within militant Islamist milieus for offending Islam, and this reputation can quickly become an issue internationally, in which case the terror threat to Danish interests abroad can take a turn for the worse. In that case, Danish diplomatic representations and other Danish interests 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.

A terror threat also emanates from right- and left-wing extremists in Denmark.

In CTA’s assessment, the terror threat from right-wing extremists has increased and is now of such a nature that CTA raises the threat level from limited to general (see section 3). According to PET’s definition, this means that there is a general threat. There is capacity and/or intent and possibly planning.

Since the spring of 2019, there have been a number of right-wing extremist terrorist attacks in the West carried out by lone actors who had mainly been radicalized through online forums. Among these was a major attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, which served as inspiration for subsequent right-wing extremist attacks by lone actors in countries such as the United States, Norway and Germany. The latest such attack occurred on February 19, 2020, when an individual with right-wing sympathies shot and killed nine individuals in Hanua, Germany. The attacks in 2019 and 2020 show that virtual platforms and online media are widely used for disseminating right-wing extremist propaganda and for radicalization. CTA assesses that the international developments affect the threat from right-wing extremists in Denmark, and that the attacks may influence a few Danish right-wing extremists to carry out attacks in Denmark. CTA also assesses that Danish right-wing extremists are increasingly building relations with like-minded individuals abroad.

“CTA assesses that the international developments affect the threat from right-wing extremists in Denmark, and that the attacks may influence a few Danish right-wing extremists to carry out attacks in Denmark.”
The most likely right-wing extremist terrorist attack to be carried out in Denmark is an attack by a lone actor or a small group from within or outside the periphery of a right-wing extremist milieu. A right-wing extremist terrorist attack in Denmark is most likely to be carried out by means of bladed or stabbing weapons or small firearms, especially hunting rifles, shotguns and pistols. Other possible weapons include arson, IEDs and vehicles.

The terror threat from left-wing extremists is limited (see section 4). According to PET’s definition, this means that there is a potential threat but a limited capacity and/or intent. According to CTA’s assessment, the threat from left-wing extremists has not changed much in recent years.

In addition, a number of other factors may affect the terror threat to Denmark (see section 5). Political, ethnic and religious conflicts abroad may for example lead to confrontation between individuals or groups in Denmark affiliated with the various affected groups. This may potentially develop into acts that could be characterized as terrorism. In addition, threatening comments on, for instance, social media may lead people who are mentally unstable or easily influenced to commit ideologically motivated violence that could constitute acts of terrorism.

PET regularly launches operations to uncover and prevent possible terror threats to targets in Denmark, but terrorist attacks may occur with no prior intelligence indications, even when the perpetrators have previously been known to have sympathy with militant Islamism or political extremism. A source of particular concern in this regard is individuals who go through a relatively short radicalization process and individuals who are excluded or turned away from milieus, for example due to their extreme behaviour or views.
2. THE TERROR THREAT FROM MILITANT ISLAMISM

2.1. Developments in the global threat picture

Despite IS losing its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the group still poses a real, although reduced, threat to the West. IS still tries to actively support the attack planning of its sympathizers, just as IS propaganda continues to call for individuals in the West to commit acts of terrorism. Thus, IS, affiliated groups and sympathizers still pose a terror threat to Denmark and Danish interests abroad.

In CTA’s assessment, the death of the IS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, will have no short-term effect on the terror threat to the West and Denmark posed by IS. Four days after the death of al-Baghdadi, the group announced the name of his successor – Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.

In March 2019, IS lost control over its last territory in Syria, but this does not mean that the group has been defeated. The declared goal of IS is still to create a “caliphate”, but the current focus of the group is to fight local security forces and regain strength in Syria and Iraq. The combination of general instability in the two countries and IS’s experience with armed combat through many years makes it unlikely that the group will be defeated within the next couple of years. In addition, many of the underlying factors that enabled IS to gain a foothold in Iraq and Syria remain, and a recruitment potential for the group will therefore also remain among Sunni Arabs. Since 2014, IS has proclaimed several “external provinces” in a number of countries outside Syria and Iraq. In practice, these provinces function as IS sub-branches.

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IS regards the West as its enemy, and the group still intends to direct attacks in the West. However, its capacity for doing so is reduced. Nonetheless, networks of IS-affiliated individuals continue to offer assistance to and support attacks against targets in Europe. For instance, individuals with links to IS work as facilitators and mentors for sympathizers who wish to carry out attacks in the West. In addition, IS still tries to inspire its sympathizers to carry out attacks in the West on their own. After the right-wing extremist terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, the official IS media, al Furqan, for instance called for attacks of retaliation against right-wing extremists. Following al-Baghdadi’s death, IS published a call for continued fighting against the West in the official IS magazine al-Naba on 31 October 2019.

