

Recruitment for the jihad in the Netherlands

from incident to trend

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1 Introduction

1.1 Reason

In January 2002 two Dutch young men of Moroccan origin, who were living in Eindhoven, were killed in suspicious circumstances in the Indian state of Kashmir. An investigation of the AIVD revealed that they had been recruited in the Netherlands by radical Muslims and that they had been spiritually prepared to participate in the violent jihad. This was a probing sign that also Muslims of the second generation who were raised in the Netherlands are responsive to radical Islamic opinions and manipulation.

This memo will argue that the above incident is not an isolated fact, but that it has to be seen in the broader context of Islamic terrorism and the development stages which can be distinguished in this respect. The phenomenon of enlistment, also called recruitment, of Muslims in the western world for the Islamistic war, the 'jihad', is not new, but is becoming more important in terms of scope and significance. In the meantime some people have been arrested in the Netherlands upon indication of the AIVD, who form part of an international network of Islamistic fighters (mujahedeen). Several of them are suspected of being involved in the recruitment of Muslims in the Netherlands for the Islamistic war.

The investigation of the AIVD into the phenomenon of recruitment in the Netherlands has provided a better insight in the recruitment strategies of radical Muslims and Islamic organisations involved, in the international context in which they operate and in the underlying causes and mechanisms. In addition a lot of information and insights on this topic were exchanged with foreign security and intelligence services. This memo outlines the phenomenon of recruitment for the jihad in its broader context. The risks for the Dutch democratic legal order will also be discussed. At the end of the memo the most important findings will be summed up in a summarising conclusion.

1.2 Recruitment as a threat for the democratic legal order in the Netherlands and for the international legal order

The recruitment of Muslims for the jihad is a direct threat to the democratic legal order in the Netherlands. It shows that there are people in our society who harbour radical

Islamic, anti democratic opinions and who are also willing – or are approaching a willingness – to use violence, in order to fight or even destroy the so-called enemies of Islam. These enemies usually include the pernicious – according to them that is – western societies. This memo will indicate that there is a real danger that recruits for the jihad will also deploy their violent actions in the Netherlands in the future.

The fact that people residing in the Netherlands are involved in the recruitment of Muslims is also a threat to the democratic legal order in another way. Their presence and activities may have a radicalising effect on parts of the Islamic communities in the Netherlands and lead to increasing polarisation and confrontation between population groups. They also contribute to a negative image of Islam. In this manner they form a threat for social cohesion and promote the origin of ethnic-religious tension or even conflicts.

People recruited in the Netherlands who then travel abroad to participate in an ideological and military training elsewhere or in the Islamic war, are also a huge threat for the international legal order. In the first place they are a threat to the governments and people of the countries where they deploy their acts of violence. Secondly, these people may start dedicating themselves to encouraging members of Islamic communities anywhere in the world to support the jihad against the enemies of Islam and thus strengthen radicalisation processes. Also in view of Article 90 of the Constitution on the basis of which the Netherlands seeks to improve the international legal order, the government should do anything within its power to avoid that people recruited here actually do travel abroad to participate in or support the jihad.

The existence of the phenomenon of recruitment in the Dutch society also entails a whole range of other undesired and criminal activities. Think for example of the trade in false personal documents, false asylum applications, social security fraud, forbidden possession of weapons and fundraising, all on behalf of and for the benefit of the Islamic battle.

1.3 Definitions and demarcation

This memo frequently uses the term ‘Islamic’, for example as in Islamic terrorism and Islamic fighter. These terms are just a bit more accurate than the terms Islamic terrorism and Islamic fighter. An Islamic fighter could also be someone who strives for

the independence of his own ethnic group, and ‘accidentally’ also be a follower of Islamic belief. An Islamistic terrorist or an Islamistic fighter, on the other hand, deploys politically-oriented, violent activities which are specifically aimed at making sure that society matches his religious (i.e. Islamic) beliefs. An Islamistic terrorist is not a Muslim by accident, his Islamic belief and his strive to turn society into an exact reflection of what is mentioned in the original sources of Islam, become his essential reason for deploying terrorist activities.

The term ‘jihad’ or Islamistic war refers in the context of this memo to the deployment of violent activities against perceived enemies of Islam in order to achieve a world which is as pure as possible a reflection of what is thought to be mentioned in the first sources of Islamic belief – the Koran and the Sunna (the words and actions of the prophet Mohammed). Thus the term ‘jihad’ or Islamistic war is interpreted as is usual within radical Islam. The final objective of the jihad or Islamistic war is often the achievement of a global Islamic caliphate. Radical Islamic movements differ quite a lot in terms of to what extent a more or less modern government system, though always fully respecting Islamic laws and rules, is deemed acceptable.

We also want to further specify the term recruitment. ‘Recruitment for the Jihad’ is understood by the AIVD as spotting (looking for and detecting potential recruits) and then monitoring and manipulating people to achieve an internalised radical political-Islamic (or; Islamistic) conviction in these people, with the final purpose of having these people participate in the jihad in one way or another.

In the period that people are participants to such a monitored process, we may speak of recruits. However, it is difficult to say when this process exactly starts. That is quite understandable, because the recruiter does not explicitly agrees with the recruit that the first one is actually recruiting the second one. Recruitment is a gradual process to be completed by the recruiter with tact and subtlety. A recruiter would cut his own throat if he would let a recruit on that he is monitoring and manipulating him. Therefore the AIVD does not refer to them as recruits until the moment that investigation shows that the recruiter is clearly monitoring and manipulating, aimed at stimulating a willingness in the recruit to participate in the jihad.

The completion of the recruitment process is also difficult to define. We may assume that the recruitment process ends, when the recruit starts acting actively to either support or execute the violent jihad. The question is, however, if that is the case when,

for example, he travels abroad to undergo a training. In the military training camp he is still a recruit, but from that moment on he is monitored and manipulated by others. It seems more useful to refer to a distinction between recruits on the one hand and Islamistic fighters or mujahedeen on the other hand. Mujahedeen have had a military and ideological training, until recently often in Afghanistan, and have already contributed directly or indirectly to the Islamistic war. A recruit is not per definition a mujahid.

