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# OUT OF REACH?

The Role of Community Policing in Preventing  
Terrorism in Canada

Charlie Edwards, Calum Jeffray and Raffaello Pantucci



Royal United Services Institute

OCCASIONAL PAPER

## **About this Study**

This report was funded under the Kanishka Project Contribution Program – a multi-year investment in research on pressing questions for Canada on terrorism and counter-terrorism – sponsored by the Government of Canada.

The Kanishka Project's primary focus is on research, but it also supports other activities necessary to build knowledge and create a network of researchers and students that spans disciplines and universities. The research funded by the project will improve Canada's ability to counter terrorism and violent extremism at home and abroad.

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Occasional Paper, February 2015

# **Out of Reach?**

## **The Role of Community Policing in Preventing Terrorism in Canada**

Charlie Edwards, Calum Jeffray and Raffaello Pantucci

The views expressed in this paper are the authors' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of RUSI or any other institutions with which the authors are associated.

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Any mistakes or omissions remain the authors' own.

### Erratum

*This occasional paper was updated on 13 February 2015.*

*Following publication of the report we identified an inaccuracy on page 43; a subsequent review led to a decision to adapt the paragraph to reflect the concern of interviewees that some law-enforcement personnel felt that 'a "firewall" between outreach initiatives and other intelligence and law enforcement activities was crucial for maintaining trust, but was a constant challenge to maintain'.*

## Executive Summary

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When the Kanishka project was being designed in 2010, there was a widespread perception both within Canada and internationally that the country had largely managed to avoid the threat from Al-Qa'ida-inspired terrorism. While there had been one or two isolated cases, these were rare exceptions.

Canadian government officials rightly described the threat picture in Canada as 'limited' in comparison with European states and the country's next door neighbour, the US, where attacks directed by Al-Qa'ida had been successful or had reached a mature stage in planning. In contrast, the domestic threat picture in Canada was relatively benign.<sup>1</sup> During the fieldwork phase the authors found this view to be largely still accepted by politicians, law-enforcement practitioners and the public at large. What was interesting to the authors, however, was that this view – influenced by events in Canada and overseas – was changing.

A few cases of predominantly Islamist terrorism with links to Canada had appeared over the years. These cases involved, for example, Ahmed Ressam and Momin Khawaja, two individuals with Canadian passports (indeed, Khawaja is Canadian-born). They had connected with elements close to Al-Qa'ida and had been involved in planning attacks at the international level, but neither had planned to launch terrorist attacks within Canada itself. A more 'home-grown' threat appeared to emerge in 2006, when Canada's security and intelligence agencies uncovered the so-called 'Toronto 18' cell; their ambitious plans were the first expression of a maturing and purely domestic threat, seeking connections through a network of young radicals across Europe and North America. The plot was successfully disrupted before it reached fruition.

Shortly before the publication of this report, the situation changed dramatically as Canada experienced two significant incidents of domestic lone-actor terrorism. On 22 October 2014, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau shot and killed a soldier at the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa; police exchanged fire and eventually shot dead the gunman inside the parliament building. Two days earlier, Martin Couture-Rouleau had deliberately driven a car into a group of Canadian soldiers in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, killing one and injuring others. Both individuals are thought to have been recent converts to Islam who had become radicalised.

Prior to these events, the last major attack that had directly involved Canadian citizens with links to the homeland was the bombing on 23 June 1985 of Air

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1. Interview with law-enforcement officials conducted as part of fieldwork, July 2013.

India Flight 182 when Sikh extremists killed 329 people – the majority of whom were Canadian citizens flying from Toronto.

### **The Changing Threat Picture**

The threat picture began to change in 2012, when a succession of plots with Canadian components was uncovered in Bulgaria, Somalia, Syria and Algeria. In January 2013, a group including two Canadians loyal to former Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar attacked a gas plant at In Amenas in Algeria, killing sixty-seven people.

In the following month, reports emerged from Syria that Jamal Mohammed Abd Al-Kader was the first reported Canadian to die on the battlefield in Syria, fighting alongside Ahrar Al-Sham (the Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant).

In April 2013, a Canadian was involved in an Al-Shabaab-directed attack against the Supreme Court in Mogadishu, which led to twenty-nine deaths.<sup>2</sup> A few months later, in July 2013, officers in British Columbia arrested a couple, John Nuttall and Amanda Korody, who were accused of planning a bombing campaign using pressure cookers, targeting Canada Day celebrations. Unconnected to any known networks and with no clear direction to their plotting, the couple appeared to be an archetypal 'lone-actor cell', with the aim of causing widespread death and chaos.

In a relatively short space of time, the terror threat to Canada had apparently come to reflect the broader terrorism trends experienced by other Western countries, with Canadian nationals and passport holders a regular feature of battlefields around the world (the current estimate is that between 70 and 150 Canadians have gone to Syria, for instance). Domestically, Canada was no longer 'the exception on the terrorist's map but a target-rich environment'.<sup>3</sup> The attacks of October 2014 demonstrated that the relatively benign security environment of the past has given way to a much more uncertain present.

In *2013 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada*, the government stated that it 'continues to identify individuals within Canada who want to commit or support terrorist acts here or abroad' and that, in 2013, 'Canadian authorities continued to investigate a range of potential domestic terrorist threats. The majority of these involved individuals influenced by the ideology of al Qaida'.<sup>4</sup> Of particular interest to the authors' research was the report's

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2. Michelle Shephard, 'Probe Focuses on Canadian as Shabaab Leader of Somalia Courthouse Attack', *Toronto Star*, 15 April 2013.

3. Interview with law-enforcement official conducted as part of fieldwork, January 2014.

4. Public Safety Canada, *2013 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada: Building a Safe and Resilient Canada* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, July 2013), p. 23.

emphasis on 'home grown violent extremists or potential lone terrorists in Canada'.<sup>5</sup>

Canada is not alone among its Western allies in its focus on this particular issue. While cases remain rare in Europe and the US, the number of terrorist incidents involving lone actors in these regions appears to be increasing, motivated by a diversity of violent ideologies. This rise can be attributed to a number of factors including the relative ease of acquiring weapons, the ingredients required to make an improved explosive device (IED) and the instructions for doing so, as well as the role of the Internet in the process of radicalisation.<sup>6</sup>

In response to high-profile successful lone-actor attacks in the US (for example, the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013 or the June 2009 shooting at the army recruitment office in Little Rock, Arkansas) and in European nations (the attacks in Norway committed by Anders Behring Breivik in July 2011 or the killing, in May 2013, of a British soldier in Woolwich, London), many Western nations have begun implementing policies to address the drivers of and pathways to radicalisation leading to violence. There has been renewed focus on these policies in light of the ongoing conflict in Syria, which has attracted significant numbers of foreign fighters, raising fears in their country of origin over their potential to launch terrorist operations on their return.<sup>7</sup>

Canada's counter-terrorism strategy recognises that potential violence related to lone-actor terrorism is an important area of threat to address, and that continued review of the country's response is necessary to ensure security.<sup>8</sup> The attacks of October 2014 have highlighted further the threat posed by lone-actor terrorism; in Canada, as in other countries, lone actors are the foremost concern for security and law-enforcement agencies, particularly considering the potential impact of the ongoing conflict in Syria.<sup>9</sup>

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5. *Ibid.*

6. Charlie Edwards and Luke Gribbon, 'Pathways to Violent Extremism in the Digital Era', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 158, No. 5, October/November 2013).

7. For an overview of the security issues surrounding returning foreign fighters from Syria see, for example, Edwin Bakker, Christophe Paulussen and Eva Entenmann, 'Dealing with European Foreign Fighters in Syria: Governance Challenges & Legal Implications', International Centre for Counter Terrorism Research Paper, December 2013.

8. 'As seen in Oklahoma City in 1995 and in Norway in 2011, continued vigilance is essential since it remains possible that certain groups – or even a lone individual – could choose to adopt a more violent, terrorist strategy to achieve their desired results.' See Government of Canada, *Building Resilience against Terrorism: Canada's Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, 2nd edition (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2013), <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsracs/pblctns/rslnc-gnst-trrrsm/rslnc-gnst-trrrsm-eng.pdf>, accessed 12 January 2015, p. 9.

9. Public Safety Canada, *2014 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada: Responding to Violent Extremism and Travel Abroad for Terrorism-Related Purposes* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2014).

The attraction of fighting in Syria (as well as in other conflicts zones such as Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan) has influenced an increasing number of Canadians to pursue violent jihad overseas, often travelling alone with a view of meeting like-minded people en route or in Syria and the wider region. The number of Canadians travelling to Syria continues to grow; as of early 2014 the government knew of more than 130 individuals with Canadian connections who were abroad and who were suspected of supporting terrorism-related activities of various groups.<sup>10</sup> It is not yet clear whether a new law passed in 2013 that considers it a criminal offence 'to leave' or 'attempt to leave' Canada to take part in terrorist activity will be a deterrent to young Muslims.

This changing threat picture, encapsulated in the October 2014 shootings, means that the evolving threat of lone actors and Canada's approach to counter-terrorism warrant closer attention – not least because the risk of lone-actor terrorism puts Canadian citizens on the front line of any future response. This report looks specifically at the phenomenon of lone-actor terrorism in Canada alongside the community engagement programme of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), with a view to making recommendations.

As discussed in Chapter II, the definition of a 'lone actor' in relation to terrorism is contested and a range of interchangeable terms are frequently used, including 'lone wolf' and 'lone fighter'. This paper defines a lone actor as an individual or couple who commits or prepares for, or is suspected of committing or preparing for, violent acts in support of an ideological group or movement, but does so outside of a recognised command structure.

There is a specific connection between lone-actor terrorism and community engagement, which will also be explored by this report. Community engagement programmes are central to building trust between the population and law-enforcement agencies. This relationship is one of the key foundation blocks of preventing terrorism and stemming the rise of support for violent extremism in communities across Canada.

According to interviewees (and other research on the topic), the phenomenon of lone-actor terrorism is less likely to be uncovered by a 'traditional' investigation than a plot organised by a group or network, as it is unlikely to set off the usual 'tripwires' that law-enforcement agencies are alert to, such as contact with known extremists. Thus, one useful by-product of effective community relationships and higher levels of trust is that, at least to some degree, these 'tripwires' are located within the communities themselves, whose members will be alert to reporting individuals who may be planning terrorist attacks. For example, on 14 April 2008 members of a mosque in Bristol in the UK reported a young man to their community police officer

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10. *Ibid.*

because he had suffered severe burn marks on his hands and arms. Andrew Ibrahim was discovered to be planning a suicide bombing on a local shopping mall. Thanks to the local community the subsequent investigation prevented a terrorist attack.

This report therefore seeks to explore whether the RCMP's community engagement programme is developing the necessary community-based projects, relationships and initiatives to support the government's wider counter-terrorism efforts across Canada. A key component of the study involved the research team working with law-enforcement practitioners in key Canadian cities to better define the lone-actor threat to the country, and to understand and outline Canadian agencies' responses to it.

### **Research Methodology**

The project team applied a structured methodology broken down into three phases to achieve granular analysis and high-level findings regarding the lone-actor threat in Canada.

The first phase involved reviewing academic, government policy and police operational literature relevant to lone-actor terrorism cases and the relevant agencies' response and management of the lone-actor threat. The aim of the literature review was to:

- Develop a summary of key definitions and concepts
- Understand the relevance of communities to the lone-actor terrorism cases and possible indicators of radicalisation that may inform the RCMP in its work within these communities to counter violent extremism
- Identify potential gaps and lessons learned from the police response to instances of lone-actor terrorism, particularly those relevant to community engagement and the 'Prevent' strand of Canada's counter-terrorism strategy.<sup>11</sup>

The second phase of the project included two substantial fieldwork trips to Canada encompassing visits to Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. The team conducted more than fifty interviews with law-enforcement practitioners, government officials, community representatives, religious leaders and researchers. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed to ensure consistency across all data sources. The third phase included an internal workshop to discuss the report, which helped to validate

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11. 'Prevent' constitutes one of four elements of Canada's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to prevent individuals from engaging in terrorism by building the resilience of communities to violent extremism and radicalisation, challenging and producing counter-narratives to violent extremist ideology, and reducing the risk of individuals succumbing to violent extremism and radicalisation.

findings and conclusions. Some initial findings were discussed with Canadian academics and policy-makers during our fieldwork.

### **The Structure of this Report**

The paper is divided into four main chapters and a conclusion, which includes a series of recommendations. Chapter I describes the current terrorist threat to Canada. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) describes Al-Qa'ida-inspired extremism as the most visible terrorist threat to Canadian interests, identifying at least three main ways in which terrorism threatens the safety and security of Canadians:

- Terrorists continue to plot direct attacks against Canada and its allies at home and abroad with the aim of causing death and disruption
- Terrorists seek to conduct activities on Canadian territory to support terrorism globally (such as fundraising to support attacks and militant groups)
- Terrorist supporters seek to radicalise individuals within Canada, some of whom may travel overseas for terrorist training or to engage in terrorism abroad. These individuals endanger their lives and pose a risk to the countries to which they have travelled. Further, should they return to Canada, it is uncertain to what ends these individuals may put their training. There is concern that they might attempt to radicalise others, or train individuals in terrorist methods.<sup>12</sup>

Chapter II focuses on the phenomenon of lone-actor terrorism. The chapter sets out the latest research and draws out the key issues regarding the threat, including assessing the 'profile' of a lone-actor terrorist, the role of the Internet, and key vulnerabilities (for example, mental health). The chapter includes a number of case studies of lone-actor terrorists and describes how the threat is currently understood within the Canadian context.

Chapter III outlines the community-based policing approach as a strategy to counter radicalisation and the emergence of lone-actor terrorism within communities. It then focuses on the role of the RCMP in countering the threat from terrorism to Canada. Four operational case studies are offered as illustrations of the RCMP's evolving approach to community outreach and engagement.

The fourth chapter addresses the effectiveness of the RCMP's current activities in this regard and describes the efforts of law-enforcement agencies in other nations to identify where improvements can be made.

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12. CSIS, 'Terrorism at Home and Abroad', Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2 May 2014, <<https://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/ththrtvnmnt/trrrsm/index-en.php>>, accessed 13 January 2015.

The concluding chapter provides a summary of the key findings and suggests recommendations for the future. As already noted, many of the findings from this project (and subsequent recommendations) were discussed with RCMP members and community representatives during the fieldwork.

### Key Findings

1. **RCMP community outreach initiatives suffer from a lack of a clear overall strategy** that provides a baseline assessment of activities, through which to identify priorities and successfully undertake activities to enhance national security.
2. **The scale and scope of community engagement activity varies significantly** between each RCMP division. The RCMP's engagement would therefore benefit from closer co-ordination at the strategic level with other police force efforts.
3. **There are currently limited structures and mechanisms in place for Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) community engagement officers to liaise, share information and exchange best practices.** Indeed, it was found that many outreach officers had never met their counterparts from other INSETs, while cuts in budget mean any face-to-face meetings that may have taken place in the past have been replaced by video conferencing. More efforts should therefore be made to support internal lesson-learning in the RCMP, and specifically in the community outreach units.
4. **Resources currently allocated to INSETs for community engagement initiatives are insufficient to achieve the desired results and ensure the longevity of outreach activities.** There was little evidence of the RCMP having a particularly focused set of responses to the threat of lone-actor terrorism even though many interviewees highlighted it as being both an emerging and increasingly serious threat.
5. **One challenge that needs to be addressed at the strategic level is the lack of a 'mentality' open to 'Prevent' activities among RCMP members.** 'Prevent' activities are not perceived to have the same glory as high-profile arrests and other disruption activities; community engagement is therefore not seen as an attractive field in which to work.

