6 May 2021

Reference: OIA-2020/21-0430

Dear

Official Information Act request relating to documents regarding right-wing extremism prepared after 15 March 2019

I refer to your request made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), received by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 8 March 2021. You requested:

> "…• Any reports, briefings, papers, or other documents produced by any aspect of the national security system -- including but not exclusive to SIS, GCSB, NAB, police -- that contains any form of assessment of right-wing, white supremacist, identitarianism, or similarly-motivated actors, groups, extremism, or violence. Please provide all such material produced subsequent to March 15, 2019.
>
> • If the above request is to be denied, please provide a detailed explanation of why the request has been denied. Please then consider providing a list of titles, dates of publication, and summary of the material denied…"

I noted I extended the time limits for responding to the parts of your request remaining with DPMC by 20 working days under section 15A of the Act, to allow for further consultation. As previously noted, the part of your request for "*reports, briefings, papers, or other documents produced by … [the] SIS, GCSB, … [or] police*" was transferred New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS), Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB), and NZ Police respectively on 12 March 2021. Following the extension, I am now in a position to respond to the parts of your request remaining with DPMC.

In considering the scope of your request, for "any reports, briefings, papers, or other documents…", I have taken the intention of your request for "other documents" to be for assessments prepared by the National Assessments Bureau (NAB), aides-memoire, and any other such documents that contain formal advice. I believe meeting minutes and agendas are not what you are seeking through this request and have excluded them accordingly. If I have misunderstood the intention of your request, please advise.

It may be helpful to note that updates on the current terrorism threat environment, relating to any ideology, is a standing agenda item for the Counter-Terrorism Coordination Committee (CTCC) that meets regularly and is chaired by DPMC. These are short verbal updates from relevant agencies, and do not replace the formal assessments produced by NAB and other agencies. I have therefore excluded these, as, again, I believe they are not what you are seeking through this request. If you are not already aware, further information about New Zealand's Counter-Terrorism Strategy can be found online at: dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security-and-intelligence/national-security/counter-terrorism/new-zealands.

Please find **enclosed** copies of the following documents:
- Right wing extremism (29 May 2019), and
- CT Implications of COVID-19: Discussion Document (8 May 2020).

Some information has been withheld in under the following sections of the Act:
- Section 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of individuals, and
- Section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

In addition, "Risk Profile – Terrorism" was identified as in scope of this part of your request. As I am sure you can appreciate, inherent risks need to be mitigated in releasing this document. Accordingly, I have decided to summarise the information contained in this document in accordance with section 16(1)(e) of the Act. In doing so, I consider that the condition outlined in section 16(2)(c) of the Act is met. Please find a copy of this summary also **enclosed**.

Twenty-three National Assessments Bureau (NAB) documents were also determined to be in scope of your request. To provide some context, I would note that assessments prepared by NAB typically focus on the international environment. These independent and impartial assessments are regarding events and developments relevant to New Zealand's national security and international relations. For clarity, the Combined Threat Assessment Group, within the NZSIS, is responsible for assessing the terrorism threats to New Zealand and New Zealand's interests. They provide independent assessments to wider government agencies of the threat posed by terrorism.

I have decided to withhold DPMC's NAB documents in their entirety, including their titles and dates, under the following sections of the Act:
- Section 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand;
- Section 6(b)(i), to protect the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government; and
- Section 6(b)(ii), to protect the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by any international organisation.

Where section 9 applies, in making my decision, I have taken the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act into account.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the DPMC's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely

Tony Lynch
Deputy Chief Executive
National Security Group

DEPARTMENT OF THE
PRIME MINISTER AND **CABINET**
TE TARI O TE PIRIMIA ME TE KOMITI MATUA

Right wing extremism

Talking points

1. The Extreme Right Wing (XRW) encompasses a broad umbrella of beliefs and ideologies including, but not limited to, racism, white supremacy, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, sexism, authoritarianism and anti-democracy. The underpinning ideology is not defined and can be a combination unique to the adherent, with much taken from mainstream politics and interpretations of history.

