

Informal JHA Ministerial Meeting
Tampere, 20–22 September

FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM: THE EU RESPONSE TO THE TERROR PLOT DISRUPTED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Background

In December 2005, the European Council adopted an EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy and related Action Plan, as well as a strategy and action plan against radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Action Plan specify those areas of counter-terrorism which are of particular importance to security and thus upon which the Union and Member States should focus.

Recent events have shown that although the priorities set out in the adopted counter-terrorism instruments have proved to be a step in the right direction, the diverse and ever-changing nature of terrorism requires continuing effort to retarget counter-action carefully within the framework of the Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Following on from the recently disrupted terrorist plot in the UK, an informal Multi-Presidency Meeting led by the current EU Presidency, Finland, was held in London on 16 August 2006. At the meeting, the EU Interior Ministers of Finland and the future Presidencies, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia and France, together with the Commission and the UK emphasised the need:

- for urgent work to prevent EU citizens from turning to terrorism through radicalisation and recruitment;
- for EU Member States and the Commission to accelerate the delivery of the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including an even greater focus on addressing home-grown terrorism. The Finnish Presidency will start a process of regular expert meetings on this issue with a view to analysing the causes of radicalisation and, based on this analysis, taking targeted measures;
- for the Commission to broaden its network of experts on radicalisation and to establish an active programme of joint projects;
- to prevent and/or reduce the use of the Internet for terrorist-related purposes;
- for the relevant aviation experts and law enforcement authorities in the EU to meet as soon as possible to review the implications of this incident. Any response should include reference to the wider EU work on law enforcement and counter-terrorism; and
- for research into explosives particularly targeted at work on liquid explosives. The Ministers also gave their support to the development of Europol's weapons and explosives database.

Strengthening of concrete counter-terrorism measures on the EU level

As a result of the events in the UK, Germany and Denmark, combating radicalisation and recruitment has become increasingly important both in Europe as a whole and in certain Member States in particular. The ongoing risk assessment by, for example, SitCen and other relevant actors plays an important role when outlining EU measures. Member States should also adopt national measures and identify the officials responsible for the implementation of the EU strategy against radicalisation and recruitment.

Keeping track of the movements of the 'jihadists' and other persons involved in radicalisation and recruitment, in addition to the related exchange of information involve some of the key areas in the struggle to combat terrorism. Particular attention should be paid, for example, to monitoring the movements between crisis areas and the EU of persons believed to have an expertise in explosives and who may be suspected of placing their expertise in the service of terrorists.

As regards the storing of information from the video surveillance of major traffic junctions and the time period of storage involved, it may be necessary to draw up an instrument which would provide for common principles of storage across the Member States, with due respect for fundamental principles of data protection. It should also be noted that video surveillance networks are maintained by the public authorities and/or by private operators.

Support should be provided within the existing frameworks to monitor the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes and to effectively exchange related information on criminal investigations and intelligence among Member States. Efforts should be made to tackle the use of the Internet as a forum for providing instructions on how to manufacture and use various types of explosives. Such measures should, of course, respect the fundamental freedoms on which the EU is based.

The law enforcement authorities in the EU Member States should have at their disposal a common explosive and bomb database which is maintained by Europol. Another option here is to provide the authorities with access to other existing databases.

Member States and the Commission should strengthen research into explosives and their availability. Particular emphasis should be placed on improving the detection of new types of explosives, such as liquid explosives, and furthering the exchange of information between law enforcement and aviation security authorities. The exchange of information and coordination between the different Council working groups and other institutions should be guaranteed.

SitCen and Europol should further deepen their ongoing cooperation in analysing the implications of terrorist attacks and foiled plots with a view to providing rapid assessments to policy makers.

Questions addressed to the Ministers

1. Do the Ministers support the approach proposed by the Presidency to continue the implementation of the Counter-Terrorism Strategy with the concrete and targeted action outlined above?

2. Do the Ministers have other proposals for concrete measures or priorities that should be taken into account, for example when assessing the implementation of the Counter-Terrorism Strategy in December 2006?