The phenomenon of recruitments in the Netherlands brings us, through people residing here, directly into contact with the Islamistic scenes of battle and terrorist activities. However, the Netherlands has had to deal in other ways with the direct participation of residents in political-religious conflicts and terrorist activities.

It has been clear for years now that different mujahedeen who settled in western societies, leave again to participate as fighters in political-Islamic conflicts, for example in Chechnya. Investigations of the AIVD over the past years have shown that several fundamental Muslims residing in the Netherlands have intended to leave for the Islamistic scenes of battle and have partially succeeded as well. There are indications that in the months following October 2001 a few dozens of Muslims left the Netherlands to go to Afghanistan and (or) Pakistan to fight there on the side of their Islamistic brothers against the United States and other 'enemies of Islam'. Quite probably these were fundamental Muslims who stayed in the Netherlands for a relatively short period of time and illegally.

A few years ago the Netherlands had already been confronted with Islamistic terrorists, who were supported in or from the Netherlands, in some way or another, in their preparation of a terrorist attack in western Europe. In that context several arrests were made in Rotterdam in September 2001 in relation to a planned attack in France. Previously, measures had been taken in the same context at the time of the European Football Championship in 2000. This memo will not pay a lot of attention to this aspect of Islamistic terrorism; this memo will address the phenomenon of recruitment of Muslims in the west – including the Netherlands – for the jihad.

2 Recruitment in the Netherlands: profiles and processes

2.1 Profiles

2.1.1 Profiles of recruits

The two young Dutch men of Moroccan descent mentioned earlier, who were killed in January 2002 at the Kashmir border, are a clear example of people recruited in the Netherlands for the jihad and who travelled abroad to undergo military and ideological training and (or) participate in the Islamistic war. It seems probable, as a careful estimate, that a few dozens of people are currently involved in a recruitment process in the Netherlands. How many of them are actually about to undergo ideological and military training or even participate in the Islamistic war is uncertain. The recruits which have been identified by the AIVD are men between 18 and 32 years old, who can be divided into three risk groups.

The first category are the so-called converts, born and raised autochthonous Dutch youths who converted to the Islamic belief and seem to grow towards a willingness to deploy activities in support of or participating in the jihad. This is probably a very small number of people in the Netherlands at the moment. The AIVD has not yet found indications that members of the international diffuse network of mujahedeen are consciously recruiting such fundamental converts for the jihad. It is more likely that we are dealing with a few inevitable exceptions, who are potentially very well deployable for the Islamistic war.

Several converts were internationally put in the spotlight because of their involvement in the Islamistic war, such as John Walker Lindt and Richard Reid. John Walker Lindt is an originally Christian US citizen, who was found in Afghanistan and appeared to be involved in the war against western countries. The Brit Richard Reid was overpowered in December 2001 when he was trying to make a bomb hidden in his shoe go off on a plane from Paris to Miami. Another convert was arrested in September 2001 in Rotterdam on the grounds of alleged supporting activities for a terrorist attack, which was supposed to struck Paris. This was an autochthonous person of French origin.

The second category is that of young immigrants who have only been in the Netherlands for a couple of years, who only recently obtained a temporary or not even an official residence permit and who do not master the Dutch language very well. On the basis of the current information available to AIVD we may say that the number of Muslims in the Netherlands meeting this profile and involved in a recruitment process is probably small. A few of these people are from Algeria and Somalia.

Even though they are as yet limited in number, the people fulfilling this profile may become a significant threat for western societies. Different people involved in the attack in the US on September 11th 2001 were recruited in the west, where they had only been residing for a short period. Also Nezar Trabelsi, the Tunisian who was arrested in Belgium in September 2001 on suspicion of preparing a terrorist attack in France or Belgium, can be described as a first generation immigrant recruited in the west.

The third category concerns youths who may be defined as second or third generation immigrants in the Netherlands. These are predominantly – but not at all exclusive – youths of Moroccan origin, born in the Netherlands or who moved to the Netherlands at a very young age. Most of them, with almost no exceptions, have the Dutch nationality. They speak the Dutch language well and have a bad or non-existent command of Arabic. Their level of education does not seem to be a distinctive criterion: some attended higher education, others did not. Even though the parents of several of these youths can be considered as pertaining to the orthodox part of the Muslim community in political-religious terms, the parents of others, are relatively liberal in terms of their belief.

Most of the people involved in a recruitment process in the Netherlands, belong to this last category. Carefully estimated, on the basis of the information currently available, a few dozens of recruits fulfilling this profile were present in our country over the past year.

In general this last category seems to be suffering from second or third generation problems, which have also become apparent in other aspects of Dutch society, most explicitly with Moroccan youths. These young people are often in search of their identity. They blame Dutch society for not having enough respect for their ethnic and religious community and not in the least for their parents and they themselves. Where

other foreign youths opt for a more liberal confirmation of their Islamic belief and attach a lot of value to their social development in the Dutch society and others end up in a criminal environment, these youths find something to hold on to in very radical Islamic beliefs. Former Islamistic fighters who guide them in a recruitment process, give them a sense of self-respect, involvement, brotherhood and identity. They feel that they are involved in a fight between good and bad, which guides them into a certain direction and provides answers to existential questions they are dealing with. For some Muslim youths embracing a radical Islamic faith signifies a clear break with their former criminal existence, a way of life they want to leave behind for good.

The second generation of immigrants involved in a recruitment process sometimes comes into conflict with their parents, even if they can be considered as part of the very orthodox part of the Muslim community. They reproach their parents that as Muslims they are not drawing the right conclusions from the situation they are in. In their opinion their parents, just like so many other foreigners in the Netherlands, mistakenly respond in a very passive manner to the fact that they are faced with political-cultural standards contrary to Islam and the fact that the west – including the Netherlands – ‘tolerates’ the Palestinian oppression by Israel and in fact ‘dominates and corrupts’ the whole Islamic world.

