

Assessment of the terrorist threat to Denmark

March 2022

Preface

The Assessment of the Terrorist Threat to Denmark is the overall assessment of the terrorist threat to Denmark and Danish interests abroad by the Centre for Terror Analysis (CTA)¹.

CTA assesses that the terrorist threat to Denmark remains at the level of **significant**. The terrorist threat level in the "Assessment of the Terrorist Threat to Denmark" reflects cases and trends in Denmark and abroad which have a combined effect on the assessment.

Terrorism in Denmark

In the past year, a number of cases in Denmark led to conviction under the anti-terrorism provisions of the Danish Criminal Code. These cases also included several convictions for attempts to commit acts of terrorism. In two separate cases, the defendants were convicted of acquiring firearms and ammunition for use in one or more acts of terrorism in Denmark or abroad. Both cases have been appealed. In February 2021, a number of individuals were arrested in Denmark, of whom five are charged with attempted terrorism or complicity in attempted terrorism. The case is still being investigated.

¹) CTA is a fusion centre comprising staff from four Danish authorities (the Danish Security and Intelligence Service, the Danish Defence Intelligence Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Emergency Management Agency).




The above cases illustrate how there continues to be individuals and small groups in Denmark with intent and capability to plan and commit acts of terrorism. However, the individual risk of being affected by terrorism in Denmark remains very low.

PET regularly launches operations to uncover and prevent potential terrorist threats to targets in Denmark. Terrorist attacks may occur with no prior intelligence indications, even if the perpetrators have previously been known to sympathize with militant Islamism or other forms of extremism. This may be the case if the perpetrators have been radicalized within a relatively short time frame.

The dynamic threat

CTA assesses that the COVID-19 pandemic in itself is not an essential driver of the terrorist threat in Denmark. However, the pandemic has contributed to making the threat picture more complex. The past year has seen examples of heavy criticism of public authorities' handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The vast majority of this criticism is peaceful, but there have also been examples in Denmark and other European countries of criticism taking the form of threats and intimidation of experts, popularly elected officials or representatives of certain public authorities as well as planning or execution of acts of violence.

Democracy is a fundamental principle of Danish society. When threats and intimidation of experts, politicians or representatives of public authorities restrict the legitimate performance of central democratic functions or involvement in free democratic debate, it is important to be able to describe and assess this threat in order to be able to counter it.



Thus, as something new in this Assessment of the Terrorist Threat to Denmark, CTA describes the terrorist threat from this kind of anti-establishment extremism, which accepts and expresses the necessity of using violence, for example against popularly elected officials, as an independent phenomenon. In that context it is important to distinguish extremists from activists. Activists do not use violent means and are therefore not of interest to PET. CTA assesses that the terrorist threat from anti-establishment extremists in Denmark is at the level of **limited**.

CTA assesses that the terrorist threat from left-wing extremists in Denmark has diminished and is now of such a nature that CTA lowers the threat level from limited to minimal. According to PET's definitions, this means that there are no indications of any threat. There is absence of intent, capability or both. However, CTA assesses that the currently low readiness for violence among Danish left-wing extremists may increase if, for example, right-wing extremist acts of violence or terrorism occur in Denmark

The impact of international developments

On 24 February 2022, Russian troops invaded Ukraine. It remains too soon to assess the consequences for the terrorist threat to Denmark. CTA assesses that, for the time being, the conflict in itself has had no direct impact on the terrorist threat. However, the conflict can have derived effects on the terrorist threat. In the short term, larger migrant flows from Ukraine may allow individuals who can pose a threat to Denmark to enter Europe hidden within these migrant flows. In the longer term, the presence of a conflict zone in Europe where the availability of weapons is presumably high can potentially attract extremists who may pose a threat to Denmark.

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 has provided an opportunity for terrorist groups, such as al-Qaida (AQ) and Islamic State (IS), to boost their capability locally in the region. However, CTA assesses that, in the coming year, the threat will remain regional and the incidents in Afghanistan will therefore have no direct impact on the terrorist threat outside the region. The long-term effect of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on the terrorist threat outside the region is, however, still subject to uncertainty.

The assessment is based on intelligence processed before 1 March 2022.

Happy reading!

Michael Hamann
Head of CTA





Content



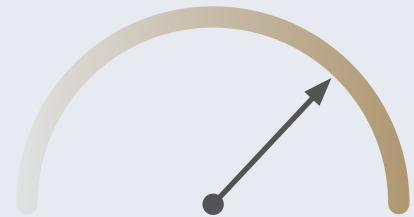
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Definitions

TERRORIST THREAT LEVEL

CTA uses the following terrorist threat levels (highlighted in **BROWN** in the text):

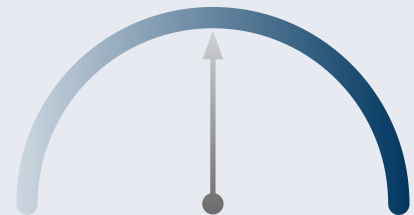
- **Very significant** • There is a specific threat. There is capability, intent, planning and possibly initiation.
- **Significant** • There is a known threat. There is capability, intent and planning.
- **General** • There is capability and/or intent and possibly planning.
- **Limited** • There is a potential threat. There is limited capability and/or intent.
- **Minimal** • There are no indications of any threat. There is absence of Intent, capability or both.



PROBABILITY

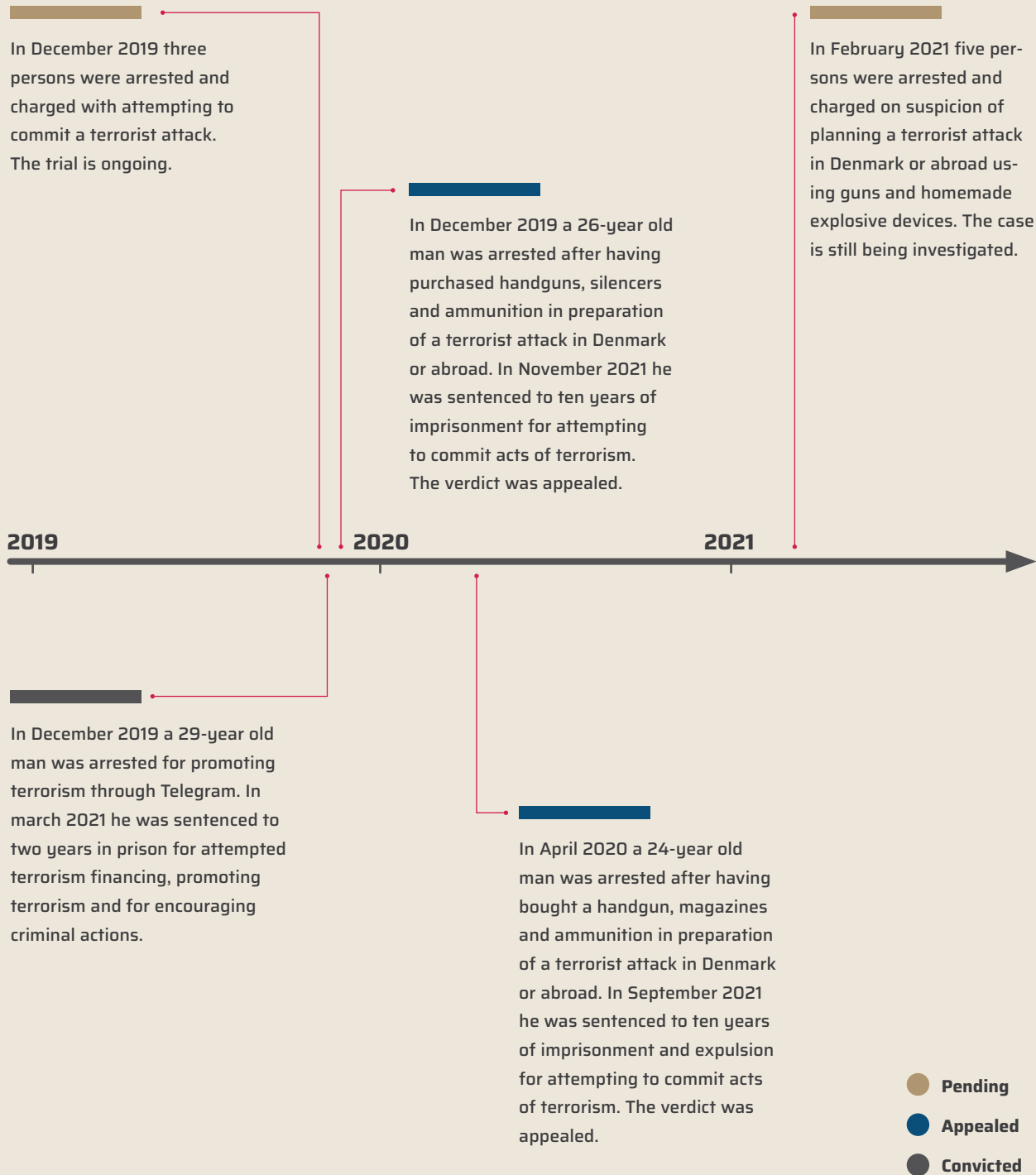
CTA uses the following degrees of probability (highlighted in **BLUE** in the text):

- **Highly likely** **>= 85%**
- **Likely** **60-85%**
- **Possible** **40-60%**
- **Less likely** **15-40%**
- **Unlikely** **<= 15%**



TERM	DEFINITION
Terrorism	CTA defines terrorism pursuant to Section 114 of the Danish Criminal Code.
The West	North America, Australia, New Zealand and Europe, not including Russia, Belarus, Turkey and the Caucasus.
Traveller	A private person who has travelled to a conflict zone in order to support one of the parties in the conflict without necessarily engaging in combat.
Capability	Agreement between a person's accessible means and their ability (training, skills, logistics etc.) to use these in a terrorist attack.
Intent	The will to employ a certain capability against a certain target or target group.
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 commits a solo terrorist attack, while planning, training etc. may involve other people.
Inspired attack	The perpetrator is inspired by militant Islamism or political extremism and plans the attack on their own.
Supported attack	The perpetrator is in direct contact with one or more persons who provide guidance or in other ways support the attack plans.
Directed attack	An attack is sanctioned by and/or planned under a mandate from the senior leadership of a terrorist group.

