



General Intelligence and
Security Service
*Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations*



2015 Annual Report



Louis Einthoven, the first head of the National Security Service (Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst BVD), the predecessor of today's General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst), was responsible for the service's motto and shield. He believed that citizens in a democracy such as ours must play an active role in society, and not just passively drift along on the waves of history: "Living fish swim against the current; only the dead ones are carried along". **Per Undas Adversas** – against the current – became the motto that symbolises the service's mentality: an active organisation, working against the current if necessary, watching out for threats to national security.

Foreword

The jihadist menace, trouble at the borders of Europe, cybersecurity threats – all of these are affecting safety and security on a global scale. As the level of threat grows, so does the importance of our security services. I am grateful for the results obtained by our country's least visible service in the past year. After reading this annual report, I hope you will have a better view of what this service has meant to our society.

By the time this report is published, the end of 2015 is already four months behind us. This makes this annual report almost dated, as the global threat picture has changed significantly in the meantime. Areas of interest have shifted; in the case of ISIS the focus is more and more on Libya. The Dutch jihadists' 'heroic view' of ISIS is swiftly crumbling, while the threat emanating from the former Eastern bloc is on the rise.

As migrants are forced to flee the violence of war in Syria and the surrounding countries, a small group of youths continues to be attracted to ISIS. Fortunately the end of 2015 saw a downward trend in the number of extremists leaving for the jihad. Apparently life under ISIS is no longer considered to be as attractive as it used to be, as also described at the beginning of this year in the AIVD publication on life in the caliphate. The incessant flow of refugees, on the other hand, has caused increased tension in our own society and throughout Europe. This is a further cause for concern to the AIVD.

The services' work in keeping abreast of all these developments is exemplary and, of course, within the regulations and limitations of the Intelligence and Security Services Act that oversees that work. This law determines the obligations and powers underlying intelligence gathering, but it dates back to the beginning of this century when data was still sent in kilobytes per second and the phone was used predominantly to make calls. A time when the smartphone had not yet been invented. Because of this, in 2015 the cabinet announced an amendment to the Act, intended to update the legal framework of our intelligence and security services with new and contemporary tools.

I hope the House of Representative will have the opportunity to discuss the implementation of this amendment in the foreseeable future, so that our security services will be able to continue their important work with a renewed mandate. The changeable times in which we live demand that we change with them. The newly amended act will make that possible.

dr. Ronald Plasterk

Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations



Silent, but not idle

On 13 November 2015 unsuspecting visitors of restaurants and cafés and the Bataclan theatre in Paris became the victims of terrorist attacks. That very night the casualties numbered more than 120, a number that would rise to 130. Over 350 people were wounded.

Both nationally and internationally the shock and outrage were enormous, especially after it became clear that the suspected perpetrators had been able to travel openly and repeatedly both inside and outside of Europe. The call for international cooperation grew louder and louder.

Ironically, that very morning of 13 November the heads of the security services of the EU, Norway and Switzerland had met in the biannual meeting of the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG), where they had decided to take their already intensive cooperation to the next level. In other words, a decision that predates the horrific events in Paris. Because the common enemy continuously adapts MO; because no laws, rules or borders stand in ISIS' way when it comes to violent action; and because the violent jihadist has access to a wide and well-functioning network, with skilful use of social media and the internet.

The combined intelligence and security services agreed that to combat this, they should become the better network. Only then can they be one step ahead of the terrorist.

That decision of 13 November 2015 received a practical interpretation in the three following months. Of course, some hurdles remain within the CTG, but the goal is clear: cooperation at its best, so that terrorism cannot gain a foothold – although total safety will always remain elusive.

Unfortunately that November attack had not been an isolated incident. Earlier that year France suffered the severe blow of the attack on Charlie Hebdo, Denmark was shocked by a bloody shooting with a terrorist motive in Copenhagen, terrorists brought carnage to Tunis and Sousse in Tunisia, Turkey was struck at its heart in Ankara, and terrorist attacks took place in Yemen, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Lebanon.

A great part of the AIVD's work focuses on such threats to our democratic legal order. Our aim is to recognize the threat before it becomes manifest; our goal is to prevent the attack. To do so we seek out other national and international partners of cooperation. We have a shared interest, after all, as terror knows no boundaries.

The digital world is equally without boundaries. In 2015 the AIVD again established that state actors abuse our digital space to gain access to political intelligence as well as proprietary corporate information. Blueprints, investment plans, research results or tenders for large projects are extracted fairly easily. Documents containing discussions of official policy and political viewpoints are especially sought after in the world of cyberespionage.

We shop, socialize, relax, pay, work and manage online. The 'internet of things' is the next step in forging connections between ourselves and our devices and between the devices themselves. This is a step we have already taken, not just to make our lives a little easier, but also, in the case of medical technology, to make life possible at all. We use our digital space on a large scale and grow increasingly dependent on it. But this dependence also means new vulnerabilities, of which the government, the corporate world and people in general in our everyday society are insufficiently aware. As a consequence proper safeguards are lacking; from a digital point of view we are still too naïve.

The AIVD therefore offers support to the government and to firms to identify these vulnerabilities, to detect and analyse cyberattacks. It also offers advice and practical assistance where wanted or needed.

The challenges the service faces in these multifarious areas are innumerable. Each day I see how the professionalism and commitment of my people make it possible to face these challenges.

Much of our work is surrounded by silence, because that is the most effective way to do our job. We can alert, investigate, interpret and mobilise, so that others can act with organizational, administrative or criminal measures. To do so we shared over 800 reports with interested parties in 2015, on terrorism, on extremism in all shapes and forms, on the world beyond our borders and on cyberthreats. Under the auspices of the AIVD over 40,000 people have been screened for positions involving confidentiality with the government and in the private sector.

This annual report is a brief interruption of that silence; a short analysis of our world followed by a discussion of our work in the light of the various threats and risks that surround us. An interlude to show that our silence does not mean idleness.

Rob Bertholee

*Director-general of the
General Intelligence and Security Service*





Madaya livrée à la faim et aux marchandages politiques



« Le régime privé... la solution multilatérale »



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1

The threat from the belt of instability

Just like the year before, 2015 saw huge instability along Europe's external borders. In many cases the developments there represented a direct threat to national and international security, and so became central to AIVD investigations.

The political instability in various North African and Middle Eastern countries has given rise to conflicts between different groups, rendered national frontiers irrelevant and created power vacuums in which terrorist organisations are able to operate unhindered. More than ever before, this situation has had direct consequences for the Netherlands. For example, it has left terrorist groups largely unchallenged in their efforts to attract young Western Muslims to join their struggle, wherever it is being fought. And many jihadists remain as determined as ever to strike the West.

The violence in the Middle East has also unleashed a vast flow of migrants. Large numbers of displaced people have been seeking ways to reach Europe, resulting in enormous pressure on its borders and on intra-European solidarity. In the Netherlands, one upshot of this has been the increasing polarisation of different sections of the community.

Political relations in the Middle East deteriorated further, often along the age-old dividing line between Sunni and Shia Muslims. South-east Turkey was the theatre of escalations between Turkish security forces and PKK-affiliated Kurdish militias. The lifting of the sanctions against Iran following the nuclear accord with the West has introduced a new dynamic with a global effect. All of these developments have very much helped to shape Dutch foreign policy, in which the intelligence provided by the AIVD is a key contributing factor.

The conflict in Syria gained a new dimension with Russia's intervention in the summer, a move that appears to be driven primarily by President Putin's desire to play a leading role on the world stage. To the east of Europe the situation in the Ukraine remained delicate all through 2015, and there was no abatement in the wider regional tension between Russia and the West.

'Attack on tourists is rude awakening for Tunisia'

NRC Handelsblad, 19 March 2015

Syria: repercussions in the region and beyond

The instability in Syria and Iraq has created a safe haven for terrorist groups like ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra (JaN). Combined with porous borders, the free movement of arms and an increasing flow of refugees, this has had major consequences for international security. ISIS and the conflict in Syria have acted as a magnet for aspiring jihadists. Although somewhat weakened by the campaign of air strikes by the international coalition, backed up on the ground by armed forces in Syria, and the Iraqi army, militias and Kurdish peshmerga in Iraq, ISIS has remained resolute in its struggle.

Politically, the divide between Iraq's Shi'ite majority and Sunni minority has widened. Many Sunnis feel threatened by the Shi'ite militias fighting ISIS and discriminated against by the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad. Because of the ongoing sectarian violence in the form of terror attacks and kidnappings both the Sunni and the Shi'ite population feel unsafe.

Confident Kurds, concerned governments in Turkey and Iraq

Relations between the Iraqi central government and the authorities in the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq have remained tense. The Kurds continue to aspire to independence, and the support they have received from the West, especially, in their fight against ISIS has greatly boosted the regional government's confidence in their dealings with Baghdad.

The Turkish government is concerned about Kurdish nationalism, too, and its conflict with the terrorist organization PKK in south-west

Turkey has flared up again. This could have repercussions for relations between the two communities in Europe.

At the same time, Turkey is also increasingly worried about the threat from ISIS. It conducted a number of military operations against the group and formally joined the international coalition. Despite its increased efforts to prevent travelling jihadists from entering the country, Turkey remains the principal country of transit for European jihadists wanting to join the struggle in Syria and Iraq.

The conflict in Syria spilled over into Lebanon as well. This was mainly because none of the principal forces on the ground – the Lebanese army and Hezbollah on one side, the Syrian army on the other – has been able to fully control the border between the two countries. Not only has this allowed hundreds of thousands of displaced persons to leave Syria, it has also kept open the threat of infiltration and attacks by fighters from ISIS or JaN. Within Lebanon, relations between Sunnis and Shi'ites have remained as tense as ever. Hezbollah actively supports the Assad regime in Damascus, even providing direct military backing, whilst Sunni extremists again attacked targets in Lebanon in 2015. JaN, ISIS and affiliated groups were all directly involved in such attacks.

Russian intervention in the Syrian conflict escalates tensions

The complexity of the situation in Syria has been exacerbated by the involvement of various international actors, often with conflicting interests. The Russian Federation's active intervention in the conflict in 2015 only complicated the international tensions even further.

As well as signalling Russia's return as a major player in Middle Eastern affairs, this move also considerably boosted Assad's self-confidence and strengthened the resolve of his troops on the battlefield. However, it did not bring about a decisive reversal of his fortunes on the battlefield. Despite some cautious diplomatic initiatives, a political solution to the conflict still seems a long way off.