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3. For an in-depth review of the elements of the global threat picture affecting the terror threat from abroad, see the 2019 Intelligence Risk Assessment of the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) on http://fe-ddis.dk.
As IS has lost territory, the group’s official propaganda has, however, become severely weakened, and the quantity as well as the quality have decreased considerably in recent years. Today, IS propaganda is mainly aimed at an audience in Syria and Iraq and the group’s external provinces. Whereas the propaganda previously focused on building a “caliphate”, the main focus today is on military efforts and “combat victories”. However, a large amount of well-produced and extremely violent IS propaganda still exists online, which may have an effect in terms of radicalization and target identification and may offer specific guidance in relation to attack planning. In addition, various unofficial pro-IS media have to some degree been able to fill the void left by the drop in official IS propaganda. Such pro-IS groups are, for instance, behind the Arabic-language magazine al-Anfal and the English-language magazine From Dabiq to Rome. Both magazines are, however, less widely disseminated and of a significantly poorer quality than the former official IS publications.

On 21 April 2019, Sri Lanka was the scene of a large-scale terrorist attack targeting churches, hotels and a housing estate in and around the capital city, Colombo, and on Sri Lanka’s east coast. The attack illustrates once again that local groups with no direct contact to the IS senior leadership may commit acts of terrorism on behalf of IS. Furthermore, the attack in Sri Lanka was committed by individuals who had not attracted much attention from the authorities.

Al-Qaida (AQ) believes that Islam is under attack from the West, militarily, financially, socially and culturally, and CTA assesses that it remains the ambition of AQ and AQ-affiliated groups to carry out terrorist attacks in the West and against Western interests in other parts of the world. In February 2020, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for an attack against a US naval base. This was the first time since the attack against the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015 that AQAP claimed responsibility for an attack in the West. However, AQ is weakened and does not have the same capacity as previously. In recent years, AQ-affiliated groups have mainly attacked local targets in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where the group has built and consolidated an international network of sub-branch-
es, which focus on local agendas within the framework of a global vision. One of the biggest threats to the West from AQ emanates from Syria, where AQ-affiliated groups are present in the north-western part of Syria, particularly in the Idlib province.

AQ propaganda regularly calls for attacks in the West, most frequently against American and Jewish targets. However, AQ also maintains its focus on specific cases of perceived insults to Islam, and AQ-related groups called for attacks against right-wing extremists in retaliation for the terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019.

2.2. The threat to Denmark from militant Islamism – areas of particular focus

The developments in the global threat picture affect the terror threat from militant Islamism in Denmark. It is CTA’s assessment that there are individuals and small groups with militant Islamist sympathies in Denmark and abroad who may pose a terror threat to Denmark. A number of areas which, according to CTA, have particular significance to the threat picture in Denmark are described below.

*Radicalization in Islamist milieus in Denmark*

There are Islamist milieus, physical as well as online, in Denmark which are the scene of social and religious activities with a potentially radicalizing effect on the participants. In particular, closed group constellations may function as echo chambers, in which the participants can build up and reaffirm one another in a militant Islamist view of the world without being challenged, which may lead to individuals or small groups committing acts of terrorism. The threat may emanate from core members as well as individuals who have had a more brief or peripheral affiliation with the milieus in question or individuals who for different reasons have been excluded or turned away. Individuals or small groups who are not directly seen to be linked with the other milieus in Denmark, but who have in other ways been subject to a radicalization process, for example through various online activities, may also pose a threat.

*It is CTA’s assessment that there are individuals and small groups with militant Islamist sympathies in Denmark and abroad who may pose a terror threat to Denmark.*

The Islamist milieus which CTA assesses to be of relevance in this context are multi-ethnic and mainly based in and around the major cities in Denmark. However, due to activities on social media, the range of contact often covers a larger geographic area. The milieus vary in terms of size and cohesion. Often, there is a certain overlap between the individuals in the different milieus, historically as well as currently. The vast majority of those affiliated with the milieus are young men, but there are also a few, small female religious communities, where radicalization may occur. There are often personal and/or religious connections between the men and women in question.
CTA assesses that the support for IS and AQ remains intact in certain circles, although it is not expressed as openly and explicitly as it used to be.

A number of the individuals in Denmark who, according to CTA’s assessment, sympathize with militant Islamism are in contact with like-minded individuals abroad. The contact differs a great deal and concerns anything from guest sermons, religious events and fundraising to the exchange of propaganda material and attack manuals in closed online forums. The latter is particularly worrying because it may serve to provide mutual inspiration and capacity building across borders, just as online radicalizers may actively attempt to incite Denmark-based individuals to carry out attacks.

As mentioned in section 1, PET carried out coordinated arrests of individuals residing various places in Denmark in cooperation with relevant police districts on 11 December 2019. A total of seven individuals were remanded in custody charged with violation of Section 114 of the Danish Criminal Code on suspicion of planning and preparing militant Islamist terrorist attacks in Denmark or Europe.

**Travellers to and returnees from Syria/Iraq**

CTA assesses that individuals from Denmark who are or have been located in the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq may pose a threat to Denmark or Danish interests abroad. This applies to both men and women and regardless of whether they are located in the conflict zone, have returned to Denmark or are located in another country in or outside Europe. Travellers from countries other than Denmark, including other European countries, may also pose a terror threat to Denmark or Danish interests abroad. The threat posed by travellers from other countries comes primarily, but not exclusively, from individuals located in countries bordering Denmark.