The general interest and sympathy for the Islamistic war against Israel, the US and the entire western world is in fact much wider spread among Islamic youths. Opinion polls after September 11th 2001 have also shown this. Therefore, (but not only for that reason) the chance that the vulnerability of Muslim youths residing in the Netherlands to be recruited for the Islamistic war will still increase is quite real. This risk applies particularly to young people of Moroccan descent, but others may also be attracted by a radical message. There are signs that for example Turkish youths also seem responsive to those ideas. In the future more children, members of these relatively new Islamic minorities in the Netherlands, will be at a recruitable age. There is no reason to assume that the second generation of immigrants of for example Bosnian, Egyptian and Somali origin will not have such identity problems, and will not present the same risks.

2.1.2 Recruiter profiles

Almost all of the people residing in the west who have performed recruitment activities over the past few years for the jihad, have a mujahedeen background. They underwent religious-ideological and military training, mostly in Afghanistan, and a few of them

have also actually participated in the Islamistic war. They vary strongly in age, from early twenties to over forty. Up to now it has always been first generation immigrants, who are residing in the west either legally or illegally. More often than is the case with Muslims recruited in the west, their origin lies in Islamic countries which are less represented, such as for example Mauritania, Libya, Algeria (we do have to mention that quite a lot of Muslims of Algerian descent are established in France for historic reasons).

The recruiters of Muslims recruited in the west who have been involved in terrorist attacks in the west over the past few years, have been able to enter into direct contact with radical Muslims in the Afghan region who formed part of or were connected to the Al Qa'ida organisation of Osama bin Laden. Therefore they have been able to send recruits directly to Afghanistan or Pakistan to undergo training there. Some recruiters have such contacts 'simply' because they built up a personal network during their stay in the Afghan region, and do not form part of Al Qa'ida themselves. They use these contacts for the Muslims they recruited on their own initiative, based upon their radical-Islamic missionary impulse. For other recruiters there are indications that they were explicitly instructed by Al Qa'ida to establish themselves in the west and to deploy recruitment activities there. In relation to some recruiters residing in the Netherlands there are clear indications that they form part of or are in close contact with Al Qa'ida. It is, however, not (yet) clear whether they got an explicit recruitment order from within that network.

Recruiters are people capable of generating admiration, respect and an image of wisdom and capable leadership in their environment. In the first place they are more admired by people who are not yet recognised as a 'brother' but who aspire to such recognition, to the extent that they say to have fulfilled a more important or heroic role in the Islamistic war. This does not mean that the recruiters openly flaunt their violent expertise and experience. In mujahedeen circles this is not only considered a safety risk, but also haughtiness: a good Islamistic fighter considers himself – at least in theory – just a tool in the hands of Allah.

The aura of wisdom is obtained by a recruiter among other things by the expertise in the field of radical-Islamic religious doctrine. This expertise is quite relative though. Recruits, especially second and third generation Islamic immigrants in Western Europe, usually have a limited knowledge of Islamic belief, therefore a recruiter can quite easily achieve a religious-political dominance. The image of a capable leader

furthermore seems quite related to the extent in which the recruiter has diverse functional contacts and is capable of arranging matters for other brothers.

Also recruiters who stay in the west illegally know how to become the help and stay of young recruits because of their social intelligence, their knowledge of the most radical-Islamic religious interpretation and the rules and regulations ensuing there from, as well as an extensive and functional social network and their own illegal activities. Even though the illegal status – and therefore the relative invisibility to governments – has certain benefits from a safety angle, a recruiter also strives for a more permanent establishment in the society he resides in.

A recruiter will welcome a prominent position in a mosque, also because this will strengthen his image and allow him to exert a bigger attraction on potential recruits. Such a position also gives him more possibilities to arrange matters for other brothers and recruits (logistics, material and financial), to monitor recruits closely in the early stages and to offer more facilities in the recruitment process.

In this context several recruiters who are illegally residing in the west are making an effort to get a residence permit. Some of them apply for political asylum, whether or not providing false personal data. However, if they do so they have to make themselves known to the authorities. If the application is refused, the continuation of their residence will be endangered. We do see that a strikingly large part of mujahedeen residing in the Netherlands, including recruiters, are married to an Islamic woman (or a woman converted to Islam) with the Dutch nationality. For a mujahid who is residing in the Netherlands illegally entering into a (fake) marriage with a Muslim woman who has the Dutch nationality is an excellent method to legalise his residence in the Netherlands.

Recruiters do not usually have regular jobs, because they usually do not have a residence permit. The guidance of recruits is also clearly their priority. A job will for some probably only be acceptable if they are not or only to a very limited extent faced with people who are 'kafirs', infidels, in their eyes. Followers of Takfir Wal Hijra, for example, call everyone who is not of the same radical-Islamic belief a kafir. The way in which these recruiters support themselves is not entirely clear. They need little money for their own support; they lead a quite sober life. A few of them get their income from trading false passports or telephone cards. There are also indications that the international diffuse network of mujahedeen provides financial support to cover the

living costs of recruiters in the Netherlands. Sometimes funds are raised in mosques for the explicitly mentioned purpose of a (former) Islamic fighter requiring money. If the collection provides more funds than needed by the fighter in question, the rest is often kept by the collector.

For the recruiters who are residing in the Netherlands illegally it is difficult to arrange independent housing. Therefore they sometimes stay in the same house with different other 'brothers' or radical Muslims, of course without being registered at that address. However, it does matter to a recruiter to have his own living space. If he does, he will be more able to host recruits in his home and even to have them stay the night with him, which increases his possibilities of monitoring the recruits. That is another reason why it is of great importance for a recruiter to get a residence permit.

2.2 Processes

2.2.1 'Spotting' and making contact

Former mujahedeen residing in the Netherlands who want to recruit for the jihad, will have to present themselves first of all to places where they can 'spot' potential recruits. The mujahedeen who are deploying recruitment activities in the Netherlands currently find themselves on the edge of the Dutch society. By means of an extensive and functional network and personal qualities they are able to provide support to other Muslims – including jihad veterans – who want to establish themselves in the Netherlands or who are merely stopping over on their way to somewhere else. They may lend a hand in finding (maybe temporary) housing or in obtaining false personal documents. Their position of help and stay for these new, often illegal people in the Netherlands strengthens their authority and does bring them new recruits in some cases.