Thwarted attacks & related activities



01



DEFINITION

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

The threat from militant Islamists

CTA assesses that the terrorist threat to Denmark from militant Islamists is at the level of **significant**. According to PET's definitions, this means that there is a known threat. There is capability, intent and planning.²

The most likely militant Islamist terrorist attack in Denmark is an attack carried out by a lone actor or a small group with easily accessible means, firearms or improvised explosive devices.

1.1 Trends in the global threat picture

The biggest threat to Denmark and Danish interests still emanates from the militant Islamist groups Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaida (AQ), which inspire individuals and networks to attacks in and outside the West.

IS regards the West as its enemy and along with its affiliated groups and sympathizers, the group still poses a terrorist threat to Denmark and Danish interests abroad. It is **likely** that it remains the primary aim of IS to create a so-called caliphate – despite the loss of the last territories controlled by the group in Syria/Iraq in March 2019. It is **likely** that, for now, IS in Syria/Iraq is mainly focused on rebuilding the organization. As part of this plan, the group continues its efforts to build attack structures outside Syria/Iraq which can act locally and also strike against targets in the West. Thus, IS continuously expands its cooperation with a number of regional sub-groups outside Syria/Iraq, mainly in Africa and Asia. Several of these groups carried out local attacks in 2021, for example against Kabul Airport in August. In 2021, a number of IS associates were arrested in Europe, which has led to a general weakening of the network in Europe. On this basis, CTA assesses that the capability of IS to carry out directed attacks in the West is currently significantly reduced. The leader of IS, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, was killed by US forces on 3 February 2022. CTA assesses that his death will have no significant impact on the threat posed by IS to Denmark and Danish interests abroad.

2) The threat to Denmark may be kept at "significant" with no planning currently in progress, as Denmark has recently been the target of attacks, attempted attacks or attack planning.



It remains the intent of AQ to carry out attacks in and outside the West. AQ sub-groups in Africa, the Middle East and Asia play a key role in the group's organization and global presence. The primary focus of these sub-groups is on their own, local interests, but in some cases they follow instructions from the senior leadership on, for example, target selection or choice of modus operandi. It is less likely that AQ currently has capability to carry out directed or supported attacks in the West, including Denmark.

A number of AQ leaders have died in the last couple of years. These losses may influence the group's plans to carry out acts of terrorism. However, it is particularly the loss of several mid-level operational leaders that is expected to delay, but not ultimately prevent, the execu-



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

tion of attacks against the West. For quite some time, there have been speculations about the health of the current AQ leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was rumoured to be dead. A new leader may come to play a crucial role in AQ's future ability to ensure global cohesion and recruitment.

CTA assesses that IS and AQ sympathizers may become inspired by the groups' propaganda to carry out attacks in Denmark or against Danish interests abroad. The extent as well as the quality of the official IS and AQ propaganda remain highly reduced compared with a few years ago, when especially IS had a large-scale production. However, a large amount of propaganda still exists online, including extremely violent IS propaganda, which may have an effect in terms of radicalization and target

selection and may offer specific guidance in connection with attack planning.

CTA assesses that both IS and AQ will seek to exploit the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 to strengthen their own presence in the region, for example by building capability and through increased recruitment, especially from the Central Asian countries. In addition, it is possible that some militant Islamists outside the region will attempt to join militant Islamist groups in Afghanistan in the coming year. CTA assesses that even a limited number of individuals travelling to Afghanistan may in the long term come to pose a threat to Danish or other Western interests if they acquire capabilities to carry out attacks during their stay in Afghanistan. ■

1.2 Impact of perceived insults to Islam on the terrorist threat

Militant Islamist groups continue to refer to Denmark or specific Danes in their propaganda. When Denmark is singled out, it is due to a long history and numerous cases of perceived insults to Islam in Denmark (hereafter “perceived insults”) – among these the so-called cartoon case³ – but also a focus on more recent cases of perceived insults.

There has been limited mention of perceived insults in propaganda in 2021, and CTA is not aware that any new and explicit threats were made to Denmark or Denmark-based individuals associated with perceived insults. In 2021, international militant Islamist propaganda included examples of Denmark being singled out as well as historical references to the cartoon case and its consequences, such as the attack on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad in 2008, which appeared in an official AQ propaganda video. CTA assesses that militant Islamist exposure of Danish cases related to perceived insults still has considerable potential as a motivating factor for militant Islamists. In 2021, there were no successful or foiled militant Islamist terrorist attacks connected with perceived insults in the West.

CTA still assesses that pronounced militant Islamist attention to perceived insults in Denmark may affect the terrorist threat to individuals in Denmark, Denmark in general and Danish interests abroad. PET has indications that a number of the recently foiled terrorist attacks in Denmark may have been motivated by perceived insults. CTA assesses that the impact on the terrorist threat is highly dependent on the exposure of the individual cases in national and international editorial media, social media and militant Islamist propaganda as well as on the response to these cases in militant Islamist environments in Denmark and abroad.

3) The “cartoon case” refers to the 2005 publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* and the reprinting of the cartoons in several media in 2008.



The extent of negative reactions from militant Islamists to perceived insults in the West varies considerably from case to case. Some cases never receive any attention, while others – as was the case when a French satirical magazine reprinted the Muhammad cartoons in the autumn of 2020 – lead to considerable negative attention, also in the form of planning and execution of militant Islamist terrorist attacks. Potential reactions to perceived insults, in Denmark or other countries in the West, may occur in the short term, but can also appear at a much later stage. CTA assesses that isolated cases of perceived insults abroad may also draw renewed negative attention to Denmark.

Finally, CTA notes that militant Islamist terrorist attacks motivated by cases of perceived insults to Islam may also trigger violent counter-reactions from individuals and groups motivated by a right-wing extremist, anti-Muslim agenda. ■



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

1.3 Physical environments and virtual communities

Militant Islamists in Denmark move in and out of various physical environments as well as national and international virtual communities. The physical environments organize social and religious activities and share extremist propaganda which can have a radicalizing effect on those involved and/or maintain and confirm an already existing militant Islamist world view. Although predominantly male, the virtual communities as well as the physical environments include both men and women.

The physical militant Islamist environments are mainly found in and around the major Danish cities. They are typically multi-ethnic Sunni environments consisting of small groups of individuals in their twenties and thirties.

The level of security awareness is quite high among individuals with militant Islamist sympathies. This is the case in both the physical environments and the virtual communities. Statements expressing approval of acts of violence or terrorism and support for groups such as IS and AQ are usually made in closed groups or indirectly by means of inside references. The virtual communities are used for propaganda dissemination, radicalization, recruitment and exchange of weapons information together with bomb and attack manuals, which may serve as mutual inspiration and contribute to building capability.

Danish militant Islamists continue to use popular social media to reach a wide audience, but they also increasingly use services offering more anonymity to communicate and access propaganda material. It is **likely** that Danish militant Islamists will continue and increase their use of virtual communication platforms in the coming year.

It is **likely** that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan will have no impact on the terrorist threat to Denmark from Danish militant Islamists in the coming year. CTA assesses that this is due to a number of factors, including ideological, linguistic and cultural differences between parts of the militant Islamist environments in Denmark and militant Islamist groups in Afghanistan.

CTA has no knowledge of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the terrorist threat to Denmark from militant Islamism. However, the pandemic may have put a temporary break on physical meetings and social events during the lockdown, whereas virtual activities have been able to continue as usual. ■

1.4 Connections between militant Islamists and Danish organized criminal environments

CTA assesses that individuals in organized criminal environments in Denmark are primarily motivated by money and personal status. This results in a general reluctance to attract the attention of the authorities brought about by involvement in terror-related activities. However, there are personal links between militant Islamists and individuals from criminal environments. In most cases, this is due to a shared history or family relations. There are also examples of individuals from militant Islamist environments carrying out Islamic missionary activities (dawa) in criminal environments and of individuals from criminal environments frequenting a militant Islamist environment.

CTA assesses that there are individuals within Danish criminal environments who sympathize with militant Islamism, including individuals who have been to Syria/Iraq to join militant Islamist groups. CTA assesses that it can aggravate the threat when individuals who are influenced by militant Islamist propaganda are also linked to criminal environments with a high readiness for violence and access to weapons. In addition, ongoing relations between individuals from criminal environments and militant Islamist environments can increase the capability of militant Islamists to carry out terrorist attacks with firearms and explosives in Denmark.

CTA has no information about attack planning in Denmark in recent years where criminal environments have facilitated weapons to militant Islamists. ■



1.5 Radicalized ex-prisoners

Radicalized inmates in Danish prisons may pose a terrorist threat, both during their imprisonment and upon their release. The group of radicalized inmates in Danish prisons includes individuals convicted of terror-related offences and others with a readiness to use violence who start or continue a radicalization process while remanded in custody or serving a sentence. Some of these have been convicted of violent crime and/or possession of weapons.

The 2015 terrorist attack in Denmark committed by Omar el-Hussein and incidents abroad have demonstrated that radicalized ex-prisoners can commit acts of terrorism shortly after their release. However, the threat may also materialize at a later stage, just as it may be



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

FACTS

The threat from radicalized ex-prisoners in Denmark should be seen in the context that, for years, militant Islamist terrorist groups such as IS have been spreading violence-promoting messages and narratives aimed at individuals engaging in criminal activities. With few exceptions, major terrorist attacks in Europe since 2014 have involved one or more perpetrators with a criminal record.

more wide-ranging and for example include radicalization and propaganda activities, logistical support, terrorist financing and other terror-related activities. During their imprisonment, the terrorist threat is aimed at prison staff and other inmates, who may be subjected to acts of violence motivated by extremist views, potentially combined with the criminal's personal grievances and avenging motives.