Terrorism undermines the North African economy

It was not only the West which faced terrorist atrocities in 2015. So too did several countries in North Africa and the Middle East. These were committed by a number of different groups, among them organisations affiliated to ISIS or Al-Qaeda. The resulting instability has had huge economic consequences for countries such as Egypt and Tunisia. The attacks on a museum and hotels in Tunisia and the downing of a Russian airliner in the Sinai peninsula have hit the local tourism industries hard, slashing a major source of revenue for these countries. That has worsened their economic prospects, fuelling further domestic unrest. This situation has the potential to foster radical groups and movements, and so threaten international security.

One of the principal causes of the rise of terrorism in North Africa is the continuing political and military power vacuum in Libya. Resolutely divided into two opposing camps, the country's politicians again failed to form a stable unifying government in 2015. Meanwhile, ISIS' growing presence in the country and its contacts with ideological allies in the wider region enhanced the ability of terrorists to strike in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt.

‘NATO warns Russia over Ukraine’

ANP, 19 August 2015

Unease about Iran

On the international political front, the conclusion of the nuclear framework agreement with Iran was one of the significant Middle Eastern events of 2015. Under the accord, Tehran consented to open its nuclear industry to inspection, to comply with international standards and to renounce the development of atomic weapons. In exchange, sanctions against the country are to be lifted, allowing it to rejoin the global economy.

Both Israel and Saudi Arabia criticised the deal, which they view as a direct threat to peace in the Middle East. Moreover, they were somewhat taken aback by the enthusiasm it generated from their strategic ally, the United States. European responses were generally more or less positive, with the prospect of greater commercial access to Iran widely hailed as an economic opportunity.

Regional relations, with Iran and Saudi Arabia as the main players at each end of the spectrum, came under greater pressure in 2015. Not only because of the nuclear accord, but also as a result of Iran’s continuing involvement in the war in Iraq and Syria. Saudi Arabia pursued an active policy to counter the regional influence of Iran and its allies.

The conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen all provided proxy stages for the ongoing power struggle between Shi’ite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia, further intensifying hostilities between the two main currents in Islam. This development has the potential to directly affect Sunni-Shia relations in Europe and is certain to fuel greater

instability in the region, possibly undermining Western economic and other interests.

The Saudi-led coalition seeking to restore Yemen’s President Hadi to power enjoyed some success in 2015. After capturing the southern city of Aden, it was able to install Hadi and his government there. However, the power vacuum throughout the country has enabled jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to gain territory. UN-brokered peace talks between the various parties in the conflict have so far achieved very little.

Relations between the West and Russia remain tense

Relations between the Russian Federation and the Western powers have seriously deteriorated since the popular uprising in Ukraine towards the end of 2013. The international community, the Netherlands included, accuses Russia of direct involvement in the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. This includes supplying the separatists there with military personnel and equipment. The Minsk II agreement of February 2015, which included a package of measures intended to lead to a greater level of self-governance for the Donetsk and Luhansk districts within the Ukrainian state, has led to few concrete results. Only after 1 September and a new ceasefire did the fighting parties better comply with the terms of the armistice. The situation on the ground remains extremely fragile, though. Moreover, there is always a chance that Russia’s other “frozen” conflicts – such as those with Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan – will again erupt into violence. This, too, would adversely affect its relations with the West.

The Netherlands’ relationship with Russia has come under particular pressure since Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down over Ukraine on 17 July 2014. In 2015 Moscow publicly rejected the findings published by the Dutch Safety Board (Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid) in its final report on the background to the disaster, presenting its own alternative explanation instead. The Kremlin also called into question the impartiality of the Dutch investigation.

Syria as a means to claim a place on the world stage

At about the same time the truce of 1 September took effect in Ukraine, Moscow unexpectedly decided to intervene militarily in the conflict in Syria. Although ostensibly a contribution to the fight against terrorism, the initial Russian military actions in fact almost exclusively targeted the “moderate” opposition to the Assad regime. Suggestions that the main purpose of its strikes was to kill jihadists from the Caucasus before they had a chance to return home were not supported by the choice of targets, but seemed first and foremost a way of legitimising the intervention for the domestic public. Only after a Russian passenger jet was downed over the Sinai peninsula in a bomb attack claimed by ISIS did Moscow start directing some of its military efforts in Syria against that group.

By comparison with Ukraine, Russia has few economic, strategic or security interests in Syria – save, that is, from the fact that its sole support base in the Mediterranean (Tartus) is located in the country. Russia’s actions seem to be driven primarily by a need to play a role on the world stage, a desire to highlight Western ineffectiveness and hypocrisy in the region and, last but not least, the intent to support

‘Putin complicates the war in Syria even more’

NRC.NEXT, 23 September 2015

the Assad regime. They have also given president Putin the opportunity to claim a place at the negotiating table, through which he most likely wants to influence relations between the European Union and the United States, possibly to create some leverage in the ongoing matters of the Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia.

The EU’s readiness to accept that Moscow has a role to play in Syria has been enhanced by the refugee crisis. The attacks in Paris, too, have increased the pressure the EU faces to suppress the threat from ISIS as quickly as possible, a goal Russia can help with.

Russia jeopardises relations with Turkey

When it intervened in Syria, Russia knew that it ran the risk of putting its relationship with Turkey on the line. At the beginning of 2015 the two countries were on reasonably good terms, with ambitious plans for greater economic cooperation. Since then, however, relations have deteriorated badly. After Turkey shot down a Russian warplane in November, their collaboration in a wide variety of areas came to a complete standstill. For the time being, projects of strategic importance to both countries – such as the Turkish Stream gas pipeline, which would also improve the security of energy supplies in Europe – have been put on hold.

President Putin as saviour of the motherland

President Putin’s desire to position his country as a superpower not only strengthens Russia’s role on the world stage, it also reinforces his own place in power. Despite worsening living standards, Putin

remains hugely popular at home. One of the main reasons for this is his presentation of himself as a “saviour of the motherland”, the defender of Russian minorities abroad and the man ready to solve the world’s problems, such as Syria.

At the same time, Putin tells the Russian people that the West is their enemy, responsible for their economic hardship and the source of moral corruption. It is highly unlikely that the Kremlin will deviate from this political course in 2016.

Putin’s public statements about extending Russia’s sphere of influence and giving the nation a leading role in world affairs are starkly at odds with his country’s fragile economic and social situation. This fragility is the product of overdependence upon a single source of national income – the selling of primary raw materials – as well as a reactionary foreign economic and political policy and endemic government bureaucracy and corruption. Maintaining a transparent relationship with Russia, either politically or economically, is nigh on impossible, and any agreements with the country must be regarded as fragile.

Fearful of domestic unrest, the Kremlin turns to trusted methods

Russia is suffering under European sanctions, a lack of political reform and the historically low price of oil, which also has a knock-on effect for gas revenues. If it continues along its current path, the Russian economy is likely to stagnate further over the next few years

and so cause an even greater decline in living standards. The Kremlin is especially anxious that this has the potential to foment (social) unrest amongst the general population and sections of the élite.

To maintain his grip on the Russian people, President Putin has always turned to tried and trusted methods: expansion of the state security apparatus, greater repression of political opponents and so on. In the past year, backed up by a powerful campaign of propaganda in the mass media, he has also played the nationalist card to great effect, strongly emphasizing patriotism and the Russian Orthodox faith.

National and international security

Developments abroad, and especially those around the edges of Europe, very much influence the security position of the Netherlands. Social and political unrest, struggles for power, the attack on Europe’s security, and the rise and growth of various terrorist organisations all pose a direct threat to the West, as the terrorist attacks on Europe during 2015 demonstrated. In response to the situation in North Africa and the Middle East in particular, the AIVD has substantially expanded its counterterrorism activities in the past year. These developments have also created a new challenge for Europe: the huge influx of migrants.

It is important that politicians and policymakers have as complete a picture as possible of the current situation in the “belt of instability” surrounding much of Europe. To help the Dutch government shape

'Yemen at risk of becoming haven for terrorists'

De Telegraaf, 23 Januari 2015

its foreign policy, the AIVD keeps the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant bodies informed of events, trends and phenomena likely to be significant. It also possesses the knowledge, international contacts and powers needed to elucidate these developments, so that potential risks to the interests of the Netherlands are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.



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The jihadist threat

Europe was shaken by a number of bloody terrorist attacks in 2015. Jihadists chose Paris as their target twice. In January two brothers assaulted the offices of satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, and shortly afterwards a fellow jihadist took a group of people hostage at a Jewish supermarket after killing a police officer. In November jihadists armed with guns and explosives carried out a series of attacks on bars, a music venue and a football stadium. In Copenhagen in January, two people died in attacks on targets of symbolic value: a public debate on freedom of expression, and a synagogue. There were also a number of stabbing incidents with a jihadist motive in France and the United Kingdom.

Attacks in Europe reveal a complex, diffuse threat

The recent attacks press home the nature of threats currently facing Europe: perpetrators born or brought up here, and generally radicalised here as well, who are willing to take up arms against their own homeland because they consider the West a wicked enemy of Islam. Amongst them are former fighters who have returned from conflict zones such as Syria, but also jihadists who planned to travel out to join the struggle but never succeeded. Some are young, inexperienced and unknown to the authorities, others veterans of the jihad familiar to the intelligence services – although they might also have been inactive for years. It is also evident that such attacks may be planned and directed from outside Europe, but can also be carried out more or less spontaneously. Some are prepared carefully and undertaken professionally as major coordinated assaults, but others are relatively straightforward, small-scale acts of violence. The threat may come from organised cells or networks dedicated to terrorist activities, or from small groups or lone individuals sympathetic to but with no direct link to any jihadist organisation. Because it is now so multifaceted, the AIVD defines the current threat as increasingly complex and diffuse.

Principal threat from ISIS and core Al-Qaeda

Externally, jihadist groups based in places like Syria, Pakistan and Yemen continue to plan attacks against Europe. The principal threat here comes from ISIS in Syria and Iraq and from core Al-Qaeda (AQ) in Pakistan. Both organisations want to strike at Europe. At the heart of AQ's ideology is the belief that the West – particularly the United States and Israel, but also Europe – is the mortal enemy of Islam and

'Islamic State is here to stay' Reformatorisch Dagblad'

Reformatorisch Dagblad, 14 July 2015

Use of migration routes

In 2015 it became apparent that jihadist groups are exploiting refugee migration routes to infiltrate Europe. At least two of the men responsible for the 13 November attacks in Paris had entered the EU in this way. In practice, it is difficult to identify any terrorists hiding among the huge numbers of migrants coming into Europe. Since 2015, investigations have been under way to find out whether jihadist groups are taking advantage of the vulnerabilities in EU border systems and the Schengen zone.

so has to be destroyed. Only once that has happened can a true Islamic state, the caliphate, be established.