2. XRW groups and individuals are fragmented and lack a unifying narrative or leadership. Some organised groups exist, but there is a wider pool of individuals with extremist views across diffuse networks, often online. XRW terror attacks are more often perpetrated by lone actors, and there have been several high profile lone actor attacks since 15 March.

3. Although increasingly transnational in nature, movements differ depending on national context (e.g. target groups, particular grievances). The XRW has historically been considered by most countries as a domestic rather than international issue, and therefore a matter for law enforcement.

4. The internet has been a fundamental catalyst to the XRW. Regardless of ideology, the internet enables better connections between individuals globally access to and sharing of ideas (often anonymously), and contributes to polarisation and recruitment.

5. Right-wing, Islamic and other extremists are using the COVID-19 crisis to spread hate, conspiracies and extremist narratives. Internationally, this has included anti-Chinese racism, theories that the virus was deliberately started or spread by traditional enemies such as Jewish people or the "Deep State", and promotion of "accelerationism" (the idea that democracy is a failure and mobilising social conflict can speed up its end).

Background

6. All our Five Eyes partners take this problem seriously. All have detected a growing XRW phenomenon and have had instances of terrorism and lower level violence. For the United States, which legally separates domestic and international forms of terrorism, the XRW has long constituted the country's main form of politically motivated violence, although it remains politically sensitive.

7. The Extreme Right Wing should be seen as distinct from the Far Right; the latter constituting a range of movements that typically work through accepted political processes (such as elections) to achieve their outcomes. By contrast, the XRW movements push an ideology that combines violence with anti-minority and anti-government platforms.

Any public statements made by Ministers or officials

8. Right-wing extremism was briefly mentioned the Director-General of the SIS, Rebecca Kitteridge, in her opening comments to Parliament's Intelligence and Security committee on 20 February 2019. "Internationally the slow, but concerning rise of right wing extremism also continues".

Version 1
Correct as at: 29 May 2019

Released under the Official information Act 1982

9. In her statement on the Christchurch mass shooting on 16 March, Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern said "I want to be very clear that our intelligence community and police are focused on extremism of every kind" and that "given global indicators around far right extremism, our intelligence community has been stepping up their investigations in this area."

10. In the 18 March NZSIS press release *NZSIS welcomes inquiry into the Christchurch terrorist attacks* it was stated "Over the last nine months, NZSIS has increased its effort to obtain a better picture of the threat posed to New Zealand by far right extremist groups. The NZSIS has over recent years received a number of tips from the public concerning right wing extremism and has taken each one seriously."

11. Many statements made by Ministers and officials after the 15 March Christchurch mosque shootings refer to violent extremism or terrorism rather than the XRW. Multiple references have been made to racism and hate, notably in Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern's *PM House Statement on Christchurch mosques terror attack* of 19 March 2019 and *New Zealand National Statement to United Nations General Assembly 2019* on 25 September 2019.

    a. "There is no question that ideas and language of division and hate have existed for decades, but their form of distribution, the tools of organisation, they are new. We cannot simply sit back and accept that these platforms just exist and that what is said on them is not the responsibility of the place where they are published. They are the publisher. Not just the postman. There cannot be a case of all profit no responsibility. This of course doesn't take away the responsibility we too must show as a nation, to confront racism, violence and extremism. I don't have all of the answers now, but we must collectively find them. And we must act." (*PM House Statement on Christchurch mosques terror attack*)

    b. "While we are home to more than 200 ethnicities, that does not mean we are free from racism and discrimination. We have wounds from our own history that, 250 years on from the first encounters between Māori and Europeans, we continue to address" (*New Zealand National Statement to United Nations General Assembly 2019*)

12. In Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern's interview with the BBC on 20 March 2019, asked about the rise of right-wing nationalism she said: "this was an Australian citizen but that is not to say that we do not have an ideology in New Zealand that would be an affront to the majority of New Zealanders."