In CTA’s assessment, radicalized individuals who are or have been located in conflict zones such as the one in Syria/Iraq differ from other radicalized individuals in a number of ways. People who travel to a conflict zone demonstrate a strong will to act even though it may involve mortal danger and great sacrifice. Stays in a conflict zone may lead to increased brutalization and readiness for violence and to individuals acquiring the capacity to carry out attacks. In addition, travellers to a conflict zone may have established connections with other individuals, groups or networks with the intent and capacity to commit terrorism in the West.

However, the fact that an individual travels to a conflict zone in order to promote a militant Islamist agenda does not necessarily mean that the individual poses a terror threat to Denmark or Danish interests abroad. The terror threat is determined on the basis of a specific assessment of the intent and capacity of the individual to attack Danish targets. Relevant factors to consider include the individual’s continued sympathy for militant Islamism and affiliation with militant Islamist groups along with any weapons training and engagement in combat.

The potential threat from travellers and returnees is not limited to attack planning, but may also take the form of radicalization or propaganda activities, logistical support, terror financing or other terror-related activities.
PET assesses that at least 159 people from Denmark are or have been in Syria/Iraq to join militant Islamist groups since the summer of 2012. Currently, almost half of them have returned to Denmark or taken up residence in mainly other European countries. According to PET’s information, around one third of the total number of travellers have died in the conflict zone. 34 adult travellers from Denmark remain in Syria/Iraq or in neighbouring countries. Just below half of them are women. Of the 34 adults who remain in the conflict zone, ten have only held a Danish residence permit, and these have all had their residence permit revoked. In addition, three individuals have had their citizenship revoked by an administrative order. The remaining 21 adults are Danish citizens. According to PET’s information, 12 of these 21 are currently imprisoned or detained, mainly in camps and prisons under Kurdish control in north-eastern Syria, while the remaining nine are presumably not detained and located in the conflict zone or in neighbouring countries.
According to PET’s information, no Denmark-based individuals have succeeded in travelling to the conflict zone to join militant Islamist groups since 2016. All of the 34 adult travellers from Denmark who remain in the conflict zone have been there for over three years.

Since the launch of the Turkish military intervention in north-eastern Syria in October 2019, the Turkish authorities have returned a number of travellers who were held in Turkish custody to the countries they originally left. One of these travellers is a Danish citizen, and it is possible that more travellers held in Turkish custody will be sent back to the countries they left, including Denmark. CTA currently assesses that it is difficult for the travellers from Denmark who remain in the conflict zone to return to Denmark on their own. Firstly, it is still quite difficult to get out of the conflict zone, and, secondly, many of those remaining there are detained in camps or prisons, as mentioned above. In addition, several of those remaining there have lost their right of residence in Denmark, as previously stated, and many of those with Danish citizenship are no longer in possession of their passport. New developments in the conflict zone and/or changed restrictions on entering and leaving the conflict zone may, however, have an influence on whether those who remain there are able to re-enter Denmark.

The majority of the Danish travellers who remain in the conflict zone will face prosecution if they re-enter Denmark.

The conditions in the Kurdish camps in north-eastern Syria, where for example travellers from Denmark are located, are difficult and may, in CTA’s assessment, add to the radicalization of the detainees, including detained travellers from Denmark. This particularly applies to the Al-Hawl camp, which primarily houses women and children, and where a large number of radicalized women with continued sympathy for IS are located. There have been several examples of female detainees attacking camp personnel and exerting social control over and vigilantism against other detained women. In September 2019, the now deceased leader of IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, published an official speech addressed to IS members, calling for attacks against prisons and camps in order to free IS members. IS has previously organized successful escapes, and it is possible that the security surrounding the camps will deteriorate further in the time to come.

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Several of the travellers from Denmark have brought children with them to the conflict zone, while some have had children while there. According to PET’s information, approximately 40 children of Danish citizens are located in the conflict zone. In addition, PET has information that approximately ten children of former Danish residence permit holders are also located in the conflict zone. Of the approximately 50 children of travellers from Denmark, around 30 are located in north-eastern Syria, primarily in the al-Roj and al-Hawl...
camps. According to PET’s information, the remaining children are located in north-western Syria and Turkey, among other places. In 2019, two children of travellers from Denmark were returned to Denmark for health reasons with assistance from the Danish authorities.

CTA assesses that it is unlikely that children of travellers from Denmark at present constitute a terror threat. This is primarily due to the current young age of the children. It is the general assessment of CTA that older children who return from the conflict zone or from camps may pose a terror threat due to indoctrination or other types of influence asserted in the conflict zone. Further to this, CTA also assesses that the risk of indoctrination and other types of influence increases with the time spent by the children in a radicalized environment such as the camps in north-eastern Syria. The threat from travellers, including children, who return to Denmark may be affected by how their return is handled by the Danish authorities, including whether they are offered any support for the purpose of potential deradicalization and reintegregation.