For ISIS, attacking the West is a central part of its strategy to maintain the myth that it has already formed the caliphate and that it must now be defended against the enemies of Islam. The international coalition's air strikes against ISIS are reinforcing this hostile attitude; in response, in September 2014 the group called upon all Muslims to take revenge. By doing so, it effectively gave its prior fiat to any attack on a member of the coalition.

As well as the direct threat ISIS poses to Europe, there is also the more indirect one emanating from its individual foreign fighters in Syria, many of whom use the internet to encourage their supporters in the West to commit acts of violence – often on a small scale – at home. Other Western-based jihadists carry out attacks on their own initiative, spurred on by ISIS propaganda. The incidents in Copenhagen in January 2015 fall into this category.

ISIS and Al-Qaeda remain rivals

ISIS and AQ are still fighting each other over leadership of the global jihadist movement, a rivalry that is significant to the threat the two groups pose. One or more spectacular attacks in Europe or the United States would be a sure way for either organisation to display its credentials as the true leader of the jihad. For AQ especially, it is important that such an event occur sooner rather than later if it is to recover the prestige it has lost since the rise of ISIS. This internecine rivalry thus surely increases the overall threat facing the West.

The threat from Al-Qaeda and its associates

Al-Qaeda has never given up its plans to strike at Western nations and so must still be regarded as a threat to Europe. The deaths of many of its key leaders in recent years have done nothing to change that. In part, the current AQ threat emanates from the so-called Khorasan group in Syria. Although it, too, has lost several of its leading figures in the past two years, it is still thought capable of mounting attacks in the West.

Another AQ affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra (JaN), also poses a genuine threat. As well as supporting other groups planning acts of terrorism – it is in contact with the Khorasan group, for example – this organisation is in a position to carry out attacks of its own outside Syria. The image it has been trying to propagate as a moderate force, particularly through a recent media interview with its leader, is false: JaN is a jihadist group with close links to AQ, and its objectives include mounting terrorist attacks against the West.

Dutch jihadists and the internal threat

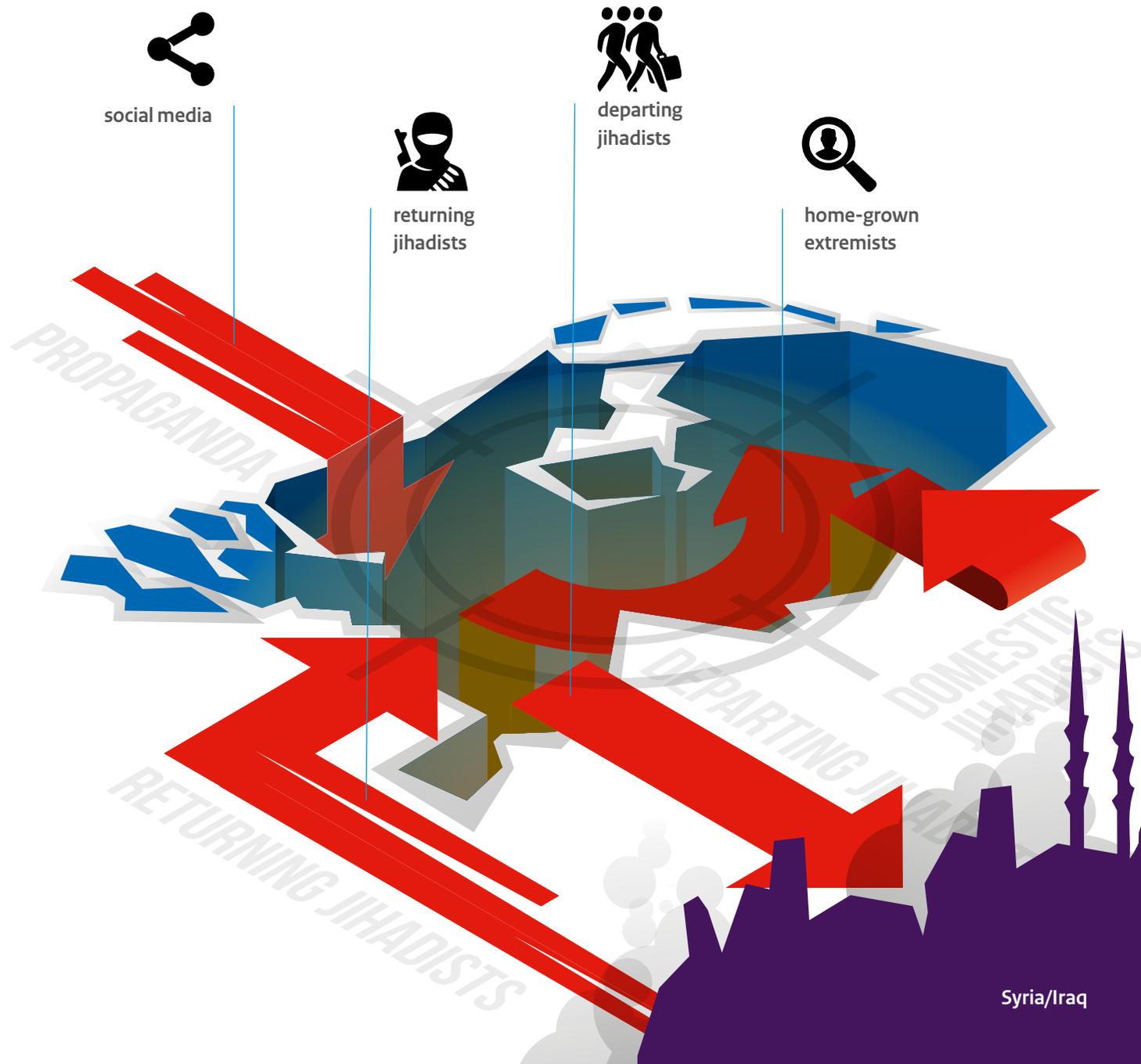
The Netherlands is in no way exempt from the threat in and to Europe. This threat comes in part from jihadists in neighbouring countries, but also from those on Dutch soil. The AIVD divides these into three groups. The first consists of those individuals who travel to Syria to join the jihad there, because they may return with combat experience, and possibly traumatised as well. The second is those whose attempts to go to Syria have been frustrated. And the third is made up of jihadists with no intention of leaving, but a desire to bring the struggle to the Netherlands.

Fighters and returnees

As of the end of 2015, approximately 230 people had left the Netherlands with the intention of travelling to Syria and Iraq to join the jihad there. At that time (late 2015) about 150 of them were still in Syria or Iraq, including almost 70 women. The great majority joined ISIS, with a small number preferring JaN. No more than twenty Dutch jihadists are thought to be in other conflict zones. The number killed in Syria or Iraq increased substantially in 2015: in all, about twenty had died up until the end of 2014, but that figure had doubled twelve months later.

There are at least 70 children of Dutch parents currently in Iraq and Syria, about a third of whom were born there. These youngsters are growing up in the midst of warfare and from an early age are indoctrinated with the jihadist ideology of hatred towards anything Western or otherwise “un-Islamic”.

As the Paris attacks showed, returnees from Syria pose a real threat to their home countries. At the end of 2015, almost 40 such individuals were living in the Netherlands. Most came back prior to 2015, after only a short stay in the region. Compared with this group, future returnees are likely to pose a greater threat because they will be better trained and have more combat experience. The AIVD observed only a handful of people returning in 2015, all of them women.



‘Raid in Sittard stops family from leaving for Syria’

Dagblad de Limburger, 22 July 2015

Return from ISIS territory almost impossible

The AIVD has reason to believe that there is widespread dissatisfaction among Dutch members of ISIS about the situation in the areas under the group’s control. In the report *Life with ISIS: the Myth Unravelling*, published in January 2016, we revealed that living conditions are often spartan, hygiene is far from satisfactory and the ISIS regime behaves in a totalitarian manner, spying on its own members. Some Dutch fighters would like to flee ISIS territory and return to the Netherlands.

But ISIS regards this as desertion, punishable by death. So openly expressing a desire to leave is not an option. Any escape and return to the Netherlands has to be organised in secret. The fact that so few people came back in 2015 is probably due to the fact that it is so hard to leave ISIS territory.

These sounds of dissension fail to filter through to jihadists in the Netherlands, though. They dismiss any negative information about ISIS as Western propaganda, unreliable by definition. On the other hand, they unquestioningly believe the ISIS propaganda portraying life in the ‘caliphate’ as wonderful, with brotherhood and friendship everywhere. The organisation does all it can to prevent anything emerging which runs counter to this portrayal, in order to keep the myth of the caliphate intact and to maintain the inflow of foreign recruits.

Local jihadists looking for weapons

Not every jihadist in the Netherlands is planning to head for Syria. Some want to take up the struggle closer to home, which could include carrying out attacks on Dutch targets. The recent calls from both Al-Qaeda and ISIS to strike at the West from within are encouraging them in this ambition.

The AIVD has established that certain jihadists in the Netherlands are actively looking for weapons, although it is not always clear what for. In June 2015 a returnee from Syria was sentenced to four years in prison for, among other crimes, planning armed robberies to finance the jihad there. Whilst any weapons obtained by jihadists may not necessarily be destined for terrorist use, then, there is a real risk that they may be, as recent cases from Canada, the United States, France and elsewhere demonstrate.

Jihadism outside Europe

Jihadist groups broadly aligned with either ISIS or Al-Qaeda are active in various parts of the world. AQ affiliates include Al-Shabaab (AS) in Somalia, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). Groups loyal to ISIS call themselves “wilayats” (provinces) of the caliphate. Places where these have been proclaimed include Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Nigeria and Afghanistan, although some are no more than a small group of jihadists controlling little or no territory.

ISIS: an ambivalent picture

The picture of ISIS which emerges from this overview is an ambivalent one. On the one hand there is growing dissatisfaction within the ‘caliphate’ and air strikes are putting the organisation under real pressure, but on the other its support base continues to grow as more jihadists join and groups in other parts of the world pledge their allegiance to it. Like the various AQ affiliates around the globe, however, these groups are engaged primarily in local and regional conflicts. Whether loyal to AQ or ISIS, in 2015 the great majority of such factions confined their activities to their own country or region – although they still pose a direct threat to westerners and Western interests in those areas.

In the conflicts involving factions affiliated to AQ and ISIS, these groups are sometimes on opposite sides, but occasionally they also work together. Many fighters in the AQ-affiliated groups would rather be a part of ISIS. Various jihadist groups or factions which were originally a part of AQ have splintered or transferred their allegiance to ISIS. Countries where this has occurred include Tunisia and Yemen.