## Recommendations

1. **The RCMP should build on its positive image and reputation among the Canadian population to further develop its community outreach activities.** The RCMP is very well placed to expand the scope of its community engagement, particularly as there is evidence to suggest that members of the public are more comfortable communicating with the RCMP than with other law-enforcement agencies.
2. **The RCMP should replicate its approach to community engagement during Project Smooth.**<sup>13</sup> The universal praise for the engagement strategy, from both within the RCMP and the community involved, demonstrate that such trust-building exercises are successful in both improving relations and raising awareness of particular threats.
3. **RCMP Headquarters should communicate the purpose and rationale of Prevent activities more effectively to members.** This will help to address the current confusion over the function and value of this aspect of the RCMP's work among officers conducting investigations.
4. **The RCMP should develop an evidence base of lone-actor cases in order to turn anecdotal information from front-line officers into corporate knowledge.** A central hub of relevant cases will help to both improve understanding of the threat and build a more strategic view of the scale of the issue across all fifteen RCMP divisions.
5. **RCMP community engagement activities would benefit from a coherent national strategy and closer co-ordination at the strategic level.** RCMP Headquarters should offer clearer guidance on particular objectives and priorities of INSET community engagement activities, improve the co-ordination and benchmarking of these activities, as well as provide the opportunity for the teams to more formally share information on cases, success stories and lessons learned.

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13. Project Smooth was the RCMP operation which ultimately led to the arrests of Chiheb Esseghaier and Raed Jaser in April 2013.

## I. The Terrorist Threat in Canada

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- Canada has seen an evolution in the domestic and international terrorist threat
- There have been high-profile incidents of Canadians travelling abroad to engage in terrorist activities, as well as notable arrests for an alleged terrorist plot to be carried out on Canadian soil
- Terrorism emanating from AQ-inspired extremism remains a serious threat; CSIS continues to see support for AQ causes in Canada
- In addition to terrorist networks or groups operating in Canada there are now cases of lone actors carrying out attacks in the country.

[My parents] are happy I'm taking my own path, doing my own thing and helping people. At the same time they don't understand entirely why I'm here.

(Abu Islam, Canadian rebel in Syria, 2013)

While some Canadians have been victims of large-scale terrorist attacks – most notably in the 1985 bombing of an Air India flight from Toronto and the 2001 destruction of New York's twin towers – there were few attacks that specifically targeted Canada prior to the two incidents in October 2014. For this reason, many Canadians have come to equate terrorism with the violence and tragic events that occur in other countries. This is largely a fair reflection of the security environment and thus the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and other agencies have adopted an approach that requires them to be 'alert but not to the extent that we alarm the community'.<sup>1</sup>

Canada has nevertheless witnessed an evolution in the terrorist threat common to many Western nations. Historically, the threat originated primarily from nationalist or separatist entities such as Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) and, in the case of the Air India bombing, Sikh extremism. Today, however, Al-Qa'ida, its affiliates and groups inspired by its ideology have rapidly emerged to pose the greatest terrorist threat.

Identifying and apprehending these terrorists is more challenging than ever. Sunni Islamic extremists, such as members of Al-Qa'ida and affiliated networks, are often well educated in specialised fields such as computer science, biochemistry and engineering. These individuals are security-conscious, well funded and resourceful. They use sophisticated technology,

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1. Interview with law-enforcement official conducted as part of fieldwork, January 2014.

enhanced by encryption and steganography (the concealment of messages), to communicate worldwide and to transfer funds electronically. Furthermore, they are masterful at exploiting the media to influence public opinion, and at using democratic institutions to further their cause or to avoid just penalty.

Terrorist organisations other than Al-Qa'ida also remain a threat, though one that has greatly diminished in recent years. These organisations include FLQ, as well as Hizbullah and the remnants of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), both of which have strong footprints through ethnic communities in Canada.

The terrorist threat emanates not only from formal, established networks but increasingly also from a generation of unaffiliated individuals inspired by Al-Qa'ida's ideology while lacking formal ties to any terrorist organisation. The profile, motivations and behaviour of these so-called 'lone actors' are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

A final recent trend is the perceived threat posed by fighters returning from conflicts overseas, and from Syria (and Iraq) in particular. A June 2014 report estimated that 12,000 foreigners from eighty-one countries had travelled to fight in Syria since 2011, of which 3,000 originated from Western countries.<sup>2</sup> On arrival in Syria, the majority of fighters appear to join extremist groups, exposed to an environment of sustained radicalisation and violence.

While the move from foreign fighter to terrorist is not inevitable in every case, the countries of origin of these individuals have expressed significant concern that they may use the knowledge, skills and training acquired during their time in Syria to launch a terrorist attack on their return. As a result many countries, including Canada, have taken steps to prevent individuals from travelling to Syria to fight in the first place.

### **A Spectrum of Risks Facing Canada**

In July 2014, Hasibullah Yusufzai was charged under a new Canadian anti-terrorism law for allegedly leaving Canada to fight with an Islamist terrorist group in Syria. The new criminal code 83.201 makes it unlawful to leave Canada to commit an offence for a terrorist group.<sup>3</sup> Yusufzai, from British Columbia, worshipped at the Masjid Al-Salaam and Education Centre on Canada Way in Vancouver.

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2. Richard Barrett, 'Foreign Fighters in Syria', Soufan Group, June 2014, <<http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf>>, accessed 14 January 2015.

3. '83.201. Leaving Canada to Commit Offence for Terrorist Group', YourLaws.ca, 2013, <<http://yourlaws.ca/criminal-code-canada/83201-leaving-canada-commit-offence-terrorist>>, accessed 14 January 2015.

Yusufzai's story highlights the growing concerns of Canadian law-enforcement practitioners – concerns shared by officials in the US and European countries – that young Muslims are being tempted to fight overseas, particularly in Syria. Yusufzai had been the subject of interest to law-enforcement agencies before his alleged departure to Syria, which had worked with the community to try to turn him from a radical path.

The British Columbia Muslim Association (BCMA) is one of the largest Muslim organisations in the province of British Columbia and represents some 75,000 to 80,000 Sunni Muslims. Following Yusufzai's arrest Aasim Rashid, a spokesman for the association, claimed that the authorities had contacted the BCMA a long time ago to disclose their concerns about Yusufzai.

Rashid suggested in a media interview that the BCMA was collaborating with law-enforcement agencies, making sure that he did not use the association as a platform. It is not clear if he had been actively approached by the BCMA or law-enforcement agencies to participate in a bespoke programme of counter-radicalisation activity. Instead, it seems more likely that the BCMA was aware of him and opted to keep an eye on him.<sup>4</sup>

Announcing the charges against Yusufzai, an RCMP spokesperson highlighted the role of its outreach and engagement activities, which are designed to 'help Canadian communities and families see the indicators of vulnerability to violent extremism, and understand the responsibilities they share with law enforcement in maintaining Canada's national security'.<sup>5</sup>

The example of Yusufzai is instructive as it raises a number of pressing issues for Canada's counter-terrorism strategy. According to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), there has been a considerable evolution in the domestic and international terrorist threat, including 'high-profile incidents of Canadians travelling abroad to engage in terrorist activities, as well as the notable arrests for an alleged terrorist plot to be carried out on Canadian soil'.<sup>6</sup>

A number of terrorist organisations are active within Canada's borders. Their presence can be attributed to Canada's proximity to the US, one of the world's pre-eminent terrorist targets, but also to the fact that Canada is an attractive

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4. Matthew Robinson, 'Police Warned BC Muslim Group to Watch Burnaby Man Facing Terrorism Charges', *Vancouver Sun*, 28 July 2014, <<http://www.burnabynow.com/news/police-warned-b-c-muslim-group-to-watch-burnaby-man-facing-terrorism-charges-1.1264374>>, accessed 14 January 2015.

5. *Ibid.*

6. CSIS, 'Terrorism at Home and Abroad', Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2 May 2014, <<https://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/ththrtvnrnmnt/trrrsm/index-en.php>>, accessed 13 January 2015.

place to live and do business because of its openness and, ironically given the Al-Qa'ida narrative, its respect for human rights and freedoms.

At the other end of the spectrum, the threat posed by lone actors or other less networked organisations also affects Canada. These plots may be similar to the case of John Nuttall and Amanda Korody, a couple who planned a campaign of violence against Canadians enjoying National Day with little clear motivation beyond their own self-constructed interpretation of violent Islamism.

In other cases, they might express themselves in the form of the 'sovereign freemen-on-the-land' groups,<sup>7</sup> whose aggressive rejection of established society is something that has already led to violence in the US. Potentially highly disruptive, but difficult to predict and detect, these expressions of political violence can have an outsized impact on society and present a threat on which Canadian authorities must also focus.

While CSIS therefore dedicates most of its counter-terrorism resources to religious extremism, the service also continues to monitor individuals and organisations that might be involved in other forms of terrorism, such as:

- State-sponsored terrorism
- Domestic terrorism (which includes the threat or use of violence by groups advocating for issues such as the environment, anti-abortion, animal rights, anti-globalisation and white supremacy, and the dissemination of militia messages by groups in the US)
- Secessionist violence.

The most visible aspect of terrorist activity is physical violence, though the absence of violence does not equate to the absence of terrorist activity. Most terrorism-related activities in Canada support actions elsewhere linked to overseas conflicts, and are relatively subtle in nature. During the authors' interviews with law-enforcement practitioners, the financing of terrorism and the issue of people sending money to fund terrorist organisations abroad were consistently noted as being of particular concern.

### **Terrorism and Canada: An Exception to the Rule?**

Despite government statements on the threat of a terrorist attack in Canada, the absence of a successful incident on Canadian soil in the decade prior to October 2014 led to a commonly held view that the terrorist threat to Canada remained low and, according to the authors' interviews with community groups, was frequently overplayed by the media.

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7. The authors recognise that such groups are known by a variety of terms, including 'sovereign freemen-on-the-land' and 'sovereign citizen movement'; the former is used for consistency.

To illustrate this, a Pew Survey Report published in 2013 found that Americans and Canadians have different concerns when it comes to potential threats to their nations. North Korea, Islamic extremist groups and Iran's nuclear programme topped the list of concerns among Americans, with majorities saying each of these is a major threat to their country (59 per cent, 56 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively). Among Canadians, however, only global climate change is seen as a serious concern by at least half of those surveyed; 54 per cent said it is a major threat to Canada. More than four in ten Canadians also expressed concern about North Korea's nuclear programme (47 per cent), international financial instability (45 per cent) and Iran's nuclear programme (44 per cent), but the opinion that these are major threats was less common in Canada than in the US.

While the October 2014 attacks have significantly changed the perception of terrorism in Canada, it is noteworthy that events over the past two-to-three years – including the implication of Canadian citizens in the January 2013 In Amenas attack, repeated appearances on the battlefield in Somalia, and the presence of Canadian foreign fighters in Syria – were recognised by law-enforcement agencies, but did not significantly alter the public's view on terrorism.

In particular, the risk that individuals returning from fighting in Syria might carry out attacks is arguably still not seen as necessarily increasing the domestic terrorism threat. The general perception identified by the authors during fieldwork was that fighters had no reason to 'bring it home' and launch attacks within Canada's borders. While not all returning fighters will have reason to do so, this overall perception ignores the training, skills and radical beliefs they may have developed and the often traumatic nature of their experiences.

A constant theme of the authors' discussions in Canada was that even if terrorists were indeed present in the country, it was still highly unlikely that there would be a terrorist attack.<sup>8</sup> Several reasons were put forward by interviewees for Canadian 'exceptionalism' and why terrorists would not see Canada as a high-value target. These ranged across:

- Political factors: Canada's foreign-policy priorities differ from those of other nations; its reputation as a peacekeeping country; the absence of occupying forces anywhere in the world
- Societal factors: lower economic disparity between rich and poor; a highly educated and even 'elite' immigrant population who do not carry 'colonial baggage' or hold prejudices towards the state
- Cultural factors: a national identity based on multiculturalism, diversity and tolerance, and the popular perception of the lack of a 'gun culture' in comparison with the US.

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8. This was most apparent in fieldwork undertaken in Edmonton and Calgary.

This perceived exceptionalism is surprising to some who point to Canada's large immigrant population. Between 2003 and 2012, the average immigration rate to Canada was approximately 250,000 people per year, originating from 186 countries and comprising over 200 ethnic groups.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the evident culture of tolerance and multiculturalism in Canada, it is reasonable to suspect that inter- and intra-community tensions will still feature, given the difficulties that some experience in integrating into a new society as well as the transplanting of longstanding social tensions that exist in their countries of origin. In rare cases, such tensions between different ethnic groups can result in low-level hate crimes that can develop into more damaging criminal and extremist behaviour, or attitudes that can be exploited by other extremist actors.

It is therefore important to bear in mind that the relative absence, to date, of large-scale terrorist violence on Canadian territory does not preclude the possibility of a terrorist attack in the future. Canada's solidarity with the US and other Western democracies in the fight against terrorism, as well as its support for Israel, has rendered the country a potential target.

Furthermore, Canada has had a number of domestic clashes that have in the past resulted in expressions of politically motivated violence on the part of those such as secessionist Québécois or, more recently, the sovereign freemen-on-the-land movement. For this reason, the intelligence, law-enforcement and security communities have been working in close collaboration to counter violent extremism, as well as to identify and apprehend Canadian extremists before their activities can reach the level of terrorist violence.

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9. Government of Canada, 'Facts and Figures 2012 – Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents', 2013, <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/permanent/10.asp>> accessed 26 March 2014; Statistics Canada, '2006 Census: Ethnic origin, visible minorities, place of work and mode of transportation', 2008, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/080402/dq080402a-eng.htm>> accessed 26 March 2014.

## II. The Emergence of Lone-Actor Terrorism

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- There is no consensus on the definition of lone-actor terrorism but there are a number of consistent features identified in the literature
- Empirical data do not show that there is a single profile for a lone-actor terrorist
- Cases of lone-actor terrorism have increased over the last decade, but still remain rare
- The internet has made it much easier for people to become lone-actor terrorists
- Lone-actor terrorists do not necessarily operate in isolation. The cases reviewed for this study showed that they often operate on the periphery of established networks and on the fringes of communities.

The problem, of course, is that we're shifting to lone actors and small teams, which are far harder to detect.

(Ray Boisvert, former Assistant Director, Intelligence, CSIS)

As noted in the previous chapter, the threat from lone-actor terrorism is increasingly recognised and focused on by Western governments, and there is a tendency in academic literature on the subject to assert that lone-actor terrorism is increasing. This chapter begins by looking at the evidence in support of this claim and reviews how the phenomenon is currently understood within the academic literature. Finally, it provides an overview of how lone-actor cases appear to be manifested within Canada.

Among the authors whose literature the authors reviewed, Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, Clark McCauley, Sophia Moskalenko and Benjamin van Son, Petter Nesser, Jeff Gruenewald et al., Ramon Spaaij, the Dutch Instituut voor Veiligheids- en Crisismanagement (COT), Gabriel Weimann and Charles Eby all conclude that the phenomenon of lone-actor terrorism is increasing. However, when examining the data in more detail the conclusions tend to be more specific, with Bakker and de Graaf, Spaaij, COT, Weimann and Beau Barnes all noting that the increase in attacks undertaken by lone actors has largely been limited to the US.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For a complete list of the publications covered in this literature review, see the Select Bibliography at the end of the report.

At the same time, a number of empirical reports into the topic of lone-actor terrorism consider that the picture is in fact more complicated than this. In 2007, COT concluded that even though in the US the numbers seem to be increasing, they remain 'statistically marginal' at less than 2 per cent of overall terrorist attacks.<sup>2</sup>

The anecdotal conclusion of a more recent paper by staff at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) supports this, though they also see these incidents as having an outsized impact: 'even though available statistics suggest that lone-actor terrorists account for a rather small proportion of all terror incidents, they can often have a large impact on society'.<sup>3</sup> The archetypal example of such an attack that generated an outsized response is Anders Behring Breivik's brutal assault on Norwegian politics in Oslo in July 2011. A lone actor, Breivik killed seventy-seven people in a self-directed double-bombing and mass shooter incident.

Spaaij, an associate professor at Victoria University, Melbourne, contends that the phenomenon may be on the increase, but the attackers are not becoming more violent or visibly effective.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, he believes there should have been more of a threat, but it has not emerged since 'few individuals radicalize to the point of violence; it is difficult to translate theory into action; and, the need to overcome confrontation tension and fear is harder for an individual as he does not have the support network around him'.<sup>5</sup>

There is a dichotomy within the literature and the interviews conducted by the authors about whether the increasing threat from lone actors is a strategic choice on the part of the terrorists. In other words: did groups want their threat projection to go in this direction, or were they forced to? The two are not mutually exclusive, of course, but the prevailing conclusion in the literature is that 'success of counter-terrorism security forces against AQ [Al-Qa'ida] and its affiliates may be bringing about another evolution in Islamist extremist strategy'.