Cover Sheet for CTCC Item 2

Meeting Date   8 May 2020

Sponsoring Agency   DPMC

Point of contact: 9(2)(a)   *; email:* 9(2)(a)

Item Title   **CT Implications of COVID-19: Discussion Document**

Purpose

1. To set out some initial talking points from DPMC on the implications of the COVID-19 situation for counter-terrorism in New Zealand, for discussion at CTCC.

CT Implications of COVID-19

2. While the New Zealand terrorism threat level remains unchanged at MEDIUM, periods of crisis open up the political space for extremists to fill with misinformation or to exacerbate people's fears of the other. This has been true of the COVID-19 pandemic, with those spending more time online in self-isolation at increased risk of exposure to extremist content and of radicalisation.

3. *Right-wing extremists* are using the crisis to spread hate and conspiracies. Internationally this has included anti-Chinese racism, theories that the virus was deliberately started or spread by traditional enemies such as Jewish people or the "Deep State", and claims that the pandemic is less serious than stated and governments are using it to enforce authoritarian measures.

4. The crisis is also being used to enforce extremist narratives such as "accelerationism" (the idea that democracy is a failure and mobilising social conflict can speed up its end), and the need for change in the world order.

5. Those spending more time online in self-isolation risk increased exposure to extremist content and radicalisation, particularly as more people rely on the internet for news, updates and social contact. This is of significant concern as right-wing extremists online have encouraged attacks against target communities, including deliberately spreading the virus. On 23 March, meanwhile, the US disrupted a neo-Nazi bomb plot against a hospital treating COVID-19 patients. Lockdowns may present challenges to would-be attackers but will not necessarily deter small-scale attacks.

6. *Islamic extremists* have also sought to use the pandemic for their own purposes. Initially, Da'esh / ISIL warned its supporters to stay away from Europe, exhorting healthy members not to enter "the land of the epidemic" to avoid becoming infected and therefore preserving ISIL forces for future attacks. However, more recently ISIL has encouraged supporters to take advantage of the pandemic by launching attacks where there are fewer security

measures, including areas where security personnel are preoccupied with maintaining social distancing among the public and trying to preserve socio-economic order.

7. *For New Zealand,* these developments highlight the importance of implementing several existing work streams to deliver the national CT Strategy:

- *9(2)(g)(i)*

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8. There are also likely to be significant short-term and enduring mental health implications arising from the pandemic and restrictions such as lockdowns, potentially making those individuals with extremist views more vulnerable to radicalisation.

9. The full CT Work Programme will be reviewed by the CTCC – with recommendations made to SIB – following the release of the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report.

Summary of New Zealand's Terrorism Risk Profile

Introduction

This document summarises the content of New Zealand's Terrorism Risk Profile, which was developed in June 2019 by New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, New Zealand Police, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. While the Terrorism Risk Profile is classified, this document provides a comprehensive summary of the content of the profile. The full Terrorism Risk Profile is a classified document to ensure methods, techniques and capabilities are protected.

Risk profiles are documents produced by government agencies to support the National Security System's awareness and decision making on nationally significant hazards and threats. The two Officials Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC) Boards; the Hazard Risk Board and Security and Intelligence Board; use risk profiles to strategically govern risks that could have a significant impact on New Zealand's security.

The Hazard Risk Board and Security Intelligence Board use risk profiles to examine how effectively risks are being managed, and provide direction about what steps could be taken to improve our management of risks and strengthen New Zealand's resilience. Risk profiles are reviewed on a regular basis and updated when appropriate.

The Terrorism Risk Profile was updated in the aftermath of the 15 March 2019 terrorist attack on Christchurch mosques, to capture the shifts in agencies' understanding of this risk in New Zealand. Since this Risk Profile was produced, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019 has presented its findings in its Report: *Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei.* This Report is available online at: https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/.