Participation in a local or regional conflict can pay dividends for a jihadist group, though. This has certainly been the case for AQAS in Yemen, for instance, which has proven capable of capturing and controlling large swathes of territory. This has allowed it to create a safe haven from which to, among other things, launch attacks

'ISIS at work on European Jihad'

Nederlands Dagblad, 18 May 2015

against the West. The situation in Libya is now much the same, with the influence of ISIS affiliates growing considerably in the past year. It is not inconceivable that, within the not-too-distant future, Libya could develop into a new 'theatre of jihad' attracting European fighters. The conflict there thus has the potential to pose yet another direct threat to Europe.

Cyberjihadism

Until about a year ago, jihadist hacker groups tended to use relatively simple methods with limited impact. The majority of their attacks involved online verbal intimidation and the dissemination of propaganda. Other jihadist computer users focused mainly upon defensive measures: protecting their communications through the use of encryption and TOR, for example.

Since ISIS proclaimed its caliphate at the end of June 2014, however, cyberjihadism has professionalised rapidly in terms of both its know-how and its organisation. There now appears to be a central body coordinating hacker groups that previously operated independently. Recent developments confirm that digital activities on behalf of ISIS have become more offensive and focused in nature, with an increase in effective defacements¹ and the publication of personal information of mostly Western military and government employees ('doxing') with the aim of identifying potential targets and the overarching goal of sowing fear throughout the Western world.

¹ Defacement is when hackers make unsolicited changes to a web page, often including some political or ideological statement.

AIVD activities and results

In 2015, as in previous years, the violent jihad and jihadists travelling to join the conflict in Syria were a primary focus of AIVD investigations. It is important to know who has reached jihadist combat zones from the Netherlands, which group they have joined, what they are capable of, whether they are planning to return to our country or another part of Europe and, if so, what their intentions are. Returnees continue to pose a major security risk. Some terrorism-related investigations concern long-term threats and so may last for years, whereas others are initiated in response to immediate danger in and to the Netherlands.

The AIVD has developed a comprehensive system to prioritise its investigative activities, and this is now going to be enhanced and implemented at the European level. The huge recent influx of migrants and asylum seekers is receiving particular attention, to ensure that it does not adversely affect Dutch national security. The AIVD examined a number of reports on the exploitation of migration routes and the abuse of asylum procedures by terrorist organisations in 2015, but has found no evidence that this is occurring on a structural basis.

Priority to EU-wide cooperation within CTG framework

It goes without saying that many of the AIVD's investigations into terrorist activities have an international dimension. Cooperation with partner services in other countries is therefore hugely important. In respect of terrorism in particular, the AIVD works very closely with its counterparts in Europe and elsewhere, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis. In the first half of 2016 the service is chairing the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG), an alliance of European intelligence services. The AIVD's declared priority during this period is to broaden, deepen and intensify their existing collaboration.

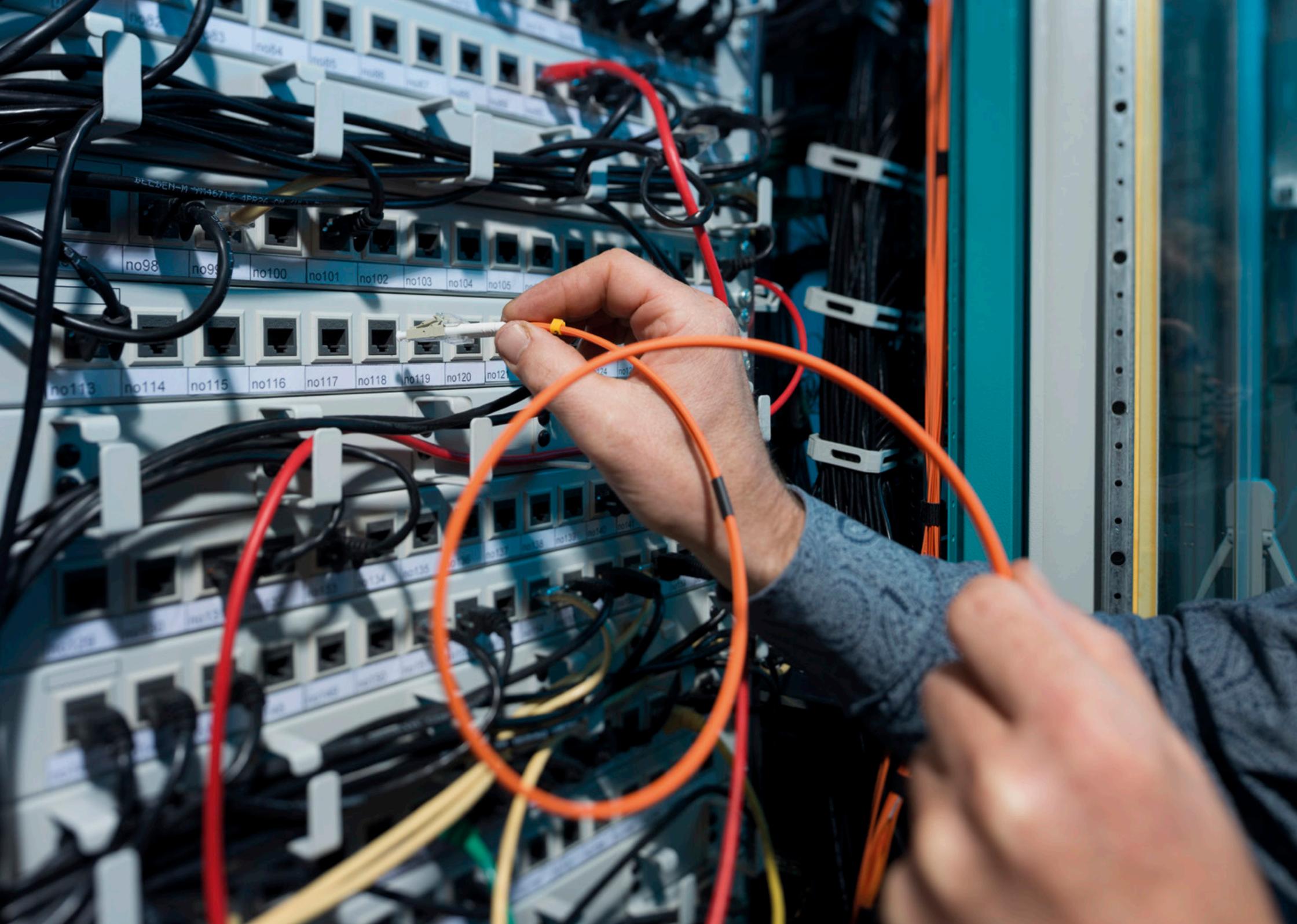
Countering jihadism together

During 2015, the AIVD was able to use intelligence gleaned from its investigations to provide a variety of other agencies with information to help them perform their own tasks better. The National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) is a structural partner in the AIVD's approach to jihadism. In addition the AIVD supplied official reports ('ambtsberichten') to the Public Prosecutor's Office (Openbaar Ministerie, OM), which have enabled it to bring jihadists to trial in the Netherlands. Similarly, information supplied to the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (Immigratienaturalisatiedienst, IND) has assisted it in ruling on the residency status of non-citizens thought likely to pose a threat to Dutch national security.

'Government increases control'

Trouw, 17 November 2015

Official reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs helped form the basis for its decisions on who to place on sanctions lists, which deny legal access to financial resources and so impede the funding of terrorism. In a number of cases the service also submitted official reports to the national Child Care and Protection Board (Raad voor de Kinderbescherming), providing it with means to prevent juveniles travelling to Syria or to stop jihadists taking children with them. Reports to local authorities also gave mayors grounds for confiscating the passports of people planning to go to Syria, and reports to other bodies resulted in freezing the benefits or student grants of jihadists who had already left.



3 Cyberthreats

Committing online attacks is relatively cheap, effective and efficient. Compared with “traditional” forms of theft, espionage, undermining, sabotage and terrorism, they can be conducted far more frequently and extensively. And if not entirely anonymous, as is often the case, it is easy to abjure responsibility for them (‘plausible deniability’). Moreover, the fact that they can be mounted from or through any country on Earth reduces the likelihood that those responsible will ever be held to account.

When it comes to cyberthreats, the AIVD’s primary focus is digital espionage. A breach of sovereignty and often damaging to Dutch political and economic interests, this is almost always carried out by state actors. That makes it a threat to national security and hence a task for the AIVD. In this respect China, Russia and Iran pose the greatest threat to national security at this moment in time.

Record number of attacks

In the past year, the AIVD has identified a record number of cyberespionage attacks against Dutch government institutions of types which constitute a threat to national security. Investigations have revealed that many such official bodies are regular targets of extensive and advanced assaults by state actors in a variety of countries. The attackers’ probable objective is to acquire information about political decision-making and standpoints, the development and content of political and economic plans, the agendas of political meetings and Dutch positions and tactics in negotiations on a range of subjects.

Given the increasing prevalence and global scale of cyberespionage, the incidents identified by the AIVD probably represent only a fraction of the total directed against the Netherlands.