Al-Qa'ida, along with a number of its offshoots and local affiliates, has tried to push the narrative in this direction: for example, Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) *Inspire* magazine has been at the forefront of advancing what it calls 'do it yourself jihad' and 'open source' jihad that

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2. COT, 'Lone-Wolf Terrorism', 2007, <<http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/Lone-Wolf%20Terrorism.pdf>>, accessed 14 January 2015.

3. Joel Brynielsson et al., 'Analysis of Weak Signals for Detecting Lone Wolf Terrorists', 2012 European Intelligence and Security Informatics Conference, Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2012, <<http://www.csis.pace.edu/~ctappert/dps/2012EISIC/data/4782a197.pdf>>, accessed 14 January 2015.

4. Ramón Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).

5. *Ibid.*

is focused on individuals launching strikes using basic tools in the world around them. Similarly, other groups like Al-Qa'ida core (through English-speaking spokesman Adam Gadahn) and Al-Shabaab have released videos in which they have praised those who have chosen to launch lone-actor attacks. However, it is impossible to draw a distinct line between Al-Qa'ida's advancement of this narrative and people making the choice to launch such attacks.

These trends do not seem to match those in other ideologies. In particular, according to Gruenewald et al., 'extant empirical research provides little guidance' as to whether far-right activists are making a similar strategic choice.<sup>6</sup> In their dataset focused on right-wing lone wolves in the US between 1990 and 2008, there is an 'overall downward trend following 2001 in the number of far-right terrorist homicides'. The study suggests that right-wing lone wolves in the US were more active before 2000, with 65 per cent of attacks occurring during the 1990s. Members of 'wolf packs' (small, disconnected cells) were also more active during the 1990s.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, this study of one 'type' of lone-actor terrorism in one geographic context may not necessarily reflect broader trends. Having concluded that lone-wolf terrorism more generally 'accounts for only a marginal proportion of all terrorist incidents', COT observes that 'lone-wolf terrorism has been portrayed in the American media as a rapidly ascending threat',<sup>8</sup> and that although the phenomenon may be increasing within a North American context, it is unconvinced that the same is true within Europe.

It has been suggested that the increase in lone-wolf terrorism is due to the growth of the Internet, something highlighted by Spaaij, Jeffrey Simon and Eby (and suggested repeatedly in the media). The role of the Internet is discussed below, but it is instructive to include the assessment from Denmark's Centre for Terrorism Analysis in 2011 that there 'is a higher likelihood for individual terror attacks in the West being carried out by solo terrorists rather than isolated lone wolf terrorists'.<sup>9</sup> This reflects the increased concern of the country's Police and Intelligence Service (PET) about the impact of individuals with loose connections, over individuals with no connections at all. Looking at this issue through the current lens of concern regarding the potential threat posed by returning foreign fighters, EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove has said he does not

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6. Jeff Gruenewald, Steven Chermak and Joshua D Freilich, 'Far-Right Lone Wolf Homicides in the United States', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Vol. 36, No. 12, November 2013).

7. *Ibid.*

8. COT, 'Lone-Wolf Terrorism'.

9. PET and Center for Terroranalyse, 'The Threat from Solo Terrorism and Lone Wolf Terrorism', 5 April 2011, <[https://www.pet.dk/English/~media/Engelsk/the\\_threat\\_from\\_solo\\_terrorism\\_and\\_lone\\_wolf\\_terrorism\\_-\\_engelsk\\_version\\_pdf.ashx](https://www.pet.dk/English/~media/Engelsk/the_threat_from_solo_terrorism_and_lone_wolf_terrorism_-_engelsk_version_pdf.ashx)>, accessed 14 January 2015.

expect 'large scale attacks like 9/11, but the EU should prepare for attacks by individuals eager to kill several people at the same time'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Defining a 'Lone Actor'**

A further challenge in assessing the scale of the phenomenon is that there is no consistent definition of 'lone actor'. There are, however, a number of consistent features that are recognised across the literature as identifiers of lone-actor terrorism: an individual is alone, has no formal links to an organisation but may be inspired by them, and the individual receives no external direction.

Spaaij offers a useful summary, stating that lone actors 'operate individually; do not belong to an organised group or network; modus operandi conceived and directed without any direct outside command and control'.<sup>11</sup> The definition offered by the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC)<sup>12</sup> adds that a 'lone wolf' is 'an individual who is inspired by a terrorist ideology or organization to conduct attacks, but acts independently, without established ties or accountability'.<sup>13</sup> Jessica Stern, a lecturer at Harvard University, writes about 'lone actors or small groups who commit terrorist crimes, inspired by a terrorist ideology, but [do] not belong to established groups'.<sup>14</sup>

In its early report on the topic in 2007, COT defined 'lone wolves' as individuals 'who operate individually; who do not belong to an organized terrorist group or network; who act without the direct influence of a leader or hierarchy; whose tactics and methods are conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or direction'.<sup>15</sup> The most recent piece of research to rely on this structure is that undertaken by Eby, who characterises a 'lone wolf' as an individual who 'plans and executes operations individually; does not receive instruction from an organized terrorist group or network; initially radicalizes without direct influence and recruitment from a terrorist group'.<sup>16</sup>

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10. Quoted in Colin Clapson, 'EU Anti-Terrorism Czar Warns of Fresh Attacks', *Flanders News*, 3 June 2014, <<http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/1.1987159>>, accessed 14 January 2015.

11. Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*.

12. In June 2011, the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre was renamed the Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre in order to renew its focus on the terrorist threats to Canadians and Canadian interests.

13. Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC), 'Lone-Wolf Attacks: A Developing Islamist Extremist Strategy?', 2007.

14. Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York, NY: Ecco, 2003).

15. COT, 'Lone-Wolf Terrorism'.

16. Charles A Eby, *The Nation that Cried Lone Wolf: An Analysis of Individual Terrorists in the United States since 9/11* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2012).

PET offers a similar classification for the 'lone wolf', characterising him or her as an individual with: 'no contact to terror groups (nor has ever had) or any other radicalized person and this individual acts entirely alone'.<sup>17</sup> A lone wolf is thus distinct from the 'solo terrorist', who is characterised by PET as 'an individual that carries out an act of terror on his own', either under instruction or through his own initiative; 'The decisive factor is that the individual is or has previously been related to a terror group.'<sup>18</sup>

This important distinction – the concept that direction is key in determining who is a lone-actor terrorist – is consistent across much of the literature. A second tier of definitions focuses on the degree to which lone actors can be seen to be truly 'alone'. As discussed in further detail below, there is some consensus across the literature over the fact that 'lone wolves' emerge from a milieu; in other words 'they are inspired by a certain group' but, importantly, 'are not under the command of any other person, group or network'.<sup>19</sup> In other words, a lone-actor terrorist may later be found to have had some level of connectivity to the community of radicals around him – through either interaction or online activity. This raises the question of how 'alone' the individual is and therefore whether the 'lone actor' model applies, or whether he or she is simply demonstrating similarities to other more connected or directed terrorist cells.

There are other factors to be considered when discussing definitions, such as motivation. For example, Spaaij highlights how some attacks, or planned attacks, have been incorrectly classified as being perpetrated by 'lone wolves' when in fact they were 'violent acts by stand-alone individuals that were carried out for reasons of personal motivation or simply with criminal intent'.<sup>20</sup> The absence of a political or ideological motivation would therefore classify such an attack as a purely criminal, rather than terrorist, act. This distinction may not be immediately obvious however, especially when comparing 'lone-wolf terrorists' with school shooters or assassins, for instance. McCauley et al. point out that 'assassins and school attackers resemble lone-wolf terrorists in three important ways: they plan and perpetrate violence, the great majority act alone, and ... the great majority act out of some perceived grievance rather than for material self-interest'.<sup>21</sup> Some authors therefore

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17. PET, and Center for Terroranalyse, 'The Threat from Solo Terrorism and Lone Wolf Terrorism'.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, 'Lone Wolves: How to Prevent this Phenomenon?', expert meeting paper, International Centre for Counter Terrorism, The Hague, November 2010, <<http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Bakker-deGraaf-EM-Paper-Lone-Wolves.pdf>>, accessed 14 January 2015.

20. Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*.

21. Clark McCauley, Sophia Moskalenko and Benjamin Van Son, 'Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders: A Comparison of Assassins and School Attackers', *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Vol. 7, No. 1, 2013).

prefer to use the nomenclature 'lone offender' to broadly conceptualise individuals who commit acts of targeted violence.

Randy Borum, Robert Fein and Bryan Vossekuil offer a useful way of conceptualising the definition of 'lone-actor terrorism', suggesting it should be seen as a continuum rather than a classification. As they put it, 'operational direction may exist on a continuum rather than as an either/or phenomenon'.<sup>22</sup> This more fluid categorisation tries to capture the often confusing nature of 'direction' that can be a characteristic of lone-actor plots.

The case of Nicky Reilly in the UK is a useful example in this regard. From a broken home and suffering from Asperger syndrome, Reilly converted to Islam in around 2002 and sought companionship from within the Muslim community around him in Plymouth. He also met individuals online who, after a period of time, suggested he launch a terrorist attack within the UK. In May 2008, Reilly decided to act on this suggestion and attempted to detonate a small improvised explosive device (IED) in a restaurant in a shopping centre in nearby Exeter. Fortunately for patrons at the restaurant, the device detonated in the bathroom as Reilly was attempting to put it together, injuring only himself. In the wake of his attack, Reilly remained unrepentant and claimed he had carried the act out by himself to punish the unclean world he saw around him. While there was evidence that he was in contact with radicals in the world around him, as well as online, the evidence related to the extent of direction he received, rather than self-motivation, was unclear.

Two final points are worth highlighting in relation to the definition of 'lone-actor terrorism'. First, the authors recognise the continued debate in much of the literature over whether or not 'small cell' terrorist plots should be seen in a similar light to 'lone wolves'. For COT, there is definitional clarity in only considering lone-actor terrorist plots to be incidents that are undertaken by single individuals, claiming that 'terrorist attacks carried out by a couple or very small terrorist cells do not qualify as lone-wolf terrorism'.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, there are a number of instructive examples of married couples or two acquaintances whose actions seem to fall naturally in the category of lone-actor terrorism, given their lack of association with any terrorist organisation and lack of external direction in planning an attack. Examples include John Nuttal and Amanda Korody, whose case is explored in more detail in Chapter III, and Mohammed and Shasta Sajid Khan, who in 2011 were found to be planning a terrorist attack in Manchester, UK, using an IED.

Second, it is important to note that many governments and security agencies purposely avoid the 'lone wolf' nomenclature, since it carries the potential

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22. Randy Borum, Robert Fein and Bryan Vossekuil, 'A Dimensional Approach to Analyzing Lone Offender Terrorism', *Aggression and Violent Behavior* (Vol. 17, 2012), pp. 389–96.

23. COT, 'Lone-Wolf Terrorism'.

to glorify or lend an aura of power to attackers who are otherwise powerless and often ineffectual. This is something that was affirmed to the authors by security officials, who highlighted how the terminology has been adopted and elevated by groups of many different ideological stripes. The media's continuing tendency to use the term 'lone wolf', however, suggests that a greater public relations push is needed in order to change public perceptions.

In light of these considerations, the authors recommend using the term 'lone actor', defined as an individual or couple who commits or prepares for, or is suspected of committing or preparing for, violent acts in support of an ideological group or movement, but does so outside of a recognised command structure.

### **Lone-Actor Profile**

In much the same way that it is difficult to define a profile of terrorists more generally, there is no single profile offered for lone actors. Some features, however, dominate the discourse on the subject. For example, Spaaij and Eby both conclude that there is no evidence to suggest that lone-actor terrorists are economically or socially disadvantaged. Indeed, Spaaij notes that they tend to be 'relatively well-educated and relatively socially advantaged'.<sup>24</sup>

In the cases of Anders Behring Breivik, Nidal Malik Hasan (who was responsible for the massacre at Fort Hood, Texas, in November 2009) and Khalid Aldawsari (a Saudi student living in Lubbock, Texas, who was planning a bombing when he was arrested in early 2011 by American federal authorities), all possessed at least one university degree. As Eby puts it, 'literature shows that terrorists need not be disadvantaged to turn to terrorism' – and his dataset of American cases affirms this.<sup>25</sup> Other authors simply point out that 'lone wolf terrorists are not necessarily lower-class residents with no prospect of social mobility', and are 'as likely to be employed as unemployed'.<sup>26</sup>

Eby's data further show no evidence of female lone actors, something reflected in the conclusions of Gruenewald et al.: 'as expected ... suspects were overwhelmingly white males'.<sup>27</sup> Although the study focuses exclusively on far-right terrorism, the relative absence of females is interesting. This male bias is further reflected in Paul Gill's findings, based on his work with the International Center for the Study of Terrorism (ICST), which determined that there is 'no uniform profile of lone actor terrorists' except that they are heavily 'male oriented'.<sup>28</sup>

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24. Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*.

25. Eby, 'The Nation that Cried Lone Wolf'.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Gruenewald et al., 'Far-Right Lone Wolf Homicides in the United States'.

28. Paul Gill, 'Seven Findings on Lone-Actor Terrorists', Extremis Project, International Center for the Study of Terrorism, 6 February 2013, <<http://extremisproject.org/2013/02/>

There have been known instances of female lone actors – such as Roshonara Choudhry in the UK, who in 2010 attempted to murder Stephen Timms MP as ‘punishment’ for voting in favour of the Iraq War, seven years earlier. However, such cases appear to be rare, particularly in North America. Overall, the academic literature on this subject offers no clear examples of female lone-actor terrorists within the various datasets, although Colleen LaRose – who is also known as ‘Jihad Jane’ and was sentenced in 2014 by an American court to ten years for terrorism-related crimes, including conspiracy to commit murder and providing material support to terrorists – is the closest example. While she may have operated in a vacuum in the real world around her, in her online world she was deeply enmeshed in a radical community, using it to identify individuals in Europe and elsewhere with whom she later met.

Gruenewald et al. and Eby also offer some thoughts on the factor of age. Focusing on lone-actor ‘cells’ (or ‘lone-wolf packs’), Gruenewald et al. claim that members are on average twenty-one years of age, while ‘loners’ (isolated individuals in his definition) tended to be in their late thirties.<sup>29</sup> Eby’s dataset of cases of lone-actor terrorism, meanwhile, offers a mean average age of 35.44 years, but reflects a spread from fifteen to eighty-eight years.<sup>30</sup>

Gruenewald et al. also highlight that around half of the far-right terrorists examined in their study had ‘evidence of prior arrests’.<sup>31</sup> Using a much more limited data-driven approach, Fredholm found that of the sixteen within his dataset, ‘a full quarter ... already had criminal records before their arrest for terrorist offences’, suggesting that many lone actors are in fact known to authorities.<sup>32</sup> The point is that if individuals are already within security-service systems, they ought to be easier to track.

Some of the literature reaches broad conclusions about profiles of lone actors that are distinguishable according to ideology – in other words, that there are differences, for example, between right-wing lone actors and Sunni Islamist lone actors. Gruenewald et al. focus on lone wolves in a right-wing context, drawing some interesting and ideologically specific conclusions, and these are supported by ICST’s research, which concludes that ‘despite the diversity of lone-actor terrorists, there were distinguishable differences between ideological subgroups’.<sup>33</sup> This is worth quoting in full:<sup>34</sup>

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seven-findings-on-lone-actor-terrorists/>, accessed 19 January 2015.

29. Gruenewald et al., ‘Far-Right Lone Wolf Homicides in the United States’.

30. Eby, ‘The Nation that Cried Lone Wolf’.

31. Gruenewald et al., ‘Far-Right Lone Wolf Homicides in the United States’.

32. Michael Fredholm, ‘Hunting Lone Wolves – Finding Islamist Lone Actors before They Strike’, Stockholm Seminar on Lone Wolf Terrorism, 2011.

33. Gill, ‘Seven Findings on Lone-Actor Terrorists’.

34. *Ibid.*

Al-Qaeda-related offenders were younger and were more likely to be students, seek legitimization from epistemic authority figures, learn through virtual sources and display command and control links. They were less likely to have criminal convictions.

Right-wing offenders were more likely to be unemployed and less likely to have any university experience, make verbal statements to friends and family about their intent or beliefs, engage in dry-runs or obtain help in procuring weaponry.

