

# ANNUAL THREAT ASSESSMENT 2014



NORWEGIAN POLICE SECURITY SERVICE

## INTRODUCTION

The threats to Norway and Norwegian interests in 2014 will continue to form a complex and varied picture. Politically motivated violence in the form of extreme Islamism will continue to represent a serious problem, and the Service's most important task in 2014 will be to prevent persons with close links to Norway from becoming involved in terrorist attacks. The emergence of an active extreme Islamist group will lead to greater polarisation between the various extremist groups in Norway, and could increase the threat from right-wing extremist groups. In 2014 Norway will also continue to be the target of foreign intelligence activity, which can be extremely damaging to Norwegian economic, political and security interests.

The annual threat assessment is a review of expected developments within the Service's areas of responsibility in 2014. There is always a degree of uncertainty associated with such assessments, and in order to reduce this we are focusing on the main outlines of the threat picture as a whole. However, single incidents and other unpredictable factors may influence developments and thus alter the assessed nature or level of threats in certain areas.

The threat assessment is intended for the Norwegian public, in order to provide information on expected developments in the threat picture. It is also intended for enterprises that need an up-to-date threat assessment for their long-term risk management. The value of the assessment therefore depends on the users' knowledge of risk management and their ability to reduce their own vulnerability.

## SUMMARY – ASSESSMENTS

- The terrorist threat against Norway is considered to have aggravated. The greatest threat comes from a multi-ethnic extreme Islamist milieu in South-Eastern Norway. Since a small number of individuals play a decisive role in the activities of this group, they have a strong influence on the threat from this source.
- In the course of 2013, a larger number of extreme Islamists from Norway have acquired a greater capability to commit terrorist attacks through their participation in fighting and training camps abroad involving militant groups. Some of those returning to Norway after such experiences will represent a potential threat to Norwegian interests in 2014.
- The organised right- and left-wing extremist groups in Norway primarily represent a law and order problem. The greatest problem will continue to be posed by individuals who could at times resort to violence and have varying links with right-wing extremist groups.
- The risk that individuals with links to right-wing extremist groups will carry out provocative and threatening acts against Muslims has increased. Confrontation and violence from left-wing extremists will mainly be directed at right-wing extremist individuals and groups.
- Extremist groups, regardless of their ideology, often attract unstable individuals. Such persons may pose a considerable threat but are difficult to detect.
- Dignitaries will continue to serve as symbolic targets for ideological and political opponents who are willing to use violence. In Norway threats against dignitaries are seldom carried out in the form of violent actions. However, threats and hate speech may prevent dignitaries from freely expressing their political views.
- The revelations of the last few years concerning interception and computer network intelligence operations have shown that this type of intelligence activity between states takes place on a large scale, and is likely to continue to increase. However, the activities of intelligence officers and insiders will continue to form a significant part of the intelligence threat.
- The Service is especially concerned about the efforts of the intelligence services of foreign states to recruit students and others at an early stage of their careers. Such

individuals will over the long term be in a position to undertake commissions for these services.

- Norwegian companies, educational institutions and research communities will continue in 2014 to be targets for the efforts to procure goods, services and technology that can be used to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. Players with links to Iran will continue their efforts to procure such products for the development of nuclear weapons, and will probably focus particularly on Norway's educational institutions and petroleum sector.

# POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE: EXTREME ISLAMISM

The terrorist threat in Norway is considered to have increased, and extreme Islamism<sup>1</sup> is still the most serious terrorist threat in this country. It is primarily posed by individuals with links to a multi-ethnic extremist milieu in South-Eastern Norway. This milieu consists mainly of young men who grew up in Norway, and the largest number, and the most important, of the members live in the Oslofjord area. The milieu seems to have no clear organisation, but its activities are influenced by certain key individuals. The main activities are radicalisation, recruitment and travel to areas of war and conflict. The milieu also collects money on a large scale, which is probably transferred to extremist players in such areas.