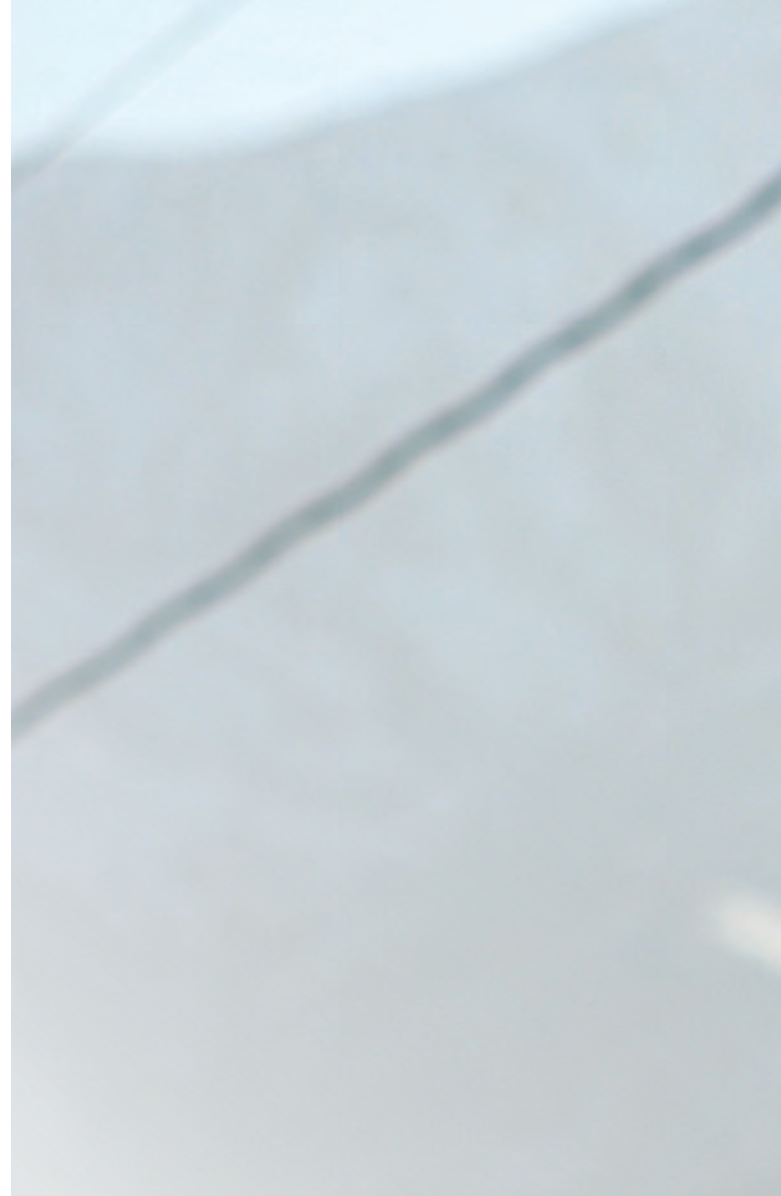
CTA assesses that, during the coming year, the number of inmates in Danish prisons who are subject to active radicalization concerns relating specifically to militant Islamism will be between 30 and 50, which is a twofold increase compared with the situation three years ago. This increase is ascribed to the prosecution of returnees from the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq as well as five other terror cases⁴ since 2019. The high concentration entails an increased risk of further mutual influence and

strengthening of networks among radicalized inmates in Danish prisons. However, the trend so far indicates no growing concern of radicalization in relation to inmates convicted of or charged with offences other than terrorism. PET has seen some examples of public authorities succeeding in reducing the degree of radicalization among inmates in a radicalization process, such as the use of mentoring.

In the past three years, the average number of prisoners released while subject to current concern of radicalization has been just over one per month, and the frequency will likely remain around this level in the coming year. In other European countries, a large number of terrorist convicts and possibly radicalized individuals will also be

⁴) See the illustration on page 7.

released in the coming years. Around one third of the possibly radicalized inmates in Danish prisons have received a deportation order as part of their sentence. Far from all of these individuals can be deported from Denmark upon their release. In some cases, the individuals in question will therefore stay in Denmark after being released from prison or subsequent custody pursuant to the Danish Return Act. As a general rule, these individuals will be placed at Departure Centre Kærshovedgård, whose residents include criminals sentenced to deportation. There is currently a considerable number of released terrorist convicts and other possibly radicalized ex-prisoners with an obligation to reside at or report to Departure Centre Kærshovedgård. The significance of this concentration is examined further in the next section on the threat from radicalized foreign nationals in Denmark. ■



1.6 The threat from radicalized foreign nationals in Denmark

A terrorist threat may emanate from radicalized asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, accepted refugees and migrants staying in Denmark. It may involve individuals who start or continue a radicalization process after they arrive in Europe, including Denmark. It may also involve individuals or small groups who have travelled to Europe with the intent to commit acts of terrorism, either inspired or directed by a militant Islamist group. Exploitation of refugee and migrant routes has previously been a key element of IS attack planning against targets in Europe, and it is possible that militant Islamist groups still intend to exploit these routes.



PHOTO: FARID ERSHAD - UNSPLASH

CTA assesses that some asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, refugees and migrants may be particularly susceptible to radicalization and influence from militant Islamist agendas. This especially applies to younger men travelling alone. High susceptibility may be ascribed to such factors as frustration over one's situation, a sense of exclusion, the absence of family or network as well as mental disorders or mental instability or a combination of these factors.

A terrorist threat may emanate from foreigners with militant Islamist sympathies who are subject to deportation orders that cannot be executed, including individuals on exceptional leave to remain in Denmark. At Departure

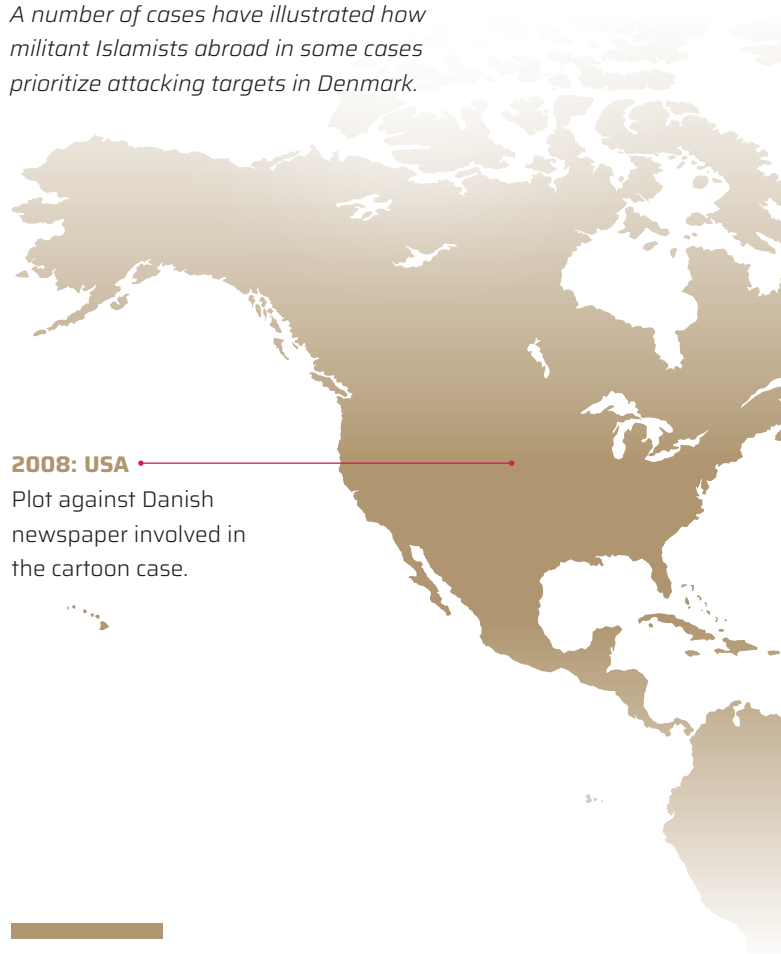
Centre Kærshovedgård, there is a concentration of former terrorist convicts and other possibly radicalized ex-prisoners who are subject to deportation. In the coming year, it is **likely** that the number will increase further. It is **likely** that some former terrorist convicts and individuals with militant Islamist sympathies will seek to establish new networks or strengthen existing networks of like-minded individuals during their stay at Departure Centre Kærshovedgård. The contact is not necessarily driven by an interest in militant Islamism but may for instance be motivated by a shared past and/or similar personal circumstances. CTA assesses that individuals at the departure centre may be particularly susceptible to radicalization and influence from militant Islamist agendas. ■

1.7 The threat from Militant Islamists based in other Western countries

Denmark also faces a terrorist threat from radicalized individuals and small groups based in other countries, mainly those neighbouring Denmark. CTA has knowledge of several cases where individuals based in the West have travelled to Denmark to prepare and commit acts of terrorism. The most recent case was in 2016, when two individuals entered Denmark from Germany and Sweden, respectively, with the purpose of committing a terrorist attack against an unknown target. This type of case has historically been more frequent in Denmark than in other European countries, which CTA assesses is mainly due to the Danish cartoon case and the fact that Denmark is home to targets that have played a central role in the case.

The threat from militant Islamists based in other Western countries may emanate from individuals with links to Denmark, but also from foreign-based individuals with no prior connection to Denmark. In both cases, it may involve individuals who have been to the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq and have returned to countries other than Denmark or radicalized ex-prisoners and/or deportees. In the coming years, a large number of terrorist convicts will be released in other European countries, and these will then be able to travel to Denmark. ■

A number of cases have illustrated how militant Islamists abroad in some cases prioritize attacking targets in Denmark.