Single-issue offenders were more likely to be married, have criminal convictions, have a history of mental illness, provide specific pre-event warnings and engage in dry-runs. They were less likely to learn through virtual sources or be depicted as being socially isolated.

Bakker and de Graaf agree that there is 'no single profile for a lone actor. Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish between different categories of lone-actor terrorists based on their ideological or religious background.'<sup>35</sup> However, they offer no specific empirical data in support of this conclusion.

One factor that is suggested in more empirical datasets is that a specific personal frustration is visible in most lone actors and might offer a way of profiling them. A study by McCauley, Moskalenko and Van Son comparing 'lone wolves' with school shooters and assassins identifies four characteristics that appear more frequently than others – 'depression, grievance, unfreezing, and history of weapons use outside the military' – and suggest that it might be prudent to focus on these when looking at lone-actor cases.<sup>36</sup> Specifically, 'recent studies of lone wolf terrorists ... indicate disproportionate levels of grievance, unfreezing, and mental disorder'.<sup>37</sup> 'Unfreezing' in this context refers to some personal crisis when an individual loses the everyday reassurance of relationships and routines.<sup>38</sup> The cases in the UK of Nicky Reilly, in 2011, and Andrew Ibrahim, in 2008, are instructive in this regard. Reilly came from a broken home and his older brother was incarcerated on narcotics charges, while Ibrahim led a chaotic life, flitting between one addiction and another. Ibrahim rejected his middle class upbringing, instead choosing to live in welfare accommodation; he drifted between poverty and substance abuse. Both men therefore appear to have undergone personal crises, and both seem to have decided that in the short-to-medium term, they should to channel their energies into terrorist activity.

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35. Edwin Bakker and Beatrice de Graaf, 'Preventing Lone Wolf Terrorism: Some CT Approaches Addressed', *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Vol. 5, No. 5–6, 2011).

36. McCauley, Moskalenko and Van Son, 'Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders'.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, 'Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual from Radical Opinion to Radical Action', *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Vol. 26, No. 1, 2014), pp. 69–85.

Drawing on his albeit limited dataset of fifteen individuals, Petter Nesser concludes that ‘personal frustrations appear to have been an important factor behind the ideological radicalization’<sup>39</sup> of the individuals he counts as lone actors. On the other hand, ICST’s dataset of 119 shows ‘a wide range of activities and experiences preceded lone actors’ plots or events’<sup>40</sup>, illustrating the difficulty of drawing definitive profiles of lone-actor terrorists when considering larger datasets.

### **Contributing Factors**

#### *The Role of the Internet*

Follow-up investigations into known lone-actor terrorism cases have often revealed evidence of substantial online activity. The use of the Internet by lone-actor terrorists to access ideological texts – such as the radical sermons and material of Islamist cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki – is well known, but the role of the Internet in lone-actor cases can often be more extensive than simply providing access to such material.

In addition to accessing more practical information such as instructions for making bombs or suicide vests (as in the cases of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev – one of the Boston Marathon bombers in 2013 – and Andrew Ibrahim), many lone-actor terrorists are active in radical Internet forums or seek to spread their views and opinions via the Internet ahead of the attacks. Anders Behring Breivik, for instance, regularly posted in far-right forums, and in the hours before his attack mailed his compendium ‘2083: A European Declaration of Independence’ to 1,000 selected recipients active in anti-Muslim and right-wing networks.<sup>41</sup>

An unusually disturbing case is offered by the example of Krenar Lusha who was arrested by police in Derby in August 2008 following a series of arrests in nearby Blackburn. Investigating a claim of the establishment of Al-Qa’ida in Britain, police tracked down Ishaq Kanmi, whose arrest led them to another extremist online, who was apparently offering himself as a suicide bomber. Through tracking this individual down, authorities were able to locate Lusha, an Albanian Muslim immigrant living in Derby. Until then, he had not featured in any investigations and was generally seen positively by his co-workers and acquaintances. However, Lusha’s online activity demonstrated his extremist interests; indeed, he had collected some preliminary bomb-making materials and videos. The case highlights the importance of the Internet not only for the individual plotter, but also for authorities in providing an investigative avenue.

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39. Petter Nesser, ‘Single Actor Terrorism: Scope, Characteristics and Explanations’, *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Vol. 6, No. 6, 2012).

40. Gill, ‘Seven Findings on Lone-Actor Terrorists’.

41. Mattias Gardell, ‘Crusader Dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the Quest for a Monocultural Europe’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Vol. 26, No. 1, January 2014).

Indeed, academics covered in the literature review and many practitioners interviewed for this study consider the Internet to be a driver of the threat posed by lone actors: some see it as an accelerator while others consider it to be a surrogate world that contains detached figures who are able to provide direction of a sort to potential lone-actor terrorists.

The most common view among academics and practitioners is that the Internet provides a surrogate community, or 'support structure',<sup>42</sup> for lone actors. The fact that such individuals interact with others through online communities leads Weimann to suggest that 'lone wolves are not really alone. They are linked, networked or communicated with through the Internet.'<sup>43</sup>

In providing an alternative community to such individuals, the Internet also considerably complicates analysis of direction and motivations. What, for example, is to be made of the case of Nicky Reilly who seems to have been in contact with unidentified individuals online who were feeding him ideas about what to do? It was never clarified whether he was in touch with a single individual, whether the individual(s) was affiliated with any group, whether it was all a prank on their behalf, or whether Reilly was reading more than intended into the communications. The picture regarding the direction provided via an online community is unclear, though there is no denying that the Internet was significant in Reilly's action.

Some think that the Internet plays a more obvious supporting role, with Jason Leigh-Striegheer concluding that it provides lone actors with 'arms and targets'.<sup>44</sup> PET suggests that this is true in ideological terms as well, since 'when it comes to solo as well as lone actor terrorism, the individuals are typically inspired by militant Islamist ideologies, for instance acquired through the Internet'.<sup>45</sup> ITAC suggests a more tactical role for the Internet, which it describes as 'providing ideological motivation, encouragement, justification, target information, and instruction on techniques – and all in an anonymous environment'.<sup>46</sup>

While there is widespread agreement that the Internet plays an important role as a driver or facilitator, therefore, on the response side it has been suggested that it may also provide opportunities to catch potential lone-

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42. Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism*.

43. Gabriel Weimann, 'Lone Wolves in Cyberspace', *Journal of Terrorism Research* (Vol. 3, No. 2, 2012).

44. Jason-Leigh Striegheer, 'Early Detection of the Lone Wolf: Advancement of Counterterrorism Investigations with an Absence or Abundance of Information and Intelligence', *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* (Vol. 8, No. 1, May 2013), pp. 35–53.

45. PET and Center for Terroranalyse, 'The Threat from Solo Terrorism and Lone Wolf Terrorism'.

46. ITAC, 'Lone-Wolf Attacks: A Developing Islamist Extremist Strategy?'

actor terrorists – something seemingly confirmed by the number individuals recently detected in Canada in part through the efforts of Canadian intelligence agencies in monitoring the Internet.<sup>47</sup> FOI also claims that, ‘There is a good possibility that [lone wolves] leave digital traces in the form of weak signals that can be gathered, fused, and analyzed.’<sup>48</sup> In fact, from their perspective, the fact that ‘many lone actor terrorists are only loners in their offline life, makes the Internet an incredibly important source for finding them’.<sup>49</sup> In the wake of Pavlo Lapshyn’s one-man anti-Muslim terror campaign in Birmingham in 2013 – during which time he stabbed one elderly man to death and detonated three, increasingly large bombs outside mosques in Birmingham and its environs – authorities discovered that Lapshyn was very active on far-right Ukrainian- and Russian-language forums, traces that might have led authorities to him, had they been attentive to them. This might have been a needle in a haystack, but at the same time it highlights the traces such individuals may leave behind.

There is one area in which much of the literature exploring lone actors and the Internet is deficient: the absence of empirical evidence or data about how individuals have used the Internet and how this might differ from how it is used by networked terrorists. Two publications from 2013 stand out in this regard: RAND Europe’s report ‘Radicalisation in the Digital Era’,<sup>50</sup> and a journal article by Cohen et al., ‘Detecting Linguistic Markers from Radical Violence in Social Media’, which is a rare example of research dedicated to detecting linguistic markers for radical violence on the Internet and in social media.<sup>51</sup>

### *Mental Health*

It is widely speculated that lone-actor terrorists suffer from greater degrees of mental illness than either the general population or the broader community of terrorists. This conclusion seems to be supported empirically and anecdotally by the literature, although authors typically emphasise that it should not be taken as an indicator, nor should it automatically suggest a greater or lesser hazard posed by the individual.

Most compellingly, Gruenewald et al., Eby and COT’s empirical datasets suggest that ‘mental health issues are more common amongst lone

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47. Interview with law-enforcement officers conducted as part of fieldwork, January 2014.

48. Joel Brynielsson et al., ‘Analysis of Weak Signals for Detecting Lone Wolf Terrorists’, Swedish Defence Research Agency at European Intelligence and Security Informatics Conference, 2012.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Charlie Edwards et al., ‘Radicalisation in the Digital Era: The Use of the Internet in 15 Cases of Terrorism and Extremism’, RAND Corporation, May 2013, <[http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR453.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR453.html)>, accessed 19 January 2015.

51. Katie Cohen et al., ‘Detecting Linguistic Markers for Radical Violence in Social Media’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Vol. 26, No. 1, 2014), pp. 246–56.

wolves'.<sup>52</sup> Eby points out that it is not a 'clear majority', but of the fifty-three cases he profiled, ten showed evidence of a possible mental disorder.<sup>53</sup> The analysis by Gruenewald et al. of the far right in the US concludes that there is 'evidence that slightly over 40 per cent of far-right loners had experienced mental health issues. Open source information also revealed that less than half of lone wolves experienced such issues and only around 3 per cent of lone wolf pack members had mental health issues.'<sup>54</sup> By 'loners', the authors are specifically referring to individuals who attempt to undertake terrorist activity, but who have no prior connections to, or have received no direction from, terrorist groups.

In many of the recent well-known cases of successful lone-actor terrorist attacks, pleas of the perpetrator's diminished responsibility as a result of mental health issues were ultimately rejected, even in cases where psychological problems were identified. Perhaps notably, the court trying Breivik for the 2011 Norway attacks considered him to be suffering from 'narcissistic personality characteristics' but not psychosis.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, following the Fort Hood shootings in 2009, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, himself a psychologist, was found to be sane and fit to stand trial, though the US Army conceded that prior to the incident Hasan had been subject to ongoing assessment for psychiatric issues including depression, anxiety and difficulty sleeping.<sup>56</sup> Similar notes can be found about many of the cases highlighted in this paper.

Two other factors highlighted in the literature are that individuals who become lone-actor terrorists tend to be alienated, and in some cases show evidence of extreme narcissism. Spaaij observes both traits to be present in his dataset,<sup>57</sup> while Simon notes the same in his writing.<sup>58</sup> Using its dataset of 119, ICST finds that 'many but not all lone-actor terrorists were socially isolated', though it is not clear how this was defined.<sup>59</sup>

As noted earlier, McCauley et al., looking at other datasets and using their model of comparison with lone assassins or school shooters, highlight 'grievance, unfreezing and mental disorder'<sup>60</sup> as three traits that are disproportionately represented among lone actors, ultimately echoing much of the prevailing wisdom without categorically declaring mental unfitness as a defining feature.

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52. COT, 'Lone-Wolf Terrorism'.

53. Eby, 'The Nation that Cried Lone Wolf'.

54. Gruenewald et al., 'Far-Right Lone Wolf Homicides in the United States'.

55. *BBC News*, 'Anders Behring Breivik: Norway Court Finds Him Sane', 24 August 2012.

56. Lisa Maria Garza, 'U.S. Army Names Fort Hood Shooter, Says Had Mental Illness', *Reuters*, 3 April 2014.

57. Spaaij, 'Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism'.

58. Simon, 'Lone Wolf Terrorism'.

59. Gill, 'Seven Findings on Lone-Actor Terrorists'.

60. McCauley, Moskalenko and Van Son, 'Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders'.

### **How Alone are Lone Actors?**

There is a general consensus among authors and practitioners that the absence of outside direction, and of command and control, is one of the key features of lone actors, separating them from networked terrorist plots. As Barnes summarises, 'Rather than a strict "command and control" relationship with a broader organization, these individuals have undertaken terrorist plots with little or no outside involvement from other terrorist groups'.<sup>61</sup>

There are questions regarding how such individuals interact with the radical milieu around them. Some suggest that the individuals identified as lone wolves often seek out groups to join, but Eby draws on his dataset of fifty-three American individuals to conclude that 'lone wolf terrorists rarely attempted to meet other extremists for any kind of support prior to or during the planning period for their attacks'.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, he notes that almost a fifth of his dataset made contact with others.<sup>63</sup>

A final fact is worth highlighting: ICST's empirical conclusions reveal that 'in the time leading up to most lone-actor terrorist events, evidence suggests that other people generally knew about the offender's grievance, extremist ideology, views and/or intent to engage in violence'.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, 'lone actor terrorists regularly engaged in a detectable and observable range of behaviours and activities with a wider pressure group, social movement or terrorist organizations'.<sup>65</sup> This suggests there is some level of visible interaction between lone actors and the communities they identify with, offering an angle of entry for security agencies.

### **Lone-Actor Terrorism within Canada**

In summary, lone-actor terrorism presents the government with a complex threat that requires further research and analysis. The RCMP's integrated national-security enforcement teams (INSETs), with support from CSIS, provide an excellent focal point for such research, since identifying relevant cases and understanding the potential scale of the threat within each distinctive region and province would be hugely beneficial to practitioners.

During fieldwork interviews, government and law-enforcement officials openly acknowledged that the threat of lone-actor terrorism is not well understood within the Canadian context, and significant confusion exists over the meaning and classification of the term.

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61. Beau D Barnes, 'Confronting the One-Man Wolf Pack: Adapting Law Enforcement and Prosecution Responses to the Threat of Lone Wolf Terrorism', *Boston University Law Review* (Vol. 92, No. 1613, 2012), p. 1613.

62. Eby, 'The Nation that Cried Lone Wolf'.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Gill, 'Seven Findings on Lone-Actor Terrorists'.

65. *Ibid.*

A key finding of the authors' research was that lone-actor terrorism was less of a focus or current priority for the RCMP than for CSIS. While lone-actor cases may be rare in each of Canada's regions and provinces, when grouped together and viewed at the strategic, national level, the issue may be more extensive than the RCMP currently suspects. It would also suggest that the degree to which information and lessons are shared between the two organisations requires improvement.

It is difficult to ascertain whether this low priority can be attributed to the absence of lone-actor cases in Canada or a lack of awareness of the extent of the problem. The challenge of ensuring that relevant agencies remain vigilant to the lone-actor threat was neatly summed up by former Assistant Director of CSIS Andy Ellis, who in a 2011 speech suggested, 'We must keep in mind the lone-wolf or stray-dog threat ... These lone actors are some of the hardest to detect and investigate'.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, RCMP officers generally considered the debate over lone-actor terrorism to be overly academic, reliant on theories from other countries and with only a limited number of cases in Canada they could refer to. However, virtually every interviewee spoken to could name numerous cases that resembled lone-actor terrorism, examples of 'close calls' and plots that almost materialised, or instances of radicalised individuals who were known to hold violent, extremist beliefs but who ultimately had not acted on these views.

Given the array of different cases cited across the country there is reason to suspect that, because the details of these cases are often not shared or publicised (even internally, within the RCMP), the true scale and scope of the problem is underestimated.

Furthermore, use of the term 'lone-actor terrorism' proved to be problematic during our fieldwork, reflecting the wider conceptual challenges outlined above. Definitions from RCMP officers varied significantly, with confusion surrounding the overlaps with other categories such as letter-writers, online threat-makers, fixated individuals and school shooters.

While RCMP members recognised a 'spectrum' of association and contact with other individuals and groups, officers also conceded that they had only limited knowledge of tools and indicators they could use to identify potential lone-actor terrorists and to distinguish their activities from those of networked terrorists, hate criminals and so on.

