National Threat Assessment 2016

PST

POLITIETS SIKKERHETSTJENESTE

Introduction

PST expects that the threats to Norway and Norwegian interests in 2016 will continue to form a complex and varied picture. Assessing future threats will involve reviewing large quantities of unverified information from many different sources.

Events in other countries will also have direct and indirect effects on the security situation in Norway. Developments in the national threat picture are in other words difficult to predict. Unforeseen incidents may have far-reaching consequences, and developments may take an unexpected course.

Norway is situated in a part of the world with a tradition of resolving problems between states by political means. However, security policy developments over the last few years give cause for concern. A larger number of states are using their intelligence services in ways that could undermine or weaken our national interests.

State intelligence services cannot be prosecuted. On the other hand, Norwegian actors can do much to uncover, prevent and reduce the harm caused by such activities. In order for the security situation to continue to be stable, it is vital that the Norwegian state maintains its ability to control its territory and exercise its sovereignty.

With regard to threats from non-state actors, there are now, at the beginning of 2016, two factors in particular that could have major consequences. One depends on how far the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and possibly other terrorist groups will manage to carry out terrorist attacks in Western countries. We consider it possible that extreme Islamists will attempt to carry out such attacks in Norway in the course of the coming year.
Another factor that will affect the threat picture is the streams of refugees and asylum-seekers who have arrived in Norway and Western Europe and who may continue to arrive in large numbers in 2016.

Norwegian society is in general marked by a high level of trust. Norwegian citizens trust not only each other but also to a large extent the authorities, the police, the courts and the democratic process. This is a very valuable characteristic for a society to have, but it is not something we can take for granted. If the same degree of trust is to be maintained in the future, we must prevent polarising lines of conflict from developing in the population.

The Annual Threat Assessment is an assessment of expected developments in PST's areas of responsibility in the year ahead. The target group for the threat assessment is the Norwegian public, who wish for publicly available information about expected developments in the threat picture. In developing the assessment, PST has made use of information from a number of different sources, and collaborated with several other authorities, including the Norwegian Intelligence Service, the National Security Authority and the police.

Main points:

We consider it likely that foreign intelligence services will continue their extensive efforts in and against Norway in 2016. Their goal is to acquire access to sensitive and classified information, influence political, economic and administrative decisions, and investigate the possibility of sabotaging critical infrastructure in the event of a future conflict.

Foreign intelligence services will use all available means to achieve their goals. This includes encouraging, pressurising or threatening those of their own citizens who have access to sensitive Norwegian information to cooperate with them. Another tool used by these services is digital espionage, including network operations.

A number of countries will attempt to obtain advanced goods, services, technology and knowledge that can be used to develop weapons of mass destruction. We consider it likely that Norwegian companies and educational institutions will also be targets for such covert and unlawful activities.

We continue to regard extreme Islamism as the greatest threat, and it is possible that attempts will be made to carry out terrorist attacks in Norway in 2016.

It is difficult to predict what strategies ISIL and al-Qaida (AQ) will adopt in the future. If they decide to command terrorist attacks in Western countries, this could increase the terrorist threat against Norway. However, Norway is not among the most prominent countries in ISIL's and AQ's enemy image.

The threat from right-wing extremist milieus in Norway is increasing. The number of sympathisers who are not part of an organised milieu is also on the rise, due to mobilisation on issues related to the large number of refugees and asylum-seekers.

The growth in the number of right-wing extremists will increase the probability of violence. It is likely that there will be attempts to set fire to or otherwise sabotage reception centres for asylum-seekers. However, we believe that the threshold for carrying out acts of violence with intent to kill will continue to be high. The threat of terrorism from left-wing extremist milieus is expected to be lower and to remain stable.

Dignitaries will continue to be vulnerable to undesired incidents and in some cases threats in 2016. Negative utterances will not normally be followed up by action, but they can nevertheless create insecurity and fear.