The activities in the more ethnically homogeneous extremist groups in Norway consist primarily of providing support in the form of money transfers and material support to militant groups in the Middle East, North Africa, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the North Caucasus. Younger people seem to be more attracted to the multi-ethnic Oslofjord milieu rather than the more ethnically homogeneous milieus. The direct threat represented by these latter groups is assessed as being lower than the threat from the Oslofjord milieu.

## Radicalisation

Even though the number of extremists in Norway is low, we continue to identify new individuals who seem to be undergoing a process of radicalisation.<sup>2</sup> Most of them seem to be attracted to the Oslofjord milieu. Radicalisation will continue to contribute significantly to the terrorist threat picture also in 2014. It is particularly worrying that the individuals concerned have usually undergone a considerable degree of radicalisation by the time we have identified them.

Key figures in the milieu use an al-Qaida-inspired rhetoric that is adapted to the Norwegian context in their recruitment and radicalisation efforts. We have also noted that some people

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<sup>1</sup> The term “extremist” refers to a person’s attitude to the use of violence. An extremist person or group accepts the use of violence to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives. Extremism therefore denotes the choice of means rather than the objective.

<sup>2</sup> Radicalisation is defined here as a process by which a person increasingly accepts the use of violence as a means of achieving political, religious or ideological aims.

within the milieu have included Norwegian interests, national symbols and Norway as a whole in their enemy image. Norway is being blamed for the sufferings of Muslims, and Norway's military engagement in Muslim countries and the caricature case were important factors in the radicalisation of many of the current members of the milieu.

Some of the leading figures in the Oslofjord milieu have foreign mentors who sympathise with al-Qaida. These have played an important role in the radicalisation of several of the young Islamists in Europe who have since committed terrorist acts. A stay with militant groups in conflict areas also increases the risk of radicalisation by al-Qaida-inspired ideologists. This applies particularly to countries such as Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and the North Caucasus.

Internet is one of the most important tools in radicalisation. The ideology and propaganda on Norwegian and foreign jihadist websites have a strong appeal to the Norwegian milieus. Social media foster a sense of fellowship, since they are arenas where people can share and exchange views with like-minded participants, which feeds and intensifies these extreme views. Internet is also a means by which people can actively participate in extreme Islamist activity regardless of where they live. In addition, this arena makes it easier for women to participate actively, which may be a reason why a larger number of women are now becoming more active members of the extreme Islamist Oslofjord milieu. Previously members of the milieu expressed their views largely in the form of debate and aggressive and sometimes threatening language in public, whereas now such activity is more often confined to closed forums.

Radicalisation through friends, family members and other close relationships is expected to continue in 2014. This is an especially effective method with young people. There are a number of examples of families in Norway where several generations support or sympathise with extreme Islamist ideology, and such cases represent a substantial problem in the preventive and counter-radicalising work.

## **Training and fighting under militant groups**

Norwegian extreme Islamists who stay with militant Islamist groups in war and conflict areas increase the terrorist threat against Norway and Norwegian interests. Individuals who have received training or have fought side by side with militant groups have been involved in a number of prevented or perpetrated terrorist attacks in Europe in the last 10 years.

Never before have so many individuals left Norway to fight under militant Islamist groups in conflict areas. As far as we know, 40–50 persons with links to the Oslofjord milieu have travelled to Syria, and several of them have links with militant groups there. Some of them are still in Syria, and some have been there for more than a year. The majority of those who have travelled to Syria are young men with no links to the country, but converts, women and minors have also travelled to the region.

The fight against the Syrian regime appeals to many extreme Islamists in Norway, and we expect more individuals to attempt to travel there in order to fight side by side with militant groups in 2014. There are now a considerable number of individuals who have been to Syria and can help Norwegian extremists with travel arrangements and arrange contacts with militant groups on their behalf. Such facilitation can be carried out either by individuals staying in Norway or abroad.

There are also other individuals with links to extremist groups in Norway who have travelled to conflict areas other than Syria and joined militant groups there, some of which are inspired by or have links to al-Qaida. Norwegian extremists who stay with militant groups in conflict areas have a high risk of becoming involved in terrorist acts outside Norway as well. A Norwegian citizen was probably involved in the 2013 terrorist attack on Westgate in Nairobi.