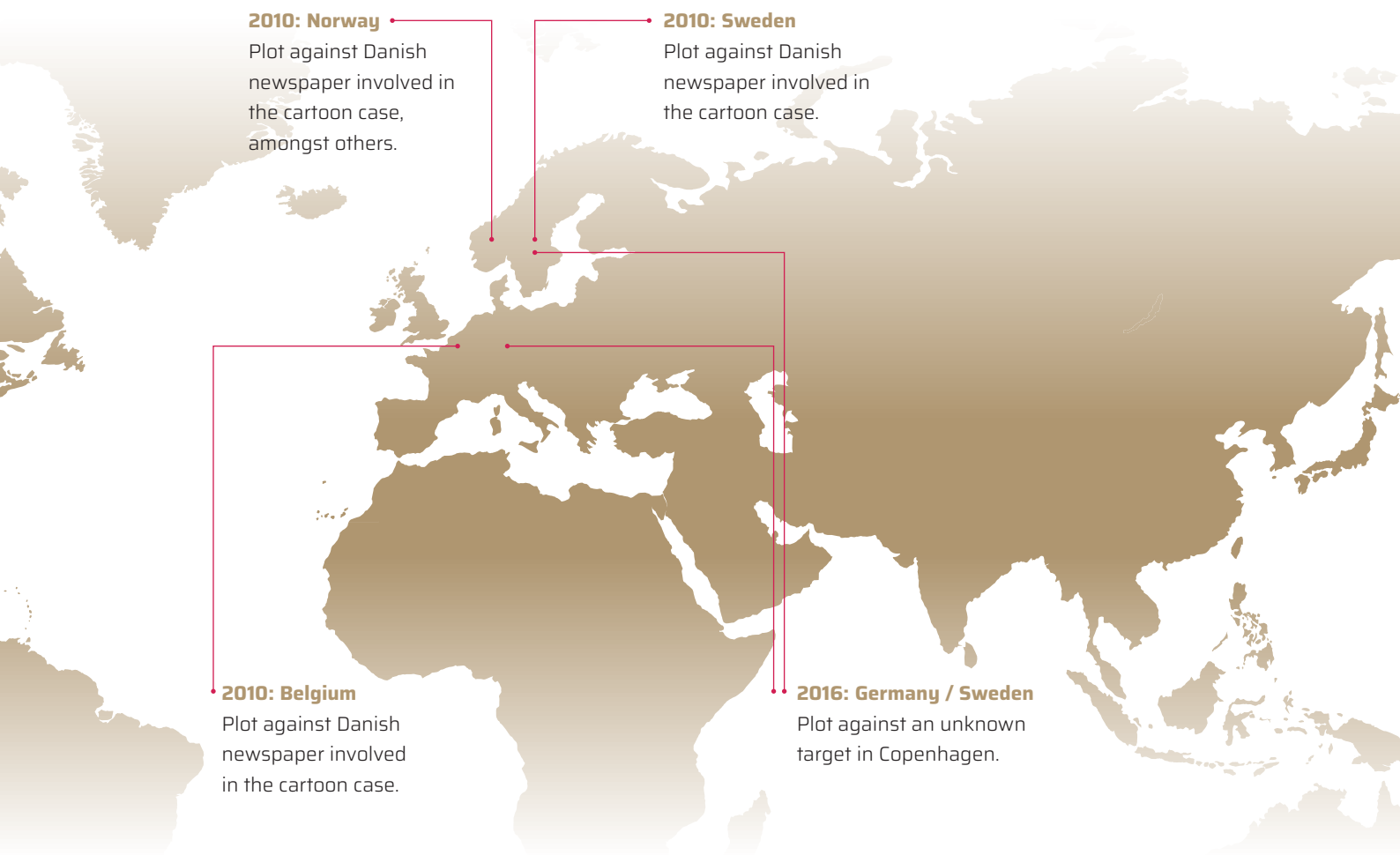
2008: USA
Plot against Danish newspaper involved in the cartoon case.

1.8 The threat posed by travellers to and returnees from Syria/Iraq

CTA assesses that at least 161 adults have travelled from Denmark to Syria/Iraq to join militant Islamist groups since the summer of 2012. According to CTA's information, no one has travelled from Denmark to the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq since 2016.

Currently, around half of the 161 travellers have either returned to Denmark or taken up residence in other, mainly European, countries, while roughly one third are presumed to have died in the conflict zone. According to CTA's information, 29 adult travellers from Denmark remain in Syria/Iraq or in neighbouring countries. Around one third of them are women.

Of the 29 travellers from Denmark who remain in or near the conflict zone, six are Danish citizens. The re-



2010: Norway

Plot against Danish newspaper involved in the cartoon case, amongst others.

2010: Sweden

Plot against Danish newspaper involved in the cartoon case.

2010: Belgium

Plot against Danish newspaper involved in the cartoon case.

2016: Germany / Sweden

Plot against an unknown target in Copenhagen.

maining 23 individuals are foreign nationals. 11 of these foreign nationals have had a residence permit in Denmark, which has become invalid. The remaining 12 individuals have had their Danish citizenship revoked by an administrative order.

Several of the travellers from Denmark brought their children with them to the conflict zone, while some have had children during their stay in the conflict zone. According to CTA's information, approximately 35 children of travellers located in the conflict zone or in neighbouring countries have a parent who was a Danish citizen at the time the child was born. In addition, CTA has information that approximately ten children of former Danish residents are also located in or around the conflict zone. Of the approximately 45 children of travellers from Den-

mark, around ten are located in the camps in north-eastern Syria with their mothers who are not Danish citizens. According to CTA's information, the remaining children are located in places such as north-western Syria and Turkey. A total of 16 children have been evacuated to Denmark from the camps in north-eastern Syria - 14 of them in 2021 and two in 2019.

Since 2016, six of the adults who left Denmark for the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq have returned to Denmark. Most recently, three women were evacuated to Denmark in October 2021 along with their 14 children in total. All six adults have been charged with violating provisions of Chapters 12 and 13 of the Danish Criminal Code during their stay in the conflict zone. One of them has subsequently been indicted for violating provisions of Chap-

ters 12 and 13. Moreover, one person has been sentenced to five years in prison for violating provisions of Chapter 13 of the Danish Criminal Code, while the remaining four are still remanded in custody awaiting trial.

CTA assesses that individuals from Denmark who have been to the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq may pose a threat to Denmark or Danish interests abroad. The potential threat includes attack planning, radicalization or propaganda activities, logistical support, terrorist financing and other terror-related activities. Travellers from countries other than Denmark, including other European countries, may also pose a terrorist threat to Denmark and Danish interests abroad.

The fact that a person travels to a conflict zone to support a militant Islamist agenda does not necessarily mean that this person poses a terrorist threat to Denmark or Danish interests abroad. This is subject to a specific assessment of the potential intent and capability of the individual to attack Danish targets. Relevant factors to consider include the person's continued sympathy for militant Islamism and affiliation with militant Islamist groups along with weapons training and combat experience. According to CTA's information, the most recent terrorist attack in the West involving returnees from the conflict zone in Syria/Iraq occurred in Belgium in 2016.

It is **unlikely** that children of travellers from Denmark to the conflict zone currently pose a terrorist threat. This is primarily due to the current young age of the children. The majority of the children are currently below the age of five, and in the coming year there will only be a small number of older children. According to PET's information, none of the older children are located in the camps in north-eastern Syria. CTA assesses in general that older children who travel to Denmark from the conflict zone or from camps may pose a terrorist threat due to indoctrination or other types of influence. Further to this, CTA assesses that the risk of indoctrination and other types of influence increases the longer children stay in a radicalized environment such as the camps in north-eastern Syria.

The terrorist threat posed by children of travellers is determined on the basis of a specific and individual assessment of each older child.

In general, CTA assesses that only a few of those who have left Denmark for Syria/Iraq and remain in the conflict zone will be able to return to Denmark in the short term without assistance from Danish or foreign authorities. Adult Danish travellers who return to Denmark will be liable to prosecution.

CTA assesses that the conditions in the camps and prisons in north-eastern Syria may add to the radicalization of detainees, including detained travellers from Denmark. In 2021, a number of women managed to escape from camps in north-eastern Syria – some of them accompanied by children – though none of the women had links to Denmark. CTA assesses that there may also be women, with or without children, who manage to escape from camps in north-eastern Syria in future, potentially also women with links to Denmark.

There have also been reports of attempts to escape from Kurdish-controlled prisons in north-eastern Syria, and most recently the Ghwayran prison was hit by a major attack on 20 January 2022, which allowed a large number of inmates to escape. The complexity of the attack on the prison illustrates that IS has some capability on a local level. It is likely that male prisoners with links to militant Islamist groups will attempt to escape from prisons in north-eastern Syria in the coming year. However, CTA assesses that it will remain more difficult to escape from prisons than from camps.

The threat from travellers, including children of travellers, who return to Denmark may potentially be affected by how they are received by the Danish authorities, including whether they are offered any support with a view to reintegration and potential prevention of radicalization. ■



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

1.9 Financial support for militant Islamists abroad from Denmark-based individuals

CTA assesses that terrorist financing from individuals in Denmark mainly goes to militant Islamist groups in Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Palestine. Terrorist financing helps maintain terrorist groups and promote their activities. Funding improves the ability of terrorist groups to carry out operations and to recruit and retain members.

IS presumably still has substantial financial reserves, but the income and expenses of the group have been significantly reduced after the loss of territory in Syria and Iraq. In this context, it is **likely** that financing, covering for instance maintenance of individuals in conflict zones, from individuals in Denmark and elsewhere will have relatively greater significance to IS. CTA assesses that IS will increasingly seek to attract donations in cryptocurrency. In addition, terrorist groups continuously seek new financing options, including through international organized drug crime.

In the past year, a number of cases in Denmark led to conviction pursuant to the provisions of the Danish Criminal Code concerning terrorist financing. In one case, several individuals were convicted of providing financial support to a terrorist group in Iran for a number of years. The case has been appealed. In another case, a person is indicted for transferring funds to another person, while being fully aware that this person had joined a militant Islamist terrorist group abroad. In two other cases, a number of individuals are currently charged with providing support to one or more individuals who had joined a militant Islamist terrorist group abroad and, in one of the cases, also support to the group itself.

CTA assesses that the intent of individuals in Denmark to provide financial support to militant Islamist groups has not diminished in the past year. Branching networks of individuals in Denmark with militant Islamist sympathies and connections to foreign countries increase the risk of new terrorist financing networks developing in Denmark. Furthermore, knowledge on how to acquire money by way of financial crime and how to transfer money or other assets to terrorist groups remains widespread among certain militant Islamist networks in Denmark. ■

1.10 Targets

Militant Islamist target selection does not follow a consistent and predictable pattern and may change during the course of the planning phase. Target selection may be influenced by extremist propaganda, current agendas, personal networks and preferences as well as the capability of the attack planner. Furthermore, successful terrorist attacks in the West may serve as inspiration for others – a so-called copycat effect. Terrorist attacks are often foiled before the final target is selected, which was also the case in several recent Danish terror cases. Terrorist target selection is therefore difficult to predict. Restrictions on social activity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic may in some cases reduce the accessibility of certain targets and prompt perpetrators to adjust their attack plans and target selection.