Radicalized ex-prisoners
CTA assesses that radicalized prison inmates may pose a terror threat upon their release. The threat may emanate from individuals convicted of terror-related offences and from other individuals with a readiness to use violence who start or continue a radicalization process while serving their sentence. Radicalized individuals may pose a terror threat even shortly after their release. In addition, former inmates may engage in existing Islamist milieus. PET is aware of a few cases where radicalized inmates in Denmark have been in contact with inmates affiliated with criminal milieus which have access to weapons.

Many European countries currently have a historically high number of inmates convicted in terror-related cases with links to militant Islamism. Following their release, these people may pose a terror threat in the country where they have served their sentence as well as in other European countries. The risk that individuals convicted of crimes relating to militant Islamist terrorism in other European countries will travel to Denmark to carry out a terrorist attack after they are released is, in CTA’s assessment, highly dependent on whether these individuals have any personal connections to Denmark or Danish individuals or if there is a particular focus on Denmark in militant Islamist propaganda.

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CTA is aware of six perpetrators in Europe since 2015 who have committed a terrorist attack during leave from prison or within the first six months after their release. One of them was the Danish citizen Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein, who committed a terrorist attack in Copenhagen in February 2015. CTA is aware of four other individuals in Europe who have committed a terrorist attack within the first year after their release. Most recently, on 2 February 2020, a 20-year-old man carried out a terrorist attack in London, United
Kingdom, approximately one week after he was released from serving a terror-related sentence of three years and four months.

As of 1 March 2020, a total of 23 people were either serving a sentence, remanded in custody or committed to an institution for terror-related offences linked with militant Islamism. Two of these are convicted of having planned terrorist attacks in Denmark. In 2018 and 2019, a number of people were released after having served sentences for committing or planning acts of terrorism in Denmark. These include two individuals from the Vollsmose case (arrested in September 2006), one individual from the Glasvej case (arrested in September 2007), four individuals from Sweden who planned an attack against the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten in Copenhagen (arrested in December 2010) and the perpetrator of the attack against Kurt Westergaard (arrested in January 2010). It is likely that some of those released still sympathize with militant Islamism and may pose a terror threat after their release.

In 2019, three individuals were released after having served sentences for travelling to a conflict zone. There are several Danish cases where individuals convicted of terror-related offences other than attack planning have subsequently been convicted in similar cases, for example in relation to terror glorification, bomb threats, terror financing and travelling to a conflict zone to join militant Islamist groups.

**Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants**

CTA assesses that individuals with militant Islamist sympathies among refugees and migrants arriving in Europe and Denmark as well as asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers and accepted refugees who are already in Europe or Denmark may pose a terror threat. Also aliens with militant Islamist sympathies on exceptional leave to remain may pose a threat. However, CTA assesses that only a very small percentage of the individuals arriving in Europe and Denmark as refugees and migrants sympathize with militant Islamism and may pose a terror threat.

CTA assesses that the terror threat from refugees and migrants travelling to Europe is e.g. posed by individuals sent by militant Islamist groups to carry out terrorist attacks in Europe, including in Denmark. It is still possible that IS and, to a lesser degree, AQ will attempt to exploit the refugee and migrant routes for this purpose. For example, in April and June 2018, respectively, two African asylum seekers were arrested and charged by Italian authorities with planning terrorist attacks in Europe. Prior to this, both individuals had been to IS training camps in Libya and sworn allegiance to this group. The individuals were subsequently convicted in Italy. Members of IS have previously used networks of human traffickers to facilitate travels to and from conflict zones, mainly Syria. CTA assesses that IS may still use such networks to send members of the group to Europe. However, CTA assesses that any entry into Europe has become more difficult by the intensified security measures, including increased control of the EU external borders and close cooperation between police and intelligence services.

In the so-called Matchstick case, two Syrian refugees residing in Sweden and Germany, respectively, planned and prepared a terrorist attack in Denmark in late 2016. The attack was to be carried out using knives and an IED made from, among other items, a substantial number of matches brought from Germa-
ny. The attack was to be carried out against an unknown target in Copenhagen at an unknown time. The attack was foiled as one of the perpetrators was denied entry to Denmark and subsequently arrested by German police. In July 2017, one of the two perpetrators was sentenced in Germany to six and a half years’ imprisonment. In May 2019, the other was sentenced in Denmark to 12 years’ imprisonment and expelled with a permanent ban on re-entry.

On several occasions, Turkey has threatened to release a large number of refugees. In late February 2020 Turkey has opened its borders to Bulgaria and Greece allowing refugees to leave the country. This has led to a significant increase in the number of refugees that try to reach Europe thus severely straining the facilities and resources of the immigration authorities, especially in the south and central European countries. In addition, the security measures implemented by the EU, including the control of the external borders such as the Mediterranean patrols, will come under pressure, which may allow an increasing number of refugees, including radicalized individuals or individuals sent by militant Islamist groups, to evade border control and reach Europe as illegal immigrants without the European authorities being aware of their arrival and/or onward travel.