Some of those who return from stays with militant groups will in 2014 represent a potential threat to Norwegian interests, for several reasons. Firstly, a larger number of individuals living in Norway will have greater expertise in violence and terrorism. Many of those who travel abroad are trained in the use of weapons and explosives, knowledge they can use to launch attacks in Norway. Some of those who have left have previously expressed a desire of attacking goals in Norway. Many individuals with experience of fighting have a lower threshold for violence and killing. In addition, the late effects of violence and fighting on an individual's mental health can increase the risk of their becoming involved in violence.

Secondly, global terrorist organisations will attempt to recruit European extreme Islamists present in areas of war and conflict to commit terrorist attacks in Europe. This has long been al-Qaida's strategy, and Syria is now considered to be one of the main recruiting arenas. Although most of those who travel to Syria to join Islamist militants probably do not wish to become involved in terrorism in Europe, some may be persuaded by extremist individuals or groups in these conflict areas to attack Norwegian or other Western interests.

Thirdly, extremists with fighting experience will have a higher status in extremist groups on their return to Norway, and some of them will probably make use of this to radicalise and recruit other individuals. Extremists with an operational focus may influence supporters in this country in a more operational direction.

## Targets and methods

In recent years terrorist attacks committed by extreme Islamists in the West have been directed at easily accessible targets, and the terrorists have normally used home-made explosives and small arms and light weapons. Any terrorist attacks in Europe involving individuals with backgrounds from Norway are likely to be based on simple methods.

However, there is a risk that certain extreme Islamists with links to Norway and experience of fighting in conflict areas will increase the capacity of terrorist groups to use explosives.

Lone actors represent a particular challenge, also within extreme Islamist groups. Extreme Islamist websites and speeches by al-Qaida leaders encourage solo terrorism in the terrorist's home country, and there are many websites with guidelines on how to launch this type of attack.

The target chosen for a terrorist attack depends on the terrorists' resources and the target's accessibility. Although al-Qaida's leadership and operational capacity have been considerably weakened, the organisation's goal is still to launch more advanced and spectacular terrorist attacks against protected targets in the West, for example in the aviation sector. The use of insiders with good knowledge of and access to the desired targets is invaluable for those planning to carry out an attack against protected targets.

The threat posed by extreme Islamists is also influenced by the activities of other players. Right-wing extremist attacks on Muslims in general and the extreme Islamist milieu in particular are likely to provoke a violent response from Norwegian Islamists. In 2014, it is also likely that Norwegian Islamists will commit violence against opponents with different views, such as researchers, journalists, politicians, spokespersons and other participants in the public debate who confront or combat extremism.



## POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE: RIGHT-WING AND LEFT-WING EXTREMISM

The organised right-wing and left-wing extremist groups in Norway pose little threat to Norwegian society. There are few of them and they are small. Neither right-wing nor left-wing extremism is marked by prominent groups, organisations or leaders that serve as rallying points. The existing groups consist primarily of loose networks of individuals with more or less extreme views. Their ideologies vary, and in many cases are not very firmly rooted. Although they tolerate, support and to some extent use politically motivated violence and threats, terrorist activity as a method has little support among right- and left-wing extremists in Norway.

### Right-wing extremism

Any potential violence or terrorist threat from Norwegian right-wing extremists will primarily come from lone actors or small, independent groups. This approach is discussed in right-wing extremist literature and plays a large part in the history of right-wing terrorism.

Norwegian right-wing extremism also attracts certain individuals who may for various reasons constitute a threat. Some of them share the extremist convictions of organised groups without becoming members. Some have their own variant of extremist ideology, often founded on a strong belief in conspiracy theories. Others are motivated by frustration, personal conflicts or other personal factors. The willingness of some of these individuals to commit violence may be inflamed by news headlines, substance abuse or mental health problems.