Perceptions of lone actors generally aligned with the features identified across the literature. The two most frequent assumptions made about lone

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66. Colin Freeze, "'Lone wolf' Terrorists a Real Threat to Canada, CSIS Official Warns', *Globe and Mail*, 10 November 2011.

actors were that such cases were associated with mental health problems, and primarily affected Muslim communities.

On the first point, interviewees believed lone actors were generally mentally ill or at least social misfits, thereby making it as much a social issue as one of national security. This made it difficult to distinguish lone-actor terrorists from, in the words of one interviewee, 'oddballs and mentally ill individuals' issuing violent threats.<sup>67</sup> Second, the issue was thought to be linked mainly to radical Islam, necessitating a focus of efforts (approximately 80 to 90 per cent according to one interviewee) on Muslim, and particularly Somali, communities.<sup>68</sup>

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67. Interview with law-enforcement officer conducted as part of fieldwork, January 2014.

68. Interview with law-enforcement practitioner conducted as part of fieldwork, January 2014. It is worth noting that the Somali question may reflect a transient focus. A number of individuals from Canada have joined Al-Shabaab, but more recently it appears that there is a larger flow of would-be fighters towards Syria. Anecdotal conversations with members of the Canadian authorities since the report was first undertaken suggest that the number of foreign fighters travelling to Syria is becoming a major preoccupation for them.

### III. The Community-Based Policing Approach to Counter-Terrorism

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- Community-based policing plays a valuable role in preventing and countering terrorism threats, particularly those emanating from lone actors
- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) National Security Community Outreach programme has been active since 2006
- The RCMP's unique structure and remit could be better leveraged to learn lessons on community engagement across the force
- The main activity of the community outreach co-ordinators assigned to each Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) involves establishing networks of key contacts within each community
- Project Smooth is a good example of how community engagement can complement other investigative approaches.

Given the often diffuse, disparate and clandestine nature of the threat, protecting the public from terrorism in general and lone-actor terrorism in particular has become a major and ever-more challenging task for law-enforcement agencies worldwide. Promoting the idea that countering terrorism is a responsibility shared by all members of society, and in an attempt to stop individuals from turning to violent extremist beliefs in the first place, police forces increasingly seek the co-operation and collaboration of members of the public.

A key component of the formulation and implementation of many national counter-terrorism policies is therefore police engagement with the public at the community level. The community-based policing model is very familiar to RCMP officers, who have been using the approach for many years as part of their overall practice. While such an approach does not guarantee the suppression of all domestic terrorist threats, it is nevertheless cited by numerous governments in their national strategies as an important way to counter violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, particularly among vulnerable young people.

'Prevent' activities and similar aspects of counter-terrorism strategies advocate the adoption of a community-based approach to policing, which pursues national counter-terrorism objectives and policies through implementing locally driven, collaborative initiatives. There are typically two principal objectives to such an approach: strengthening community cohesion and resilience, and enlisting the support of communities in counter-terrorism policies and measures.

First, community-based approaches are founded on the notion that terrorism can be prevented by increasing a community's cohesion and resilience. Such initiatives therefore aim to build tolerant communities where individuals are unlikely to embrace violent extremism and terrorist ideologies, as well as to build community resilience to withstand, respond to and recover from a wide range of adverse events such as conflict and the development of tensions between different groups within the community, or with other communities.

Second, community-based approaches aim to strengthen public confidence in, and support for, counter-terrorism policies and measures – including police activities. They seek to provide opportunities and mechanisms for increased transparency of, accessibility to and consultation in police operations, activities and decision-making. This helps to increase the legitimacy and level of public trust in law-enforcement agencies which, in turn, increases the likelihood of members of the public reporting suspicious individuals, incidents and behaviour.

Community-based policing therefore offers particular advantages for helping to counter the threat from lone actors. With limited intelligence or evidence linking individuals to known groups and operations, law-enforcement agencies must instead rely on members of the public to act as the first line of defence, reporting suspicious individuals and activity. This strategy relies on a degree of trust between communities and the law-enforcement agencies that serve them.

A successful community-based approach to counter-terrorism can be characterised by a sustained, collaborative and trust-based relationship between the community and the police, whereby officers are more closely integrated into the community, the community's specific concerns and dynamics are known and understood, and the level of community participation in community safety and security is increased. Other features of community-based policing include:

- Formal structures designed to increase communication and trust between communities and public authorities
- Community support for, and involvement in, the formulation, implementation and evaluation of various strategies, policies and measures
- Counter-terrorism efforts being framed in relation to community safety concerns, rather than specifically tied to national security.

The adoption of a community-based approach to policing often requires significant organisational, procedural and cultural changes to be made within police forces. Internally, this can involve a certain degree of decentralisation of decision-making and resource management, changes in training and

### **The Key Principles of Community-Based Policing to Counter-Terrorism**

As outlined by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the key principles of community-based policing are:

- Be visible and accessible to the public
- Know, and be known by, the public
- Engage, mobilise and partner with communities
- Listen to communities' concerns
- Respond to communities' needs
- Respect and protect the rights of all community members
- Be accountable for their actions and the outcome of those actions.

*Source: OSCE, Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach (Vienna: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, February 2014), p. 76.*

mentoring to introduce new skills, the allocation of additional resources to visible and easily accessible police facilities, the long-term deployment of officers to particular communities and neighbourhoods, and closer collaboration between local police officers and between departments.

Externally, the implementation of community-based policing entails encouraging citizen input through organising inter- and intra-community meetings and forums, establishing formal structures for co-operation with other police forces and government agencies in order to divide responsibilities and avoid duplication, and allocating time and resources to participating in outreach and other community events and activities.

A final common challenge to implementing community-based policing is overcoming past tensions, anti-government sentiments, or a history of misperceptions on the part of both the community and law-enforcement agencies. This is particularly true in areas where there is a high immigrant population, whose members may previously have had poor experiences with police forces in their country of origin, who might have had less regard for human rights and community concerns.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous proven benefits to a community-based policing approach to countering terrorism. As noted, such initiatives can strengthen community cohesion and enable its leaders to act pre-emptively to divert its young people from extremist views and action. Other advantages include a higher degree of police communication (allowing communities to better understand the terrorism threat and convey their own concerns) and public engagement (with enduring trust in policing services delivered through consent).

Community-based policing can benefit terrorism prevention through:

- Improving public perceptions of and interaction with the police
- Improving police communication with the public on counter-terrorism
- Increasing public vigilance and resilience
- Enhancing police understanding of communities
- Helping to identify and address community safety issues and grievances
- Facilitating timely identification and referral of critical situations.

*Source: OSCE, Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism, p. 76.*

Finally, the greater opportunities for interaction between the public and police as a result of community-based policing can facilitate the sharing of information and intelligence. The public is an important source of intelligence for the police, and higher levels of trust and confidence in law-enforcement agencies will lead to an increase in the quantity and quality of information provided voluntarily by members of the public in support of police action.

That said, the use of community-based policing for intelligence purposes also represents one of its greatest risks. The term 'intelligence' has negative connotations among certain communities, and the idea that police forces are 'spying' on communities can significantly undermine public trust and support, potentially irreversibly damaging police–community relations. While one of the aims of this approach is indeed to encourage the public to be forthcoming with information on threats, the relationship between the police and the community must not be relied on or exploited for the purposes of intelligence collection.

A related risk is the danger of unintentionally targeting and marginalising certain communities, particularly as the result of poorly designed or executed policies, which may do more to undermine police–community relations than an absence of policy. In order to be effective, outreach cannot exclusively constitute a counter-terrorism issue, and wider community security and safety concerns must be taken into account. Additionally, the use of stop-and-search powers, covert operations and intelligence-gathering methods, while aiming to increase community safety, may run the risk of police activities being perceived as marginalising or even stigmatising particular individuals and communities. Table 1 (see opposite) sets out a selection of community-based approaches adopted by overseas governments to counter-terrorism.

**Table 1:** Overseas Examples of Community-Based Approaches to Counter-Terrorism.

	United States	United Kingdom	Netherlands
<b>Policy</b>	‘Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism’ is an outreach-based strategy for reducing the threat of violent extremism in the US. One of its aims is to support communities in grassroots efforts to prevent violent extremism, through strengthening co-operation with local law-enforcement agencies	In 2011 the UK published its updated Prevent strategy, with the aim of stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The strategy foresees the use of neighbourhood policing teams and other community-engagement activities to identify and support individuals vulnerable to radicalisation	The Dutch ‘National Counterterrorism Strategy 2011–2015’ integrates all public policies in relation to terrorism and radicalisation. Counter-violent extremism strategies are typically ‘de-centralised’, with local authorities responsible for signalling, preventing and fighting radicalisation in their municipality
<b>Initiative</b>	Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) initiative	Channel programme	Integrated Security Management Matrix (Matrix Integrale Veiligheidszorg)
<b>Focus</b>	Outreach	Intervention	Collaboration
<b>Detail</b>	The BCOT initiative, implemented in over fifteen urban areas across the US, features community roundtables hosted by police chiefs, sheriffs’ departments, and ‘fusion centers’ (inter-agency information-sharing centres). These roundtables offer the chance to understand and respond to community concerns, and to encourage community leaders and local law-enforcement officers to share responsibility for addressing the prevention of crime and terrorism in their neighbourhoods	Channel is a multi-agency approach to provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist-related activity. Channel uses existing collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners (such as the education and health sectors, social services, children’s and youth services and offender-management services), the police and the local community to identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism, assess the nature and extent of that risk, and develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned	In collaboration with local authorities, community police officers organise meetings that bring together representatives of the community to identify the most significant safety and security issues affecting the municipality or a particular neighbourhood. The objective of the meeting is to jointly identify a number of priorities they will try to tackle together over a given period of time within a matrix. Community police officers also provide an analysis of local issues based on personal knowledge of the community, demographic and socioeconomic data, crime data and other police records

Sources: Department of Homeland Security, ‘Building Communities of Trust’ fact sheet, <<http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cve-as/building-communities-of-trust-fact-sheet.pdf>>; HM Government, ‘Channel: Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism’, <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/118194/channel-guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118194/channel-guidance.pdf)>; Community Policing Preventing Radicalisation & Terrorism Collection of Good Practice, <<http://www.coppra.eu/dl%5CGoodpractices.pdf>>.

### **The RCMP and National Security**

Under the strategic priority of ensuring national security, the RCMP's National Security Criminal Investigations (NSCI) Program aims to reduce the threat of terrorist criminal activity in Canada by 'preventing, detecting, investigating, and gathering evidence to support the prosecution of those involved in national security-related criminal acts'.<sup>1</sup>

While offering a broad definition of threats to national security as 'anything that impacts the fabric of Canadian society', the focus of the NSCI is to combat 'espionage or sabotage against Canada; foreign influenced activities detrimental to the interests of Canada; activities directed towards or in support of the threat or use of acts of serious violence against Canadians for political, religious or ideological objectives; and, activities leading to the destruction or overthrow by violence of the government of Canada'.<sup>2</sup>

A number of sections and directorates in the NSCI collectively support, coordinate and direct national-security efforts. The roles and responsibilities of some of these sections are provided in Table 2 (see opposite).

Two key organisational components of the NSCI programme are the INSETs and national security enforcement sections (NSESs). While NSESs comprise solely RCMP employees, INSETs comprise representatives from the RCMP, federal partners and agencies such as CSIS and the Canada Border Services Agency, as well as provincial and municipal police services. Centrally controlled by National Headquarters, INSETs are strategically based in six locations across the country: Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

By bringing together federal, provincial and municipal police and intelligence resources, INSETs are designed to increase the capacity of the RCMP to collect, share and analyse intelligence among partners, in order to undertake national-security criminal investigations into terrorist activities in partnership with both domestic and foreign agencies; collect, share and analyse information in support of criminal investigations and threat assessments; and, notably, enhance prevention measures against the threat of terrorism.

Specifically, the mandate of an INSET is to:

- Increase the capacity to collect, share and analyse intelligence among partners on individuals who are a threat to national security

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1. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 'National Security Criminal Investigations Program', 2014, <<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ns-ci-ecsn/index-eng.htm>>, accessed 20 January 2015.

2. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 'Strategic Priority: National Security', 2012, <<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/terr/index-eng.htm>>, accessed 20 January 2015.

**Table 2: NSCI Units and Initiatives.**

<b>NSCI Team or Unit</b>	<b>Primary Responsibility</b>
<b>Anti-Terrorist Financing Team</b>	Assesses, co-ordinates, monitors, and provides operational support and progress reporting on established national priorities for financing activities associated with terrorism
<b>Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Team</b>	Examines physical and cyber threats to critical infrastructure; gathers information from industry and law-enforcement agencies about suspicious incidents that may have a nexus to national security Provides analysis and intelligence about national-security threats to the Canadian border from extremist groups and other harmful entities
<b>National Security Border Integrity Unit</b>	Provides analysis and intelligence about national-security threats to the Canadian border from extremist groups and other harmful entities
<b>National Security Legislative Affairs</b>	Provides a centrally co-ordinated response to issues arising from public inquiries and civil litigation stemming from RCMP national-security criminal investigations
<b>National Security Threat Assessment Section</b>	Monitors events, investigations and intelligence reports in order to identify and evaluate potential threats and prepare threat assessments on national-security issues
<b>Operational Research</b>	Identifies, articulates, researches and translates complex international security realities into domestic intelligence in support of national-security criminal investigations
<b>Passenger Protect</b>	Prevents individuals who may pose a threat to aviation security from boarding commercial airline flights within, destined for, or departing from Canada
<b>National Security Community Outreach</b>	Engages the communities most impacted by RCMP national-security criminal investigations; builds trust and encourages ongoing dialogue about key issues of concern related to national security
<b>Counter Terrorism Information Officer Initiative</b>	Provides front-line police officers and other first responders with terrorism-awareness training

Source: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 'The RCMP and Canada's National Security', 2012, <<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/nsci-ecsn/nsci-ecsn-eng.htm>>.

- Create an enhanced enforcement capacity to bring such targets to justice
- Enhance partner agencies' collective ability to combat national-security threats and meet specific mandate responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

The RCMP consistently highlights the integrated nature of the INSETs as its key strength, keen to underscore the importance of greater integration of resources and intelligence in the wake of 9/11 and other terrorist incidents. INSETs are therefore seen as playing a critical role in fulfilling the objectives of Canada's counter-terrorism strategy, and were widely regarded by interviewees as a good model of co-operation.

### **The RCMP and Community Engagement**

A core function of the INSETs is to enhance prevention measures against the threat of terrorism. Recognising that law-enforcement agencies cannot effectively counter the threat of violent radicalisation through detection and police intervention alone, the RCMP has made efforts to develop initiatives as part of the 'Prevent' element of the counter-terrorism strategy, which addresses 'the factors that may motivate individuals to engage in terrorist activities'.<sup>4</sup> Such initiatives revolve primarily around community engagement; since 2006, the RCMP has been working on reaching out to and engaging with citizens to help build communities that are resilient to the kind of radical thought that could lead to violence.

The National Security Community Outreach programme encompasses the majority of the RCMP's community-engagement activities. Representing a 'comprehensive effort for all of Canada's ethnic, cultural and religious communities to take part in the protection of Canada's national security', outreach is based on the philosophy that effective counter-radicalisation programming should focus on promoting a community that is tolerant and inclusive.

The rationale behind the outreach programme is that the active engagement of citizens, and collaboration between communities and law-enforcement agencies, are essential elements in countering violent radicalisation. This approach has drawn praise, particularly from the Global Counter Terrorism Forum, which recognised that the RCMP has been able to 'build trust with local communities which had previously been distrustful of the police', through 'demonstrating cultural sensitivity [*sic*] and respect for particular cultural and religious practices'.

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3. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 'Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams', 2014, <<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/secur/insets-eisn-eng.htm>>, accessed 21 January 2015.

4. Government of Canada, *Building Resilience against Terrorism: Canada's Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, 2nd edn (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2013), <<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/rslnc-gnst-trrrsm/rslnc-gnst-trrrsm-eng.pdf>> accessed 21 January 2015.

### **The National Security Community Outreach Programme**

The RCMP describes the National Security Community Outreach initiative as being created to 'address issues raised during the O'Connor Commission of Inquiry and other national security initiatives. National Security Community Outreach is focused on engaging the communities most impacted by RCMP national security criminal investigations. By acknowledging community concerns, identifying mutual goals and practicing open and respectful communication, this effort aims to build trust and encourage ongoing dialogue about the key issues of concern related to national security'.