CTA assesses that asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers and migrants may be particularly susceptible to radicalization and influence from militant Islamist agendas. This is especially true of younger people travelling alone. This susceptibility may be ascribed to such factors as frustration over their own situation, a sense of exclusion, the absence of family members and mental instability.

**Individuals residing in other countries**
CTA assesses that a terror threat to Denmark may emanate from individuals and small groups with militant Islamist sympathies residing in other countries. The threat may come from returned foreign fighters or individuals who are released after having served terror-related sentences. The threat mainly comes from individuals residing in countries bordering Denmark.

It is CTA’s assessment that a number of factors may have a particular impact on the potential intent of individuals in other countries, including Denmark’s neighbouring countries, to attack targets in Denmark: Denmark’s international military involvement, including Denmark’s participation in the international coalition against IS in Syria/Iraq, current or previous cases where Denmark is portrayed as a “nation of offenders”, prior knowledge of Denmark, awareness of the fact that preparations for an attack in one country against targets in another country may be particularly difficult for the authorities to uncover and thus to prevent, unwillingness to attack in one’s own country and Denmark’s geographical proximity.

"The threat may come from returned foreign fighters or individuals who are released after having served terror-related sentences."

In the last ten years, there have been several cases where individuals residing in other countries have shown intent to attack targets in Denmark. The most recent example is the previously mentioned Matchstick case, where two Syrian refugees residing in Sweden and Germany, respectively, planned and prepared an attack in Denmark in late 2016.
2.3. Terrorist targets for militant Islamists

CTA assesses that the most likely targets of a militant Islamist terrorist attack in Denmark is an unprotected civilian target, such as a public crowded place or an event where a lot of people are gathered, or a “symbolic target” – primarily individuals, institutions and events that may be seen as offensive to Islam. Other potential targets include Jewish targets, police and military – particularly in connection with guarding duties – certain public authorities and government representatives. Militant Islamists still focus on attacking the transport infrastructure, in particular international air traffic and airports.

The target identification of militant Islamists does not follow a consistent and predictable procedure and may change during the course of the planning phase. The target identification may be influenced by militant Islamist propaganda, current agendas, personal networks and preferences as well as the capacity of the attack planner. Furthermore, terrorist attacks already committed may serve as inspiration – a so-called copycat effect. Since mid-2014, IS has been very focused on attacking random civilians in the West, and civilians have increasingly been the primary target for terrorist attacks.

The transport sector, including civilians using public transport, has proved to be an attractive terrorist target for militant Islamists. In March 2019, a terrorist carried out an attack on a tram in the Netherlands, resulting in the death of four people.

As mentioned in section 2.1, AQ continues to focus on specific cases of perceived insults to Islam in its propaganda. IS has only done so to a very limited extent so far. However, CTA assesses that militant Islamists generally regard perceived offenders of Islam and events critical of Islam in Denmark as legitimate targets. CTA further assesses that new cases of perceived insults which receive major exposure in national and international media may draw attention to perceived offenders in Denmark. No attacks have been aimed directly at targets related to perceived insults in the West since the terrorist attack in Copenhagen in February 2015. However, there have been attacks aimed at random civilians motivated by cases of perceived insult. In the autumn of 2018, a man armed with a knife attacked random people in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in response to a Prophet Muhammed cartoon competition organized by the Dutch politician Geert Wilders.
Jewish people, events and locations continue to play a prominent role in militant Islamist propaganda, and militant Islamists regard such targets as legitimate terrorist targets.

2.4. Modi operandi for militant Islamist terrorist attacks in Denmark

CTA assesses that the most likely militant Islamist attack form in Denmark is a terrorist attack with easily accessible means. Easily accessible means mainly refer to knives, striking weapons, arson and vehicles. Attacks carried out using firearms or IEDs are also possible. Attacks with more innovative means, such as drones or chemical, biological and radiological agents, are regularly mentioned in militant Islamist propaganda, and the risk of these kinds of attacks are also occasionally mentioned in open media. However, it is CTA’s assessment that attacks using such agents are far less likely.

Militant Islamists’ choice of modus operandi is influenced by the propaganda and by resources, skills, networks, access to the intended target and inspiration from other attacks. The capacity of militant Islamists in Denmark may be enhanced through contact with resource persons who share instructions or give advice on specific modi operandi or through recruitment or radicalization of key figures with legitimate access to facilities, resources or information. Such insiders may have various functions and jobs which may enable them to carry out a terrorist attack, aid in carrying out an attack or in other ways cause harm.

Terrorist attacks with easily accessible means are regularly emphasized in militant Islamist propaganda and can be carried out spontaneously or after a short planning phase. The attacks in a number of European cities in 2016 and 2017, where vehicles were used against large crowds, are among the

"Jewish people, events and locations continue to play a prominent role in militant Islamist propaganda, and militant Islamists regard such targets as legitimate terrorist targets.”
clearest examples of how attacks with easily accessible means can have a very harmful effect. There are individuals in Denmark with capacity to carry out a terrorist attack using firearms, but procuring such weapons requires legal access to weapons or criminal contacts.