Our national approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism is set out in New Zealand's Counter-Terrorism Strategy[1], with an aim of bringing our nation together to protect all New Zealanders from terrorism and violent extremism of all kinds. This strategy prioritises prevention – focusing on increasing understanding, working collectively, building resilient communities, and addressing the underlying causes of violent extremism – whilst ensuring systems and capabilities are in place to act early and to respond whenever needed.

The Terrorism Risk Profile is a key document that underpins this strategy, by supporting awareness and decision-making to manage the risk as effectively as possible.

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[1] *Available online at https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security-and-intelligence/national-security/counter-terrorism/new-zealands*

Terrorism Risk Profile Summary: June 2019

Risk Description

Under New Zealand law, a terrorist act is defined as an ideologically, politically, or religiously motivated act – including those causing death or serious bodily injury – intended to induce terror in the population, or to compel the government to do or not do certain things.

The Terrorism Risk Profile considers the risk of a terrorist attack in New Zealand, and a terrorist attack off-shore impacting New Zealanders (e.g. while travelling, living/working off-shore or attending an international event). The scope of the Risk Profile includes violent extremism in so far as it is a precursor to, or supportive of, terrorist activity.[2]

Context

On 15 March 2019, New Zealand experienced its most significant terrorist attack. Two Christchurch mosques were targeted, killing 51 people and seriously injuring dozens more. This attack was undertaken by an individual assessed to adhere to a violent extreme right-wing ideology, who live-streamed the attack on social media.

Due to the unprecedented nature of the Christchurch terrorist attack, it will take time to fully understand the long-term impacts on New Zealand's terrorism threat environment. However, the impact is likely to be wide-ranging, significant and enduring.

The Christchurch terrorist attack had a significant impact domestically and internationally, and has received a considerable amount of international attention. The Risk Profile assessment recognises that this event could potentially inspire a retaliatory or copycat attack in New Zealand or off-shore, and may be a motivating or radicalising event for years to come.

New Zealand's national terrorism threat level

The Combined Threat Assessment Group (CTAG), an autonomous inter-agency group hosted by New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, is responsible for reviewing and recommending the national terrorism threat level. New Zealand's national terrorism threat level is continuously monitored and can change at short notice.

The Risk Profile acknowledges the shift in New Zealand's terrorism threat environment following the Christchurch terrorist attack, reflecting the CTAG's assessment of the terrorism threat level from LOW to HIGH in the aftermath of the Christchurch attack, which was then reduced to MEDIUM[3] in April 2019.

Since this Risk Profile was completed in June 2019, the terminology generally used by New Zealand government agencies to describe terrorist and violent extremist ideologies has been updated.

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[2]. *In the absence of a formal legal definition, violent extremism as described in the national Counter-Terrorism Strategy is the justification of violence with the aim of radically changing the nature of government, religion or society. This violence is often targeted against groups seen as threatening violent extremists' success or survival or undermining their world view. Pathways to radicalisation are also relevant to this risk profile, particularly in the context of managing the risk of terrorism.*

[3]*Terrorism threat levels are a statement about the likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring based on the intent and capability of actors. Medium means a terrorist attack is assessed as feasible and could well occur.*

Sources of terrorism

The Risk Profile outlines three sources of the terrorism threat, in no particular order, using the terminology that was in use at the time[4]:

- **Violent right-wing extremism** - Violent right-wing extremism referred to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve their extreme right-wing goals, which may include terrorism.[5]

- **Violent Islamist extremism** - Islamist extremism was defined as a revolutionary political ideology, the goal of which is to remove existing social and political systems, and impose a single system based on an extremist interpretation of the Qur'an. Violent Islamist extremism refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve these ideological goals, which may include terrorism.

- **Other types of violent extremism –** This includes other terrorist groups, and other issue-motivated groups and individuals who may conduct terrorist acts.