State intelligence activity

Foreign intelligence services will continue to work in and against Norway in 2016. There are a number of factors that make Norway an interesting intelligence target. The country has rich natural resources and an important strategic location in the north, is a member of NATO, has technological expertise in a number of areas, participates in peace and human rights work and is at times engaged in various conflict areas.

Developments on NATO's flanks, together with the increased migration into Western Europe, growing instability and escalating competition between major powers in the south, are likely to continue to influence the Norwegian and international situation in 2016. Thus assessments, decisions and strategies on the part of Norwegian authorities and other Norwegian actors in a wide range of areas could affect the interests of other states in a positive or negative direction. This will mean that other states will make covert attempts to obtain information and seek to influence Norwegian decision-making processes.

Likely intelligence targets

There is a high level of intelligence activity in and against Norway, and state intelligence activity is not only carried out by countries such as China and Russia. However, we assess Russia's capacity for and intention to carry out espionage against Norway as having the greatest potential for harming Norway and Norwegian interests.

The activities of Russian intelligence services are partly steered by long-term Russian security interests. The areas of defence, security and preparedness in Norway are a target for these services, and our capacity in these areas is the subject of continual surveillance.

Our assessment is that the aim of these activities is to facilitate Russian military dispositions in a future security policy scenario. The results of such intelligence activity could therefore ultimately threaten key Norwegian interests and Norway's control over its own territory.

Foreign intelligence services will also seek to obtain information about and influence important political decision-making processes.

This means that ministries, their subordinate agencies and other organisations are vulnerable. A number of states also use their intelligence services as a means of strengthening national business development and competitiveness. If they succeed, these efforts will harm Norway and Norwegian interests. The activities include covertly obtaining information that will enable foreign interests to steal a march on Norway and Norwegian actors, covertly exerting influence to ensure that Norwegian decisions are in accord with the interests of the foreign state, or covert manipulation or sabotage to interfere with Norway's decision-making processes and crisis management capacity.

The High North, including Svalbard, is an important region for Norway and Norwegian policy. Other countries also have interests and ambitions in the north and make active efforts to strengthen their political influence and secure their current and future business interests. The authorities in a number of countries make active use of their security and intelligence services to further these ambitions, in political arenas and cooperation forums, research projects, natural resource-related issues and commercial activity. This intelligence activity is often interwoven with or concealed in open, legitimate activities. Experts and visiting delegations from the business or the public sector are often tasked by their respective countries' security and intelligence services with collecting information, and efforts are made to recruit individuals with Western backgrounds. Intelligence activity in the High North is a threat to Norwegian interests since it attempts to weaken the Norwegian Government's political freedom of action and damage our commercial and natural resource-related interests.

It is highly probable that the intelligence services of several countries will continue to focus on Norway's petroleum activities in 2016. Experience has shown that technological developments and infrastructure, strategies and investment, clients and cooperation partners, and developments in supply, demand and prices are priority intelligence targets. Other targets in addition to private-sector companies and enterprises will be public institutions with relevant information and decision-making authority.

Some states' intelligence services monitor exiles and critics of the regime from their own country who have fled to Norway. Political refugees may be contacted and subjected to pressure and in some cases also threats. Some states also use their intelligence services to attempt to influence the Norwegian authorities to limit the freedom of expression of political refugees in Norway.

Intelligence services' methods of operation

A number of foreign states have intelligence personnel operating in Norway. These are mainly officers posted to Norway in a diplomatic capacity at the foreign embassy or consulate. Their main task is to establish relations of trust with individuals who can provide sensitive information. The possibility of using this traditional method of obtaining information based on personal relations is assessed as being more limited now than formerly, due to the changes in the security picture in Europe and a greater awareness among intelligence targets. Foreign intelligence services have therefore strengthened their technological capacity so that they can use it primarily for obtaining information from sensitive but often unprotected communication platforms.