It is CTA’s assessment that individuals in Denmark possess the capacity to make small IEDs and carry out attacks by means of these IEDs. Correct guidelines and manuals on how to make various explosives and IEDs, which can be used by individuals with no prior training, are available online. The effect of such IEDs may, however, vary considerably. A number of barriers exist in relation to the production of homemade explosives, including the general awareness regarding the sale of substances which can be used for making IEDs. Access to commercial explosives and other commercial components, such as detonators, may ease the production of small IEDs. There are a few criminal milieus in Denmark with contacts that enable procurement of factory-made explosives, mainly dynamite which in all probability comes from Sweden.

CTA assesses that individuals who have received weapons training in a conflict zone, such as Syria/Iraq, or who have knowledge of weapons from, for example, criminal milieus will be able to carry out high-impact attacks and serial attacks, where individuals or groups carry out multiple consecutive attacks.

There is capacity in Denmark to use drones for reconnaissance, for simple attacks or for intimidation purposes, whereas the capacity of militant Islamists to use drones for causing serious harm is limited. Militant Islamists have displayed considerable ability to operate and use drones, for example to carry out attacks in and around the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq, but this capacity has yet to be seen applied to the West. According to CTA’s assessment, the challenges faced by militant Islamists in relation to using drones as a weapon for attacks remain substantial compared to the potential harmful effect of such a weapon.

Militant Islamist propaganda regularly focuses on the use of chemical agents, but CTA assesses that the capacity of militant Islamists to carry out chemical attacks using means other than unprocessed substances is limited. Militant Islamist propaganda also regularly focuses on biological agents, but CTA assesses that the capacity of militant Islamists to weaponize biological agents, such as anthrax, is very limited. In 2018, there were three cases (in the United Kingdom, France and Germany) where use of the toxin ricin was considered in connection with militant Islamist attack planning. In none of the cases did the considerations lead to an attack. According to CTA’s information, there were no cases in 2019 with validated information that militant Islamists have been focusing on the use of ricin in connection with attack planning. Chemical as well as biological agents have been delivered in so-called “powder letters”, but there are only very few examples of successful attacks with powder letters, and CTA assesses that the vast majority of letters containing an unidentified powder primarily aim to frighten and harass the recipient.

CTA assesses that militant Islamists in Denmark have very limited capacity for carrying out terrorist attacks using radiological agents and no capacity for committing terrorism by means of nuclear agents.
In a few cases, militant Islamists have shown an interest in committing cyber terrorism, but CTA assesses that the capacity of militant Islamists to carry out cyber attacks causing physical harm to humans or serious disruptions to critical national infrastructure or similar targets is limited⁴.

CTA follows the technological development closely in order to assess the effect of new technologies on the terror threat to Denmark. CTA assesses that, despite their potential, none of the new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, 3D printing and synthetic biology⁵, are currently suited for use in a terrorist attack.

2.5. Financing of militant Islamist terrorist groups abroad

Terrorist financing helps to sustain terrorist groups and promote their activities. Funding enhances the ability of terrorist groups to prepare and carry out operations and to recruit and retain members.

CTA assesses that the level of terrorist financing in Denmark for militant Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq has decreased. Among other factors, this is due to restricted possibilities for transferring funds due to the loss of territory suffered by IS in Syria and the very limited number of Danish foreign fighters remaining in the conflict zone. However, CTA assesses that the intent to provide funds for militant Islamist groups abroad has not diminished among individuals in Denmark. Also, knowledge on how to acquire money by way of financial crime and how to transfer money or other capital assets to terrorist groups has become increasingly widespread among certain Sunni Islamist networks in Denmark over the past few years.

As far as militant Islamist groups are concerned, the primary beneficiaries of terrorist financing from individuals in Denmark are groups in Syria and Iraq.

2.6. The terror threat from militant Islamism to Danes and Danish interests abroad

The terror threat from militant Islamism to Danes and Danish interests abroad is particularly high in countries and regions where AQ and IS have branches and are able to train and plan attacks. In recent years, however, militant Islamist networks with no direct link to IS or AQ have also carried out attacks elsewhere against Western interests in countries outside Europe.

The terror threat is aimed at protected targets such as diplomatic representations as well as unprotected targets such as companies, NGOs and tourists. The threat to Danish interests does not, generally, differ from the threat to interests of other Western countries, and Danes, like other Westerners, are at risk of falling victim to attacks directed at Western interests, as illustrated by the Sri Lanka attack in 2019, which claimed the lives of three Danish citizens. In addition, Danes located abroad risk falling victim to an attack if they are

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⁴. See the assessment of the CFCS regarding the cyber threat against Denmark.
⁵. Synthetic biology concerns the engineering of new, man-made biological systems.
in near vicinity of local terrorist targets, including crowded places, certain tourist destinations and certain official buildings.

However, the cartoon case has not been forgotten within militant Islamist milieus, and Denmark's reputation as a “nation of offenders” can quickly become an issue internationally, in which case the terror threat to Danish interests abroad may increase. Danish diplomatic representations and other Danish interests abroad, including employees of Danish companies, may be seen as symbolic targets, providing an opportunity to target Denmark without actually carrying out an attack in Denmark. Danish diplomatic representations may become targets of terrorist attacks because they may be perceived as less secure than the representations of larger Western countries.