Targets of economic cyberespionage

The AIVD has also observed numerous attacks in the past year on companies within the so-called “top sectors” identified as national economic priority industries. These include high-tech, chemicals, energy, life sciences and health, and water. In general, the attackers were looking for highly specialised, sometimes experimental technologies which have yet to prove their market value. Not only are these vital to the current and future earning potential of the companies concerned, they are also key to maintaining the stable, growing economy upon which our national prosperity is based. That it is these particular sectors which are coming under attack demonstrates that the perpetrators have a deep-seated and detailed



cyberespionage
attacks on
government
institutions



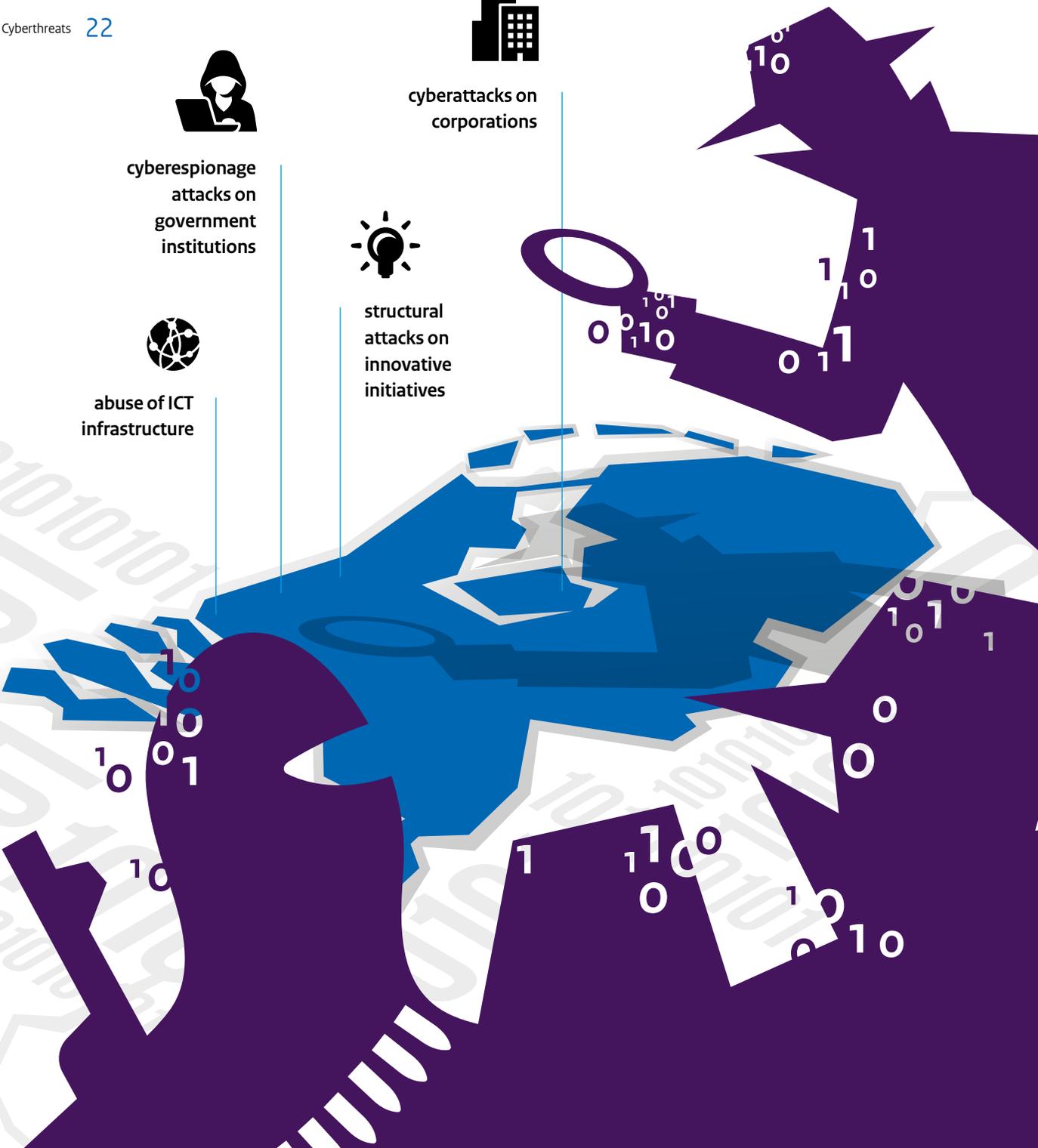
abuse of ICT
infrastructure



cyberattacks on
corporations



structural
attacks on
innovative
initiatives



interest in innovative initiatives in the Netherlands, and know exactly where to find them. Their activities exemplify the structural cyberthreat we are exposed to, and how it is undermining the Dutch knowledge economy.

Increasing complexity

Continuing a trend which has been under way for some time now, the complexity of the cyberespionage attacks observed by the AIVD once again increased last year. Although those responsible often use standard techniques like “spear phishing” emails² or “watering holes”³ to penetrate computer systems, it is the more advanced weapons in their armoury – such as the malware they use and their exfiltration (data extraction) techniques – which make their activities hard to detect, and hence all too frequently successful.

Once an attacker has gained access to a computer system, it can be very difficult to exclude them permanently from it. Attackers often install alternative access points, such as so-called “back doors”, so that they can return easily if found and ejected a first time. AIVD investigations have also revealed that some attackers are able to remotely monitor IT personnel at victim organisations, so that they can tell when they have been discovered and what is being done to

² Spear phishing emails are messages that appear to be from a trusted authority or person, but that are in fact used to infect the computer of the unsuspecting victim with malicious code to obtain confidential information.

³ The technique of a watering hole involves infecting a web page that is used on a regular basis by a specific group of users with malware, which is subsequently transferred to the computer of the site’s visitors.

‘US and China promise less hacking’

De Volkskrant, 26 September 2015

remove them from the system. This allows them to respond in such a way that they do not lose access. On several occasions in the past year, the AIVD has found that attackers were able to regain access to a target network very quickly after their initial malware had been detected and removed.

Tasking and specialisations in cyberespionage

The AIVD has established on several occasions that state actors divide the tasks associated with cyberattacks among different groups. These specialise in such work as target identification, tool development, the attack itself and infrastructure management.

The same applies during the actual attack. Different operatives are responsible for infiltration (penetrating the system), exploration (finding the data they want) and exfiltration (extracting the data). In many cases, these activities are outsourced by these state actors to private organisations. It has been established on several occasions that workers at what seem to be commercial IT companies are carrying out attacks or buying and managing the necessary infrastructure, when in fact they are acting on behalf of a government. This division of responsibilities encourages specialisation and continuity in the conduct of cyberattacks, and is often an indication that they form part of long-term espionage operations intended to have a far-reaching impact.

Insufficient target resilience

In the past year the AIVD has notified many different organisations of preparations to attack them, or that a cyberattack was actually

under way. As far as possible, the service aims to prevent such activities, or at least to detect them at the earliest possible stage. However, a substantial proportion of the targets notified were not in a position to detect the preparations and infections themselves. The AIVD notes that Dutch organisations tend to concentrate their IT security efforts around blocking intrusions into their networks. Dynamic measures to detect the activities of intruders already inside the system are far less common. This shortcoming often enables attackers to operate unnoticed within a network for some considerable time after successfully breaking into it.

Due to this lack of ‘inward-looking’ security precautions, many of the organisations affected are unable to determine how long their networks have been compromised and what impact a cyberattack has had.

As in previous years, in 2015 Dutch IT infrastructure has been exploited on a large scale by state actors from several nations to spy on or sabotage third countries. The Netherlands is known for its advanced IT and communications infrastructure, through which a lot of internet traffic is channelled. That makes our networks an attractive tool for those with malicious intent. Such abuse can damage the political and economic interests of our own country and our allies, and last year it was observed more frequently than ever before by the AIVD.

AIVD activities and results

In 2015 the AIVD shared its findings from investigations into cyberthreats with a wide range of victims, government agencies and other stakeholders. This was done in the form of direct briefings and presentations, and also through a number of intelligence reports and analyses. With a view to countering complex online attacks, the service also published a paper entitled *How to Recognise Attacks from Advanced Persistent Threats on behalf of the national government*.



4

Other AIVD tasks and areas of interest

Countering terrorism and cyberthreats constituted the AIVD's main priorities for 2015. Nonetheless, other developments around the world also affect Dutch national security and so retained the service's interest. For example, the threat posed by conventional espionage remains as high as ever. And the arrival in Europe of thousands of migrants and refugees resulted in new trends in political activism and extremism.

Espionage and other intelligence activities

States can pursue their own interests by conducting clandestine activities in or against other countries. For instance, they may secretly try to acquire information which gives them a political, financial, economic or military advantage, or which benefits their science and technology sectors. We classify this as espionage. But clandestine activities are also carried out with other aims, such as influencing political decision-making or manipulating perceptions of particular topics.

An attractive target

Many foreign intelligence services have long taken a great interest in the Netherlands, and so are active here on a major scale. As a member of the EU and NATO, and economically as a place where ground-breaking technological advances are made, our nation makes an attractive target for many forms of espionage. So too does its role as host to numerous international organisations, whilst the presence of many immigrant communities brings with it intelligence activities targeting them or intended to influence our immigration policy.

Human intelligence still essential

With the continuing development of information and communication technologies, the arsenal of operational resources available to intelligence services is expanding all the time. In our digital age, technology-based information gathering is becoming more and more important. But that does not make 'classic' espionage methods any less useful. Human sources remain an essential intelligence tool.

‘Spy returns to Moscow empty-handed’

Algemeen Dagblad, 29 July 2015

The main players: Russia and China

When it comes to espionage and clandestine efforts to exert influence in the Netherlands, the main players are undoubtedly Russia and China. Their respective intelligence ambitions here are determined by their own political, financial and economic agendas.

Russia wants political, military, scientific and technological intelligence

Russian clandestine intelligence operatives are permanently present and active in the Netherlands, as they are in other Western countries. These services and the personnel working for them are extremely professional and possess a high degree of operational capability. Their activities thus pose a genuine threat to the national security of the Netherlands and of its EU partners and NATO allies. In the past year, it has once again been established that Russian services are attempting to acquire political, scientific and technological intelligence in our country.

The Russian Federation is also highly adept at mounting clandestine operations designed to exert untoward influence, as well as being skilled in the use of propaganda. This is the product of many decades of experience in these domains.

China focuses upon foreign policy, finance and economics

The Chinese intelligence services are also gathering material to be used in a manner detrimental to Dutch interests at home and abroad. For example, the AIVD has identified recruitment efforts and

the acquisition of specific information on financial, economic, political and other topics.

Chinese, Dutch and European interests are increasingly overlapping. For example, China is seeking to gain improved access to Europe through the development of the so-called “New Silk Road”. The Port of Rotterdam and Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport could play a significant role in this. As well as an economic initiative, though, it is also a means for China to extend its sphere of influence.

China wants to make the transition to a high-value economy. As part of this effort it is attempting to acquire advanced technical and scientific know-how. The government in Beijing is also encouraging Chinese enterprises to invest abroad, for example through takeovers, in order to gain a competitive advantage. However, such moves have the potential to upset the ‘level playing field’ in international trade. In 2015 the AIVD held a number of presentations for interested parties about developments related to China.

Weapons of mass destruction

Throughout the world, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their delivery systems is regarded as a genuine threat to international security. The Counterproliferation Unit (Unit Contraprolieratie, UCP) operated jointly by AIVD and its military counterpart, the MIVD, conducts investigations into nations suspected of developing or producing WMDs in contravention of international treaties.

AIVD activities and results

In 2015 the UCP provided the Dutch government with unique intelligence regarding the proliferation of WMDs in so-called “countries of concern”⁴. Its activities include careful monitoring of developments related to Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in part to confirm that Tehran was complying with the terms of its framework agreement with the international community. At the same time, the unit continued to focus upon the risks of proliferation in other countries. And it produced several reports about the potential chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) capability of non-state actors, most notably in Iraq and Syria.