The most likely targets of a militant Islamist terrorist attack in Denmark are symbolic targets or unprotected civilian targets, such as public crowded places. The threat against symbolic targets is primarily aimed at individuals, institutions and events that may be seen as offensive to Islam. Other potential symbolic targets include Jewish targets as well as the police and the armed forces – particularly in connection with guarding duties. There may also be a threat to other public authorities and certain political representatives. Finally, militant Islamists still intend to attack transport infrastructure.

On 15 October 2021, a British member of parliament was killed in a militant Islamist terrorist attack in the UK, and CTA has knowledge of another militant Islamist terrorist attack, which occurred in May 2010, also in the UK, in which a member of parliament was injured in a knife attack at an election meeting. CTA notes that it remains relatively rare that political representatives are selected as targets by militant Islamists in the West, and the above incidents do not change CTA's overall assessments of militant Islamist target selection. ■



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK



DEFINITIONS OF MILITANT ISLAMIST TARGET TYPES

CTA assesses that militant Islamist targets can be divided into symbolic targets and civilian targets. The list below is not organized in order of priority.

SYMBOLIC TARGETS

- **Public authority targets:** Public authorities, including certain ministries, police, military, emergency response services, other public institutions as well as representatives of such authorities. Public authority targets may also include diplomatic representations.
- **Political representatives:** Popularly elected officials, ministers and other persons, events and locations affiliated with political parties and movements.
- **Targets related to perceived insults:** Groups, individuals, locations and events which have been selected on the basis of statements, actions or themes which the perpetrator perceives as offensive to Islam.
- **Jewish targets:** Synagogues, Jewish meeting places and institutions, such as schools, and other targets whose association with Judaism is identifiable. Jewish targets also include Israeli interests in Denmark, including diplomatic representations, companies and tourists.
- **Other religious targets:** Christian symbolic targets, such as churches and Christian schools, Muslim symbolic targets, such as Shia mosques, and other religions.

CIVILIAN TARGETS

- **Persons who do not constitute symbolic targets.** For example random persons gathered in public squares, at events or in other crowded places.

1.11 Modus operandi

CTA assesses that the most likely militant Islamist terrorist attack in Denmark is an attack with easily accessible means, firearms or improvised explosive devices. Attacks with easily accessible means can be carried out spontaneously or following a very short planning phase, whereas attacks with firearms are most likely to be carried out by individuals with legal access to weapons or criminal contacts, potentially through virtual communities, who can help them procure weapons. In Denmark, easily accessible means mainly include bladed weapons, bludgeons, incendiary devices or vehicles.

The attack plans in four Danish terror cases⁵ since 2019 show a persistent interest in carrying out attacks using firearms and/or improvised explosive devices among militant Islamists in Denmark. In two of the cases, the City Court found the defendants guilty of acquiring firearms and ammunition for use in one or more acts of terrorism in Denmark. Both cases have been appealed to the High Court. Most recently, two Syrian citizens were arrested in Denmark and one in Germany in February 2021 on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack in Denmark or abroad inspired by militant Islamist propaganda, using firearms and improvised explosive devices. ■



FACTS

The types of weapons most often used in militant Islamist attacks in the West from 2020 to 2021 were bludgeons and bladed weapons, which were used in 12 out of 17 attacks.

⁵ See the illustration on page 7.



1.12 The terrorist threat to Danish interests abroad

CTA generally assesses that it remains the intent of militant Islamist groups in a number of countries to attack Western, including Danish, individuals and targets in non-Western locations.

However, CTA has no knowledge of successful or attempted terrorist attacks against Danes or Danish interests in non-Western countries in 2021. CTA has knowledge of a few successful militant Islamist terrorist attacks on Western civilians in non-Western countries in 2021. This may in part be due to the fact that where there is a significant terrorist threat, the presence of Western interests is often limited.

The terrorist threat is aimed at protected targets such as diplomatic representations as well as less protected targets such as companies, NGOs and tourists. Danes, like other Westerners, are at risk of becoming random victims of attacks directed at Western interests. Danes located abroad also risk falling victim to an attack if they are in near vicinity of local terrorist targets, including crowded places, religious targets and certain public authority targets.

CTA generally assesses that Danish diplomatic representations and other Danish presence abroad, including employees of Danish companies, may be perceived as symbolic targets providing an opportunity to target Denmark without carrying out an attack in Denmark. In addition, Danish diplomatic representations may become targets of terrorist attacks if they are perceived as less secure than the representations of other Western countries.

CTA assesses that reference to Denmark in relation to past or recent cases of perceived insults may potentially cause local militant Islamist groups to become increasingly aware of Danish interests as legitimate targets, which may intensify the threat to Danes and Danish interests in certain countries and regions.

CTA assesses that the threat to Danish interests abroad is most significant in countries and regions where AQ and IS have established groups and networks and are able to train and plan attacks. This is especially the case in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also in West and East African countries, where militant Islamist terrorist groups carried out frequent attacks in 2021 targeting public authorities in particular, but also the local population .

In addition, CTA assesses that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 has provided an opportunity for terrorist groups, such as AQ and IS, to boost their capability locally in this region. However, CTA assesses that, in the coming year, the threat will remain regional, and the incidents in Afghanistan will therefore have no direct impact on the terrorist threat to Danish interests outside the region. The long-term effect of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on the terrorist threat outside the region is, however, still subject to uncertainty. ■

02



DEFINITION

Right-wing extremism is a generic term covering various political views on the far right of the political spectrum characterized by combinations of nationalist, authoritarian, anarchist, anti-parliamentary, racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic viewpoints. The ideological foundation of right-wing extremism may derive from Nazism, fascism or national conservatism. Right-wing extremists question or reject democracy and consider the use of violence a legitimate means to achieve political ends.

The threat from right-wing extremists

CTA assesses that the terrorist threat to Denmark from right-wing extremists is at the level of **general**. According to PET's definitions, this means that there is capability and/or intent and possibly planning.

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.

2.1 Trends in the right-wing extremist threat picture in the West

CTA assesses that the right-wing extremist terrorist threat in Denmark reflects the general trend in the West, as it primarily emanates from individuals who are on the periphery or outside the established, physical right-wing extremist organizations or groups and who are mainly radicalized in virtual communities. It is less likely that a terrorist attack is planned within a physical right-wing extremist organization or group in Denmark. However, such organizations and groups may perform acts which are not defined as terrorism, but which may create insecurity within the Danish society, especially acts of vandalism with a clear right-wing extremist element.

It is **likely** that the declining number of right-wing extremist attacks in the West over the past years is partly the result of a strong focus on right-wing extremism from the authorities. Furthermore, CTA assesses that the attack in Christchurch in 2019 was the catalyst for a series of subsequent copycat attacks that year, but none of the attacks in 2020 and 2021 have had the same inspirational effect. Looking ahead, it is possible that one or more high-profile terrorist attacks by right-wing extremists could inspire other right-wing extremists to carry out attacks, creating a renewed and general upward trend in the number of right-wing extremist attacks in the West.

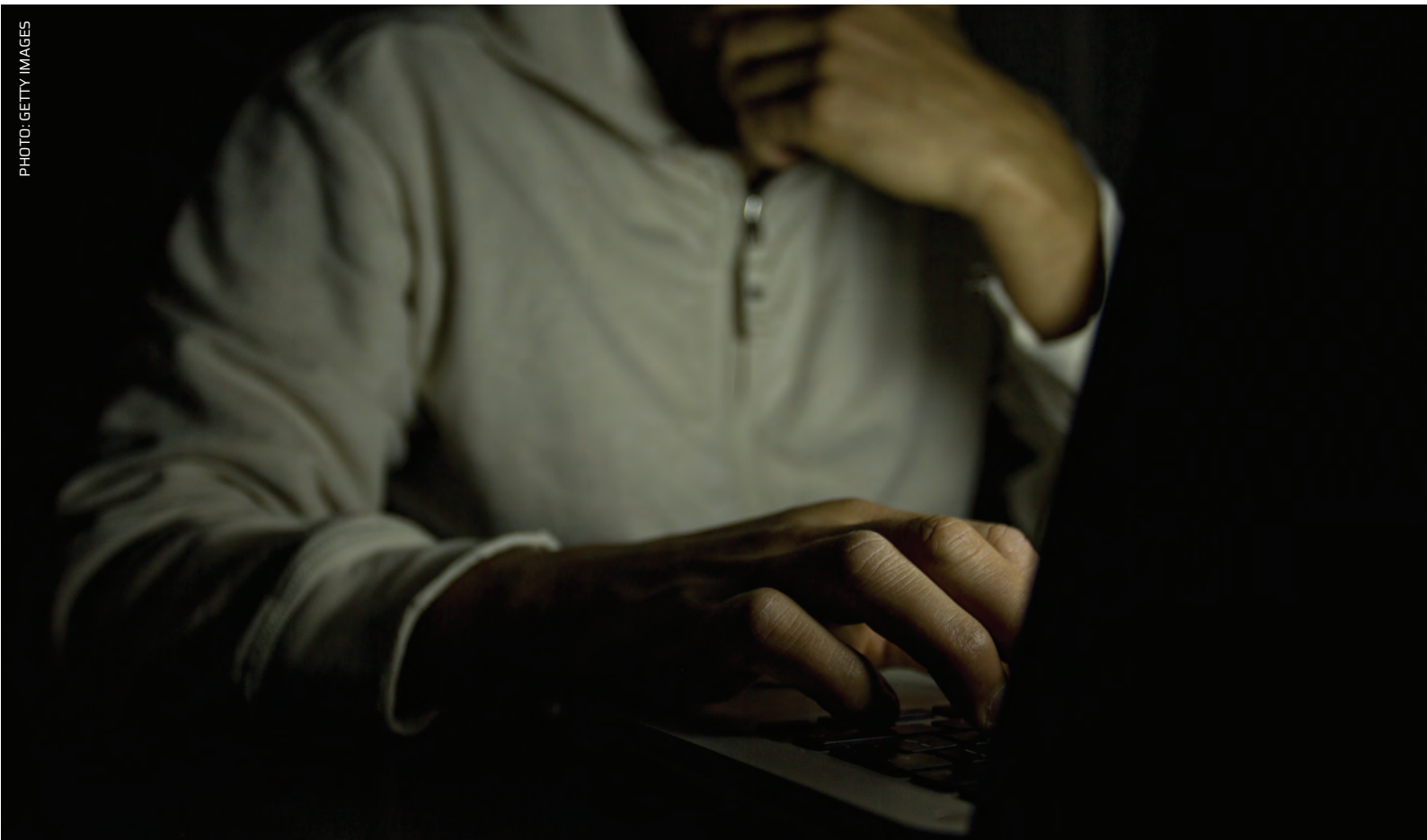
FACTS

In 2019, there were 12 successful right-wing extremist attacks in the West, including a major attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, while eight attacks were foiled. In 2020 and 2021, CTA recorded a downward trend in the number of right-wing extremist attacks in the West compared to 2019. There were three successful and 12 foiled attacks in 2020, while there were three successful and five foiled attacks in 2021⁶.