Many other first generation immigrants who come to establish themselves in the Netherlands do apply for asylum. Many of them are moderate Muslims, some of whom seem to be drawn into a radical-Islamic environment during their stay in Dutch Asylum seekers' residence centres. On the other hand, moderate Muslims who establish themselves in the Netherlands illegally, are indeed very vulnerable, but they seem not to be drawn into a recruitment process so easily. Perhaps because these people are often older and not so impressionable and also because they are less easily 'spotted' by

recruiters. However, if they are seeking alliance with other Islamic communities and if they visit mosques known for their orthodoxy, which are also frequented by radical Muslims or former Islamistic fighters, the chance that they will be approached by recruiters increases.

There are several reasons why it is easier to arouse the interest of the second generation of immigrants in the jihad. Recruitment attempts seem to be most successful with people in their teens. The vast majority of second and third generation immigrants in the Netherlands belongs to this group. They are not only impressionable due to their age, they are also having trouble with their identity. Though some of them have problems because they engage in criminal activities, they are less preoccupied with basal personal affairs than young asylum seekers and illegal aliens in the Netherlands: second and third generation immigrants usually have the Dutch nationality, are often supported by their parents, attend school, have a job or an allowance and have a lot of time and possibilities to invest in their self-development. The corrective impact of parents and organisations on their activities is often quite poor.

Before a recruiter approaches a potential recruit in the Netherlands, this young person is probably already acquainted with or even sympathises with Islamic fundamentalism. The more orthodox mosque communities in the Netherlands usually employ an imam who is poorly integrated in Dutch society, they show a clear involvement in the situation in the Middle East and the fate of the Palestinian people and collect money for needy Muslims elsewhere – for example in Chechnya. Sometimes the building displays posters of Islamic NGOs (non-governmental organisations) which have been associated with the support of Islamistic war abroad.

Several youths visiting the orthodox mosque which is also frequented by their family, often share the same fascination for the Islamistic war. They watch jihad videos together and attend lectures, conventions and summer camps organised for them. They also participate in chat boxes on the internet, where the Islamistic war is often discussed. Sometimes they are joined by friends who do not come from an orthodox Islamic environment. The discussions on the internet also allow other Islamic youths to develop a positive stance towards radical Islam, quite independently from their parents and their direct environment, and to come into contact with youths participating in activities based on radical-Islamic opinions or who even organise such activities themselves.

All this means that it is quite easy for the mujahedeen to contact a group of second generation Muslim youths struggling with their identity and interested in or even sympathising with radical Islamic opinions via visits to more orthodox mosques in the Netherlands. Finding potential recruits is therefore relatively simple for the mujahedeen. All they have to do is join in in the prayers, conversations and activities to get in touch with these youths. However, 'spotting' is not just done in mosques. Islamic centres, coffee houses and especially prisons also seem to be suitable locations to establish the first contacts and to discuss the Islamic war. Muslim youths who are deprived of their freedom appear to display a striking receptivity for radical missionary enthusiasm. Therefore recruiters are remarkably active towards the existing prison population.

At this stage recruiters arouse the interest and admiration of potential recruits, for example because it is revealed quite quickly that they were involved in one way or another in the Islamic war elsewhere, by showing their knowledge of radical Islam in small circles and by acting as a guide at summer camps for Islamic youths. In some mosques the 'spotting' does encounter some difficulties, especially because recruiters do often not occupy a leading position. They operate in the margin of the mosque world, which may be a hindrance for establishing contacts with recruits and acquiring the image of a wise and capable leader.

In the interest of their recruitment activities the recruiters usually try to acquire a position in which they can leave their stamp on the mosque, for example by taking up a more prominent position. Examples of this practice can be found elsewhere in Western Europe, such as in the UK, where it has been going on for several years. The first stage of the recruitment process for the jihad, the actual 'spotting' is currently still taking place quite publicly, as well as making and intensifying the contacts. It is exactly in this stage of the recruitment process that the established Islamic communities could use their influence to provide a counterweight for the recruitments for the jihad. However, in practice it appears that they cannot or do not always want to recognise the nature and seriousness of this problem situation.

Therefore Muslim communities only have a limited ability to provide a counterbalance for the tendency of some amongst them who are glossing over or even approving of the use of violence based upon a radical Islamic conviction. Neither do they succeed in actually stopping all the recruitment activities of the mujahedeen in or outside the mosque. However, in a few cases known to us the mosque direction urged some radical Muslims to leave the mosque because of their explicit, very radical opinions. This,

however, is usually hushed up, because they are afraid that people will say that they are deserting brothers in belief or that they are sowing discord.

In the cases that the mujahedeen was requested to no longer visit the mosque because of their recruitment activities, several youths ended up choosing the side of the recruiters or in any case keeping in touch with them. This must be a very painful experience for the parents of these youths; parents who often visit the same mosque. These events show that some parents have little corrective impact on their children, which has also become clear in other aspects of the Dutch society. Therefore we must ask ourselves whether addressing the parents of Islamic youths in the Netherlands will be effective to refrain these youths from getting involved in the Islamic war. Parents of youths involved in the recruitment process do often not seem to know or to understand what goes on in the heads of their children and if they are informed, they have difficulties handling the situation. Even though young people do seem to respect their parents, the question is whether they will allow their parents to correct them: the criticism of youths in a recruitment process does often refer to their parents as well. They reproach them that, as Muslims in the Dutch society, they took stands and made choices witnessing of 'weakness' and inconsistency.

It is difficult to say as from which moment a person can be considered a recruit. A recruiter requires patience and social-psychological insight to gradually tighten his grip on the recruit and to be able to manipulate him towards a willingness to devote himself to the jihad. The recruitment process is a long process, that starts with making and intensifying the contact, in which the relation starts to look more and more like a recruiter-recruit relationship. Because recruiters have more impact on recruits than the other way around, it seems probable that the initiative for recruitment originates with a recruiter. If no mujahedeen would be staying here, there would undoubtedly be a lot less Muslims involved in a recruitment process.