As well as gathering intelligence, in 2015 the UCP also intervened on a number of occasions to impede efforts to acquire ‘proliferation-sensitive’ goods. In these activities, it works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the customs service, partner services abroad and others. Numerous reports were issued on this topic, too, including several dozen official reports for the ministry in support of Dutch export controls. Finally, UCP personnel visited a number of institutions and businesses to advise them on potential proliferation risks.

⁴ Countries of concern: countries that are suspected of staging development programmes for weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, and of pursuing goals that could pose a threat to international legal order and safety and the interests of the Netherlands and its allies.

‘Pegida protest without any clashes’

Dagblad van het Noorden, 30 November 2015

Latin America and the Caribbean

A joint AIVD-MIVD team gathers intelligence and background information for the Dutch government about Latin America and the Caribbean region. The permanent presence of Dutch troops in the Caribbean territories is reason enough to monitor events there, insofar as they might affect our forces. With the islands of Sint Eustatius, Saba and Bonaire governed since 2010 as special municipalities of the Netherlands, our nation’s borders – and hence the security tasks of the AIVD and MIVD – now extend to the very fringes of Latin America.

This makes Venezuela our biggest immediate neighbour, and it has seen increasing political, social and economic tensions in recent years. The economic situation has worsened considerably, due in large part to the fall in world oil prices and lack of investment in vital infrastructure. There was also greater political polarisation in the run-up to the parliamentary election of December 2015, which the united opposition won with a substantial majority.

Influx of Venezuelans causes concern

The election result in Venezuela reflected widespread public dissatisfaction with the country’s poor socioeconomic state and its lack of democracy. Directly related to this, increasing numbers of Venezuelans have been coming to the Dutch Caribbean islands in search of the basic necessities of life and, in many cases, to try to acquire dollars. This influx has become a growing cause of concern on the islands.

The situation in Venezuela is expected to worsen even more in 2016. Because of its potential knock-on effects across the region, the AIVD and MIVD will continue to monitor developments closely in order to provide the Dutch government with up-to-date information to help it safeguard our national interests.

Activism and extremism

The great political and social theme of 2015, the migration issue, was clearly reflected in the nature of the political activism and extremism monitored by the AIVD during the year. This area of interest was dominated by the extreme left’s response to anti-immigration movements like Pegida. The threat posed by the extreme right largely emanates from single individuals and ad hoc groups operating locally or regionally.

The traditional (neo-Nazi) extreme right barely made an appearance in 2015. It has largely made way for, in principle peaceful, nationalist groups opposed to the current influx of migrants and to what they see as Islam’s growing influence in the Netherlands. The ideology they espouse is gaining wider public support, which has resulted in increasing numbers of people attending their demonstrations over the past year.

Left-wing extremists campaign against Pegida

Pegida is one of the organisations opposed to Islam and immigration. Up until then an online Facebook phenomenon imported from Germany, where the movement originated, Pegida Netherlands first took to the streets in Utrecht in October 2015. This appearance

prompted counterdemonstrations by various left-wing activist and extremist groups, with a number of anarchist elements and, most notably, Antifascist Action (Antifascistische Actie, AFA) expressing particularly militant opposition. As far as AFA is concerned, Pegida is no different from ‘classic’ far-right organisations such as the Dutch People’s Union (Nederlandse Volks-Unie, NVU).

Pegida itself says it wants nothing to do with the extreme right, but the far-left protests against it brought support from that very quarter nonetheless. A number of right-wing extremists subsequently joined Pegida demonstrations and, with the help of apolitical hooligans that are always up for short-term violent action, the right-wingers began acting as a sort of unsolicited, unofficial protection force. AFA in turn spread photographs of these known extremists among Pegida ranks to back its claim that the new movement shares their ideology.

One emergent and as yet hard-to-assess phenomenon is local and regional opposition to emergency shelters and asylum centres for refugees and permanent housing for registered asylum seekers. A number of local authorities and politicians are or have been the targets of violence by members of these movements.

NVU joins the immigration debate

The NVU has seized upon the media coverage of the migration issue to publicise itself and recruit new members. In 2015 the organisation claimed a membership of a thousand and, according to its leader, was going to take part in the debate all over the country. Given its

‘NVU no more than a splinter group’

Trouw, 15 December 2015

true membership figure, about a hundred people, only some of whom are active, this ambition was never realistic. However, it did lead to the cancellation of several public meetings on the reception and accommodation of migrants. When such events were disrupted, the culprits were almost always local opponents and hooligans.

Left-wing extremism and anarchism

As in previous years, various groups on the extreme left collaborated to a certain extent in 2015. AFA's activities, for example, gained some support from anarchists, particularly those linked to Utrecht Anarchist Anti-Deportation Group (Anarchistische Anti-deportatie Groep Utrecht, AAGU).

Largely at the behest of its radical hard-core members, the AAGU also continued its existing campaign against Dutch and European immigration and asylum policy. The main focus of these activities was the construction of a so-called “Closed Family Facility” at Camp Zeist, not far from Utrecht. As well as “naming and shaming” contractors and subcontractors working on the project, the group also held noise protests, disrupted a council meeting and blockaded both the main contractor and Camp Zeist itself.

Animal rights extremism: a receding phenomenon

Extremist activities in the name of animal rights are a slowly disappearing phenomenon, with none reported in 2015. There were some peaceful actions and demonstrations during the year, but these fall outside the AIVD's remit.

AIVD activities and results

In 2015 the AIVD compiled several intelligence papers for relevant stakeholders. These include analyses of current left-right tensions with respect to immigration, and of such matters as extremists' readiness to use violence. A number of ministers, among others, were provided with verbal briefings on current developments at the political extremes. As far as opposition to immigration and asylum policy was concerned, extremist actions were either announced in advance or elucidated afterwards, or both. Also in this respect, a number of official reports (ambtsberichten) were issued to local authorities.

Separatist terrorist groups

Turkey-PKK conflict raises tensions

The tensions between the PKK and Turkey have reverberated across Europe, the Netherlands included. The PKK has maintained its policy of non-violent action in Europe, and its supporters have held demonstrations on a number of occasions to protest against Turkey's actions and to draw attention to their cause.

Despite the official line, however, some young PKK supporters have displayed a readiness to use violence. But so far the organisation has managed to stick to its official stance of non-violence, with incidents confined to verbal sparring and occasional acts of vandalism.

DHKP/C active in Turkey

The ‘Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front’ or DHKP/C has recently committed several acts of terrorism in Turkey. It honours the perpetrators as ‘martyrs’ and exploits them for propaganda purposes in the Netherlands and other parts of Europe. The organisation also uses the popular band Grup Yorum to generate support, raise funds and glorify its martyrs. In the Netherlands, opposition to the DHKP/C appears to be growing amongst its traditional Alevi support base.

AIVD activities and results

In 2015 the AIVD issued a number of intelligence reports examining tensions between the Turkish and Kurdish communities, and the role played in them by the PKK and DHKP/C. Relevant chain partners, local authorities and other stakeholders were also briefed verbally on developments in this area.

Salafism

Salafism attracted considerable Dutch public, media and political interest in 2015. In September the AIVD and the NCTV published the report *Salafism in the Netherlands: Diversity and Dynamics*, describing both recent developments within the Salafist community in the Netherlands and the international context which has contributed to the movement's growing influence here.

‘House of representatives demands more measures against salafism’

Brabants Dagblad, 18 December 2015

Salafist messages multiplying

Salafism is a collective term for a spectrum of fundamentalist currents within Sunni Islam, all pursuing what they regard as the ‘pure’ version of the faith. Whilst not all Salafists by any means pose a threat to our democratic legal order, the AIVD is concerned about the antidemocratic, polarising and intolerant message a number of them are propagating. Moreover, certain elements of Salafist ideology can breed radicalisation leading to jihadism.

Salafists constitute a minority among Sunni Muslims in the Netherlands, although their precise number is impossible to ascertain due to the movement’s diversity and imprecise definition. But the AIVD has observed an increase in the amount of Salafist material targeting Dutch Muslims, both online and offline. And the current tensions in the Middle East have created a climate receptive to the movement’s message, which could increase its support base.

The AIVD has also witnessed cases of Salafists attempting to impose their ideology upon those around them. Moderate Muslim communities, in particular, are coming under pressure from these fundamentalist ideologues. They have been intentionally targeting vulnerable groups, like refugees. And the AIVD has seen certain Salafists repeatedly trying to provoke a response from the authorities or people in their vicinity, so that they can then claim to be victims of a hostile Western society and use that supposed enmity to justify their own anti-Western, antidemocratic stance.

AIVD activities and results

In its investigations into individuals and groups responsible for disseminating antidemocratic, polarising and intolerant messages, the AIVD has been focusing particularly on the principal mouthpieces of Salafism in the Netherlands.

Following the publication of its report on this topic in September 2015, the service delivered a number of presentations for relevant chain partners and local authorities. It also issued several intelligence reports on specific cases, for recipients including the NCTV, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst, IND), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and a number of local mayors.

Security screenings for positions involving confidentiality

In the first quarter of 2015, the AIVD began the implementation of a new operational process for security screenings. This aims to place a much greater emphasis on national security safeguards in relation to the individual subject when designating positions involving confidentiality and conducting screenings. It should also make the procedure more efficient and effective, under the slogan “Quick where possible, thorough where necessary”.

Completion times reduced after difficult start

The introduction of the new process proved more complex than originally envisaged, which substantially increased the backlog of work and extended screening completion times between March and September 2015. Level B screenings were particularly affected. Because of the high sensitivity of level-A positions involving confidentiality, the AIVD made every effort to ensure that screening procedures for them were completed within the statutory deadline.

The backlog had cleared by the end of September 2015, and average completion times were improving. This trend is expected to continue in 2016. Measured over 2015 as a whole, the AIVD completed 71 per cent of all screenings and 89 per cent of those at level A within the statutory deadline.

Private-sector screening costs recovered

In spring 2015 the Dutch Senate passed the Security Screening Act Amendment Bill (wetsvoorstel tot Wijziging van de Wet veiligheids-onderzoeken), under which the costs of screenings can be recovered from the employers of persons holding positions involving confidentiality in the private sector. This brings it into line with the public sector, where employers have been required to cover screening costs since 1 January 2013. The amended Security Screening Act took effect on 1 September 2015, from which point the AIVD began charging for private-sector screenings. Over the whole of 2015, the service received almost €4.5 million for screenings in the public and private sectors.

