

Counter-terrorism

The role of GCSB and NZSIS



DEPARTMENT of the
PRIME MINISTER and CABINET

Te Tari o Te Pirimia me Te Komiti Matua

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CASE STUDY NO. 1

Terrorism is a growing international problem and New Zealand is not immune. Counter-terrorism is an important part of the work of the New Zealand Intelligence Community.

The Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) and New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) collect intelligence related to terrorist activity and, through their links with other security and intelligence organisations overseas, monitor movements of known terrorists around the world.

The strategic aim of New Zealand's counter-terrorism effort is that New Zealand is neither the victim nor the source of an act of terrorism, and that New Zealand plays an appropriate role in international efforts to combat terrorism.

The Combined Threat Assessment Group

The Combined Threat Assessment Group (CTAG) is an independent, inter-agency group located in NZSIS. It assesses terrorist and criminal threats of physical harm to New Zealanders and New Zealand interests. CTAG ensures assessment advice relating to these threats is reported to the appropriate domestic and international partners in an accurate, timely and relevant way, so the risk can be mitigated.

Case studies

There are individuals and groups in New Zealand with links to overseas organisations that are committed to acts of terrorism, violence and intimidation. There are also home-grown and self-radicalised individuals and groups.

Read about some real cases over the page.

Securing New Zealand from threats

- In 2015, NZSIS identified a foreign citizen on a NO FLY watchlist attempting to travel to New Zealand. NZSIS advised Immigration New Zealand who made further enquiries about the person and found he had served a prison sentence overseas for terrorism-related charges. Immigration New Zealand did not allow the person to board their flight to New Zealand, as their convictions meant they did not meet the character requirements of the Immigration Act. The information provided by NZSIS enabled Immigration New Zealand to make an informed decision, and manage the risk to New Zealand while the individual was still overseas.

- A foreign citizen in New Zealand was identified as being directly associated with people responsible for a terrorist attack overseas. The person had entered New Zealand under a variation of his name. NZSIS decided the person was a threat to New Zealand's national security because of this and their activities since arriving in New Zealand and they were deported for security reasons.

Combating international terrorism

NZSIS and GCSB also contribute to the international effort to combat terrorism by collecting intelligence related to terrorist activity and monitor, to the extent possible, the movements of known terrorists around the world.

- A New Zealand citizen based offshore had their passport cancelled by the Minister of Internal Affairs. This followed a classified briefing by NZSIS indicating the individual sought help from a jihadi facilitation network to enter Syria and engage in militant jihad alongside a terrorist group. The New Zealander was subsequently arrested and convicted by foreign authorities on terrorism charges.

- NZSIS identified a New Zealander who was in contact with someone in a European country. The two had discussed plans to meet in a third country in order to travel and participate in militant jihad. NZSIS shared this intelligence with the intelligence service of the European country. That country started their own investigation and discovered the European-based individual had obtained items that could be used to make explosives. The European-based person was arrested and charged with terrorism offences.

- GCSB intercepted the communications of a Syria-based affiliate of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This individual was providing advice to a New Zealand person on ways to enter Syria and join ISIL. This enabled New Zealand authorities to disrupt the New Zealand person's travel. In this way, GCSB complemented NZSIS capabilities by intercepting communications and conducting technical analysis of complex data related to counter-terrorism investigations.