The right-wing extremist attacks in recent years have a number of similarities, including the fact that they were mainly carried out by lone actors with little or no contact or affiliation with established physical right-wing extremist organizations or groups. Moreover, the perpetrators have mainly used virtual right-wing extremist communities for communicating with like-minded individuals and/or seeking out and adopting a wide range of propaganda and ideology, upon which they have then been able to build their right-wing extremist world view.

CTA assesses that these similarities reflect a general trend among right-wing extremists in the West, indicating that the primary terrorist threat does not emanate from established physical organizations and groups, but from lone actors or small groups with no affiliation to right-wing extremist groups. To illustrate this point, 16 out of 18 successful right-wing extremist terrorist attacks in the West from January 2019 to December 2021 were carried out by lone actors who, at the time of the attack, were not acting on behalf of, nor had any affiliation to, physical right-wing extremist organizations or groups. ■

6) It should be noted that data on the number of foiled and successful terrorist attacks in the West may vary depending on the method used for assessing the data and the available information.



2.2 Right-wing extremist environments – physical and virtual communities

The right-wing extremist environments in the West are made up of virtual communities, which are often characterized by loose and informal structures, as well as physical organizations and groups with fixed hierarchies, structures and membership requirements. In addition, there are several small and informal right-wing extremist communities with varying activity levels, where individuals with shared opinions gather over a period of time.

CTA assesses that right-wing extremists increasingly use virtual communities for communication, propaganda dissemination and knowledge sharing, and that this in-

creased use has a considerable impact on the right-wing extremist terrorist threat in the West, including Denmark. This is partly due to the fact that radicalization and capability building in virtual communities are unrestricted by physical borders. CTA assesses that the number of right-wing extremist virtual communities will grow and that this development will be reinforced by a new generation of young and technology savvy right-wing extremists, to whom a virtual community is just as real as any physical one. In addition, the international nature of the virtual communities ensures almost unlimited, round-the-clock access to material without any geographic restric-

FACTS

Right-wing extremist groups in Denmark are mainly financed by membership fees, fundraising and donations, increasingly also in the form of cryptocurrency. CTA assesses that the collected funds are currently not used for terror-related activities.

tions. The high level of anonymity offered further reinforces the popularity of the virtual communities among right-wing extremists.

CTA assesses that this development to some extent will cause physical organizations and groups to become less relevant as social gathering points and ideological hubs. It is likely that a number of existing physical organizations and groups will experience declining support and membership and that some will therefore disband, while the emergence of new ones is unlikely to compensate for this development. However, CTA assesses that contextual changes affecting right-wing extremist core issues, for example a renewed surge of refugees into Europe from the Middle East and North Africa, may cause Western and Danish right-wing extremists to form new physical groups or join existing ones in order to counter the perceived threat directly and physically.

CTA assesses that the virtual communities where right-wing extremists gather and are radicalized are dynamic and ever-changing. Virtual communities are continuously set up, closed, moved and renamed within right-wing extremist networks. In addition, the absence of national borders in virtual communities and their dynamic nature may cause enemy perceptions and narratives to change rapidly. This, in turn, may affect and alter the way existing ideologies and world views are perceived, weighted and approached, also among Danish right-wing extremists. ■



2.3 Ideology within Danish right-wing extremist environments

Danish right-wing extremists take inspiration from different political and ideological agendas, including conspiracy theories. Their ideological foundation may for example derive from National Socialism (Nazism) or national conservatism⁷, which means that Danish right-wing extremists can have strongly diverging opinions on core ideological issues, such as the perception of Jews as enemies. However, a shared view among Danish right-wing extremists is the perception that immigration from Muslim countries poses a threat to Denmark.

CTA assesses that the typical ideological foundation underlying physical right-wing extremist organizations is increasingly difficult to maintain in the ever-more prevalent virtual environments. Right-wing extremists today often form part of several different virtual communities and groups and are much more inclined to mix and match elements from different ideologies, narratives and conspira-



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

cy theories to form their own personal convictions. Conspiracy theories in particular are increasingly common among right-wing extremists internationally, and increasingly dominant in right-wing extremist narratives.

The most widespread conspiracy theories typically relate to Jews or immigration to Europe from non-Western countries. For instance, the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory ZOG, or “Zionist Occupied Government”, claims that Jews control Western governments through their alleged ownership and total control of banks and the financial sector. In the same way, the conspiracy theory known as “The Great Replacement” claims that a political and financial elite are making intentional and targeted efforts to replace Western populations by inciting mass immigration from non-Western countries.

Against this background, CTA assesses that the ideological affiliation of right-wing extremists will become more fluid and fleeting in nature. CTA also assesses that the number of right-wing extremists with complex world views is likely to increase, and, in consequence, right-wing extremist narratives and enemy perceptions will become increasingly inconstant or adaptable. Furthermore, CTA assesses that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this development, as Western and Danish right-wing extremists have taken inspiration from a wider range of conspiracy theories during the pandemic, including some that are not based on right-wing extremist ideology. ■

7) *National Socialism (Nazism) is a totalitarian political ideology and movement based on visions of an autocratic, classless and highly nationalist society, populated exclusively by individuals of “Arian” (white) descent and free of non-Arians, who are considered inferior. National conservatism is an ideological and political school of thought typically focusing on national sovereignty and a wish to conserve traditional cultural and ethnic identity.*

2.4 Targets

Right-wing extremist target selection does not follow a consistent and predictable pattern and may change during the course of the planning phase. It may be influenced by extremist propaganda, current agendas, personal networks and preferences as well as the capability of the attack planner. Furthermore, successful terrorist attacks in the West may serve as inspiration for others – a so-called copycat effect. Terrorist attacks are often foiled before the final target is selected. Terrorist target selection is therefore difficult to predict. Restrictions on social activity e.g. in response to the COVID-19 pandemic may in some cases reduce the accessibility of certain targets and prompt perpetrators to adjust their attack plans and target selection.

CTA assesses that the most likely targets of a right-wing extremist terrorist attack in Denmark are Muslim targets, immigrant targets, Jewish targets and individuals of non-Danish ethnicity as well as locations where they may gather.

Furthermore, CTA assesses that anti-state narratives have gained foothold among Danish right-wing extremists and that COVID-19 restrictions are **likely** to have reinforced this trend. It is also **possible** that Danish right-wing extremists have been inspired by foreign anti-establishment extremists and right-wing extremists with strong anti-state views. It is **possible** that the acceptance of anti-state narratives among Danish right-wing extremists may affect their target selection and thus increase the threat to certain targets, especially public authority targets. However, CTA assesses that the focus on anti-state narratives and how they are weighted among Danish right-wing extremists depend on developments within the population groups that are typically perceived as the enemy. A renewed surge of refugees e.g. from the Middle East and North Africa into Europe is for example likely to cause a change of focus.

CTA assesses that the prevalence of anti-Semitic narratives and conspiracy theories in Denmark may be due to the fact that a number of the most prominent and active right-wing extremists in Denmark confess to Nazism – where anti-Semitism is an essential element – although it may also be due to the fact that several conspiracy theories on the spread of the pandemic include anti-Semitic narratives. CTA assesses that conspiracy theories circulating among Danish right-wing extremists may reinforce existing enemy perceptions or lead to the creation of new ones and thereby affect their target selection. ■



PHOTO: MIRIAM NIELSEN

DEFINITIONS OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST TARGET TYPES:

CTA assesses that right-wing extremist targets can be divided into symbolic targets and civilian targets. The list below is not organized in order of priority.

SYMBOLIC TARGETS

- **Muslim targets:** Mosques and other Muslim meeting places, events on Muslim days of celebration and holidays, Muslim schools and clubs as well as shops frequented by Muslims.
- **Immigrant targets:** Asylum seekers, asylum centres, accepted refugees, migrants and others who may be perceived as immigrants on account of ethnic or cultural markers such as skin colour and language.
- **Jewish targets:** Synagogues, Jewish meeting places and institutions, other targets with an identifiable link to Judaism as well as events on Jewish days of celebration and holidays. Jewish targets also include individuals who are perceived as being Jewish as well as Israeli interests in Denmark, including diplomatic representations, companies and tourists.
- **Racist targets:** Individuals identified as terrorist targets on the basis of ethnic markers such as skin colour.
- **Public authority targets:** Authorities, including certain ministries, police, military, emergency response services, other public institutions as well as representatives of such authorities. Public authority targets may also include diplomatic representations.
- **Political representatives:** Popularly elected officials, ministers and other individuals, events and locations affiliated with certain political parties and movements.
- **Other perceived political opponents:** Individuals, events and locations which are perceived as or represent political opponents and which are not public authority targets or political representatives.
- **LGBT+ targets:** Persons who, for example, are openly homosexual, queer, bisexual or transgender or who may be perceived as such.

CIVILIAN TARGETS

- Persons who do not constitute symbolic targets. For example random persons gathered in public squares, at events or in other crowded places.

2.5 Modus operandi

Firearms have been the most commonly used weapon type in successful right-wing extremist attacks in the West in recent years. CTA assesses that there is generally a strong interest in weapons, especially firearms, among right-wing extremists in Denmark and internationally and that such weapons will remain the preferred choice for this group in the short as well as the long term. Against this background, CTA assesses that the most likely weapons to be used in a right-wing extremist terrorist attack in Denmark are firearms. Other possible weapons include stabbing and bladed weapons, incendiary devices, improvised explosive devices and vehicles.