However, the fact that several Muslims who are established in the west are recruited for the jihad, cannot only be ascribed to the presence of mujahedeen and their personal qualities and the methods of recruitment they use, but also to the fact that a part of the Islamic youth is obviously – and for different reasons – susceptible to recruitment for the jihad. Therefore, when acting against recruitments, it is not enough to simply deal with the recruiters. Also the circumstances that allow for the susceptibility of some Muslims living here for the radical Islamic line of thoughts, should be given the attention it requires.

2.2.2 Isolation and indoctrination

After the potential recruit has been ‘spotted’ and contact has been made, a period starts in which the grip on the recruit is tightened and in which he becomes ever more isolated from his social environment. The strategy followed to achieve this has all the characteristics of a religious sect, which tends to wrap up its followers in quite the same way. This process usually takes quite some time and requires clear personal qualities of the recruiter, more specifically psychological skills. The contact becomes more intensive and joint activities and meetings are taking place more and more often under the guidance of the recruiter and in a private atmosphere, for example in his house. At this stage the recruiter imparts the radical Islamic line of thoughts to the recruit and he internalises in him the conviction that participating in the jihad is an obligation for every Muslim and the martyr’s death is the highest obtainable objective. He tries to become the help and stay of the recruit in relation to questions of a theological and practical nature.

The knowledge of recruiters about Islamic belief is often limited and gives evidence of a strict interpretation, which puts aside any differentiation in the Islamic scriptures. In comparison to many second generation Islamic immigrants, however, they are real religious experts. The recruiter’s objective is not providing a differentiated image of Islam: the central message they want to convey is that the Islam is being pushed back in a defensive position by the enemy – especially the United States, Israel, Zionism and the corrupted west, yes, in fact by all non Muslims – and that a good Muslim should really be fighting for a just Islamic cause by means of the jihad.

During the meetings speeches of people like Abdullah Azzam (a famous mujahid who fought against the Soviet army in Afghanistan) and Osama bin Laden are listened to, and jihad videos are shown with often terrible images of mass murders and images of corpses of Islamistic fighters: the ‘martyrs’. At this stage of the recruitment process the recruiter is usually less modest about the role he played in the Islamistic war, both with the objective of strengthening his authority and of transferring his knowledge and experience onto the recruits. A recruit is sometimes assigned a jihad veteran as ‘buddy’ with whom he lives in the same house and spends most of his time. In this way the jihad can be a continuous source of influence and inspiration for the recruit.

2.2.3 Completion of the recruitment process

The completion of the recruitment process is marked by two important events. In the first place many recruits give their testimony for posterity as convinced Muslims, by saying goodbye to earthly life and making known that their deepest wish is to die as a martyr – ‘mujahid’ – in the Islamic war. This testimony may be recorded in writing, but also on audio or video tape. Such a testimony serves multiple purposes. On the one hand it strengthens the conviction of the person involved and after this testimony he will not be able to retract his intention to participate in the jihad without loss of face or honour. On the other hand it is a goodbye message to justify himself and encourage his relatives, as well as to motivate new recruits.

Secondly, the recruits have to undergo paramilitary training to prepare for their participation in the jihad. Until October 2001 this training often took place in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Participation in the jihad can mean participation in an existing violent conflict (e.g. in Chechnya), but may also mean involvement in terrorist attacks. Which people are ‘chosen’ to carry out Islamic terrorist attacks seems, in case of the (attempted) attacks in the west over the past few years, to have been decided by the Al Qaeda organisation and not by the recruiters in the west. In order to have his pupils undergo some kind of military training abroad, the recruiter can appeal to his extensive international network. This network offers support to let the recruit, often via detours, travel abroad. To this end the recruiter is provided with the financial means, the tickets and if necessary false personal documents. Coordinators forming part of or involved in the Al Qaeda seem to have been informed of the arrival of the recruits in advance.

2.2.4 Changes in the recruitment process since October 2001

Recent information seems to indicate that Muslims recruited in the west do not necessarily undergo a paramilitary training in the Afghan region before they can participate in the jihad. The Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan – which were often only very basically equipped – were almost completely destroyed after October 2001. It seems that paramilitary training is being organised for recruits in several countries often in a very provisional manner. In several western countries also recruits are physically and technically prepared in one way or another to participate in the jihad. There are also indications that people residing in the Afghan region who form part of Al Qaeda or are somehow related to the organisation, have informed recruiters in the

west that they should no longer send recruits to Afghanistan due to safety considerations. Instead they are asked to keep the recruits in the west and to prepare them there for violent actions.

Bearing these developments in mind we may expect the role of the recruiters in the west to become more important and more independent from Al Qa'ida. Recruiters will potentially not only have a bigger impact on the recruitment itself, but also on choosing the people who may undergo such training. There is a real chance that they will also start getting more impact on the decision of who may execute the terrorist attack, what such attack will target and how the attack should be carried out. Such a development also fits into the picture of the given fact that the Al Qa'ida organisation is increasingly working with autonomously operating cells. Such fragmentation of the direction and organisation of Islamic terrorist activities would decrease the supervisory and disturbing power of security services and judicial authorities.

3 Recruitment as part of an increasing Islamistic terrorist threat

3.1 Introduction

Looking back on the past decades we see a clear development in the direct threat of violence coming from Islamistic terrorist groups and networks towards the west, including the Netherlands. When at first we were dealing with a small, external threat of violence, which manifested itself almost exclusively somewhere else in the world, we can now speak of a threat of violence within western societies.

This chapter provides a more in-depth discussion of this development in the threat of Islamistic terrorism. We will argue that the phenomenon of recruitment in western societies is a new stage in an ever expanding mobilisation of members of Islamic communities, anywhere in the world, for the Islamistic war against all 'enemies of Islam'. This development in the threat of violence will be outlined by making a distinction in stages, which partially overlap in time.

3.2 First stage - national orientation

The first stage roughly refers to the period until the end of the eighties of the previous century. Until then Islamistic terrorist activities were almost exclusively deployed by nationally oriented groups. We were dealing with organisations such as for example the Egyptian Al Jama'a al-Islamiya (AJAI). The members of this nationally oriented groups were mainly stationed in their country of origin and they were mainly dedicated to realizing an Islamic state in the country of origin. The terrorist attacks conducted by these groups also took place almost exclusively in the country of origin. These nationally oriented groups formed only a very slight threat towards the west at this stage.