There is a significant terror threat to Western, including Danish, interests in a number of countries in North, West and East Africa. There have been several attacks and attack plans indicating that tourist destinations and locations frequented by Westerners are high-priority targets for militant Islamists in the region. In East Africa, the Somalia-based group al-Shabaab regularly carries out attacks in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, and it has planned and carried out attacks in Kenya, including the capital of Nairobi. In Egypt, militant Islamists have attacked foreign, including Western, targets on numerous occasions.

In the past two years, attacks on Danish citizens have taken place in North and West Africa. The most recent of these attacks took place in December 2018, when a Danish and a Norwegian tourist were killed by a group of IS sympathizers in a mountainous area of Morocco, close to Marrakesh. Following the attack, the perpetrators published a video, in which they described the killing of the two women as revenge for IS's loss of Hajin, which at the time was one of the last remaining towns under IS control in Syria. CTA assesses that the two women were not targeted because of their nationality but due to their Western appearance.

There is also a significant terror threat to Western, including Danish, interests in a number of countries in the Middle East as well as South and South-East Asia, where both AQ, IS and their affiliated groups are active. This applies in particular to Syria and Iraq as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan.

CTA assesses that the threat of militant Islamist kidnappings is most significant in conflict zones and their neighbouring areas. Kidnappings provide militant Islamist groups with financial means, and the risk of kidnapping may therefore increase in cases where militant Islamist groups lose other sources of funding.

Information on country-specific risks is provided via the travel advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark on www.um.dk.
3. THE TERROR THREAT FROM RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

CTA assesses that the terror threat from right-wing extremists in Denmark has increased and is now of such a nature that CTA raises the threat level from limited to general.

Danish right-wing extremists have a number of political objectives, of which the main ones are to fight the dissemination of Islam in Denmark, to curb immigration and to confront political opponents, particularly left-wing politicians and groups. A right-wing extremist terrorist attack would therefore primarily target Muslims and mosques, asylum seekers and asylum centres. Jews and synagogues and individuals of a non-Western origin, including locations where such individuals gather. Other potential targets include political opponents, especially left-wing extremists, homosexuals as well as authorities and selected politicians, especially those considered responsible for the non-Western immigration to Europe.

CTA assesses that the most likely right-wing extremist terrorist attack to be carried out in Denmark is an attack by a lone actor or a small group from within or outside the periphery of a right-wing extremist milieu. A right-wing extremist terrorist attack in Denmark is most likely to be carried out by means of bladed or stabbing weapons or small firearms, especially hunting rifles, shotguns and pistols. Other possible weapons include arson, IEDs and vehicles.

In 2015-2017, a number of European countries experienced several cases of violent assault on asylum seekers and migrants along with cases of vandalism and arson attacks against asylum centres. Subject to a specific assessment, such incidents may be characterized as terrorism. These acts of violence were highly spurred on by the large number of asylum seekers entering Europe at that time. Arson attacks have also been directed at asylum centres in Denmark. As the number of asylum seekers coming to Europe has decreased, the number of such attacks has fallen considerably, and there have been no arson attacks of this kind in Denmark over the past years. However, CTA assesses that similar incidents may reoccur, especially if the number of asylum seekers in Denmark increases.

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In recent years, a number of anti-Semitic actions have been carried out in Denmark’s neighbouring countries, and most recently also in Denmark. In November 2019, for example, right-wing extremists committed serious vandalism and desecration of Jewish symbols and graves.

Since the spring of 2019, there have been a number of right-wing extremist terrorist attacks in the West carried out by lone actors who had mainly been radicalized through online forums6. Among these were a major attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019 and attacks in Poway and El Paso, the United

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6. According to CTA’s data, at least 12 right-wing extremist terrorist attacks were carried out in the West in 2019. It should be noted that the Western countries have different definitions of right-wing extremism and use varying methods for assessing the data.
States, Bærum, Norway, and Halle, Germany. On February 19, 2020, an individual with right-wing sympathies shot and killed nine individuals in Hanau, Germany.

CTA assesses that the attack in Christchurch served as inspiration for the subsequent solo attacks. Shortly before carrying out the attack, the perpetrator in Christchurch posted an easily understandable manifest online, and he live streamed parts of the attack on Facebook. Right-wing extremist attacks like the one that took place in Christchurch, possibly combined with a high attack frequency, may inspire further right-wing extremist attacks by lone actors. Right-wing extremist attacks carried out by lone actors inspired by the attacks in 2019 could also take place in Denmark. In addition, militant Islamist attacks may inspire right-wing extremists to carry out terrorist attacks.

The right-wing terrorist attacks in 2019 and 2020 show that virtual platforms and online media are widely used for disseminating right-wing extremist propaganda and for radicalization. The sharing of propaganda, including manifests or letters in connection with the execution of right-wing extremist attacks, is a very effective way for right-wing extremists to get their message to a large audience with only a modest effort. CTA therefore assesses that this type of right-wing extremist propaganda sharing is likely to continue.