*Source: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 'The RCMP and Canada's National Security', 2012, <<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/nsci-ecsn/nsci-ecsn-eng.htm>>, accessed 20 January 2015.*

Community-outreach initiatives are currently considered by INSET officers to be in the early stages of development. The authors' research found that the main activity of the community-outreach co-ordinators assigned to each INSET involves establishing networks of key contacts within each community (such as religious leaders, civil-society actors and so on) in an effort to establish ongoing dialogue on key issues.

In communities where migrants may have had bad experiences of law-enforcement agencies, engagement is seen as a particular challenge, and the RCMP gives priority to basic trust-building measures and attempts to overcome community suspicions of government spying, particularly within mosques and other Islamic centres. Conscious efforts are made to convey the fact that criminal activities rather than certain communities are targeted, and ensure Muslims do not feel victimised.

Arguably, this has led in some cases to an overly cautious approach to engagement, where issues and interventions are avoided for fear of being seen to unduly target or interfere with certain communities (this is explored in Chapter V).

Other specific tasks of officers from the National Security Community Outreach programme include acting as RCMP representatives at cultural as well as targeted outreach events (such as Junior Police Officer or Youth Academy days). The officers further act as points of contact and spokespeople on behalf of the RCMP in the wake of major incidents.

### **RCMP Community Engagement: Case Studies**

The Outreach programme most closely resembles a dedicated initiative to prevent lone-actor terrorist threats to Canada. Effective community engagement

by the RCMP on the specific issues affecting communities should provide officers with an understanding of the grievances emanating from that community, and allow them to identify potential threats and offer guidance to the community on key indicators of lone-actor terrorist activity that they should be alert to. While there is some evidence that larger networked plots have come to the attention of authorities through community-engagement contacts, the RCMP will face challenges in developing an effective tripwire approach to lone-actor cases.

This section outlines four recent case studies of the RCMP's response to terrorist incidents and cases and its impact on community engagement, looking at both pre-event engagement (building trust with communities) and post-event engagement (incident management). The cases cover individuals or small groups who did not receive direction for their planned attack.

In two of the cases (Projects Samossa and Smooth), community tip-offs played an important role in helping the RCMP to identify the offenders, but in the other two (Project Souvenir and Adel Arnaout) there is limited evidence of any community information or support. The parallel pairs are offered as a way of seeing how community engagement can provide crucial support for law-enforcement agencies, while at the same time highlighting the particular difficulties that such cases pose.

#### *Project Samossa*

In August 2010, Project Samossa led to the arrests of three Canadian citizens: Hiva Mohammad Alizadeh and Misbahuddin Ahmed, both from Ottawa, and Khurram Syed Sher, of London, Ontario. All three were charged with preparing to build improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and raising money to fund IED attacks on Canadian and coalition troops in Afghanistan.

In the press briefing provided in the wake of the arrests, RCMP Chief Superintendent Serge Therriault explained that investigators had seized more than fifty electronic circuit boards designed to trigger IEDs remotely, as well as videos, schematics, drawings and manuals on the construction of IEDs. Additionally, police seized 'a vast quantity of terrorist literature and instructional material ... showing that the suspects had the intent to construct an explosive device for terrorist purposes'.<sup>5</sup>

Each of the suspects had received some form of scientific training. Ahmed had been an X-ray technician at an Ottawa hospital; Alizadeh had studied electrical engineering technology at Red River College in Winnipeg; while Sher had been an anatomical pathologist at St Thomas Elgin General Hospital near London, Ontario. In August 2014, Sher was found not guilty; Ahmed and

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5. CTV News, 'Terror Suspects Planned to Build Bombs: RCMP', 26 August 2010, <<http://www.ctvnews.ca/terror-suspects-planned-to-build-bombs-rcmp-1.546264>> accessed 21 January 2015.

Alizadeh were convicted of terrorism related offences. Court documents from 2013 indicate that a CSIS undercover source and intelligence supplied by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the UK's London Metropolitan Police helped to build the case against the suspects.<sup>6</sup>

Relatively few details on the preparations and *modus operandi* of the suspects have ever been revealed by the RCMP; the degree to which they can be classified as 'lone actors' is also uncertain. Chief Superintendent Therriault stated that they formed 'a terrorist group, as it is defined in the Criminal Code of Canada', and had links to another group in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> While it is unclear whether or not they received orders and direction from this or any other group, there is evidence that one of the individuals had previously received training in building and detonating electronic and explosive devices.

There are no indications that RCMP community outreach was involved prior to uncovering the plot; in the wake of the arrests, its outreach activities appear to have generated a significant amount of controversy. In the days and weeks following the arrests, representatives from the Ottawa INSET community-outreach team organised meetings with Muslim groups in order to address their concerns over the incident.

Some controversy arose after Salma Siddiqui, a participant at one of the meetings, alleged that RCMP and Ottawa police officials had issued an apology during one of these meetings for arresting the men during the holy month of Ramadan. 'When you tell the community that there is no disrespect meant by making the arrests during Ramadan what is the RCMP doing but apologizing. An apology is an apology is an apology,' said Siddiqui.<sup>8</sup> The RCMP denied the claims, with Francois Bidal, commanding officer for A Division, claiming that the reports were 'simply not correct'.<sup>9</sup>

The incident drew the attention of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who underlined his expectation that the law is enforced regardless of religious holidays. 'In fairness, this is an operation matter of the RCMP and I wouldn't pretend to know all details and aspects of the story ... But the general

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6. Jim Bronskill, 'Undercover CSIS Source, Allied Intelligence Cited in High-Profile 2010 Terror Case', *National Post*, 17 May 2013, <<http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/05/17/undercover-csis-source-allied-intelligence-cited-in-high-profile-2010-terror-case/>>, accessed 21 January 2015.

7. *CNN*, 'Canadian Domestic Terror Investigation Snares Fourth Suspect', 27 August 2010, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/08/27/canada.terror.arrests/>>, accessed 21 January 2015.

8. Brian Lilley, 'RCMP Denies Apology for Timing of Arrests', *St Thomas Times Journal*, 8 January 2011, <<http://www.stthomastimesjournal.com/2011/01/08/rcmp-denies-apology-for-timing-of-arrests>>, accessed 21 January 2015.

9. *Ibid.*

approach that this government would expect to see is that the law, our important laws, are enforced every day of the year.<sup>10</sup>

Discounting the alleged apology, the RCMP's post-event outreach approach was criticised by some Muslim Canadians as 'blind pandering'. Tarek Fatah, founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, saw it as an indication of how 'within the RCMP there are officers in authority who do not see the threat Islamism poses to our nation'.<sup>11</sup>

While the credibility of the claims against the RCMP has been questioned, the lack of clarity over the issue, combined with fact that the prime minister felt it necessary to respond to the claims, pointed to shortcomings in the communication efforts and overall community-engagement procedures of the RCMP.

#### *Project Smooth*

In September 2012, a joint operation between the RCMP and the FBI was launched, ultimately leading to the arrest of two men, Chiheb Esseghaier, a Tunisian PhD student living in Montreal, and Raed Jaser, a Palestinian refugee claimant working as a New York van driver. The pair were charged with terrorism offences relating to an attempt to derail a train between New York and Toronto travelling over the Jordan Station rail bridge.

Public reporting indicated that the plot was first brought to the attention of police by a local imam, Naseer Syed, who informed the Canadian authorities of the suspicious activities of the two men. Once the investigation was under way the Canadian authorities had the pair under constant surveillance, using two undercover officers from the FBI and RCMP to infiltrate and communicate with the suspects.

The two men were arrested in April 2013. Esseghaier and Jaser are repeatedly classified in the media and interviews as 'lone actors', although there is an equal volume of coverage of and speculation over their connections to known networks abroad. The plot has been described as 'linked' to Al-Qa'ida; it is thought that Esseghaier travelled twice to the Iranian city of Zahedan, where he allegedly may have received training, as well as 'direction and guidance' from Al-Qa'ida 'elements'.<sup>12</sup>

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10. Brian Lilley, 'PM on Ramadan Apology: Law Should Apply Every Day', *Toronto Sun*, 6 January 2011, <<http://www.torontosun.com/news/canada/2011/01/06/16785766.html>>, accessed 21 January 2015.

11. Brian Lilley, 'Mounties Apologized for Ramadan Terror Arrests', *Toronto Sun*, 5 January 2011, <<http://www.torontosun.com/news/canada/2011/01/05/16768326.html>>, accessed 21 January 2015.

12. Mark Hosenball, 'Canada Train Plot Suspect Travelled to Iran: U.S. Officials', *Reuters*, 25 April 2013.

The nature of this direction, and the degree to which the pair allegedly organised the attack alone, remains unknown. Furthermore, American authorities undertook considerable investigatory work looking into connections and possible plotting on their side of the border, though no charges were immediately identifiable.

Esseghaier was allegedly very active online; the police suspect that he extensively researched religious information and practical guidance in order to commit an act of terrorism. Both men were known within their communities for their outspoken views on Muslim issues. According to a colleague at the laboratory where he worked, Esseghaier demonstrated aggressive behaviour by tearing down posters he did not like and pestering his superiors to install a prayer room. Jaser, meanwhile, often discussed his radical views with Muslim leaders, including Mohamed Ali, a part-time imam at the Masjid Al-Faisal mosque in Toronto, and Muhammad Robert Heft, who was approached by Jaser's father over concerns he had about his son's behaviour.

Immediately after the arrests and before the press was notified, it was decided that details of the arrests should first be announced to a community committee in Montreal where Esseghaier was based. The committee, made up of leaders, religious figures and other prominent personnel, was given as much detail as possible which could be passed on and used to provide answers to any questions community members might have.

This was the first time something of this nature had been attempted, and was universally hailed in interviews conducted by the research team as a great success. Community members appreciated the proactive efforts of the RCMP to brief the community before the press. From the RCMP's point of view, it was seen a trust-building exercise designed to assure the community that it was the criminal 'activity' being targeted rather than the community itself. This trust-building effort was seen as key for gaining future community co-operation.

Overall, Project Smooth is put forward as an example of effective community engagement. In particular, the fact that it was an imam from the community who provided the lead which started the investigations is considered to illustrate the effectiveness of community-outreach activities. However, given the lack of evaluation structures it is difficult to draw a causal link to determine whether or not the imam would have reported the pair's activity in the absence of any RCMP community outreach and engagement.

#### *Project Souvenir*

In February 2013, a plot was uncovered by Canadian authorities to bomb the British Columbia legislature in Victoria on Canada Day. The two accused, John

Stuart Nuttall and Amanda Korody, are Canadian-born citizens and residents of Surrey, British Columbia. The pair allegedly planned to detonate pressure-cooker bombs in the crowds that would have been gathered around the legislature building on Canada Day. The RCMP learned of the plot from CSIS in February, beginning a four-month investigation. The couple were arrested on 25 June 2013 and have been charged with building explosive devices with the purpose of causing death or serious bodily injuries. The trial date has been set for January 2015.

According to the RCMP, Nuttall and Korody were 'self-radicalised'. There are no clear connections between the pair and other terrorist individuals or groups, including Al-Qa'ida, although the attack is thought to be 'inspired' by Al-Qa'ida. 'Our investigation demonstrated that this was a domestic threat, without international linkages,' said RCMP Assistant Commissioner James Malizia during the press conference that followed their arrests.

Nuttall is known to have a criminal history dating back to at least 1997, including convictions in 2003 for assault and robbery and in 2010 for possessing a weapon for a dangerous purpose. Both Nuttall and Korody were recovering heroin addicts. Given his criminal history of assaults and past violent behaviour, RCMP officers suggested that Nuttall had used Islam as a 'crutch' to further violent intent.

Nuttall converted to Islam sometime in 2011 after meeting a Muslim male – whose identity has never been established – who taught him about Islam and the Qur'an. Soon after, Nuttall began to attend a local mosque with Korody, who had started to wear a burqa.

From the RCMP's perspective, the role of the Internet in the pair's radicalisation process is clear. The couple's interest in violent jihad is thought to have grown from watching YouTube videos of Anwar Al-Awlaki and Osama bin Laden. There are indications that Nuttall increasingly sought advice on jihad from various mosques; an acquaintance claimed he was kicked out of a mosque for disagreeing with their teachings, while the British Columbia Muslim Association (BCMA) banned him from all mosques in Lower Mainland.

There were other clear indicators of Nuttall's extremist beliefs in the months before the planned pressure-cooker plot. At one stage Nuttall claimed to have killed a Jewish girl in a phone call to a Pakistani acquaintance. The acquaintance notified Surrey police, who determined that Nuttall was intoxicated and ended the investigation. In a separate investigation, the police again believed Nuttall was intoxicated and took no further action following complaints from a neighbour that he was ranting loudly about jihad.

Further online activity led CSIS to prompt an RCMP investigation. In the four-month investigation that followed, the RCMP discovered that other lone-actor cases had acted as triggers and sources of inspiration for Nuttall, including the case of Omar Khadr (a Canadian citizen who was one of the youngest people to be detained at Guantanamo Bay, after killing an American soldier in Afghanistan), the Woolwich attack in London, and the Boston Marathon bombing.

Feedback on the way the case was handled by the RCMP in the wake of the arrests is generally positive; officers met a number of community leaders in order to provide them with updates on the case. However, there are indications that the dialogue between the police and the communities concerned could have been better generally prior to the investigation.

On the one hand, there is evidence of the positive engagement from members of the community who reported Nuttall's suspicious behaviour to the police (his claim to have killed a Jewish girl and rants on jihad). In the RCMP press conference following the arrests, officers called on citizens to continue to engage with the RCMP on national security and urged the public 'to bring any suspicious activities to the RCMP's attention'.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, however, the BCMA did not inform the RCMP about Nuttall's radical views or their decision to ban him from mosques. The BCMA was also critical of the RCMP, claiming that its press release about the case contained the photo of a mosque which was unconnected (though the authors were unable to find evidence of this). There are therefore indications that the level of dialogue between the RCMP and one of the area's largest Muslim associations was not optimal, either before or after the arrest.

#### *Adel Arnaout*

In June and July 2004, a series of contaminated water bottles were sent to model agencies, a judge and a bank branch in Ontario. Three years later, a series of letter bombs were delivered to three seemingly random individuals in Toronto and Guelph, Ontario.

After a brief investigation, authorities were able to identify the bomb-maker as Adel Arnaout, who was arrested in a vehicle containing three further devices. He was discovered to have also been responsible for the earlier spate of attempted poisonings and was found guilty of eleven counts of attempted murder. He was sentenced to an indeterminate prison sentence in March 2012.

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13. RCMP, 'RCMP Arrests Two Individuals for Terrorism-Related Charges', press release, 2 July 2013.

Motivated primarily by what Judge Todd Ducharme called a 'greatly magnified sense of his own victimhood',<sup>14</sup> Arnaout is an archetypal lone actor driven to attempted murder in revenge for perceived slights. An aspiring model, Arnaout's poisoning campaign in 2004 was aimed at modelling agencies that he had signed up with and in one case had paid \$1,500 for promotional photos.

After receiving minimal work from them, he started to harass the companies and agents, bombarding them with aggressive phone messages, faxes and letters. He was taken to court where he pled guilty to criminal harassment. In revenge, Arnaout sent the agencies, agents at the company, the judge in his case and a local bank (which had frozen his account and credit cards) what appeared to be gift bottles of water, into which he had injected industrial solvent.

The second round began in 2007 and appeared much closer to home. The three letter bombs were mailed to a former roommate of Arnaout's, his lawyer and a construction worker he had hired to do some repairs on his house. In admitting his guilt, Arnaout stated that his intent was revenge ('I was just trying to get even') and that his aim was not to murder, but rather to 'scare the s\*\*\* out of them'.<sup>15</sup> He also claimed to be motivated by a sense of revenge against the Toronto Police Service, which he said had failed to investigate the numerous complaints he had lodged against others and 'wanted to waste their time and money the way they wasted mine'.<sup>16</sup>

Assessed by a court-appointed psychiatrist to be an extreme narcissist with a high probability of re-offending, at no point was it speculated that Arnaout had any connections to others in conducting his campaigns of violence. While clearly a lone actor, Arnaout is distinct from John Nuttall and Amanda Korody in that his targets did not appear explicitly political or intended to advance a globalised message; his motives appear as much personal as political.