Since the end of the eighties several other nationally oriented, violent political Islamic groups have been established, such as for example the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) and the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC). However, these nationally oriented organisations started (in a more or less structured manner) to cooperate with radical Islamic groups and networks from other countries

(including the Al Qa'ida organisation of Osama bin Laden). They were no longer exclusively targeting the regime of their country of origin, but also Israel and the enemies of Islam in general. The violent activities they deploy are also partially taking place in the west, more specifically in France. These new groups are therefore, even today, a larger threat for the west than the old nationally oriented groups that did so until the end of the eighties.

An important exception during this first stage were the activities of the state of Iran. Therefore Shiite Iran fulfilled a clear exemplary function in the eighties for radical Sunnite Muslims. The Islamic revolution which took place in Iran in 1979 demonstrated that in modern times also a western form of government can be converted into an Islamic state. With several international activities Iran shaped its status as Islamic pilot country. Unlike the Sunnite nationally oriented groups in the first threat stage, Iran formed in itself, but also because of its impact on the Lebanese Hizballah, a direct, threat of violence for the west. Even today, Iran is still offering support to radical Islamic Lebanese and Palestinian groups in the Middle East for their violent war against Israel.

Even though there is still a threat of violence from Iran towards the west, since the end of the eighties Iran has no longer fulfilled an exemplary function for radical Sunnite people and groups. The main reasons for this development can be found in the Shiite belief in Iran, which is not so closely related to the predominantly Sunnite Islamic world and the – compared for example to Saudi Arabia – relatively limited financial and logistic means made available by Iran in support of radical Islamic groups and networks.

3.3 Second stage - international orientation

The outlines of the second stage started to take shape in the eighties. Muslims from different (often Arab) countries (often members or sympathisers of a nationally oriented Islamicist terrorist organisation prosecuted in their country of origin by the government) moved to Afghanistan and Pakistan. There they participated in or supported the armed resistance against the Soviet army that attacked Afghanistan in December 1979. Amongst these mujahedeen a feeling of mutual solidarity grew, based upon a common radical Islamic ideology and common (war) experiences. This gathering and common fight of radical Muslims of different nationalities was of crucial importance for the internationalisation of Islamicist terrorism. The strive for founding an Islamic state in countries with a predominant Muslim population, shifted to the strive for

conducting a jihad to the benefit of Islamic faith in general. The retreat of the Soviet army from Afghanistan in 1989 strengthened the confidence in an eventual victory.

Much more than the members of a nationally oriented Islamistic terrorist group, these internationally oriented mujahedeen strive for a recovery of the holy places of Islamic faith and the foundation of a world caliphate, which should cover the entire region where Islam once 'reigned'. In this context they deem violence against, especially, the following states necessary:

- 1 Israel, as ruler of a region which in the eyes of the mujahedeen rightfully belongs to the oppressed Palestinian "brothers" and as occupier of one of the Islamic sanctuaries, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem
- 2 The United States, as protector and ally of Israel and as symbol of "western imperialism" (both in terms of power politics and culture), especially since the US attacked Iraq in 1991.
- 3 Other western states, because from a political-cultural and military angle, they are, both independently and in cooperation with the US, contributing to the global threat and humiliation of the Islamic religious community.
- 4 Saudi Arabia, with the royal family, corrupted by the west, at the helm in the eyes of the mujahedeen, which is therefore considered an undesired keeper of two holy places of Islamic belief – Mecca and Medina.
- 5 Other states, especially those with a predominant Islamic population, who pay insufficient respect to Islamic laws and regulations.
- 6 The countries that formerly formed the Soviet Union, not just because the Soviet Union attacked Afghanistan, but originally because Communism is atheist and therefore anti Islamic and later because of the war in Chechnya and the problems in Central Asia.

The direct threat of violence of these internationally oriented mujahedeen towards the west, was relatively insignificant until the beginning of the nineties. In that period a lot of Islamic (often Saudi Arabian) non governmental organisations (NGOs) were already establishing themselves in the west, but possible violence-related activities by these organisations consisted mainly of a (quite insignificant) support of the mujahedeen in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The number of mujahedeen in the west was very small in that period. Islamistic terrorist activities against western objects or even in the west were not yet taking place.

3.4 Third stage - establishment in the west

The third stage of the development of the threat of violence towards the west develops at the beginning of the nineties. After the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan in 1989 and even more after the mujahedeen conquered Kabul in 1992, many mujahedeen left Afghanistan and Pakistan. They returned to their countries of origin, participated in new scenes of action for example in Algeria, Bosnia and Chechnya or applied for asylum in Western Europe. However, the alliance which originated between the mujahedeen in Afghanistan and Pakistan remained intact. Since then these Islamistic fighters form a diffuse network of internationally oriented radical Muslims and they often seem willing to provide some sort of support to terrorist activities.

The internationally oriented Islamistic fighters who managed to establish themselves in Western Europe since the end of the eighties, took up a very isolated and marginalised position. They could not really identify themselves with the Islamic communities that had been here longer. Over the years the international diffuse network of Islamistic fighters was further expanded. After 1989 several tens of thousands of Muslims still got paramilitary training in Afghanistan, an opportunity created by the Taliban regime. After this training they spread over several countries and also settled in Western Europe. This new generation of Islamistic fighters also became part of the diffuse network. Supporting activities deployed by people in the network gradually became more professional and extensive. The new generation of Islamistic fighters in Western Europe increasingly moved in the parallel society as an illegal alien,¹ but did, on the other hand, dispose of high-tech means of communication. They often provided support to other 'brothers', for example by providing them in a well-organised manner, with false personal documents, allowing them to move around (illegally). This expansion and more professional approach is continuing even today.

The threat for Western Europe caused in this stage by the international diffuse network of Islamistic fighters was mainly due to the logistic, financial or material support they provided (or tried to provide) while living hereto violent activities of likeminded people elsewhere in the world. The terrorist attacks conducted in this period by political Islamic groups in Western Europe, were mainly the responsibility of the aforementioned nationally oriented political-Islamic groups. An example thereof is the GIA; members of that organisation conducted several attacks in France in the mid

¹ A parallel society refers in this context to a system of informal social, economic and even cultural activities often unknown to the government, which are unsupervised and illegal, carried out by a fluid network of people, including people residing in western societies illegally, if only to support themselves.

nineties, which, as a former colonial power, they associated with the Algerian regime .