Today, increasing numbers of citizens from states with which Norway does not have any security cooperation work in sectors where

they have access to sensitive and classified information, such as national computer systems. PST has received a number of reports of such citizens being subjected to threats and pressure to cooperate with the security and intelligence services of their countries of origin. If these services manage to persuade such persons to cooperate, we regard this as a highly effective intelligence method that has the potential to inflict considerable damage on Norwegian interests.

Certain intelligence services work very actively and make use of all available tools to achieve results. This includes extensive use of operations to spread information and propaganda and influence opinion in other countries, with a view to weakening confidence in the authorities of the target state or sowing division between population groups or regions. Such methods are used particularly in periods of security policy tension, and Norway should be prepared for this eventuality.

Digital espionage has become an integral part of the activity of foreign intelligence services, and is extensively used against Norway and Norwegian interests. Digital espionage is also cost-effective and yields high returns in terms of intelligence. Network operations can compromise and harm fundamental national interests. We are concerned that enterprises, which manage major assets are not taking this threat seriously enough, and that a weak security culture and a lack of security expertise are causing this vulnerability to persist.

Digital espionage also involves mapping communications and information infrastructures in order to mount cyber operations against them. Computer equipment and software can be infected and manipulated for purposes of interception and sabotage. The intelligence service may also make use of suppliers, service personnel and disloyal employees to install such malware. Cyber-attacks enable foreign intelligence services to strike without warning at critical infrastructure, which could potentially inflict enormous damage on the Norwegian state and Norwegian society.

In our view, traditional intelligence gathering in the form of mapping civil and military infrastructure and employees, particularly in the defence and emergency preparedness sectors will continue in 2016.

Advanced weapons development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

International procurement intended for weapons of mass destruction and advanced weapons development are a threat to the interests of Norway and its allies. We will support measures to prevent countries of concern from developing such weapons or strengthening their military capacity through unlawful procurement. It is also possible that in the future attempts will be made by non-state actors to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Until 2015, Iran was regarded as the main actor behind procurement activity. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed between P5+1 and Iran is intended to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme is civil in nature. However, exports of goods, technology, services and knowledge that are relevant to the development of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery are still regulated by the export control regime.

A number of countries in Asia and the Middle East are making covert attempts in Europe to procure goods for their own national programmes for weapons of mass destruction or

advanced weapons development. Private actors and educational institutions are also supporting covert procurement. These are often part of a larger international procurement network that cooperates on circumventing Norwegian and European export control.

Unlawful procurement activity may take sophisticated forms. Enterprises involved in such activity are rarely aware of their involvement because the buyer and end user appear credible. For example, consignments may be routed through several countries in order to conceal the final destination. Procurement actors attempt to conceal the real end-user and the intended use of the product or technology. Front companies, often with European names and websites in European languages, are sometimes used to provide the buyer with a credible identity. Such companies often use offensive tactics. Some procurement actors request shipping agents to conceal information about the final destination from the exporter and the authorities.

Covert procurement activity is directed towards a wide range of goods and technology from different commercial sectors. Both large and small companies may be targeted, but experience has shown that smaller companies that deliver high-quality niche goods and technology, companies involved in the defence industry and suppliers of high-quality products to the oil and gas industry are particularly targeted. Procurement activity is also often directed towards goods and technology with both civil and military application, also known as dual use goods that are subject to licensing under the Norwegian Export Control Act.

Countries of concern are also interested in goods and technology that are not subject to licensing and that can be used in weapons of mass destruction and advanced weapons development. These often have technical specifications that fall just short of the threshold at which goods are subject to licensing. Used goods that may or may not be subject to licensing, are also in demand.

The unlawful supply of such goods and technologies from Norway to counties of concern may have extremely negative consequences. It could harm the reputation of Norwegian authorities and companies and make Norwegian goods and technology less attractive to established, reliable trading partners.