CTA assesses that right-wing extremists, in Denmark and elsewhere, can build the capability to use weapons and explosives by sharing knowledge in virtual communities and following instruction videos on YouTube or other video sharing services. There have been a number of cases abroad, including the United States and Germany, where members of the armed forces have expressed highly right-wing extremist views. CTA assesses that right-wing extremists with military experience have a higher capability building potential than those without, especially in relation to handling and using weapons.

CTA assesses that right-wing extremists can build the capability to perform acts of terrorism through, for instance, employment in the armed forces, membership of rifle clubs as well as possession and use of legal hunting weapons. In addition, employment with the police or affiliation with the Home Guard may have a capability building effect, especially in relation to handling and using weapons. ■

The threat from left-wing extremists

CTA assesses that the terrorist threat from left-wing extremists in Denmark has diminished and is now of such a nature that CTA lowers the threat level from **limited** to **minimal**. According to PET's definitions, this means that there are no indications of any threat. There is absence of intent, capability or both.



DEFINITION

Left-wing extremism is a generic term covering various political views on the far left of the political spectrum which accept the use of violence to achieve political ends.

3.1 The impact of left-wing extremists on the threat

CTA assesses that, although Danish left-wing extremists have no known capability or intent to commit acts of terrorism, some remain willing to use violence. As the current primary objective of Danish left-wing extremists is to expose and counter perceived racism and fascism, especially as expressed by right-wing extremist groups, CTA assesses that their current low level of readiness for violence may increase if right-wing extremist acts of violence or terrorism are committed in Denmark.

The left-wing extremist environments in Denmark are mainly made up of a number of groups that meet in person, for example when attending demonstrations and actions in Denmark and abroad. In addition, there are sympathizers with varying levels of affiliation to the left-wing extremist environments, who can be mobilized to attend left-wing extremist events of different kinds at relatively short notice. This happens for instance in virtual communities used by Danish left-wing extremists to communicate and share information.

The most likely targets of left-wing extremist attacks are right-wing extremist groups and individuals perceived to be right-wing extremist sympathizers or political opponents, including politicians, artists and debaters. Public authorities, especially the police, are also targets, although primarily when clashes erupt, for example in connection with demonstrations. Targeted attacks against police officers outside the context of such clashes are assessed to be **unlikely**.

The most likely left-wing extremist terrorist attack in Denmark is an attack carried out by a small group of members or associates of a left-wing extremist group, rather than a lone actor. A left-wing extremist terrorist attack in Denmark is most likely to be carried out by means of bludgeons and bladed weapons, incendiary devices such as Molotov cocktails, or powerful fireworks, espe-

cially bangers and chrysanthemum bombs. Arson is another possible weapon, which is especially likely to be used in connection with demonstrations and actions. It is **less likely** that Danish left-wing extremists will make use of improvised explosive devices and **unlikely** that they will use firearms.

Left-wing extremist environments in Denmark collaborate with like-minded organizations and groups abroad, and it is **likely** that such collaboration may increase their capability, for example in relation to gaining specific tactical know-how on the execution of violent acts. CTA assesses that collaboration with foreign left-wing extremists with a significant readiness for violence will provide an opportunity for recruitment of such individuals to events in Denmark and may increase the level of radicalization and readiness for violence among Danish left-wing extremists. It is **likely** that the COVID-19 pandemic has limited the international collaboration of Danish left-wing extremists, but it is also **likely** that it will increase when the current restrictions in Europe are eased. ■



DEFINITION

Anti-establishment extremism is a collective term covering a range of narratives which address the need for violent action against politicians, public officials and experts and which are not primarily founded on established extremist ideologies such as militant Islamism, right-wing extremism or left-wing extremism.

The threat from anti-establishment extremists



ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT ACTIVISTS AND ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT EXTREMISTS

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, protest groups and loosely structured networks have emerged in Denmark, criticizing the official handling of the pandemic and, in some cases, performing or inciting acts of violence. As far as this issue is concerned, it is important to distinguish between anti-establishment *extremists* and anti-establishment *activists*.

ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT ACTIVISTS

- Use non-violent means when protesting or taking action against the authorities and engage in legal political activities.

ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT EXTREMISTS

- Accept and express the need for violent action against the institutions and representatives of the state, including popularly elected officials.

CTA assesses that the terrorist threat from anti-establishment extremists in Denmark is at the level of **limited**. According to PET's definitions, this means that there is a potential threat. There is limited capability and/or intent. The threat from anti-establishment extremism is volatile and may be affected by current social themes or developments, which may periodically increase the terrorist threat. CTA further assesses that, compared to other extremists, anti-establishment extremists are particularly susceptible to current themes and messages in the public debate or in virtual communities.

4.1 Impact of anti-establishment extremists on the threat

CTA emphasizes that the current assessment of the terrorist threat from anti-establishment extremists is subject to uncertainty. This is due to the fact that the perceived threat from such actors is relatively recent and therefore only has a brief history in Denmark. The most likely type of anti-establishment extremist terrorist attack in Denmark is an attack by a lone actor or a small group who is in or outside the periphery of the main anti-establishment activist communities.

The vast majority of the anti-establishment groups and networks are peaceful, but a limited number of individuals have shifted away from a narrow anti-lockdown focus – which was the original starting point of the COVID-19 demonstrations – to a radical anti-establishment extremist focus. This shift in focus materializes as threats to elected and public officials, calls for violent action or references to an alleged impending civil war to punish the “traitors”. It is noted that anti-establishment *activists* and anti-establishment *extremists* are typically present in the same online forums and physical environments. The radicalization path from activist to extremist may therefore be relatively short. CTA assesses that this development may be accelerated if hybrid environments emerge, for example with right-wing extremists.

Individuals whom anti-establishment extremists perceive as opponents risk being subjected to intimidation, threats and ultimately violence. The most likely weapons to be used in an anti-establishment extremist attack in Denmark are powerful fireworks, small improvised explosive devices and incendiary devices, such as Molotov cocktails, as well as other types of arson.

CTA assesses that anti-establishment extremist terrorist attacks may be directed at critical infrastructure or symbolic targets, including buildings that are associable with public authorities or efforts to fight the pandemic, popularly elected officials and other politicians or representatives of certain public authorities.

Threats and harassment targeting politicians, public officials and experts primarily take place on social media. Only in very exceptional cases do such statements lead to violent actions, but CTA assesses that they may bring individuals who are mentally unstable or easily influenced to commit acts of violence that could be characterized as terrorism. The risk of being exposed to threats and harassment is closely connected to the individual level of public exposure and/or involvement in specific issues. ■

FACTS

In the course of the pandemic, anti-establishment extremists in the West have attempted – sometimes successfully – to set fire to or cause explosions at testing and vaccine facilities and directed targeted attacks at specific individuals. In December 2021, a Molotov cocktail was for instance thrown at the residence of the Belgian politician Pascal Arimont, following positive statements he had made about COVID-19 vaccines. In Denmark, there have been a few arson attacks on testing and vaccine facilities as well, presumably by anti-establishment extremists.

4.2 Trends in the threat picture

The dynamics driving the threat from anti-establishment extremists are conflicting and non-transparent, and it is therefore uncertain how the threat will evolve. However, in the current situation, CTA assesses that there are radicalized individuals in Denmark sympathizing with anti-establishment extremism who have the capability and will to perform acts of violence which, subject to a legal assessment, could be characterized as terrorism.

CTA assesses that the dissemination and acceptance of anti-establishment extremist narratives to some extent follow the fluctuations of the COVID-19 pandemic, as restrictions and directives imposed by the state are significant mobilizing factors for anti-establishment extremists. Thus, any pandemic slowdown or resurgence may have an either moderating or aggravating effect on anti-establishment extremist individuals and networks. Danish anti-establishment extremists also find inspiration among like-minded individuals in other Western countries, especially in virtual space. As a result, proposals about mandatory vaccines or clashes between authorities and protesters in other countries may impact the dissemination and acceptance of anti-establishment extremist narratives in Denmark.

However, at the same time, CTA assesses that anti-establishment extremists are also motivated by agendas with no relation to the pandemic, including conspiracy theories claiming that the population is living under a dictatorship which needs to be fought in order for “the people” to regain its freedom.

Conspiracy theories are prevalent among anti-establishment extremists internationally and play a central role, especially in virtual space. The most widely accepted anti-state conspiracy theories typically relate to perceived oppression from various elites. For instance, the conspiracy theory called “The Great Reset” claims that the COVID-19 pandemic was planned and initiated by an international, powerful elite with the aim of controlling global developments by use of technological means and deprivation of basic freedom rights. Anti-establishment extremist

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Conspiracy theories are attempts to explain events and circumstances using unfounded claims of underlying secret conspiracies between powerful actors. Individuals who believe in conspiracy theories will often reject this term for its derogatory connotations.

The current trend indicates that individuals who believe in conspiracy theories are interested in not just one theory, but often a whole group of overlapping or sometimes outright contradicting ideas relating to conspiracy theories, ideology, alternative treatment, religion and/or spirituality.

CTA assesses that further dissemination of certain conspiracy theories that add to the perception of public officials, popularly elected officials and other politicians as traitors and enemies may lead to more threats and inflamed rhetoric. The vast majority of threats have no implications of violence or other physical manifestations. However, CTA assesses that conspiracy theories may affect the selection of targets and motivate individuals to perform acts of violence which, subject to a legal assessment, could be characterized as terrorism.

CTA assesses that the potential impact of conspiracy theories on the terrorist threat is primarily related to individuals affiliated with anti-establishment extremism and political extremist environments, particularly within the extreme right.

narratives are ever-changing and may therefore create a more complex and dynamic threat picture. CTA therefore assesses that the threat from anti-establishment extremists will outlast the current efforts to handle the COVID-19 pandemic. ■





Other threats

A number of other factors may affect the terrorist threat to Denmark. For example, some conspiracy theories and movements may have a violent threat potential that can lead to actions which, subject to a legal assessment, could be characterized as terrorism. This includes theorists glorifying violence and so-called incels.