‘Detective with financial problems vulnerable to blackmail’

Reformatorisch Dagblad, 10 October 2015

More than 41,000 screenings completed

In all, over 41,000 security screenings were conducted in 2015 by the AIVD and the mandated organisations to which it delegates this task in some domains: the National Police Service and the Royal Military Constabulary (Koninklijke Marechaussee, KMar). In just over 900 cases (2 per cent), most in the civil aviation sector, they resulted in Security Clearance being denied or withdrawn.

The AIVD itself performed more than 5500 screenings of subjects referred directly to the service, with 71 per cent of these completed within the statutory period. It also screened over 2500 people on behalf of mandated organisations.

Protecting vital sectors

For our society to function effectively, it is essential that we are able to rely upon vital sectors like energy supply and the financial system. Their failure could seriously disrupt the nation’s public and economic life.

The AIVD shares information on terrorist, extremist, (cyber) espionage and other threats to vital sectors with the government and the business community. In 2015 the service gave dozens of presentations warning of the risks associated with cyberespionage and other forms of spying. It also provided briefings on such incidents as the attack on Air Products in Saint-Quentin-Fallavier,

Table 3 Results of security screenings, including delegated procedures

	Positive (clearance issued)	Negative (clearance refused or withdrawn)	Total	Within statutory period
Level A, by AIVD	1134	12	1146	89%
Level B, by AIVD	3833	20	3853	66%
Level C, by AIVD	574	7	581	69%
Level B, by AIVD through KMar/NP/DKDB	1712	862	2574	
Level B, by KMar/ NP/DKDB (delegated)	32958		32958	
Total	40211	901	41112	

KMar: Royal Military Constabulary (Koninklijke Marechaussee). NP: National Police Service (Nationale Politie). DKDB: Royal and Diplomatic Protection Service (Dienst Koninklijke en Diplomatieke Beveiliging).

Table 4 Results of objections and appeals against security clearance denials

	Dismissed	Upheld	Inadmissible	Withdrawn	Deneid	Granted	Total
Objections	38	18	8	1	-	-	65
Appeals	8	2	-	-	-	-	10
Second appeals	5	2	-	-	-	-	7
Preliminary injunctions	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total	51	22	8	1	0	0	82

‘NCTV remains calm under EU terror alert’

De Telegraaf, 13 December 2015

France, and information about an alleged plot to poison water supplies in Kosovo. It also contributed to risk and threat analyses for the government, the railways, the nuclear sector and so on.

As well as sharing specific, credible threat information, the AIVD also looks at future earning opportunities for the Netherlands. To help protect Dutch economic interests, and hence our national security, the service participates in various initiatives emanating from the Interministerial Working Group on Economic Security (interdepartementale werkgroep Economische Veiligheid). Here, multidisciplinary teams identify interests requiring special protection by combining threat analyses with industry know-how. In addition, the AIVD works with other interested parties to oversee scientific research into ways of safeguarding economic security.

Analyses for the Counterterrorism Alert System

The AIVD promotes effective measures to safeguard the vital sectors covered by the national Counterterrorism Alert System (Alertingssysteem Terrorismebestrijding, ATb) operated by the NCTV. In 2015 it issued two threat analyses encompassing the entire ATb framework, as well as more specific ones reviewing international incidents such as the attacks in Paris and discussing their possible implications for a particular sector in the Netherlands. The NCTV draws upon these analyses to determine threat levels within the ATb and the overall Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland, DTN).

Safeguarding Dutch interests abroad

The safety of Dutch interests abroad is another of the AIVD’s specific areas of interest. In the fields of international shipping and civil aviation in particular, the service made great strides in 2015 in improving cooperation with other government agencies and private partners so as to share threat information more effectively. This is a need which has been prioritised since the MH17 aircraft disaster.

Developments such as the capture by ISIS of Libyan coastal cities and the bomb attack on the Russian Metrojet airliner over the Sinai peninsula have prompted the AIVD to produce specific threat analyses for both government and private-sector partners in the shipping and civil aviation sectors. Within a day of the Sinai incident, for example, the service was able to share information about its likely cause with airlines and relevant government agencies. This intelligence contributed directly towards the enhanced security precautions subsequently implemented at Sharm al-Sheikh Airport.

In 2015 the service strengthened its collaborative relationships with public and private partners in a variety of sectors by holding dozens of training sessions and presentations. It also provided information and expertise to assist strategic partners in compiling or updating their own risk and threat analyses. All in all, in this domain the AIVD delivered dozens of reports, analyses, intelligence papers and face-to-face briefings.

Expertise in terrorist methods

To improve its risk and threat analyses and to support its own operational investigations, the AIVD maintains in-house expertise on the methods and means used by terrorists. Among other things, in 2015 this resulted in a report on so-called “target matching”. The service also gave a number of presentations on this topic, and participated in several interministerial working groups.

Safety and security partnership

The recent increase in the number of jihadist terrorist attacks in Western countries, and in particular the great diversity of their targets, has heightened public concern about the safety of people, places and events. The need for reliable intelligence about credible threats against specific targets has never been greater. AIVD investigations identify those threats so that the NCTV’s national Safety and Security Coordinator (Coördinator Bewaking en Beveiliging, CBB) can decide when particular security precautions need to be taken, and what they should be. The National Police Service and the Military Intelligence and Security Service are also part of the national Security and Safety System (Stelsel Bewaken en Beveiligen, SBB).

Threat to politicians and government targets

In some cases jihadist-terrorist threats are explicitly aimed at politicians and other government targets. Politicians are also faced with right- and left-wing extremism and serious forms of threats and intimidation. In several instances information supplied by the

‘From worrying to threatening’

Algemeen Dagblad, 17 October 2015

AIVD has helped the Safety and Security Coordinator in making decisions on the need for security measures.

In the autumn of 2015, widespread public unease about the arrival of large numbers of refugees and migrants in the Netherlands resulted in strong opposition towards public officials and elected representatives. In some cases this opposition manifested itself in serious incidents, including death threats, intimidation, destruction of personal property and the disruption of democratic decision-making processes. Such activities endanger the proper functioning of our open, democratic society. The targets included both local and national politicians.

Of all the threat assessments, threat analyses and risk analyses issued by the AIVD in 2015, more than half related to politicians and government targets.

Protecting diplomatic property and international institutions

As in previous years, in 2015 the AIVD produced a comprehensive analysis of the threat to diplomatic property and personnel in the Netherlands. The service also maintains contacts with the international courts and tribunals located on Dutch soil, such as the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court, in order to support them in functioning free of disruptions.

Threats to events of national importance

To ensure that events of national importance pass off safely and without disruption, the AIVD assesses potential threats to them and the dignitaries attending them. The occasions in question in 2015 were King’s Day, Remembrance Day, Veterans’ Day and Budget Day. The service also began its preparations to protect events during the Dutch presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2016.

AIVD activities and results

Within the framework of the national Safety and Security System, the AIVD issued 73 threat assessments, eleven threat analyses, one risk analysis and six other reports in 2015.

Protecting sensitive information

The Dutch government must be in a position to protect its confidential information from hostile state actors and other antagonists. To this end, the AIVD provides it with impartial advice on secure IT and communications solutions suitable for state secrets. The service’s own National Signals Security Bureau (Nationaal Bureau voor Verbindingsbeveiliging, NBV) possesses unique knowledge and expertise in this field, and also makes use of information drawn from its extensive international network.

Enhancing the government’s digital resilience

The AIVD advises the government about protective measures, and on how to detect and respond to breaches of security. On request, the service also evaluates security products before they enter into service with the government and oversees the development of

products for use with classified information. This work improves government resilience in the digital world and supports its risk management activities. Thanks to AIVD advice, ministries and the government-wide ICT service centres are better able to safeguard their interests.

Security product development and evaluations

In 2015 the AIVD issued recommendations concerning the development and introduction of various new products, including telephones and network, media and document security solutions. Evaluations covering network security, hard-disk encryption and other topics were completed. In telecommunication, the VOIP (voice over IP) version of the technology used to secure calls at “Secret” (Stg. Geheim) level became available. In addition, secure government telephones with different security classifications are now able to communicate with each other.

Government security advice

In 2015 the AIVD advised various branches of central government, including the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, on security issues related to the establishment and configuration of digital information architectures and the protection of classified data, for instance in the “i-Diplomacy” project at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Publications on cyberthreats and cybersecurity

As part of its effort to raise awareness of the threats to and protection of sensitive information, the AIVD produced a number of

‘Antivirus and firewall not always enough’

ANP, 14 October 2015

publications in 2015. These included a guide to the implementation of detection solutions⁵, compiled jointly with the National Cybersecurity Centre (Nationaal Cyber Security Centrum, NCSC), and papers on the rise of the quantum computer⁶ and how to recognise advanced persistent threats⁷.

Security inspections

The AIVD is the designated national security authority for the protection of classified NATO and EU information held by the Dutch government – with the exception of the Ministry of Defence – and private companies in the Netherlands. In this capacity, more than 325 firms were inspected in 2015.

Cryptokey production, distribution and management

The service produces all the keys for the Dutch government’s cryptographic equipment, and in 2015 also contributed towards a digital Ministry of Defence system for the distribution and management of encryption key material for national and NATO signals traffic.

Cooperation with NCSC on the National Detection Network and the Cybersecurity Overview

Alongside the Military Intelligence and Security Service (Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, MIVD) and the NCSC, the AIVD is

a participant in the National Detection Network (Nationaal Detectie Network, NDN) coordinated by the Ministry of Security and Justice. In this context, the service worked with the NCSC on a variety of products in 2015. They included the annual National Cybersecurity Overview (Cybersecurity Beeld Nederland), published in November.⁸

International cooperation and product reviews

Beyond the Netherlands, the AIVD is playing its part in joint international efforts to standardise information security measures in order to simplify the safe exchange of data within NATO and the EU. In addition, at their request it also reviews the security product evaluations conducted by foreign partner services.

⁵ *Handreiking implementatie van detectie-oplossingen*, AIVD en NCSC; November 2015.

⁶ *Bereid u voor op de komst van quantumcomputers*, AIVD; April 2015.

⁷ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2015/10/14/cybersecuritybeeld-nederland-csbn-2015>

⁸ *Cybersecuritybeeld Nederland*, NCSC; October 2015.



5 Network development

The impact of informal, often temporary alliances is growing all the time. In today's world, fixed structures and physical locations are becoming less important. This is a trend reflected across all kinds of domains and in many different ways, and is one made much easier by digital connections and the formation of opportunistic coalitions that transcend traditional boundaries. And it is one which is opening up unprecedented economic and social possibilities. But it also has its downside, in the sense that more and more threats to national security – whether they come from terrorism, radicalisation or cyberespionage – are emanating from this 'networked' environment.