In Norway, as in other parts of Europe, the dividing lines between traditional and Islamophobic right-wing extremism change constantly and are unclear in certain areas.<sup>3</sup> Some right-wing extremists have links to both Islamophobic and traditional right-wing extremist groups. In Norway Islamophobic individuals and right-wing extremists often focus on the same issues, and they share a negative attitude to leading politicians and the authorities and consequently a deep-seated distrust of Norwegian democracy. Another

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<sup>3</sup> Traditional right-wing extremism includes typical racist and national socialist ideologies. Islamophobic right-wing extremism is based on the idea that the national, Christian fundamental values and cultural heritage are threatened by Islam and by the authorities and their supporters.

shared feature is a nationalist view that involves hostility to immigration, Islam, Muslims, Jews and the Roma.

Most of the right-wing extremist activity in Norway takes place on Internet, where specific cases are presented from a right-wing extremist perspective. There are many references to right-wing extremist groups and activities, some of which, like Russian right-wing extremists or political parties like Golden Dawn in Greece, are far more active and violent than their Norwegian equivalents. Over the long term a more focused use of Internet and closer links with foreign right-wing extremists may serve to recruit and radicalise Norwegian extremists.

Since the right-wing extremist groups in Norway are few in number and small in size, initiatives taken by a single individual have a considerable impact. Often such initiatives have been taken by foreign extremists, who play an influential role in the internal organisation of the group concerned and in public demonstrations. Most of the foreign contacts of Norwegian groups are right-wing extremists from countries in north-western Europe. There is no evidence that the influence of right-wing extremists outside Norway will push the organised Norwegian groups into violence in 2014. However, it is possible that individual Norwegian extremists will be inspired and radicalised by violent right-wing extremists from countries like Russia or Greece.

A number of Norwegian right-wing extremists hope for stronger political influence, and we are therefore likely to see attempts to rally and coordinate these groups and their activities. Some right-wing extremists are also likely to become more involved in political activities, a trend we have noticed in other European countries. However, it is too early to say how or how much such a trend will affect the threat picture in Norway. The internal conflicts and changing leadership in Norwegian right-wing extremist groups will continue in 2014.

In 2013, several aggressive and threatening attacks were made on Muslims and various religious communities in Norway. Provocation targeted at Muslims and certain Islamist groups is a deliberate strategy used by Islamophobic groups in several European countries. There is a risk that individuals in Norway with strong or weak links to right-wing extremist groups will engage in activities that are intentionally provocative and threatening to Muslims. It is also likely that political demonstrations by Islamophobic groups will be directly provocative towards Muslims and Islam, which may lead to violent confrontations.

A violent or terrorist attack by extreme Islamists in Norway will lead to mobilisation and coordination among Norwegian right-wing extremists. A number of right-wing extremists have the capacity to carry out serious violent acts, and such an incident will increase sympathy and support for right-wing extremist ideologies.

### **Left-wing extremism**

The level of activity among Norwegian left-wing extremists is low and is primarily a law and order problem. The fight against right-wing extremism will continue to be the most important and unifying issue for left-wing extremists. These extremists hold relatively few political protest demonstrations in Norway, but differ from other extremists in that they often use violent and threatening methods in their demonstrations. Left-wing extremists will continue to hold violent and threatening demonstrations that are mainly directed at persons defined as right-wing extremists and right-wing extremist events.

The number of left-wing extremists is smaller than it used to be, and their engagement for causes other than the fight against right-wing extremism is less intense. They therefore seem to have a higher threshold for mobilising and using violent methods in connection with individual political issues than they used to have.

In some European countries, left-wing extremism poses a serious and persistent threat of violence and terrorism. Although certain left-wing extremists could, in the same way as right-wing extremists, be inspired and radicalised by foreign players, it is unlikely that Norwegian left-wing extremist groups in general will become more violent, and their level of activity is expected to remain low in 2014.

## THREATS AGAINST DIGNITARIES

Every year the Service investigates a relatively stable number of cases connected with threats against dignitaries. Verbal threats are primarily intended to cause fear, and very seldom represent an actual willingness on the part of the individual to carry them out. The number of criminal cases related to threats against dignitaries in 2014 will probably remain unchanged. Punishable threats will mainly be directed at leading politicians with a high media profile, and in a few cases at members of the Royal Family.