5.1 Incels

The word incel is short for “involuntary celibate”. The term predominantly covers men who are frustrated with their inability to engage in romantic or sexual relations with women. They join up with people who feel the same way in online subcultures, using a variety of virtual platforms as well as a number of dedicated websites and social media subgroups. Some radicalized incels use the platforms to express a strong hatred towards women as well as men who are thought to have success with women.

Many incels are engaged in international virtual communities offering a high degree of user anonymity, which makes it difficult to assess the total number of radicalized users.

Misogyny has been a main motivating factor behind several attacks committed by incels in the West, especially the United States and Canada, from 2014 to 2021. The threat from misogynists with a readiness for violence has also materialized in Denmark. In December 2020, a 27-year-old man was arrested and later found guilty of attempted murder and illegal possession of firearms under particularly aggravating circumstances, in part motivated by his hatred of women.

CTA assesses that it can be very difficult for the authorities to predict whom and where incels are going to attack, as they have a wide-ranging target selection, including both women and men. ■



5.2 Climate extremists

Climate extremists are individuals or groups who, unlike activists, are willing to use violence in the fight for one or multiple causes with environmental protection or global climate as a key element. Climate extremists also comprise individuals with right-wing extremist sympathies, including the so-called eco-fascists. There is also a risk that individuals sympathizing with left-wing extremism may take violent action, for example during climate-related actions.



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

CTA assesses that there are currently no climate extremist groups in Denmark that are willing to use violence in their fight to protect the climate and the environment.

It is **less likely** that individuals or small clusters of individuals who are actively engaged in climate activist groups and who are dissatisfied with the non-violent approach will break away from the groups to engage in climate extremism. ■

ISSUES IN RELATION TO MENTAL DISORDERS

Individuals with mental disorders continue to play a part in the efforts to combat terrorism across extremist ideologies, both in Denmark and the rest of Europe.

An individual's mental state and potential mental disorders may be of great importance to their behaviour and motivation for taking action, also in connection with terrorism. For some radicalized individuals with a mental disorder, there is a strong synergy between their disorder and their extremist mindset. For others, the disorder may be a limiting factor in terms of their radicalization or it may be completely disconnected from it. A mental disorder is not necessarily decisive in respect of an individual's ability and will to commit terrorism, but one of several factors which may trigger or intensify a radicalization process. Sometimes, the threat may be aggravated if the mental disorder appears in conjunction with other risk factors, including social isolation, marginalization and life-altering events.

If a perpetrator suffers from a mental disorder, it may be difficult for the authorities to assess whether violent actions committed by that person constitute acts of terrorism. There may be reason to give special attention to individuals suffering from mental disorders who show signs of radicalization and who have previously displayed violent or impulsive behaviour.

Social media are increasingly used for making threatening comments, for example against public figures, and for sharing misleading information and so-called fake news. While the vast majority of such commentary does not lead to attacks, CTA assesses that it may lead persons who are mentally unstable or easily influenced to commit acts of ideologically motivated violence that could be characterized as terrorism.

5.3 Sovereign citizen movements

Sovereign citizen movements are movements formed by individuals and loosely affiliated groups of varying sizes, sharing the common fundamental ideology that they do not recognize the legitimacy and authority of the state. In addition, supporters of such movements also share the conviction that, by declaring sovereignty, individuals can resign from the existing society, setting themselves free from the obligation to abide by its laws and regulations.

There are individuals in Denmark associated with sovereign citizen movements. Because of their anti-state ideology, sovereign citizen movements pose a potential threat to public authorities, especially the police. The threat is especially likely to materialize when supporters of a sovereign citizen movement violently resist police arrest or other directions from the authorities. Subject to a legal assessment such acts of violence could be characterized as terrorism.

CTA assesses that, if sovereign citizen movement ideologies become more rooted in Denmark, it may increase the likelihood that such movements will come to pose a terrorist threat. ■





5.4 Other factors

The development in Ukraine is causing a large refugee flow towards Europe. Combined with the already existing refugee and migrant flow from regions such as the Middle East and North Africa, the overall scale may affect the ability of the authorities to identify possible radicalization in time.

Finally, political, ethnic and religious conflicts as well as isolated events abroad may spark reactions from individuals or groups in Denmark, which may develop into acts that could be characterized as terrorism. Such acts may involve foreign powers. The concrete reactions, including violent protests, may for instance target politicians, public officials, random citizens or foreign diplomatic representations in Denmark. ■

06

The terrorist threat to Greenland and the Faroe Islands



6.1 Specifically on the terrorist threat to Greenland

The terrorist threat to Greenland is at the level of **minimal**. According to PET's definitions, this means that there are no indications of any threat. There is absence of intent, capability or both.

CTA assesses that violent extremism is less widespread in Greenland than in Denmark. However, 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, might increase the chances of carrying out an attack with great damage. ■

6.2 Specifically on the terrorist threat to the Faroe Islands

The terrorist threat to the Faroe Islands is at the level of **minimal**. According to PET's definitions, this means that there are no indications of any threat. There is absence of intent, capability or both.

CTA assesses that violent extremism is less widespread in the Faroe Islands than in Denmark. Extremist propaganda may influence individuals in the Faroe Islands or individuals travelling there to commit acts of violence.

This may be triggered by specific political issues such as animal welfare. Socially marginalized or vulnerable young people may be particularly susceptible to radicalization. ■



Modus operandi for terrorist attacks in Denmark

The choice of modus operandi in a terrorist attack reflects a number of factors including the abilities and access to resources of the individual perpetrator, access to the intended target and inspiration from other attacks and from propaganda. Within the individual categories of potential perpetrators, there may be some difference in terms of capability, focus and preferences, which affects the choice of modus operandi.

The terrorist threat in the West increasingly emanates from individuals with no physical links to established groups. This regards both militant Islamists and right-wing extremists. In Denmark, the capability of potential perpetrators may for example be enhanced through the use of virtual networks where resource persons share instructions and give advice on specific modi operandi. The capability may also be enhanced through recruitment or radicalization of key figures with legitimate access to facilities, resources or information. Such insiders may have various functions and access rights which may enable them to aid in carrying out a terrorist attack or in other ways cause harm. Below follows an assessment of the overall capability of potential perpetrators in Denmark. ■



ATTACKS WITH CHEMICAL AGENTS

CTA assesses that the capability among extremists in Denmark to carry out chemical attacks using means other than unprocessed substances is limited. Various propaganda publications have occasionally focused on the use of chemical agents. Despite calls for using corrosive liquids and chemical agents to poison food, for example, CTA is aware of no examples that such means have been used for terrorist attacks in the West.

Toxic industrial chemicals and actual warfare agents (primarily mustard gas) have been used by armed groups in conflict zones, but CTA assesses that the ability to transfer this capability to individuals or groups in the West is very low.



ATTACKS WITH BIOLOGICAL AGENTS

CTA assesses that the capability to weaponize biological agents, such as anthrax, is very limited among extremists in Denmark, primarily because the handling of viruses and bacteria requires very special conditions, including access to laboratory facilities.

CTA assesses that there are extremists in Denmark who would be able to produce certain toxins of a quality and quantity suitable for use in a simple biological attack. However, the execution of an attack would also require knowledge of efficient means of distribution or dispersion of the agent. CTA has no information about attacks with biological agents in the West in 2021. CTA is not aware of any powder letter attacks in the West in 2021.



ATTACKS WITH EASILY ACCESSIBLE MEANS, FIREARMS AND IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

Terrorist attacks with easily accessible means can be carried out spontaneously or following a very short planning phase. In Denmark, easily accessible means mainly include bladed weapons, bludgeons, incendiary devices or vehicles. Attacks with easily accessible means may cause major harm.

CTA assesses that there are extremists in Denmark with the capability to commit acts of terrorism using firearms. However, acquisition of such weapons typically requires legal access to weapons or criminal contacts, for example through virtual communities, who can help facilitate the acquisition.

CTA assesses that there are extremists in Denmark with the capability to make small improvised explosive devices and carry out attacks by means of these. Instructions and manuals on how to make various explosives and improvised explosive devices, which can be used by people with no prior training, are available online. However, the effect of such improvised explosive devices may vary considerably.

A number of barriers exist in relation to producing home-made explosives, including the general restrictions surrounding the sale of substances such as hydrogen peroxide. However, despite national and international efforts, it remains fairly easy to procure ingredients for making simple improvised explosive devices.

There are a few criminal environments in Denmark with contacts that enable procurement of factory-made explosives, especially dynamite. Increased availability of such explosives may ease the production of improvised explosive devices for potential terrorist use.

CTA assesses that radicalized individuals who have received weapons training in a conflict zone, such as Syria/Iraq, or who have knowledge of weapons from the military, shooting clubs, criminal environments or elsewhere will be able to carry out high-impact attacks. This includes serial attacks, where individuals or groups carry out multiple consecutive attacks.



ATTACKS WITH DRONES

CTA assesses that there are extremists in Denmark with the capability to use drones for reconnaissance, for simple attacks and for harassment and intimidation purposes, while the capability to use drones for more complex attacks is limited. Militant groups abroad have displayed considerable ability to use drones, for example to carry out attacks in and around conflict zones in Syria/Iraq and Ukraine, but this capability has yet to be seen in the West. According to CTA's assessment, the challenges involved in using drones as an attack weapon in Denmark remain substantial compared to the potential harmful effect of such a weapon.



ATTACKS WITH RADIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR AGENTS

CTA assesses that the capability among extremists in Denmark to carry out terrorist attacks using radiological agents is very limited. CTA is aware of no attack planning involving such agents in the West.

CTA assesses that there are no extremists in Denmark with the capability to commit acts of terrorism by means of nuclear agents.



ATTACKS WITH CYBER-RELATED MEANS

CTA assesses that there are no extremists in Denmark with the capability to commit acts of cyber terrorism. The term cyber terrorism refers to cyberattacks aimed at causing an affect similar to that of conventional terrorism, including human injury or massive disruption of critical infrastructure. Furthermore, the intent to carry out is this type of attack is limited⁸.

8) For further details on the threat from cyber terrorism, see "The cyber threat against Denmark 2021" by the Centre for Cyber Security.