CTAG assessed it was probable there were individuals in New Zealand with an extreme right-wing ideology with the intent and capability to conduct a terrorist attack who have not come to the attention of security agencies. Further, the Risk Profile highlights that right-wing extremism in New Zealand is generally fragmented in nature and has a significant presence online.

The Risk Profile notes that New Zealand agencies are aware of a small number of Islamist extremists in New Zealand who were of security concern and who had the capability to commit an unsophisticated terrorist attack. There have been numerous calls of encouragement over many years from the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Qai'da, and their support to conduct attacks targeting the West. Since the Christchurch terrorist attack, calls of encouragement have specifically mentioned New Zealand.

Risk Drivers

International political and social drivers will have an impact on both the international and domestic threat environment, although when and how is difficult to predict. Terrorism is driven and exacerbated by a range of social, religious, ideological and political factors. Radicalisation pathways vary widely between individuals, however, there are certain identifiable patterns. Known risk drivers include:

- The internet and social media
- Radicalising and mobilising influences
- Changing demographics
- Individual and group dissatisfaction and grievance
- Ideology
- High profile conflicts and extremist flashpoints.

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[4] *As at May 2021, the NZSIS uses the following terminology when referring to extremist ideology:*
- Faith-Motivated Violent Extremism (FMVE): promoting the use of violence to advance one's own spiritual or religious objectives;
- Identity-Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE): promoting the use of violence to advance one's own perception of identity and/or denigrate others' perceived identities;
- Politically-Motivated Violent Extremism (SMVE): promoting the use of violence to achieve a desired outcome to a specific issue; and
- White Identity Extremism (WIE): describes extremely radical ideologies and beliefs that are focussed on real or perceived threats to concepts of a white or ethnic-European culture and identity.

[5] *Right-wing extremism encompasses a broad umbrella of beliefs and ideologies, including, but not limited to, racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, sexism, authoritarianism, anti-immigration and anti-democratic views. Adherents may strongly espouse some or all of these views.*

Risk Analysis

Each nationally significant risk on the National Risk Register is assessed using a standardised methodology. These assessments are undertaken by subject matter experts and informed by our current understanding of the risk.

Nationally significant risks are assessed using a "maximum credible event" scenario; a plausible worst-case scenario that could occur in the next five years which could have significant negative impacts on New Zealand and would require significant coordination by government. Looking at the risk in this way helps agencies to plan and be prepared for the worst-case-scenario, if it were to play out.

The overall risk rating is derived from an assessment of the likelihood and consequence of the maximum credible event, with the results of the analysis recorded in the Risk Profile.

There are a wide range of scenarios by which terrorism could occur, which vary in target, method and number of casualties. The Terrorism Risk Profile includes an assessment of three plausible worst-case scenarios for a terrorist attack in New Zealand. All scenarios would require a degree of planning, preparation, capability and coordination.

Likelihood

The likelihood of the three scenarios occurring was assessed by subject matter experts as LIKELY; *"likely to occur, regular recorded events and strong anecdotal evidence; once per 1-10 years"*.

Terrorist attacks and plots can be difficult to detect due to their generally covert nature, and can occur with little or no forewarning. Prevention and security activities by a range of agencies help reduce the likelihood of an attack, but there will always be some risk.

Consequences

The consequence of the scenarios was assessed as MAJOR; "Multi-functional, multi-regional specialised management required, national agencies involved, of interest to international institutions and partner states".