An exception – and in a way the first signs of the next stage – was the attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 1993. This attack could both be associated with the Al Qa'ida organisation of Osama bin Laden and with the Egyptian Islamic organisation Al Jama'a al Islamiya, and was therefore actually the first terrorist attack conducted in the west by the internationally oriented network of mujahedeen.

3.5 Fourth stage - association with established Islamic communities

Since the end of the nineties we may speak of a fourth stage. The Islamic fighters established in the west gradually crawled out of their social isolation. Not just the number of Islamic fighters living illegally in the parallel society kept on increasing; they were making more and more contact with the very orthodox or even radical section of the Muslim community established here since decades and became more explicitly present in Islamic institutions. As a result thereof the fundraising in Western Europe in support of the international jihad increased and the scope of Islamic terrorist activities elsewhere in the world increased.

The threat towards the west represented in this stage by violent political-Islamic groups and networks was no longer limited to the possibility of them supporting armed conflicts and terrorism elsewhere. The attempted attack by Ahmed Rezzam in December 1999 in Los Angeles was the first of a series of terrorist activities organised by the international diffuse network of mujahedeen, aimed against the west (though particularly the United States) and also actually conducted in the west. The Al Qa'ida clearly played a coordinating part in all this.

In the nineties Al Qa'ida both played an essential role in providing paramilitary training to Muslims and in facilitating and coordinating terrorist activities of international mujahedeen. In addition, Al Qa'ida started to support – and even coordinate – activities of the nationally oriented violent political-Islamic groups which have existed for a much longer time. The Al Qa'ida organisation also played a clearly instigating role in moving Islamic terrorist activities to the west.

The intended perpetrators of terrorist attacks in the west are not just 'fighters' flown in from the Afghan region or mujahedeen who have been here for quite a long time, but

more and more often they are people recruited in the west. It has been established that several people who participated in the execution of Islamistic terrorist attacks in the west over the past few years, were also recruited in the west, instigated by the Al Qa'ida organisation.

Since the end of the nineties first generation immigrants have been used in several (attempted) Islamistic terrorist attacks in the west; people who had not been here long or were here temporarily, but who were not supporters of the radical Islamic body of thoughts when they arrived. The most poignant example thereof are the September 11th attacks in the US. Men who were not originally radical Muslims, who spent some time in Western Europe, were recruited to commit a terrorist attack in and against the western world (in this case the US) driven by political-Islamic motives.

The fact that the Islamistic terrorist activity is extended to the west is actually not just Al Qa'ida's 'merit' but also of the members of the international diffuse network of mujahedeen established here. They are continuously faced with – in their eyes – totally perverted political-cultural aspects of the western society surrounding them and once again this confirms that the west is a real threat to Islam.

We can also see that the objective of the international Islamistic war has shifted in this stage. From striving to found an Islamic world caliphate, which should primarily be formed by countries that have had an Islamic majority for centuries, as well as fighting Israel and western countries that hinder that strive, the objective is gradually expanding to the complete destruction of all 'enemies of Islam' in general and the west in particular, which is considered more and more as an annoying obstruction in the strive for a pure reflection of the Islamic scriptures on this earth.

From an ideological angle the Wahhabi principles are winning ground among the members of the international diffuse network of mujahedeen – which in fact rejects the concept of a modern state, to the detriment of the Salafi line of thoughts of for example the Muslim Brothers, who mainly strive for the achievement of a rather modern form of government in which the Islamic laws and rules have to be observed. This Wahhabi, almost nihilistic anti western line of thoughts does not in the least meet with no response in the Islamistic fighters who are residing in the west and are continuously faced with values and standards that are – in their eyes – completely corrupted, as well as with a part of the second and third generation immigrants from Islamic countries, who reject the western society they live in for some reason or another.

3.6 Fifth stage - jihad in the west ?

At this moment we may say that the direct threat of violence of Islamicist terrorist groups and networks towards the west developed from a small, exogenous threat to a significant and structural exogenous and endogen threat for modern western societies. The Islamicist war has become international and has developed into a war against the west; a significant number of members of the international diffuse network of Islamicist fighters have settled and organised themselves here – whether or not in parallel societies – and (attempted) Islamicist terrorist attacks are increasingly taking place cross-borders in the west.

The fact that the mujahedeen established here seem to be capable of recruiting new people for the jihad, not just among first generation immigrants, but mainly among the second generation, means a further increase in the threat of Islamicist terrorism towards the west. A next stage would be reached if Muslims raised in the west are recruited, undergo their military and ideological training here and then consider Europe as a frontline, in other words, if they start committing terrorist attacks here. The first signs of such a development are already becoming visible. Even before the western powers attacked Afghanistan in October 2001 and destroyed the training camps there, people recruited in the west were already partially trained physically and technically in the west for their participation in the Islamicist war. The AIVD also has information that a few months after the western powers entered Afghanistan, the Al Qa'ida leadership advised not to send new recruits to the Afghan region due to the circumstances at that time, but to prepare them in the west for the execution of violent activities. Should this eventually lead to attacks in Western Europe, where vast Muslim communities exist, a further increase in ethnic-religious tensions and conflicts may be expected, including all harmful consequences for security and the democratic legal order.

3.7 Recruitment as a factor in the increase of the Islamicist terrorist threat

The outline provided in this chapter of the development of the threat of violence from Islamicist terrorism towards the west, shows that the phenomenon of recruitment for the jihad is not just a new modus operandi of the Al Qa'ida organisation, which can be studied and dealt with in an isolated manner.

Since the eighties a few tens of thousands of people have been trained in Afghanistan to become Islamicistic fighters and these people have spread all over the world, they have deployed activities on behalf of the Islamicistic war and have tried to win other Muslims for their ideas. The phenomenon of recruitment in the west should be seen as a new stage in an ever expanding global mobilisation of members of Islamicistic communities for the Islamicistic war against the 'enemies of Islam'. Recruitment for the jihad in the west also shows that Islamicistic terrorism is not 'just' an external threat, aimed against the west; the threat is also generated in the west and is characterised by ever more professional methods.