Expected increase in knowledge transfers related to weapons of mass destruction and advanced weapons development

Countries of concern are interested in knowledge in various areas of technology for use in the development of advanced weapons and weapons of mass destruction. A number of these countries are working over the long term to ensure national expertise in these fields. They send their own students and researchers to other countries to enable them to acquire technological expertise that can later be used in developing weapons of mass destruction and advanced weapons development programmes.

Norwegian higher education and research institutions must expect to be misused for unlawful knowledge transfers in the years ahead. Such institutions have an independent responsibility to assess the extent to which the knowledge they produce and teach is relevant to the development of weapons of mass destruction or advanced weapons development.

Extreme Islamism

We continue to regard extreme Islamism as the greatest terrorist threat to Norwegian interests, and consider it possible that in the course of 2016 attempts will be made to carry out terrorist attacks against targets in Norway. ISIL has repeatedly threatened Western countries and encouraged sympathisers in these countries to carry out attacks.

Since the first time ISIL encouraged attacks against the West in September 2014, there has been a marked increase in the number of terror-related incidents in Western countries. Several previous attacks in the West have been carried out by persons who have no experience as foreign fighters but who identify with ISIL. It is therefore a matter of concern that Norway has become part of the enemy image of ISIL sympathisers in this country.

We continue to regard attacks with simple weapons or on symbolic targets as the most likely scenarios for an attempted attack in Norway, and believe that there is a lower risk that random civilians will be the target of such an attack. Spontaneous attacks will have limited effects and involve short-term preparations and a minimal degree of planning. This considerably reduces the possibility of warning about and preventing attacks.

It is difficult to predict future developments, and changes due to national or international factors may occur at short notice. Incidents in Norway that lead to polarisation, and threats and encouragement from international groups can influence individuals or small groups to carry out a terrorist attack. If ISIL or AQ decide to command attacks in Europe in the coming year, the terrorist threat could increase in Norway. However, the present situation and further developments in other European countries will not necessarily apply to Norway. Nor is Norway among the most prominent countries in ISIL's or AQ's enemy image.

Ideology and enemy image

We consider that the largest and most important group of actors who present an Islamist threat to Norway in 2016, as in previous years, consists of individuals who are inspired by ISIL and to some extent also AQ. These actors have a complex, multifaceted enemy image. All those who differ from the extremists' interpretation of Islam, politically, ideologically or in terms of religion, are defined as infidels and therefore regarded as enemies. Both ISIL and AQ intend to wage a global resistance war against what they regard as a Western conspiracy against Muslims and Islam. Thus the West, including Norway, is

part of their enemy image, and is regarded as a legitimate target by both groups.

However, ISIL has a more uncompromising ideology than AQ. It differentiates more sharply than AQ between believers and infidels, and emphasises the duty of ISIL followers to wage war on the enemy by violent means. This division runs along religious, ethnic and sectarian lines, and has intensified the conflicts in Muslim countries. It is possible that such differences will also come to light in Norway in 2016, inspired by hate speech and episodes of violence perpetrated by ISIL followers against certain Muslim groups. We believe that Kurds and Shia Muslims, and those regarded as apostates, are likely to be vulnerable.

In 2016 there will continue to be Norwegian extreme Islamists who support ISIL's self-declared caliphate in Iraq and Syria and who regard the proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as their legitimate leader. The gross violations in Iraq and Syria, and ISIL's responsibility for international terrorist attacks and its place on the UN list of terrorist organisations, have not changed this situation. At present ISIL's actions are praised and defended by certain Islamist groups in Norway, and the organisation has become a unifying symbol. This situation is likely to persist, even if ISIL should experience large military setbacks in Iraq and Syria.

