



Center for Strategic & International Studies
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VIOLENT JIHAD IN THE NETHERLANDS: CURRENT TRENDS IN THE ISLAMIST TERRORIST THREAT

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On June 1, 2006, CSIS' Transnational Threats Project and the Royal Netherlands Embassy co-hosted a roundtable to present the General Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands (AIVD) findings from their recently released report: *Violent Jihad in the Netherlands: Current Trends in the Islamist Threat*.

Immigration over the past 40 years has transformed The Netherlands into a multicultural society, which has brought increased crime and the growing threat of Islamic radicalization. Currently, three million of the country's total population of 16 million are non-Dutch, with 1 million of the non-Dutch population being Muslim. Despite the fact that 10% of the country's mosques support extremist Islam, it was not until after 9/11 that the Dutch government actively explored the problems of radicalization within the country.

The AIVD report identified four general trends in the development of jihadism:

- **European jihad.** Foreign terrorism evolved to indigenous home-grown terrorism as jihad war veterans settled in The Netherlands.
- **Decentralization and local transplantation of global networks.** Terrorists connected with jihadists who have already established themselves in The Netherlands and facilitated the transition to Europe of foreign jihadists.
- **Independently-operated, local jihadist networks.** Local networks emerged from grassroots radicalization.
- **Virtualization of jihad.** Networks using the Internet to disseminate extremist ideology, form global networks, and develop virtual terrorist training camps

Jihadist networks are fluid, dynamic, and have vaguely delineated structures that are comprised of radical Muslims with a common interest. Jihadist networks can be transnational networks, internationally-oriented local networks, or local, autonomous networks with local interests. Presently, there are about 20 jihadist networks in The Netherlands and these networks have links to an estimated 300 to 400 networks outside the country. In addition to networks there are 'lone wolves,' individuals who self-radicalize and engage in solo terrorist activities.

Jihadist terrorists' motivation to commit violent acts is rooted in religious faith, a desire to make a political impact, or feeling of helplessness resulting from discrimination, unemployment, and other factors. Many Moroccans grapple with identity issues, uncertain where they belong in either Dutch or Moroccan society. Such doubts regarding self-identity make young Moroccans particularly vulnerable to the influence of radicals. Moreover, the Dutch Moroccan community is not politically organized, as a result, the community lacks a political voice for articulating grievances.

The War on Terror has eroded the powers of Al Qaeda's power and direct control; it is not the mastermind behind all jihadist networks. Al Qaeda is viewed as an ideology and those ideas and goals persist in the minds of Muslim youth worldwide, unaffiliated with the organization. In addition to Muslim youth, women and Dutch converts to radical Islam also play important roles in jihadist activities. The susceptibility of Dutch converts to radical Islam further demonstrates that al Qaeda has maintained spiritual strength.

The report is available on the AIVD web site as follows:

https://www.aivd.nl/actueel_publicaties/aivd-publicaties/violent_jihad_in_the