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(Beath, L., 2012)

## Story: Terrorism and counter-terrorism

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#### Geographic isolation

Geographic isolation provides New Zealand with some level of protection against terrorism. Arguably, New Zealand's physical remoteness makes it less vulnerable to acts of terrorism than many other countries. New Zealand may be less at risk of mass casualty attacks than countries such as the US, the UK and other Western powers that are perceived by groups such as Al Qaeda as being 'enemies' of Islam or supporters of governments in the Middle East that such groups wish to see overthrown.

Nonetheless, New Zealand recognises that it is not immune to terrorist attack. It is for this reason, as well as the need to support the rule of international law and good order, that New Zealand supports the work of the United Nations and other international organisations in countering terrorism.

#### The 'anti-terror' raids

On 15 October 2007 armed police carried out raids throughout the North Island, arresting 17 political activists. During the raids the small Tūhoe Maori community of Rūātoki was completely closed off. Police

#### Counter-terrorism capabilities

New Zealand invests significant resources in building and maintaining its own counter-terrorist capabilities. In the early 2000s police responsibility for counter-terrorism was held by the Special Tactics Group (STG). Formerly known as the Anti-Terrorist Squad, the STG was the full-time tactical and counter-terrorist group of the

claimed they had arrested participants in a terrorist training camp in the Urewera region. The solicitor general turned down police requests to charge those arrested in the October raids under the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002. In September 2011 firearms charges were dropped against 13 of the defendants. In February 2012 four stood trial on various charges, including firearms charges and belonging to a criminal group, but were convicted only on firearms charges. The case remains controversial, as some members of the public claim that police used the fear of terrorism to suppress genuine political dissent.

## Ahmed Zaoui

In December 2002 Ahmed Zaoui arrived in New Zealand on a false passport and asked for refugee status. Zaoui, an Algerian academic, had fled Algeria following a military coup. He was detained on the recommendation of the Security Intelligence Service (SIS), who wanted him deported. Information from European security agencies had convinced the SIS that Zaoui had links to terrorist groups. In contrast, the Refugee Status Appeals Authority recognised him as a genuine refugee. Zaoui eventually won a long legal battle for the right to stay in New Zealand. The SIS withdrew Zaoui's security risk certificate in September 2007 on the grounds that changed

police. The police also had a Specialist Search Group charged with finding and neutralising bombs.

In 2002 the New Zealand police established the Strategic Intelligence Unit (SIU) in response to the heightened awareness of terrorism. The unit's job was to provide intelligence on domestic and international security. This included information on terrorism and on transnational criminal activities.

Within the New Zealand Defence Force responsibility for counter-terrorism was principally vested in the Special Air Service (SAS).

In the 2000s the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) also had a greater focus on working to combat terrorism.

## Security preparations

New Zealand goes to considerable lengths to plan for and implement security measures designed to prevent terrorist disruption of major political events. Some examples of events with high security include the APEC ministerial meeting in Auckland in 1999, other major international political meetings, royal visits to New Zealand and international sporting events such as the Rugby World Cup in 2011.

## Border security

New Zealand has been an active supporter of new international trade and transportation security standards, and is working to further strengthen critical infrastructure against possible terrorist attack. New Zealand's adoption of the Border Security Act 2004 was designed to enhance New Zealand's border security regime. In addition, the New Zealand and US customs authorities have

circumstances and new information indicated he was no longer a threat.

agreed on a comprehensive security arrangement that allows both countries to work together to identify and intercept high-risk containers as early in the supply chain as possible.

The SIS carries out security checks on people entering the country and works to ensure New Zealanders are not involved in spreading weapons of mass destruction.



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