Organisation and recruitment

We do not consider that the extreme Islamist milieus in Norway will become more united during 2016. They have been weakened by the imprisonment of foreign fighters and the greater number of deaths among them in Syria in the last year. Although the multi-ethnic milieu in Oslo and South-Eastern Norway is still the most influential, there are milieus and networks throughout the country with extreme Islamist sympathies. However, cooperation between these milieus is limited and random. There are also individuals on the margins of known milieus, and individuals who have undergone a radicalisation process on their own. It is difficult for PST to identify such persons, and there are hidden statistics. The majority of members of these extremist milieus are men, but there are some women who sympathise with them and help to radicalise others. Their activities are mainly targeted at other women, and their presence and activities do much to legitimise the ideology of these milieus.

The organised milieus are probably the most important driving forces of radicalisation and recruitment. The most likely targets for these efforts are individuals with a weak identification with Norwegian society. Radicalisation in Norway is supported by the stream of propaganda produced by ISIL and globally distributed through social media. The propaganda makes use of language, symbols and audiovisual tools that appeal particularly to young people. Social and political phenomena are interpreted in an extreme Islamist context, with a strong focus on perceived enemies who have insulted Islam. The rhetoric is categorical and apocalyptic, and no attempt is made to promote a realistic, feasible political agenda for social change in Norway.
It seems probable that these milieus have become more security-conscious and try to avoid exposure. The trend has become more pronounced since the imprisonment and prosecution of a number of returned foreign fighters during the past year. There have been few public demonstrations by the milieus, and they tend to use personal contact and social media. Increased use of closed social forums and encryption tools has been observed.
It is likely that attempts will be made in 2016 to recruit and radicalise asylum-seekers. Such

attempts may be made by networks with connections to Norway or by other asylum-seekers who sympathise with or have links to ISIL, AQ or other militant Islamic groups.

In the short term, asylum-seekers connected with extreme Islamism are not considered to present any major threat to Norway and Norwegian interests. Nor is there any indication at the beginning of 2016 that Norwegian asylum has been misused by ISIL or AQ to send persons intending to commit violence to Norway. However, this situation may change, depending on the strategy ISIL and AQ decide to use. In the long term, radicalisation and recruitment of asylum-seekers could have serious consequences for the threat picture.

Foreign fighters

Foreign fighters belonging to ISIL in Syria and Iraq have a high status in extreme Islamist milieus. We consider it likely that individuals from these milieus will continue to try to recruit foreign fighters in 2016. Such activities were carried out throughout 2015, to some extent combined with propaganda activity and fund-raising. The funds may go either to Norwegian foreign fighters or to international terrorist and insurgent groups. Such activity takes place throughout the country, but mainly in the multi-ethnic network in Oslo and southeastern Norway.

In spite of these activities, it is possible that the number of active foreign fighters will decrease somewhat in the course of 2016, for two reasons. Firstly, it is more difficult for groups in Norway to recruit foreign fighters. This is due to the fact that the milieus have become more security-conscious in their recruitment efforts and that national counter-measures, including prosecution, are believed to have an effect.

Secondly, the military operations against ISIL are deterring potential recruits from travelling and are causing more deaths among foreign fighters. At the beginning of 2016 there were about 40 Norwegian foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, mainly linked to ISIL. A small number of them are women, who probably do not take part in the fighting but participate in the radicalisation of women in Norway. In addition, we know that about 30 persons have returned to Norway, and at least 17 have been killed.

Individuals who become foreign fighters do not necessarily intend to return to Norway to carry out terrorist acts. However, they may still present a threat if they disseminate extremist propaganda targeted at individuals at home, or work to enable other individuals and networks to perpetrate terrorist attacks in Norway. While in Iraq and Syria, Norwegian foreign fighters may also form ties with international terrorists who intend to attack targets in the West. This has become of greater concern since the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, and will influence the European threat picture in 2016.

In 2015 a number of returned foreign fighters were investigated, and some were sentenced. Prosecution will continue in 2016, as ongoing cases are decided and new cases brought to trial. Prosecution is likely to have a deterrent effect on some individuals who are considering travelling to the areas in question. In addition, returned foreign fighters are temporarily outside these milieus because they are in custody or in prison. Other individuals will not be deterred by the threat of punishment, and for some of them society's response may have a radicalising effect. However, the effect will also depend on how far society manages to facilitate rehabilitation and prevent radicalisation in prison.