A significant terrorist attack could have wide-ranging impacts, such as death, physical and psychological injuries, eroded public perceptions of safety, and exacerbation or creation of divisions in society along social, ethnic, religious or other lines. Other consequences could include damage to built infrastructure, erosion of confidence in government and institutions; and pressure for policy change.
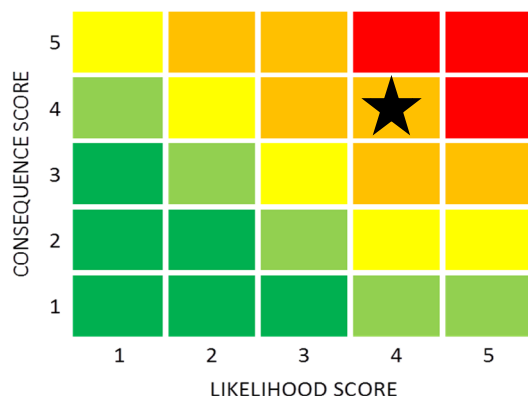
Based on the analysis above, the overall risk rating for Terrorism was assessed as 'Very High'. The national risk rating for Terrorism differs to the national terrorism threat level administered by CTAG (which at the time was MEDIUM). CTAG's terrorism threat levels are a statement about the current likelihood of a terrorist attack occurring. They reflect the assessment of CTAG on the intent and capability of actors to conduct terrorist attacks in New Zealand. National risk assessments capture the likelihood and consequence of a potential worst-case scenario occurring in the next five years.

Risk Management

New Zealand actively seeks to reduce the threat of terrorism, both globally and at home. Our counter-terrorism system and related activities aim to protect New Zealanders and support the global effort to counter terrorism and violent extremism. The range of counter-terrorism activities can be organised into categories broadly reflecting their place on a terrorism prevention spectrum. The risk management activities below are highlighted in the Risk Profile:

Understand the threat
Understanding the threat of terrorism is critical as it informs and enables all other counter-terrorism activities. Example of risk management activities in this space include: • the National Security and Intelligence Priorities (NSIPs), which provide high level direction for agencies involved in counter-terrorism to influence resourcing and prioritisation of intelligence and assessment effort • the delivery of CTAG's annual strategic terrorism threat assessment • New Zealand's national terrorism threat level system • terror-related communication and public awareness, including on the role of the public in helping to counter the threat.
Reduce the threat (globally and at home)
Global initiatives include: • supporting and implementing various counter-terrorism-related United Nations resolutions and conventions, and participating in a growing number of international fora, committees and working groups focussed on countering terrorism and violent extremism • maintaining and fostering strong international relationships • the 'Christchurch Call' and related efforts to tackle and eliminate extremist content online. Domestic risk management activities include: • social initiatives which support vulnerable communities and enhance social inclusion • intervention, monitoring and disengagement activities by agencies for specific persons of concern • combating violent extremist content online within New Zealand's jurisdiction, supported by the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 • limiting access to resources used to conduct terror activities (such as weapons and finances), through legislative change (amendments to the Arms Act 1983) and New Zealand's ongoing commitment to anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing (AML/CFT).

Address vulnerabilities
New Zealand has in place a range of precautionary measures and activities intended to protect the public through strengthening potential vulnerabilities or ensuring the integrity of critical systems. These include: • the Crowded places strategy • aviation and maritime security efforts • improving information-sharing between border agencies.

Prevent and disrupt extremist activity
New Zealand agencies engage in legal, operational policy and security activities that target specific terrorist and violent extremist threats. These activities range from the designation of terrorist groups and the administration of terrorism-related legislation, to passport cancellations, the disruption of extremist propaganda channels, operational investigations and plot disruption, through to terrorism-related criminal prosecutions. The ability to prevent and disrupt terrorist activity relies heavily on counter-terrorism legislation. Examples of activity in this area includes: • the review of counter-terrorism legislation • Responding to the Law Commission's report The Crown in Court: A Review of the Crown Proceedings Act and National Security Information in Proceedings 14 December 2015 (NZLC R135).

Remain ready to respond and recover
There is an ongoing requirement for New Zealand's national security system and its agencies to be ready to respond to, and recover from, a terrorist attack. Activities in this area include: • the framework of the ODESC system whereby the threat, risk, mitigations and response are escalated through Watch Groups, the ODESC Board and ministers as deemed necessary • tactical response planning, training and exercising, such as counter-terrorism exercises conducted as part of the National Exercise Programme (NEP) • ongoing review of agency responses to the Christchurch terror attacks.