While his Internet history contained some evidence of Arnaout seeking out information on domestic terrorism, as well as the addresses of a local police chief and a Jewish high school, there was little clear evidence in his actions of a serious desire to move in this direction. His willingness to cross the threshold to violence and the fact that he had had another three letter bombs in his possession at time of arrest suggest that he might have moved beyond his personalised campaign at some point; nevertheless, at the time

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14. Kirk Makin, "'Vendetta Bomber' Deemed a Dangerous Offender', *Globe and Mail*, 7 March 2012.

15. Sam Pazzano, 'Toronto Letter-Bomber Says He Was Getting Revenge', *St Catherines Standard*, 23 March 2010.

16. *Ibid.*

of arrest he seemed primarily focused on exacting revenge on those he perceived had slighted him.

There was little evidence of RCMP becoming immediately involved in the investigation, which appears to have been primarily led by the Toronto Police Service. The fact that Arnaout was able to conduct two quite distinct and disparate campaigns with a three-year gap between them suggests there was little overall connectivity in assessments of the threat he might pose or that the case was particularly prioritised when he first struck.

Certainly, once he escalated to bomb-making the response appears to have been much more substantial and rapid. However, in all of this there is little evidence of community engagement playing much of a role in detecting him or subsequently in reassuring communities about the threat. Arnaout appears to have been repeatedly in contact with authorities, complaining about people around him, and those he was harassing appear to have complained to authorities about his behaviour as well. Yet at no point was the assessment made that he might move further down the road to more extreme violence.

#### *What Can be Learned from These Cases?*

The four cases highlighted offer some insights into the parallel issues examined within this report. On the one hand, it seems clear that the community-engagement programme has provided authorities with useful 'tip-offs' that have helped build cases against individuals who were intent on conducting large-scale terrorist violence in Canada; on the other hand, these tripwires have so far not caught any clear lone-actor cases.

The two lone-actor cases identified (Project Souvenir and Adel Arnaout) were detected either through CSIS online monitoring or the work of the Toronto Police Service. While in both cases the societies in which the individuals lived saw them as slightly strange individuals, they were not felt to be moving towards violence. Based on these two cases, Canadian society seems to have begun to recognise the need to notify authorities of the activities and actions of certain worrisome individuals. However, the cases also suggest that the public have not inculcated the possibility that such lone-actor individuals might be associated with terrorist violence, and are therefore not alert to noticing the specific indicators of this within their communities.

It also appears that the RCMP has learned the importance of community engagement, both before and after arrest. In this regard, the contrast between Project Samossa and Project Smooth is stark. The former seems to have been carried out as a classic counter-terrorism operation using undercover agents and overseas support; from the available information, little community information was sought or received. Subsequently, authorities also failed to

carry out a proper post-arrest community outreach, prompting confusion over what had taken place and anger within the Muslim community.

This model was largely turned on its head during Project Smooth, with the RCMP identifying a tip-off from local communities as the trigger for their investigations (this does not preclude the fact that CSIS were already aware of these individuals). The RCMP briefed community leaders pre-arrest and post-arrest, ensuring clear and coherent messaging was given over the fact that it was the individuals who were being targeted, rather than the community. The result was that many interviewed (within both security agencies and communities) applauded the RCMP's approach and held it up as an example of best practice.

#### **RCMP Community Engagement: Key Themes**

The divergence in outcomes from the four case studies outlined above is difficult to assess on the basis of such a limited case set, but some key themes are discernible.

RCMP community outreach in the wake of arrests has played a beneficial role in building and strengthening links between authorities and Canada's communities. This may bear further fruit in the future. Canadian communities are at least partially primed to be aware of the threat of violent terrorists and extremists, and have reported individuals of concern to authorities.

It is not clear that the lone actors who have been detected in Canada so far would have been detected as a result of community-engagement efforts. The individuals in question appear to have been isolated and, while seen as societal 'outsiders', were perceived to be simply peculiar rather than dangerous.

A key conclusion is that while the RCMP's community-engagement efforts are effective in building links with community members, they are not getting the message out that lone-actor individuals are of concern, and may come in different forms from overzealous extremists who suddenly appear at the mosque.

## IV. The Effectiveness of RCMP Community Engagement

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- The RCMP is generally seen in a positive light by the community organisations spoken to by the authors
- The purpose and role of community outreach is not universally understood within the RCMP
- Current resources allocated to outreach are insufficient to gain a comprehensive understanding of community concerns
- Outreach efforts tend to revolve around the work of individual RCMP members, with limited institutionalisation
- While the RCMP uses the Terrorism Community Outreach and Engagement Principles set out by the International Association of Chiefs of Police Committee, there is no evaluation framework in place for engagement activities, making it difficult to demonstrate operational success.

While it is recognised that many of the RCMP's outreach initiatives are in an early stage of development, its operational efforts still suffer from what its own officers and staff consider to be a number of shortcomings. While the RCMP should be credited with implementing a commendable community-based policing programme, there are notable areas where the RCMP can improve its outreach activities to help reach its national-security objectives, including more effectively combating the threat from lone-actor terrorism.

This chapter outlines particular weaknesses identified in the outreach programme and the RCMP's approach to community engagement, while identifying the lessons learned from community-based policing and other 'Prevent' initiatives overseas.

### **Understanding Community Outreach**

The aims of community engagement are not universally understood within the RCMP. The authors asked a number of officers what they considered to be the objective of community engagement, what officers should be trying to achieve, and how they would define success. They considered its purpose to be one or more of the following:

- To provide a communication function (demystifying the RCMP to the public, building bridges, counteracting extremist messages)
- To provide a liaison function (listening to community concerns, offering guidance on community issues, putting individuals in touch with investigative officers to deal with problems)

- To facilitate wider RCMP investigations (offering guidance on the potential reaction of communities to events, providing smoother introductions than can be established through investigations, and even gathering intelligence).

The success of outreach activities was also measured in different ways, ranging from the number of return contacts (for example, the number of files and leads generated from within the community), to the number of events and other cultural activities attended by outreach officers, and even the mere absence of terrorist attacks. The perception that community engagement offered an opportunity to acquire community information – often referred to as ‘intelligence’ – should be handled sensitively. The position held by outreach officers themselves is that a ‘firewall’ between outreach and investigative officers is crucial for maintaining the trust of communities.

This was not the view held by many investigative officers, who saw outreach as valuable not only in providing a ‘temperature reading’ of communities, but also as a tool for generating leads and providing actionable intelligence, judging the number of calls and leads generated from the community as a measure of success. This is partly because of the general challenges of gathering intelligence; generating tips and sources through community engagement is seen as an ‘easy’ solution. Even if this is not the main function of the service, it is at least seen as a good by-product of engagement.

### **The Twenty-First-Century Challenge: Knowing the Local Community**

The RCMP has not yet achieved a full understanding of its communities, let alone the ‘full collaboration’ with them that it strives for. It has set up the National Security Community Outreach programme to ensure that appropriate channels of communication are maintained through regular contact with community members, whether through meetings or other community-based events. However, many officers admitted that they have only medium baseline knowledge of communities, generated from individual cases.

Interviews conducted with civil-society organisations and community members also suggested that current levels of engagement were insufficient to gain a coherent understanding of the community as a whole, for two primary reasons.

First, outreach frequently tends to be channelled through religious leaders; while important, focusing on these individuals neglects other voices within the community and provides only a limited understanding of non-religious sections of society, fragmented communities, and the evolution of internal community dynamics. The multitude of different groups and complexity of dynamics within the Somali community, for example, was seen as one of the main challenges in engaging with it. This approach also risks the further radicalisation of individuals who feel their concerns receive insufficient attention.

Second, there was recognition by both sides that RCMP engagement with communities tends to be reactive rather than proactive. RCMP officers conceded that initiatives are rarely top-down, tending to be locally driven, and the scaling up of effective initiatives remains a significant challenge.

Meanwhile, community members called for the RCMP to do more than ‘just show up to events and eat cultural food’; suggestions of proactive steps it could take included further recruitment of minorities (particularly into its outreach programmes), increased sensitisation training, and hosting more cross-cultural and inter-faith roundtables.

### **Dialogue between the RCMP and Communities**

Dialogue between the RCMP and communities appears to be primarily reactive, taking the form of briefings and discussion in the wake of major incidents, rather than engaging with communities before events, attempting to prevent such incidents from happening in the first place, and addressing sensitive subjects such as radicalisation. On the issue of lone-actor terrorism, for example, it was seen as ‘dangerous to put that sort of thing in people’s heads’.

Solely having RCMP officers attend events and occasionally offer briefings leads many communities to remain confused over what the purpose of community engagement is, signalling a failure in communications. More efforts are clearly required to manage communities’ expectations of the roles and responsibilities of the RCMP in this regard.

RCMP outreach officers themselves admitted that they are often asked ‘Why are you here?’, and overall there is limited public understanding of how the RCMP is involved in national security and community engagement. The situation is further complicated from the communities’ perspective by the role of different agencies and their engagement with the community. The majority of members felt that a ‘firewall’ between outreach initiatives and other intelligence and law-enforcement activities was crucial for maintaining trust but was a constant challenge to maintain.

There are particular challenges for RCMP community engagement in the regions of Ontario and Quebec, where the RCMP does not provide provincial policing services. Here, communities frequently question the logic of a federal policing service implementing local outreach activities, particularly where there are overlaps with, or the RCMP relies on, the engagement activities of local police agencies.

In Toronto, for example, there is little reason for the RCMP to focus efforts on the Somali community, given the existing efforts of the Toronto Police Service Somali Liaison Unit, on which the RCMP relies for establishing contacts and conducting outreach activities. Establishing direct dialogue on national security is a challenge, however, as it would necessitate asking the Somali

community to liaise with two police forces in parallel, risking confusion and potentially damaging the relationships that the Toronto Police Service has managed to forge within the community.

### **Ensuring the Long-Term Effectiveness of RCMP Outreach**

From the information gleaned during interviews, and from the case studies outlined in the previous chapter, it is clear that the community-outreach initiative has had some successes. Yet, how this will translate into effective engagement in the long term and specifically help to address the problem of lone-actor terrorism, and how the RCMP will be able to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of this engagement, is far from obvious.

By its very nature, community engagement is personality-based and the effectiveness of activities usually depends on the hard work and dedication of well-networked and 'entrepreneurial' outreach officers. While there are suggestions that outreach initiatives are becoming institutionalised, for the moment there is a clear reliance on particular individuals; should any one of them leave their current post, there is little indication that there will be resources to fulfil that individual's role to the same high level. The emphasis of personality over process also tends to lead to inconsistencies in the scale and scope of RCMP engagement across the board, with no indication of efforts to benchmark or set standards between different regions.

The second major obstacle to effective long-term engagement is the lack of evaluation undertaken on the impact and effectiveness of current activities. For the moment, evaluation of success is vague and anecdotal (for example, 'we've found that people are now more open to us'), and no indicators are offered or studies conducted on programmatic success.

Some believe the goal of their activities is simply to establish an initial dialogue, with the general expectation that the community will thereafter actively come forward with their concerns. Others recognise that evaluation is needed but are not sure how to carry it out, or believe that outreach and 'Prevent' initiatives cannot be evaluated. An example cited was an 'out-of-the-box' initiative offering yoga classes for Somali women; it was thought that the success of such programmes was impossible to evaluate but that they were invaluable for 'getting a foot in the door'.

Asked to demonstrate success, some officers claimed that they could not be expected to evaluate the absence of a terrorist attack, demonstrating confusion over outcomes (the overall desired result of an activity) and outputs (the direct and measurable impact of the activity).

Failure to implement a formal evaluation framework is likely to lead to two significant challenges for the RCMP. The first will be measuring the success of

programmes to determine which initiatives are effective in achieving the desired objectives, and which avenues of activity are worth pursuing in the future. For example, rapid developments in information technology mean that consideration should be given to the RCMP's on-the-ground versus online presence, and to the means of measuring the relative success of these two approaches.

The second challenge will involve being in a position to demonstrate the impact of their outreach activities in order to justify the future allocation of resources. A lack of quantitative or qualitative data on the success of initiatives is likely to weaken the justification for programmes and reduce the level of engagement activities.

### **Lessons Learned from Overseas**

Canada is not alone in facing difficulties implementing a successful community-based approach to counter-terrorism and the threat from lone actors. This section offers some brief lessons learned from the US and the UK in the design, implementation and evaluation of community-based policing and initiatives to tackle the threat.

#### *The United States*

A 2006 study by the Homeland Security Institute found, 'Community policing has been applied with notable success in places such as New York City, Chicago, Boston, and San Diego, and has been widely adopted (at least in name) throughout the US.'<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, assessments of the country's counter violent extremism (CVE) strategy and community-engagement activities have identified a number of organisational and activity-related improvements that could be made.

The US approach appears to suffer from many of the same issues as those found in Canada. Specifically, a 2014 study found that 'there appears to be little federally driven guidance to community groups on how to intervene with people vulnerable to radicalization ... Ad hoc and opaque decision making might render the whole CVE outreach process arbitrary to some community participants.'<sup>2</sup>

It is often held that part of the reason for this lack of strategic overview is the lack of a single agency managing national CVE activities and efforts. Responsibility for CVE efforts within communities is currently assigned to a multitude of agencies; this is an illogical response 'to counter a recruiting

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1. Rosemary Lark, Richard Rowe and John Markey, 'Community Policing within Muslim Communities: An Overview and Annotated Bibliography of Open-Source Literature', Homeland Security Institute, 2006, p.iii.
  2. Jerome P Bjelopera, 'Countering Violent Extremism in the United States', Congressional Research Service, February 2014, <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/R42553.pdf>>, accessed 21 January 2015.

problem that produces only dozens of wannabe terrorists annually', according to an assessment by the Foreign Policy Research Institute.<sup>3</sup> At the national level, some argue that it would be of value to have a single federal agency in charge of the government's CVE efforts so that these are not diluted.

A final issue often highlighted in the US is the tension between enforcement and engagement activities, and the need for a high degree of transparency on the part of authorities. Some commentators identify the risk of federal agencies involved in community outreach as 'securitizing' the relationship with communities, who perceive it as a purely intelligence-gathering exercise; an 'effort to co-opt communities into the security process – providing tips, leads, sources, and informants', in the words of Bjelopera.<sup>4</sup>

In an effort to avoid this issue, focus is placed on the national network of 'fusion centers' in alleviating tension between the government's investigative and engagement activities. While the centres have experienced notable challenges in their implementation, 'only by showing that fusion center operations are fully transparent, and providing an effective mechanism through which community concerns and perceptions can be addressed' can an effective relationship between law-enforcement agencies and the communities in which they operate be fostered, according to Robert Wasserman, author of Department of Justice guidance on the Building Communities of Trust initiative.<sup>5</sup> The following are some of the recommendations Wasserman made to enhance this transparency:<sup>6</sup>

- Train 'fusion center' analysts in cultural sensitivity so they can distinguish behaviour that is constitutionally protected from criminal or terrorist activity
- Focus on broader topics than national security and ensure that 'fusion center' products and activities are useful to local communities
- Establish 'fusion center' advisory boards which feature representatives from local immigrant and minority communities.

### *The United Kingdom*

Allegations of 'spying', 'intelligence gathering' and 'surveillance' under the Prevent programme were at one point widespread in the UK, particularly after a 2009 article published by the *Guardian* newspaper claiming that

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3. Will McCants and Clinton Watts, 'U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment', Foreign Policy Research Institute, December 2012.  
 4. Bjelopera, 'Countering Violent Extremism in the United States'.  
 5. Robert Wasserman, *Guidance for Building Communities of Trust* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, 2010), <[http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/e071021293\\_BuildingCommTrust.pdf](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/e071021293_BuildingCommTrust.pdf)>, accessed 21 January 2015.  
 6. *Ibid.*

Prevent was being used as a cover to ‘spy’ on Muslims.<sup>7</sup> The current ‘Prevent’ strategy states that the government found ‘no evidence’ to support the claims that previous Prevent programmes had been used to spy on communities; it recognised, however, that ‘trust in Prevent must be improved’.<sup>8</sup>

The UK therefore also suffers from a tension between its community engagement and enforcement activities. The report ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee suggested that ‘stakeholders may have confused the need for local authorities to understand the background and social patterns of communities they serve, and the beliefs, attitudes, habits and values of the people with whom they engage, with the kind of “intelligence” required by the police and security services to combat crime and undertake surveillance’.<sup>9</sup>

In 2011, the UK government published a review of its Prevent strategy. A senior lawyer, Lord Carlile of Berriew QC, was also appointed to provide independent oversight of the review. Although many of the government’s efforts in this area were judged to be valuable, the review recognised that ‘evaluation of projects has in the past been poor, and that some money has been wasted’.<sup>10</sup> It concluded that significant funding was provided to local authorities without sufficient guidance, accountability or oversight.