We deal to an increasing extent with speech that has threatening elements but not to a punishable extent. These types of utterances are primarily published on Internet and consist of hate speech, abuse and threatening language aimed at dignitaries. There is a risk that such language, regardless of whether or not it is punishable, may cause some dignitaries to refrain from freely expressing their views.

There are few examples of Norwegian dignitaries being physically attacked. However, it is important to be aware that an individual may quite rapidly develop a willingness to harm a dignitary. Their motives are often rooted in personal problems or political discontent, usually in combination with some form of mental instability.<sup>4</sup> Dignitaries may also be symbolic targets for individuals or groups who use violence to emphasise their views.

The new government parties are likely to experience an increase in incidents of annoying and threatening behaviour by individuals in 2014. The number and scale of such incidents will depend on the degree to which one or more of these dignitaries are linked with particular issues or subjects that arouse strong feelings and that are regarded in some quarters as controversial. Issues that have previously provoked threatening behaviour against dignitaries are immigration, asylum policy, decisions in the health and care field, environmental protection, animal rights and a military presence in other countries.

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<sup>4</sup>“Mentally unstable” refers to individuals who are mentally ill, in a critical or desperate life situation and/or affected by alcohol or other substances.

## INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY

The intelligence services of several states engage in activities that represent a threat to Norway and Norwegian interests. The purpose of the intelligence operations that cause us most concern is the theft of military and technology secrets. Several exposed operations have also shown that a number of states use intelligence activities to secure future access to energy and other natural resources, and some to acquire information that could strengthen their own interests at the expense of other states' interests in bilateral and multilateral negotiations and decisions. Intelligence operations are also used to identify and weaken support by dissidents for oppositional activity in their home countries.

### Computer network intelligence operations

In recent years the exposure of computer network intelligence operations and interception has revealed the scale and complexity of intelligence activity between states. However, these only constitute a part of the intelligence picture. Foreign intelligence officers are still involved in different kinds of operations in Norway.

Computer network intelligence operations are one of several intelligence *methods*. Norway has many intelligence targets that can be accessed through such operations. The choice of whether or not to use computer network intelligence operations depends on the purpose of the operation, since an important aspect of computer network intelligence technology is its potential for revealing the operator's own identity and activities. Such operations may also be more cost-effective than other methods. If the purpose is to acquire large numbers of documents, this method is far faster and more discreet than one that involves the deployment of intelligence officers. If the intelligence service has not succeeded in establishing a contact inside the target, computer network intelligence operations are also the only available alternative.

A number of attempted computer network intelligence operations directed at Norwegian targets have been exposed in the last few years. However, new operations aimed at Norwegian interests may be conducted by other players using more advanced technology that makes the operation more difficult to detect.

At the international level, there have been a few cases of computer network based sabotage by states to cripple or disable the computer network system of other states. Cyber attacks on state infrastructure have also been carried out as a political message from one state to

another. Players who are currently undertaking intelligence operations in Norway have previously demonstrated to other states that they are willing and able to make use of such operations for political ends in particularly tense situations. It is therefore necessary that we in Norway bear in mind that attacks on computer network systems may in the future be directed against Norwegian interests.

## **Intelligence officers**

Intelligence officers who operate in Norway use a variety of methods, including theft, bribery, fraud and blackmail, to influence Norwegian decision-making processes and obtain sensitive civil and military information. These officers often operate under cover of other occupations that give them credible access to the Norwegian public administration, such as diplomats, journalists or visiting technologists. They are trained to establish relations of trust with individuals in a position to influence political processes, and in methods for inducing trusted employees to release information from classified computer networks.

Foreign intelligence services continue to play a role in the efforts to promote cooperation between government agencies, institutions and business and research communities in Norway and their own countries. They try to make use of such cooperation to reinforce their efforts to obtain sensitive information about the Norwegian government and trade and industry.

Some of the states involved in espionage directed at refugee communities in Norway have imposed further restrictions on freedom of expression in their own country in the past year, and some of the intelligence officers operating in Norway are here for the purpose of registering information about dissidents from their own countries. These officers work for repressive regimes, and their presence and mapping activity in Norway is often perceived as very frightening, especially by the dissidents concerned. These states' operational efforts against opponents of their regimes in Norway will continue in 2014.