"The right-wing terrorist attacks in 2019 and 2020 show that virtual platforms and online media are widely used for disseminating right-wing extremist propaganda and for radicalization."

CTA assesses that Danish right-wing extremists are increasingly building relations with like-minded individuals abroad, including on virtual platforms. These relations enable Danish right-wing extremists to learn new modi operandi, coordinate internationally and seek support from like-minded individuals abroad.
CTA assesses that the terror threat posed by left-wing extremists in Denmark is limited. It has changed very little in recent years.

The primary objective of Danish left-wing extremists is to combat perceived racism and fascism, especially as expressed by right-wing extremist groups. The threat from left-wing extremists is therefore primarily directed at such groups and individuals with right-wing extremist sympathies and, to a lesser extent, at representatives of right-wing political parties. In addition, there may be a threat directed at the authorities, especially the police.

CTA assesses that the most likely left-wing extremist terrorist attack to be carried out in Denmark is an attack perpetrated by members of a left-wing extremist group or individuals with links to such groups. Left-wing extremist terrorist attacks may occur in connection with actions targeting right-wing extremist events and during confrontations with the authorities, especially during left-wing extremist demonstrations and actions.

A left-wing extremist terrorist attack in Denmark would most likely be carried out by means of striking weapons, bladed weapons, Molotov cocktails or fireworks, including powerful bangers and chrysanthemum bombs. Another possible weapon is arson, for instance during demonstrations and actions.

Right-wing extremist attacks in Denmark may inspire left-wing extremist sympathizers to carry out an attack.

The left-wing extremist milieus are cooperating with like-minded organizations and groups abroad, and Danish left-wing extremists also participate in demonstrations abroad. The international cooperation may lead to increased capacity building in terms of enhanced tactical abilities and readiness to use violence within domestic left-wing extremist milieus.
5. OTHER THREATS THAT COULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS TERRORISM

Political, ethnic and religious conflicts abroad may lead to reactions from individuals or groups in Denmark affiliated with the various affected groups, which may develop into acts that could be characterized as terrorism. Such reactions, including violent protests, may be targeting diplomatic representations in Denmark.

Subject to a specific legal assessment, violent actions motivated by political single issues may be characterized as terrorism. There are several examples of single issue activism which have been motivated by a wish to promote issues such as animal welfare or environmental protection. A more recent trend is climate activism, which is driven by a wish to create awareness about the climate and/or any climate friendly initiatives. Climate activism may be exercised by individuals and/or groups who support the introduction of more climate friendly initiatives as well as individuals and/or groups who oppose such initiatives. Climate activism has only been exercised non-violently in Denmark so far, and CTA is aware of no examples where single issue activism, including climate activism, in Denmark could be characterized as terrorism.

If a perpetrator suffers from mental disorders, it may be difficult for the authorities to assess whether the person’s violent actions are carried out with intent to commit terrorism. In some situations, it may be necessary to give special attention to individuals suffering from mental disorders who show signs of radicalization and who have previously displayed violent or impulsive behaviour.

A mental disorder is not necessarily decisive in respect of a person’s ability and will to commit terrorism, but only one of several factors to consider when assessing the terror threat which may be posed by the person in question. CTA assesses that people’s mental state may be of great importance to their behaviour and motivation for acting, also in connection with terrorism.

Social media are increasingly used for making threatening comments, for example against public figures, and for disseminating rumours and fake news. While the vast 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 acts of ideologically motivated violence that could be characterized as terrorism.
6. THE TERROR THREAT TO GREENLAND AND THE FAROE ISLANDS

As a rule, the assessment of the terror threat to Denmark applies to the entire Danish Realm, but a number of special factors apply to Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

CTA assesses that there are also individuals in Greenland and the Faroe Islands who may become inspired by propaganda or successful terrorist attacks in other Western countries. In addition to people with militant Islamist sympathies, others – such as mentally unstable individuals – may also be influenced to commit acts of ideologically motivated violence which can be characterized as terrorism. Social media are also used in Greenland and the Faroe Islands for making threatening and hostile comments. The majority of these comments rarely lead to actual attack planning, but they may lead people who are mentally unstable or easily influenced to commit acts of ideologically motivated violence which can be characterized as terrorism.

CTA assesses that the terror threat to Greenland is limited. One reason is that militant Islamism is less widespread in Greenland than in Denmark. However, militant Islamist or political extremist propaganda may also influence individuals in Greenland to commit acts of violence. Socially marginalized or vulnerable young people may be particularly susceptible to radicalization.

CTA assesses that the easier access to weapons and explosives in Greenland, compared to other parts of the Danish Realm, may increase the capacity for carrying out an attack with a high damage-inducing effect.

CTA assesses that the terror threat to the Faroe Islands is limited. Like in Greenland, militant Islamism is less widespread in the Faroe Islands than in Denmark.

Militant Islamist or political extremist propaganda may influence individuals in the Faroe Islands or individuals travelling there to commit acts of violence which can be characterized as terrorism. This may also be triggered by political single issues, such as animal welfare.