Despite these criticisms, the review also emphasised the ‘key value’ to the Prevent strategy of the Channel programme (the UK government’s initiative to provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist-related activity). The following are some of the changes the government made to Channel and Prevent in light of the review’s recommendations:

- The revised Prevent strategy involved a shift beyond Al-Qa’ida-inspired extremism to include other forms of extremism, including right-wing extremism
- The strategy called for greater monitoring and evaluation of Channel and other Prevent projects; in order to increase value for money, it also decided Channel activities should be prioritised around areas and places of higher risk

7. Vikram Dodd, ‘Government Anti-Terrorism Strategy “Spies” on Innocent’, *Guardian*, 16 October 2009.

8. HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, Cm 8092 (London: The Stationary Office, 2011), p. 6.

9. House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, HC 65 (London: The Stationary Office, 2010).

10. HM Government, ‘Report to the Home Secretary of Independent Oversight of Prevent Review and Strategy’, May 2011, <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97977/lord-carlile-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97977/lord-carlile-report.pdf)>, accessed 21 January 2015.

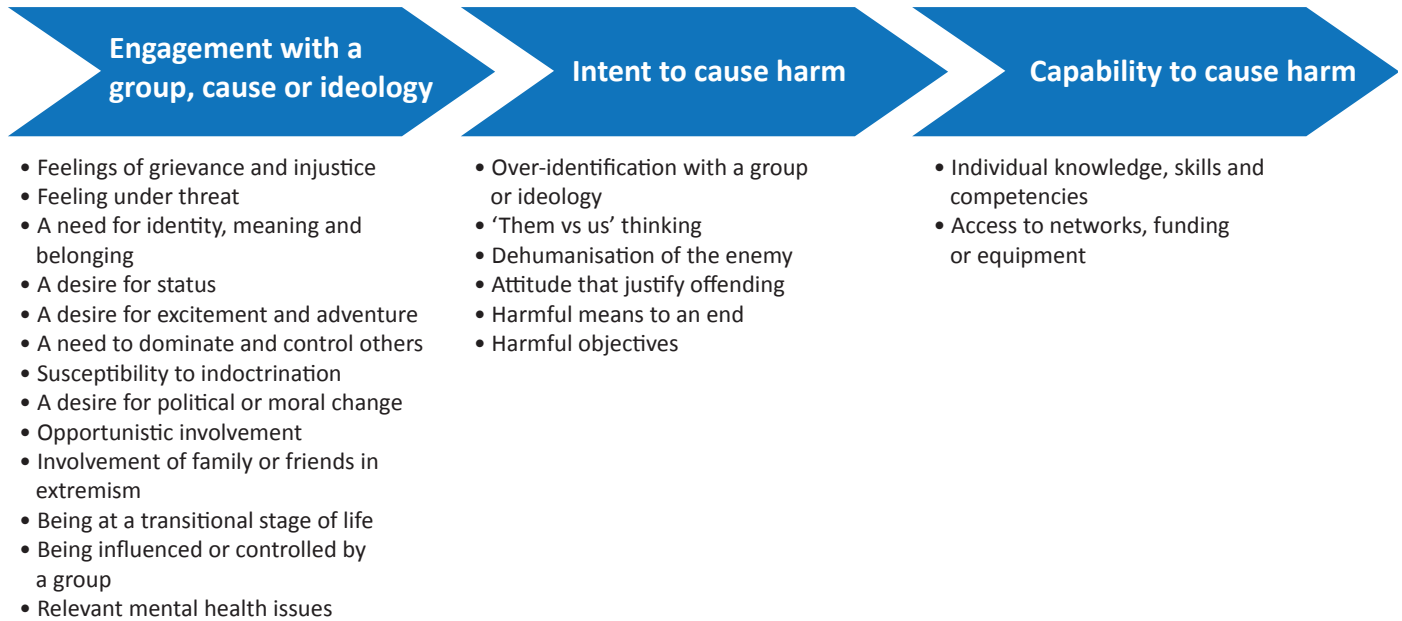
- There were calls for the police to communicate more clearly their role in Prevent, since it was found that many communities tended to regard views expressed by the police as the views of government.

Other countries have looked to the Channel programme, considering both its tools (for example, its twenty-two vulnerability indicators, as illustrated in Figure 1 (see opposite) and whether this model, more generally, could be used to foster community engagement as part of their own CVE policies and strategies. The programme's ability to solicit the support of community members to recognise and report suspicious activity has been praised. Indeed, Channel relies on a range of community members who have contact with those at risk of violent radicalisation (such as police, teachers, social workers, youth workers and community groups) to identify individuals who are potentially 'at risk'. If a referred case passes an initial 'screening' stage then it is considered by a multi-agency panel, which can include representatives of local community organisations and charities.

Finally, the 2014 annual report on the UK's counter-terrorism strategy emphasises the importance of police forces working not in isolation, but in collaboration with 'a very wide range of government departments, the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales, local authorities and in particular community and faith-based organisations' on which 'Prevent' work depends.<sup>11</sup>

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11. HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, Annual Report*, Cm 8583 (London: The Stationery Office, 2014), <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/170644/28307\\_Cm\\_8583\\_v0\\_20.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/170644/28307_Cm_8583_v0_20.pdf)>, accessed 21 January 2015.

**Figure 1:** The Vulnerability Assessment Framework of the Channel

Source: HM Government, 'Channel: Vulnerability Assessment Framework', October 2012, <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/118187/vul-assessment.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118187/vul-assessment.pdf)>, accessed 23 January 2015.



## V. Conclusion

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This is a message to Canada and all the American tyrants: we are coming and we will destroy you, with permission from Allah the almighty.

(Unidentified foreign fighter, Syria 2014)

The previous chapter identified several shortcomings in the approach of the Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams (INSETs) to community engagement, and many of them can be attributed to a lack of strategic direction offered by RCMP Headquarters in Ottawa.<sup>1</sup> With no overarching guidance and limited communication between key individuals involved, community-engagement efforts are likely to reflect the initiatives of individuals in each INSET.

This ‘bottom-up approach’ was favoured by many RCMP members the authors met with – who highlighted that, after all, they were in the best position to understand what was required in their local areas. However, it is also the case that community initiatives remain piecemeal and disjointed. Lessons and ideas cannot be transferred across INSETs and Headquarters does not have basic criteria to understand if the INSETs are being successful in their outreach activities. There are a number of hurdles that need to be successfully navigated.

### **National Co-ordination**

The community-outreach initiatives organised by the RCMP suffer from the lack of a clear overall strategy, providing a baseline assessment of activities in order to identify priorities and successfully undertake activities to enhance national security. Currently, community outreach takes place on very general terms and only the Counter Terrorism Information Officer initiative appears to be specific to counter-terrorism.

The level of communication on community engagement between RCMP Headquarters and the regional INSETs is limited. Perhaps most surprisingly, staff at Headquarters were (when the fieldwork took place in 2013 and early 2014) formulating their own community-outreach initiatives without co-ordinating or sharing this information with the INSETs. This lack of information and strategic direction results in very different (even incoherent) community-outreach activities being undertaken at national and regional levels, with no co-ordination between the two.

A further consequence of this lack of direction is that the scale and scope of engagement activity varies significantly in each RCMP division – and

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1. Interviews with RCMP officials, January 2014.

this variation does not simply reflect population distribution. Admittedly, there are other influencing factors such as the absence of RCMP provincial policing in Ontario and Quebec and the various outreach initiatives already implemented by local police services. It is clear, however, that RCMP engagement would benefit from closer co-ordination at the strategic level with other police force efforts.

Given the evident difficulties for a force operating at the federal level to build trust at community level, there is good reason to organise a national footprint in co-ordination with the police, particularly to increase the quality of outreach activities in areas where the RCMP's presence on the ground is limited.

### **INSET Communication and Resourcing**

There are currently limited structures and mechanisms in place for INSET community-engagement teams to liaise, share information and exchange best practices. Indeed, it was found that many outreach officers had never met their counterparts from other INSETs, and cuts in budget mean any face-to-face meetings that may have taken place in the past have been replaced by video conferencing.

It is clear that successful ground-up interventions and mature models of engagement are being developed by individuals in each INSET but these are not shared, partly as a result of the limited relationships that exist between INSETs. Thus, while instances of radicalisation within communities and lone-actor terrorism plots are being uncovered, the lessons learned from these investigations are not being integrated more widely. More efforts should therefore be made to support internal lesson-learning in the RCMP, and specifically in the community-outreach units.

As discussed in the previous chapter, community engagement within each INSET tends to be limited to one or two full-time staff. The authors' findings suggest that the resources currently allocated to INSETs for community-engagement initiatives are insufficient to achieve the desired results and ensure the longevity of outreach activities.

Outreach takes time and energy, especially in maintaining relationships and networks with each community, and the requirement to be available during community crises places considerable strain on single individuals. It is also worth reiterating that there are currently few measures in place to ensure continuity should these individuals leave or move into different roles.

### **The RCMP Response to Lone-Actor Terrorism**

There was little evidence of Canada or the RCMP having a particularly focused set of responses to the threat of lone-actor terrorism (though this

can obviously also be said for law-enforcement agencies in many countries). Most officers and officials spoken to by the authors highlighted the potential danger of lone-actor terrorism, though as the assistant director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Andy Ellis, noted in 2011, 'these lone actors are some of the hardest to detect and investigate'.<sup>2</sup>

But difficult investigation should not preclude action. The authors were surprised by the degree to which, during their research, people would talk of the lone-actor threat as particularly worrying, but then offer little evidence about either how it had matured or how it was being specifically addressed.

The problem is in many ways founded in an absence of definition and clear direction about the nature of the threat and how it might express itself. In part this is a product of the fact that lone-actor terrorism is a dynamic subject that is evolving and producing new case studies, but it also results from a lack of clarity about what constitutes a lone-actor terrorist.

For example, in interviews, officials would often say they had never seen a lone-actor case, and then would suggest a number of cases (like that of Adel Arnaout) that at least bear some resemblance to a lone-actor terrorist threat. The issue is how to create a definition and indicators to help officers identify what they are facing and how they can therefore develop methodologies to counter it.

From a community-engagement perspective there are a number of areas that could be better addressed in clarifying and dealing with the threat posed by lone-actor terrorism. These activities do not necessarily need to overwhelm community-engagement efforts, nor do they need to require much more activity by implementing officers; rather, tweaks and adjustments could be made to current efforts to help focus attention on this particular expression of the terrorist threat. In the absence of connections to known groups or very limited obvious digital data about a particular lone actor, often it is communities who are on the front line, identifying these individuals before they act.

### **The 'Culture' of Outreach and Prevent**

A final challenge that needs to be addressed at a more strategic level is the lack of a 'Prevent mentality' among RCMP officers. 'Prevent' activities are not perceived to have the same 'glory' as high-profile arrests and other 'Deny' activities; community engagement is therefore not seen as an attractive field in which to work.

Confusion between the counter-terrorism strategy's 'Prevent' and 'Respond' principles is also common within the RCMP, and efforts to improve

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2. Freeze, "'Lone Wolf' Terrorists a Real Threat to Canada, CSIS Official Warns'.

preparedness capabilities are often seen as helping to contribute to prevention efforts. An example cited was the Comité adviseur antiterrorisme de Montréal (CAAM), a unit set up by the Montreal Police Service in 2012 to improve the city's state of terrorism preparedness after a smoke grenade was set off in Montreal's metro system. Although the group focuses on 'Respond' activity such as city evacuation and contingency plans, this was put forward as an example of 'Prevent' activity.

Interviewees suggested that there was limited training on prevent functions; courses such as the RCMP's Counter-Terrorism Leadership Course for its members focus on investigations and pursuing terrorists, rather than on outreach and CVE efforts. Training on these topics appears to be informal and ad hoc.

Confusion over the rationale behind 'Prevent' activities and a lack of training on the topic contribute to uncertainty over the role and importance of community engagement within the RCMP. Some officers do not consider outreach an important part of RCMP functions; many agree there is a place for it but are unconvinced of its value, given the current inability to demonstrate successes. According to one interview, for example, 'increasing community outreach would never hurt, but it's hard to see it decreasing the threat'. As in other areas of law enforcement, many will remain unconvinced until there is evidence that ongoing 'Prevent' and deterrence activities have been successful.

Whether or not community engagement is seen as a priority is typically determined by the leadership of INSETs. Often this leadership is convinced of its importance but frustrated by the lack of resources to implement initiatives effectively and the lack of tools at their disposal to demonstrate the impact of these initiatives to others.

### **Long-Term Thinking**

Fundamentally, the RCMP remains an organisation focused on reacting to events, in particular when it comes to counter-terrorism. As an organisation dedicated to investigating cases and bringing them before a judiciary, RCMP is naturally responsive with little time and few resources to sit back and carry out strategic planning and thinking in particular about the terrorist threat that Canada faces.

This role is something that falls more naturally to CSIS or the Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre (ITAC), which – as analysis and intelligence agencies – are much more focused on horizon scanning. However, in taking this short-term perspective, the danger is that longer-term policy areas such as community policing and engagement are seen as the poor relation to investigations and therefore do not receive the necessary focus and

attention that would make them better support efforts to counter the threat of terrorism in the longer-term.

The RCMP is well placed to conduct further community-engagement efforts, however. It is almost universally considered to have an extremely good 'brand', and the public tends to have a positive image and attitude towards the 'mounties'. This is helped by much of the symbolism associated with the RCMP, and the historical role of the force.

This is an image that the RCMP can leverage, in particular when trying to do the difficult work of engaging with and gaining the trust of suspicious communities or communities that have suddenly come to public attention because of the bad actions of a few individuals. The research of one academic spoken to by the authors showed that people generally preferred to talk to the RCMP rather than the local police. There is no reason to believe that this would not hold in a crisis situation.

More broadly, the terrorist threat in Canada is not very well articulated by or discussed within Canadian communities. Given the absence of major domestic attacks until very recently, the predominant view holds that domestic terrorism is something that only occurs in other countries. One way around this is to engage with communities at every level and, where possible, raise general awareness of counter-terrorism issues among the wider public. The RCMP could play a particularly interesting role in this regard, acting as a voice that can engage directly with both communities and federal authorities.

The RCMP might think more about how it wants to project this message into communities, both to support activities as part of community outreach when arrests are made, but also to try to get communities to help identify threats before they mature into attacks.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. The RCMP should build on its positive image and reputation among the Canadian population to further develop its community-outreach activities.** The RCMP is very well placed to expand the scope of its community engagement, particularly as there is evidence to suggest that members of the public are more comfortable communicating with the RCMP than with other law-enforcement agencies.
- 2. The RCMP should replicate its approach to community engagement during Project Smooth.** The universal praise for the engagement strategy, from both within the RCMP and community involved, demonstrates that such trust-building exercises are successful in both improving relations and raising awareness of particular threats.

3. **RCMP Headquarters should communicate the purpose and rationale of 'Prevent' activities more effectively to members.** This will help to address the current confusion over the function and value of this aspect of the RCMP's work among officers conducting investigations.
4. **The RCMP should develop an evidence base of lone-actor cases, in order to turn anecdotal information from front-line officers into corporate knowledge.** A central hub of relevant cases will help to both improve understanding of the threat and build a more strategic view of the scale of the issue across all fifteen RCMP divisions.
5. **RCMP community-engagement activities would benefit from a coherent national strategy and closer co-ordination at the strategic level.** RCMP Headquarters should offer clearer guidance on particular objectives and priorities of INSET community-engagement activities, improve the co-ordination and benchmarking of these activities, as well as provide the opportunity for the teams to more formally share information on cases, success stories and lessons learned.

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