Therefore it can be expected that the scope of the phenomenon of recruitments will become more significant. The AIVD currently has clear indications that circles of recruiters and recruits in the Netherlands are deploying ever more professional initiatives to expand the number of recruitments in the Netherlands for the jihad and to optimise the guidance of recruits to paramilitary training camps or Islamicistic battlefields.

The phenomenon of recruitment shows once again that combating Islamicistic terrorism does not only require a major effort of the intelligence and security services, police and justice, but also requires continuous attention in other fields of policy, such as immigration and aliens and the policy of integration.

3.8 Recruitment as part of the polarisation process

The threat coming from Islamicistic terrorist groups is not only directly related to violence. The mujahedeen residing in the Netherlands who are deploying recruitment activities there, are also threatening the Dutch democratic legal order in another manner. They are determinedly having a polarising impact on the members of the Islamic communities established here and they are trying to achieve an alienation between the Muslims established in the Netherlands and the rest of the population.

This threat cannot be detached from all the rest. The polarising impact of the mujahedeen goes together with the continuous attempts of radical-Islamic people and organisations, inside and outside the Netherlands, to discourage the integration of citizens with a Muslim background in the Netherlands and to create a religiously defined contradiction between the Muslims residing in the Netherlands and their environment.

Radical Islamic people and groups from many countries seem to succeed increasingly in convincing not yet radicalised Muslims that the achievement of a society in accordance with the 'pure' Islam offers a worldwide solution for injustices in society. Their force does not lie in the fact that they can demonstrate that implementing Islamic laws and rules would solve all problems, but in appealing to the idea that the rights and interests of 'good' Muslims are violated over and over again – also in the west.

Concerning the regimes in the Middle East the radical Islamic ideologists do not have a hard time giving evidence of such injustices. It is generally about undemocratic, not very constitutional societies with a lot of socio-economic problems that offer their population a not very hopeful future and that are seeking – an partially getting – support from 'infidel' western powers in their struggle against radical Islam. In terms of the western societies they usually indicate the socio-economic deprivation of Islamic minorities and the discrimination that caused it. They also reproach the west that it tolerates the violence of Israel against the Palestinians (despite several UN resolutions) and that it is interfering in the Gulf region without the approval of the majority of the people in that region.

A further study indicates that it is in the interest of the radical Islamic leaders to keep ventilating such criticism on regimes in the Middle East and the Gulf region and on the liberal-democratic western societies. They benefit from emphasising these problems and the (actual or perceived) violations of the rights of Muslims. It is a conscious strategy to achieve the polarisation between Muslims and the 'infidel'. Once Muslims primarily express their identity in terms of religious and Islamic ideas, they reckon, they will be easily won over to accept the implementation of Islamic laws and rules.

In line with this idea we can also say that the attacks on September 11th 2001 in the US were not just a success for radical Islam because so many people were killed and the force of Islamistic terrorist groups and networks was demonstrated, but maybe a lot more because western governments – and at least a very significant part of the autochthonous population there – were successfully provoked to make generalising statements or even generalising acts towards Muslims and 'Islam'. The consequence of all this has been that the tendency rose in the Islamic ranks to close the ranks and that a new impulse was given to the hate or aversion towards the United States and western societies in general. A growing global polarisation may be the result, of which the Netherlands will inevitably get its share.

4 Conclusion

The phenomenon of recruitments in the west for the violent Islamic war forms an intrinsic part of a globally spreading radical Islamic movement. This movement strives for the achievement of a world order reflecting as literally as possible the affirmations of the Koran and the Sunna. In practice this strive comes down to propagating a simplistic and destructive theocratic concept of society.

The – growing – core of this movement executes this strive by provoking and fighting everything they consider to be an enemy of Islam. This core consists mainly of a diffuse network of several tens of thousands internationally spread Islamic fighters (mujahedeen). Several terrorist attacks executed by this network were orchestrated by the Al Qa'ida organisation, but this diffuse network also has its own dynamics. Mutual support of and cooperation between members of this network is mainly on an ad hoc basis and is primarily based on a shared enemy. Based upon blind religious zealotry the followers of this radical Islamic movement committed a series of bloody attacks which do not seem to be contained in any geographic, humanitarian and moral boundaries.

With the very consequent argument that a good Muslim does not make concessions to a credo and a concept of society deviating from what is said in the Koran and the Sunna, the movement is increasingly successful in overlapping the more moderate Islamic movements. The underlying objective to overthrow the global political, economic and cultural status-quo (as they see it), is therefore getting alarming response in non-western groups of the population. This cannot only be observed in the Islamic world itself, but also in a – still small – part of Muslim communities in the west.

The recruitments for the Islamic war which took place in the Netherlands over the past year, can therefore not be seen as mere isolated incidents. They are rather the first tangible illustrations of a tendency, closely related to a stealthy entrance of a violent radical Islamic movement in Dutch society, which is also taking place in the rest of the western world.

The outlined development is a significant threat for the Dutch society. People who can be included in this radical Islamic movement are positioning themselves explicitly outside and opposite the democratic legal order. They are not only willing to support or use violence if they deem it necessary to defend 'true Islam', they are also decidedly

trying to discourage the full participation of Muslims in Dutch society. By employing a strategy of provocation they are trying to drive a wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims. This provocation is mainly verbal, in the form of fundamental criticism on western society.

The Islamists involved are indeed aware of the “favourable” polarising effect of Islamic inspired violent activities. Such violent activities promote the prejudices of the Dutch population about all Muslims. As a result thereof Muslims also increasingly get the idea that they are alienating from the Dutch society and the chance that they become susceptible to radical ideas becomes bigger. It is the government’s task to avoid this. However, they cannot do this alone, but will have to work together with all moderate forces in the Dutch society, Muslims and non-Muslims.

Leidschendam, 3rd December 2002

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Basisvormgeving

Buro van Bergenhenegouwen, Den Haag

Grafische verzorging

Van Langen Drukwerk B.V., Rijswijk

December 2002