Terrorist organisations like ISIS are making the most of society's digitisation and the evaporation of physical barriers. It has contacts all over the world, and is able to recruit and activate supporters anywhere. To press home their cyberespionage attacks, states are forging alliances with hackers as ready and willing to turn to online crime as they are to steal state and corporate secrets. The nature, scale and variety of these networked threats can only be countered by building even stronger networks against them.

Partner needs are central

To create a stronger security network, it is essential that we understand and acknowledge the value brought to it by every participating public and private institution, domestic or international. Each member has its own task, its own role to play. The AIVD's is a very special one, though, in that it is charged with protecting national security. This also means that it offers unique added value for its network partners. For them to make the most of that, however, it is important that the service know exactly what information they require. What do they need from the AIVD in order to help it make the Netherlands a safer, more secure place?

With the introduction of the so-called "Integrated Security and Intelligence Order" (Geïntegreerde Aanwijzing Inlichtingen en Veiligheid) in 2015, the principal recipients of AIVD intelligence have been given the opportunity to stipulate explicitly what they require from the service and where they would like the focus of its investigations to lie. Unlike the old Foreign Intelligence Designation Order (Aanwijzingsbesluit Buitenland), which covered only investigations into political developments in other countries, the scope of the new integrated order also includes domestic threats. And it applies to both the AIVD and its military counterpart, the MIVD. This new system will take formal effect once the Intelligence and Security Services Bill (wetsvoorstel Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten) currently before Parliament enters law.

‘Cabinet to decide soon on extra funding for secret services’

Nederlands Dagblad, 12 February 2015

Ten years CT Infobox

One long-standing form of collaboration is the Netherlands Counterterrorism Information Centre, or CT Infobox. Ten years old in 2015, this is a partnership of ten official Dutch security, investigative and intelligence organisations, which have joined forces in the fight against terrorism. In the CT Infobox they share information about individuals thought to pose a terrorist or extremist threat to Dutch society. This results in recommendations for effective ways to deal with those subjects and thus reduce the risk they present. The CT Infobox is hosted by the AIVD.

Combining internal strengths

The operational investigations conducted by the AIVD are intended to expose hitherto covert threats. This task requires the careful deployment of a wide variety of intelligence resources. They range from technical methods, such as telephone taps and computer hacks, to more traditional techniques like the use of human sources and sharing information with partner services abroad. Through this combination of approaches, the service’s investigative teams build up a network of intelligence sources.

Current threat assessments show that developments in other parts of the world are directly affecting the national security of the Netherlands. In many cases, investigations into individuals and organisations which pose a danger to our democratic legal order overlap substantially with those exploring the intentions of other countries (political intelligence). Consequently, since 1 January 2015 the AIVD has been reorganised in such a way that these two previously separate tasks are now integrated with one another.

Today, the AIVD has three directorates: Operations, Intelligence and Security Screening & Management. Operations is responsible for the service’s intelligence-gathering capability, and also manages the National Signals Security Bureau (Nationaal Bureau voor Verbindingsbeveiliging, NBV). Intelligence is where the material generated during investigations is combined and processed. The third directorate includes the Security Screening Unit and the service’s management functions.

In 2015 the AIVD was able to strengthen its operational processes using the additional investment it was allocated by the government in 2014. An intensive recruitment campaign attracted about 180 new employees. The service will continue this capacity-building, in terms of both human and material resources, in 2016. In so doing, it is conscious of the fine balance to be struck between pressing ahead with a welcome strengthening of its operational capability and its ability to properly absorb, induct and train new employees. That is an intensive process.

Intensive cooperation with the MIVD

The AIVD and MIVD maintain a close working relationship. In 2014 they established a Joint Sigint Cyber Unit (JSCU) responsible for the acquisition and processing of signals intelligence (sigint) and cyberdata, which are then made available to investigative teams in both services. For many years they have also operated joint counterproliferation and Caribbean teams.

In 2015 the two services outlined plans for a new joint security screening unit. This came in response to a recommendation in the so-called Dessens Report of 2013, a review of the 2002 Intelligence and Security Services (Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten, Wiv). A strategic plan was finalised in the autumn, and the joint security screening project will be implemented over the next two years. In anticipation of the creation of the new unit, it has been decided that the MIVD personnel responsible for security screenings are to relocate to the AIVD’s premises in mid-2016.

In 2015 the ministers of Defence and the Interior agreed that the AIVD and MIVD will be housed in a single building from 2022. This should further enhance their collaboration in the future.

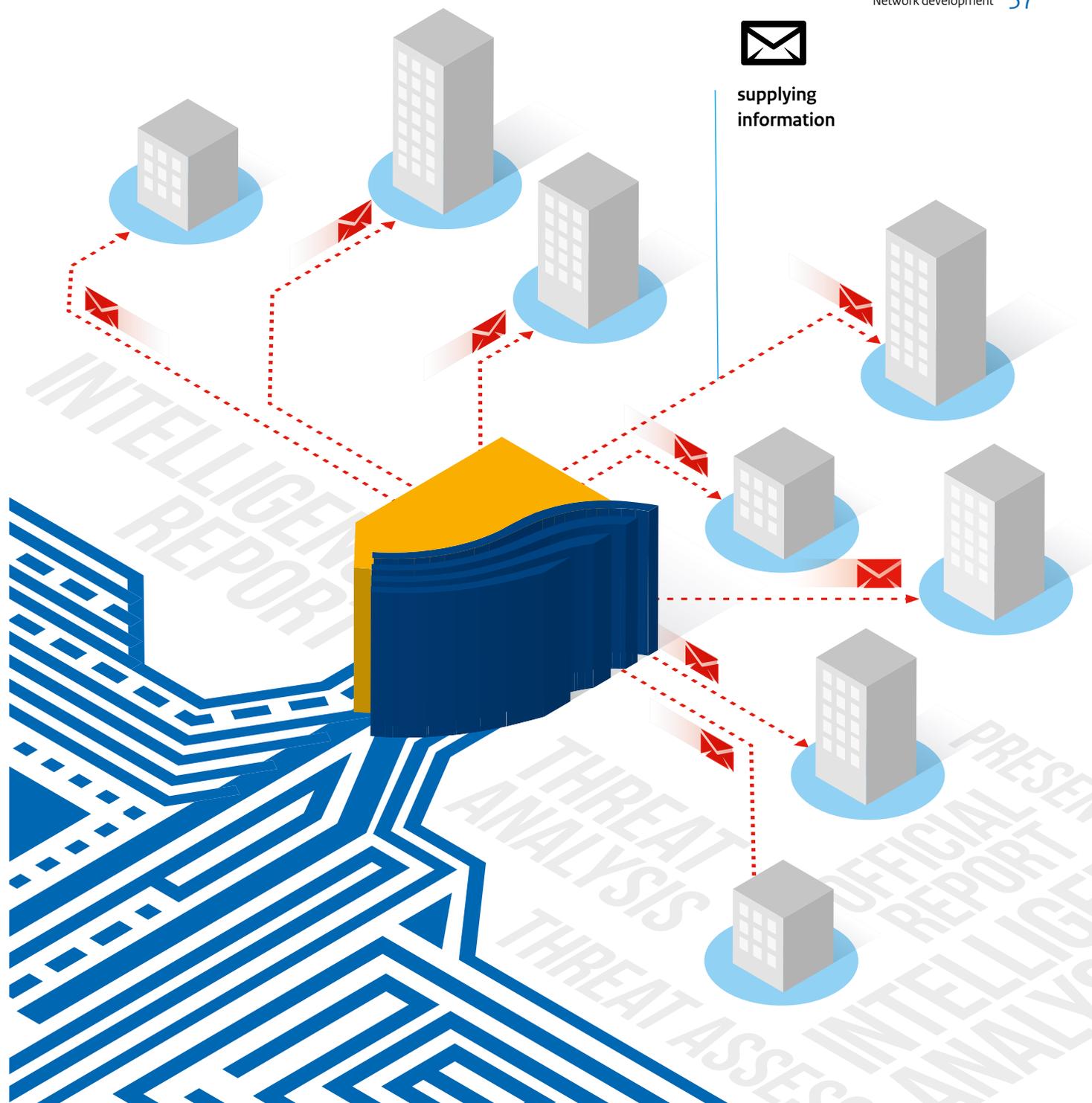
For and with partners

The AIVD maintains close contacts with its partners in the so-called “national security network”. Traditionally these partners are the Public Prosecutor’s Office (Openbaar Ministerie, OM), the National Police Service (Nationale Politie), the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, NCTV) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the network today also includes other ministries, the National Cybersecurity Centre (Nationaal Cyber Security Centrum, NCSC), various research centres and sections of the business community.

In recent years the AIVD has been increasing its efforts to build a wider external network. In this context, the service gave a large number of presentations in 2015 and held meetings with a range of partners, including ministries, mayors and companies, which are better able to do their job thanks to AIVD intelligence.

Relations with partner services abroad

The AIVD works closely with a network of partner services abroad, a set of relationships which enhances its contribution to Dutch national security. Conversely, shared Dutch intelligence helps to maintain international security. Not a day goes by when the service is



‘No European CIA, but cooperation is very close’

HP/De Tijd, 7 December 2015

not in touch with one or more of its international partners at the operational level.

Within Europe, the AIVD is an active member of the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG). This is a partnership of intelligence and security services from the EU member states, Norway and Switzerland. It is constantly seeking opportunities to further improve, extend and intensify mutual cooperation and the exchange of information – an effort it has redoubled since the Paris attacks of 2015. The AIVD itself has initiated the creation of a joint CTG database and the establishment of an interactive intelligence platform. These projects are to be refined during the service’s chairmanship of the group, which coincides with the Dutch presidency of the EU in the first half of 2016. The proposed platform should make it easier to pool operational intelligence within the CTG. At present, most of the information shared relates to terrorist fighters in countries such as Iraq and Syria.

A final word on oversight

A special ‘partner’ in the AIVD’s field of operations is the Supervisory Committee concerning the Intelligence and Security Services (Commissie van Toezicht op de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten, CTIVD). The committee remains fully independent in its reviews of the legal dimension of the service’s work, which is, after all, the primary task assigned to the CTIVD. Thus the CTIVD constitutes an essential part of the service’s oversight structure, as the authoritative public statements it issues regard activities that may be, by their very nature, secret.

In 2015 the Committee issued four reports on the AIVD’s activities and dealt with ten complaints involving the AIVD.

Colophon

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