



Bundesnachrichtendienst

„International terrorism seven years after 9/11“

Vortrag des BND-Vizepräsidenten,
Herrn Dr. Arndt Freytag von Loringhoven,
im Rahmen des *First Munich Young Leaders Round Table on Security Policy*
der Körber-Stiftung
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Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a pleasure for me to be here today and discuss with you the current situation of international terrorism. Let me focus on three aspects:

- the current threat situation and trends in international terrorism,
- strategies to combat terrorism including the role of intelligence services,
- some lessons learned since 9/11.

First of all, regarding the threat it is fair to say that over the past few years, international jihad terrorism has undergone significant changes. Al-Qaeda has evolved and adjusted its structure and tactics to a changed environment. Three distinct trends and developments can be identified:

- decentralization
- regionalization and the establishment of franchise groups
- development from an organization towards an ideology.

The number of terrorist activities centrally controlled by al-Qaeda has markedly gone down in the past few years. To an increasing extent, attacks are planned and conducted by autonomously operating groups. To a limited degree, though, operational control is still exercised by al-Qaeda. In still existing sanctuaries in the Afghan-Pakistani border region core Al-Qaeda has managed to maintain command structures established since the mid-1990s – albeit on a clearly reduced level. Clearly, AQ is still capable of conducting operations in Afghanistan. More doubtful is whether it is currently able to conduct operations beyond this area.

At the same time, a continued tendency towards the formation of al-Qaeda branches can be observed, namely Al-Qaeda in Iraq, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Presently the latter represents perhaps the most dynamically evolving AQ branch, potentially threatening Europe and European interests.

Also, the role of the inner leadership circle around Usama bin Laden has undergone a significant change after 2001: the operational-tactical orientation has been superseded by an ideological approach. The prime role of al-Qaeda today is that of a propagandist for “global jihad”. It inspires and motivates regional groups and local cells whose specific agendas thus receive a veneer of universality.

With the increasing application of modern means of communication, al-Qaeda consistently pursues the goal of mobilising adherents worldwide. In the Western Diaspora, al-Qaeda's propaganda campaigns in the Internet are an important instrument for the self-radicalisation of marginalized Muslim immigrants and encourage the recruitment of new jihadists. In addition, the internet is apparently used increasingly to prepare terrorist attacks.

Recently Germany has increasingly become the subject of video-messages of international terror groups. Since October 2008 a number of videos with German speaking protagonists and with reference to Germany were published. They aim at the recruitment of German speaking Muslims for global jihad, they also address German government and threaten to attack German Armed Forces unless they withdraw from Afghanistan. Clearly, Germany has moved into the focus international terrorism.

Generally speaking, the threat emanating from international terrorism has become increasingly diffuse. It is precisely this vague shape of international terrorism which makes it so difficult to identify points of attack and thus stands in the way of effective counterterrorism operations.

My second point is about strategies used to combat international terrorism. The causes and manifestations of international terrorism are extremely complex. Fighting terrorism needs to take this complexity into account and hence necessitates a comprehensive approach consisting of

- a) good intelligence,
- b) executive action by police and, if necessary, military means,
- c) political strategy.

Prevention is key, and here intelligence services have a paramount role to play. The collection of information at the earliest possible stage, when terrorist infrastructure and networks are starting to emerge and ideas of attacks are beginning to take shape, is among the priorities of most intelligence services, including the Bundesnachrichtendienst.

In Germany, there is a special situation in that our legal framework – for historical reasons - requires a strict separation between intelligence and police services. This means that both sides are not allowed to work under a common command. At the same time, the massive threat of international terrorism requires close practical cooperation of intelligence services and law enforcement authorities.

To overcome this dilemma, the so called Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (JCTC) was founded in 2004. In this centre more than 40 German securities agencies work together and share information on a daily basis.

Equally important is international cooperation between the different members of security community, since this is the only way to adequately address the transnational nature of terrorist activity.

Let me conclude with a reflexion on “lessons learned” since 9/11: We have seen that effective and pre-emptive action against terrorism is possible. Concrete successes have been scored. The relentless prosecution pressure exerted by the international anti-terror coalition and by national counterterrorist agencies has prevented the formation of a centralized command structure of global jihad. It hampers communication between individual terrorist groups and reduces access to safe havens and training areas. Numerous planned terrorist attacks have been foiled – including in Germany - and terrorist networks have been dismantled.

However, in spite all our efforts international terrorism remains one of the most serious threats to our security and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The overall threat situation has not significantly eased.

A very important goal is to develop our flexibility to adapt our strategies and instruments to the dynamic changes that occur in international terrorism. The increasing amorphousness of terrorist networks makes it necessary to shift the focus on to the correlation between ideology and acts of terrorism. Effective and pre-emptive measures against terrorism hinge on our ability to penetrate the minds of potential terrorists and to discern "what makes them tick".

At the level of politics and strategy, the underlying conditions which contribute to radicalization and ultimately to the recruitment of fighters for jihad need to be addressed. A successful counterterrorist strategy needs to go far beyond intelligence and police action. It must include instruments of foreign, social and development policies. Appropriate measures must be aimed at:

- supporting forces oriented towards dialogue in the Islamic world as a means of combating extremism at political-ideological level;
- preventing the emergence of lawless areas as a potential base for operations by terrorist organizations;
- within the Western world - avoiding the development of fringe societies through appropriate social and integrationist policies.

In the long term, the complex challenge of international jihad terrorism can only be met by an equally complex and comprehensive, “holistic” strategy involving the elements I have described. We must be aware that although measures designed to avert immediate dangers are essential and indispensable, the most important thing is to win the famous “hearts and minds” of the people in the Islamic world and to offer real prospects to young people who are stuck in a feeling of uncertainty and frustration about the future. I believe that a key factor for our success in this endeavour will be the credibility of our values. In other words: getting the balance of freedom and security right.

Thank you for your attention.