Right-wing extremism

The terrorist threat

We consider the threat from right-wing milieus to be increasing. The asylum issue is fuelling right-wing activity, radicalisation and recruitment. On the other hand, right-wing extremism poses a lower risk of terrorism than extreme Islamism. This is because the milieus continue to suffer from poor organisation, internal conflicts and constant changes in leadership, and there is no significant external ideological agent corresponding to ISIL or AQ. The threat from right-wing extremists comes therefore primarily from lone actors and small groups in or outside the milieus.

Several reception centres for asylum-seekers in Norway were subjected to arson or other acts of sabotage in 2015. It is considered likely that further action will be attempted against these centres in 2016. A number of individuals from extremist milieus have the capacity to carry out serious acts of violence, but the threshold for committing acts that involve killing is probably high. Any right-wing violence will probably be the result of personal initiative on the part of individuals or small groups. Although acts of violence will be primarily directed at immigrants, confrontations with left-wing extremists may also occur.

Ideology and enemy image

The increasing number of asylum-seekers entering Norway is and will probably continue to be an issue that mobilises right-wing extremist milieus in 2016. The right-wing extremist enemy image may also have a stronger focus on Norwegian authorities in the coming year. However, it is unlikely that these milieus will manage to become a unified group because they have no common ideology. They spread conspiracy theories and claim that immigrant groups plan to take over, alter or destroy society. The authorities are accused of being in league with the enemy or of failing to take the necessary counter-measures. Hatred of the authorities and lack of confidence in democracy are therefore widespread in these milieus.

Organisation and recruitment

Norwegian right-wing extremist milieus will probably grow and become more active in 2016. This will be mainly due to mobilisation around the growing numbers of asylum-seekers. However, these groups still consist mainly of unorganised, loosely linked networks spread throughout the country.

Over the last year, right-wing extremist propaganda and hateful utterances on the Internet have been increasing. Many of those who make such public utterances do not start out as members of an organised group, but

certain websites are potential radicalisation arenas. Some of these have several thousand followers, and some extremist utterances are widely disseminated. In the long term, a growing number of sympathisers will also increase the risk of violence.

The organised right-wing extremist milieus will probably attempt to radicalise and recruit more members in 2016. Their propaganda is disseminated throughout the country, mainly through the distribution of flyers and posters. Individuals or small groups are usually responsible for distribution, acting on behalf of a more centralised leadership. More prominent actors in other countries, mainly in northwestern Europe, also play an important role as leaders and instigators of action in the Norwegian milieus. Security-consciousness among these actors means that communication is to an increasing extent encrypted or takes place in closed chatrooms on social media.

It is highly probable that right-wing extremists in Norway will take part in public demonstrations in 2016. In the last few years these individuals have regularly joined demonstrations on issues that preoccupy them. Right-wing extremists have also tried to sabotage demonstrations in a number of other European countries in order to promote their own agenda, and it is possible that such extremists will try to do the same in Norway in 2016.

Foreign fighters

Right-wing extremists in Norway have shown little interest in the conflict in Ukraine, so that we consider it unlikely that this conflict will play a central role in the threat from the Norwegian milieus. A few European extremists, including some Norwegians, have travelled to Ukraine, where they have joined either the pro-Russian insurgents or Ukrainian militias. It is possible that some of these individuals now have the intention and the capacity to carry out violent attacks in Norway. They have probably also established networks with right-wing extremist milieus in other countries.

Norwegian foreign fighters or foreign right-wing extremists may attempt to recruit individuals with whom they have contact in Norway to the conflict area. However, unless the conflict acquires a clearer ideological basis, it is unlikely in our view that the number of right-wing foreign fighters from Norway will increase.