## **Insider operations**

Insider operations occurs when a foreign intelligence service plants or exploits an employee in a Norwegian institution or company who has access to classified and sensitive information to gather information on its behalf. In recent years there has been a growing tendency for foreign intelligence services to try to recruit students or people at the start of their careers

to work for them. This demonstrates the long-term nature of the methodology used by intelligence services.

Insider operations are an effective method of obtaining information, especially if the object is classified national security or military information. It is also a good method of acquiring information about new technology and other technology-related information. Norwegian research and industry are far advanced in the fields of petroleum, military and space technology and in a number of scientific basic research areas. All these areas have high priority in other states as well, and some states use intelligence methods to steal secrets and thereby gain an advantage. If these services succeed in placing moles or exploit employees with access to classified and sensitive information, they can cause substantial damage.

Insider operations can also be used against institutions that have registered personal information about dissidents and refugees, defence personnel, the security services and the justice sector. A large volume of personal data concerning refugees and asylum-seekers is stored electronically, and access to these files through insiders will weaken our ability to protect these people.

The conditions for insider operations have changed in the last few years. An increasing number of persons from states that carry out intelligence activity in Norway are being employed in sensitive positions. These are civilians with no known contacts with intelligence actors in their country of origin and without any desire to cooperate with foreign intelligence services. However, in some cases the person's background may make them vulnerable to threats and other pressure, which could force them to cooperate with a foreign intelligence service.

## PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

In October 2013, Iran and the P5+1 countries<sup>5</sup> reached a first-phase agreement as a basis for further negotiations on a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear programme. However, in spite of this progress in the international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, there is still broad political agreement on continuing the existing sanctions and restrictions concerning the non-proliferation of such weapons. The present Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty does not apply to the rules governing the export of dual-use goods and technologies to Iran.

Iranian players are still behind most of the attempts in Norway to obtain goods and technology that can be used in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. The reason for these attempts is the international sanctions that have resulted in substantial restrictions on trade with Iran. Many Norwegian companies, both high-technology and more traditional companies, produce or resell goods and technologies that are intended for civilian use but that can also be used to produce weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The attempts to procure these companies' products will for the time being continue as before.

The methods for concealing the fact that an approach to a company may be linked to the development of a nuclear programme have changed very little. Civilian projects are still being used as pretexts for procurement for nuclear purposes. We also see that the persons responsible for these attempts, who intend to use the products for proliferation purposes, establish nominee companies with apparently legal activities. In order to conceal the connection with their country of origin these companies often have European names and websites in European languages. Some companies also establish cover companies in Europe that only exist on paper. There is widespread use of transit countries in order to create as much uncertainty as possible around the identity of the end user. It seems likely that these methods will continue to be employed and further developed in 2014 and that they will be used against Norwegian companies.

Iran's difficulty in obtaining products for its nuclear programme is an incentive for the country to develop its own technology. The number of Iranian applicants to Norwegian higher education and research institutions is high compared with the numbers from other non-Western countries. These applicants are often interested in technological and other

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<sup>5</sup> P5+1 refers to the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, the US and the UK), plus Germany.



subjects that are relevant to the development of a potential nuclear weapons programme. There is a high risk that Norwegian educational institutions and high-technology activities will be subject to attempts of illegal transfer of knowledge in 2014 as well.

In 2013, we registered an interest taken in the Norwegian petroleum sector. In Iran it is mainly the state-controlled companies that are making more persistent efforts to establish contact with the Norwegian petroleum sector. Given the dual-use potential of the goods, services and technology in the oil and gas industry, the Iranian authorities will continue their activity directed at the Norwegian petroleum sector in 2014.

Internationally there is concern that non-state players are attempting to acquire the capacity to use chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear substances or material for terrorist attacks. Norwegian enterprises with access to these types of substances or technology need to be aware of such activity.

Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is both a national and an international challenge, and cooperation between the various players in this area is crucial. At the national level, it is extremely important that suppliers and educational institutions are aware of the threat in order to prevent Norway from contributing to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.