

2021 Terrorism Situation

Global Situation

- The global terrorism situation remained heightened and complex throughout last year despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Violent extremists motivated by various ideologies conducted attacks in different parts of the world to pursue their agenda.
- International terrorist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaeda continued calling upon followers to stage attacks against their enemy states. Last year, a number of “lone-wolf” attacks featuring simple weapons, such as knives and arrows, were reported in several Western countries including France, New Zealand and Norway.
- Symbolic or significant dates remained preferable timing to stage attacks so as to maximize impact and casualties. Attacks of such kind included a church bombing in the South Sulawesi province of Indonesia during Easter, and the taxi bombing in Liverpool on the UK’s Remembrance Day.
- Moreover, state leaders and government officials were commonly targeted by violent extremists who sought to undermine or revenge the authorities. In October, a member of the UK Parliament was stabbed to death during an open event. During Christmas, assassination plots targeting Queen Elizabeth and the US President were respectively reported in the UK and the US.
- Apart from religious extremism, radicals driven by other extremist ideologies also staged numerous deadly attacks, which included a vehicle ramming attack conducted by an Islamophobic perpetrator in Canada in June, a shooting attack inspired by a mixture of far-right and incel beliefs in the UK in August, and a shooting attack arising from anti-epidemic measure sentiment in Germany in September.

Local Situation

- In Hong Kong, all must remain vigilant for domestic terrorism given that local extremists have transformed their violent campaigns into underground and clandestine activities.
- On the anniversary of the establishment of HKSAR, there happened the first “lone-wolf” attack in Hong Kong. An on-duty police officer in Causeway Bay was seriously wounded by a suspected self-radicalized knife-wielding man, after which he committed suicide by stabbing himself.
- In July, the police foiled the bomb plot of a local extremist syndicate, whose members were planning to inflict mass casualty to members of public by planting explosive devices at different major public facilities.
- Throughout the year, there happened multiple cases of firearm and ammunition seizures, highlighting that local extremists retained capabilities in acquiring deadly weapons for illicit purposes.

Conclusion

- At present, the overall terrorist threat facing Hong Kong remains **"MODERATE"**, meaning that there is a possibility of an attack, but there is no specific intelligence suggesting that Hong Kong is likely to be a target.
- In the coming year, the Inter-departmental Counter Terrorism Unit (ICTU) will continue to proactively coordinate counter-terrorism efforts among its member departments and other relevant stakeholders in public and private sectors.
- More crucially, support and participation of the public are of paramount importance in keeping Hong Kong safe. Hence, ICTU will continue to enhance public education and publicity, with a view to strengthening public awareness and reinforcing a “whole-of-community” approach in counter-terrorism.



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