

Fusion Centres in Six European Countries: Emergence, Roles and Challenges

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This report provides an overview of fusion centres in six European countries, taking a closer look at their roles in the wider security and counter-terrorism landscape and what challenges they face. This publication was produced by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), with support of the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV). It is partly based on contributions from experts of the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (EENeT), as well as input from a conference organised in October 2018, with representatives of national fusion centres and members of EENeT. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the NCTV or any other organisation.

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1. Introduction

Fusion centres are organisations tasked with interagency coordination in the field of preventing and countering terrorism. As such, most fusion centres are responsible for coordinating, analysing, combining, and facilitating information sharing with regard to terrorism, and in some cases in relation to broader security threats.¹ Fusion centres' roles, legal mandates and their institutional make-up vary greatly across countries.² The role and function of national fusion centres in Europe is an understudied topic as little comprehensive or comparative research exists on it as of yet, with the existing literature predominantly focussing on fusion centres in the United States (US).³ While the term fusion centre is preferred in the US, in Europe they are more commonly referred to as national counter-terrorism coordinators. Fusion centres are currently operating for over a decade, giving reason for a closer look at what purposes these centres serve in the wider security and counter-terrorism landscape in their respective countries, and what challenges they face.

This report aims to address this gap and is the result of a project by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) supported by the Dutch National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and Security (NCTV). It describes fusion centres in six European countries by looking at why and how they have been established and implemented in various countries. It explores why these fusion centres were created, and how their formal roles and actual activities relate to operational realities.

The report utilises a literature study as well as contributions from terrorism experts on fusion centres in their respective countries, who responded to a call for contributions issued by ICCT among members of the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (EENeT).⁴ The response to this call determined which European countries and fusion centres are featured in this report, namely: Belgium (CUTA), Germany (GTAZ and GETZ), Italy (CASA), The Netherlands (NCTV), Spain (CITCO), and the United Kingdom (JTAC). Additionally, this report and particularly the reflections on themes and challenges builds upon discussions by representatives of fusion centres and terrorism experts, during an expert session co-organised by ICCT between members of EENeT and the Madrid Group in October 2018.⁵ The Madrid Group is a forum under which representatives from

¹ Peter Gill, "The United Kingdom: Organization and Oversight After Snowden," in *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures*, ed. Bob de Graaff and James M. Nyce, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 422 -423; Gudrun Persson, "Fusion Centres – Lessons Learned: A Study of Coordination Functions for Intelligence and Security Services," Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies, Swedish National Defence College (2013): 8-9, <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:685935/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

² It can be noted that this is also the case with regard with security and intelligence services, where "intelligence institutions cannot, and indeed should not, simply be replicated from one national context to the next—irrespective of their relative efficacy in their original setting." Peter Chalk and William Rosenau, "Confronting the 'Enemy from Within': Security Intelligence, the Police, and Counterterrorism in Four Democracies," *Rand Cooperation* (2014), 55, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG100.html>; See also: Jeremy Shapiro and Benedicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism," *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2003): 88; Todd Masse, *Domestic Intelligence in the United Kingdom: Applicability of the MI-5 Model to the United States*, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, May 19, 2003), 6–10.

³ The topic of national fusion centers and their workings and infrastructures in various countries was recently also featured in a list of under-researched topics and themes in the field of (counter-)terrorism studies. See: Alex P. Schmid & James J. Forest, "Research Desiderata: 150 Un- and Under-Researched Topics and Themes in the Field of (Counter-) Terrorism Studies – a New List," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, no. 12 (2018): 68-76, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2018/issue-4/05---un-and-under-researched.pdf>.

⁴ ICCT wishes to express its gratitude and acknowledges the exceptional and valuable contributions and input for this report provided by Constant Hijzen, Richard Warnes, Manuel Ricardo Torres Soriano, Stephan G. Humer Alessandro Boncio, and Matthias Van Hoey.

⁵ The closed joint expert session was organised under Chatham House rule by ICCT on 3 October 2018 in The Hague, as part of a conference organised by EENeT. For more information on EENeT, see their website: https://www.europeanenet.org/EENeT/EN/Home/home_node.html.

various national fusion centres informally convene bi-annually, to share insights and experiences on threat assessments and counter-terrorism coordination. These expert discussions determined the themes that this report takes a closer look at, and fuelled the critical reflections on fusion centres' challenges in this report.

Following this introduction, the second section of this report describes the emergence of fusion centres, the third section covers fusion centres in six European countries, focusing on their origins, objectives, and how they are institutionally embedded. On the basis of these descriptions and discussions with experts, the fourth section takes a closer look at two themes identified in the expert meeting, namely the development of the role of fusion centres and the collection and sharing of information. Section five then reflects on the identified challenges, focussing on 'the illusion of independence', political influence and the concept of 'human fusion'. The report ends with a general conclusion.

2. Emergence of Fusion Centres

Fusion centres were predominantly an American invention. The New York and Los Angeles Police Departments experimented with them prior to 9/11, and there were various other local and state-level initiatives, but it was only after the publication of the 9/11 Commission Report that the first national fusion centres were established. Their main goal was to prevent another 9/11 from happening by properly exchanging relevant (tactical, operational, and strategic) information and intelligence on the local, state, and national level between various agencies. In 2003, the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) was created, a part of which was to become the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). It became a "government terrorism 'campus'",⁶ where personnel of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other agencies involved in counterterrorism met, exchanged information and coordinated efforts.⁷

Apart from 9/11, there are many other examples of 'post-disaster commissions' that aim to fix perceived gaps or bottlenecks identified in hindsight, resulting in the reorganisation of security and intelligence frameworks.⁸ However, with regard to the general emergence of fusion centres the background of 9/11 was important. Not only in the US, but also in Europe, this event led to evaluations of the existing counter-terrorism and security structures,⁹ and eventually to the establishment of many fusion centres in Europe and elsewhere.¹⁰ These centres aimed to improve operational coordination and information sharing between counter-terrorism and law enforcement agencies.

⁶ Gregory Treverton, *Intelligence for an age of terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 90

⁷ *Ibid.*, 75-81, 90-91; Congressional Research Service, "National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC)," *In Focus*, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/IF10709.pdf>; Amy B. Zegart, "An Empirical Analysis of Failed Intelligence Reforms before September 11," *Political Science Quarterly* 121, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 39.

⁸ See: Katherine Hibbs Pherson and Roy A. Sullivan Jr., "Improving the Quality of Analysis in Fusion Centers: Making the Most of the Nation's Investment," *Journal of Strategic Security*, no. 6 (August 2013): 312, <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1324&context=jss>.

⁹ See for example the list of measures outlined by European Justice and Home Affairs Council of the European Council, shortly after the attacks in the US on 11 September 2001, Council of the European Union, *Conclusions adopted by the Council (Justice and Home Affairs)*, 12156/01, September 25, 2001,

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2012156%202001%20INIT>; For evaluations conducted on the various security and counter-terrorism frameworks see for example: Council of the European Union, *Final report on the Evaluation of National Anti-Terrorist Arrangements: Improving national machinery and capability for the fight against terrorism and capability for the fight against terrorism*, 12168/3/05, November 18, 2005, para. 6, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2012168%202005%20REV%203>.

¹⁰ It should be noted that France had already founded UCLAT (Unité de coordination de la lutte anti-terroriste) back in 1984. UCLAT has since also evolved and developed, see: Gudrun Persson, "Fusion Centres – Lessons Learned: A Study of Coordination Functions for Intelligence and Security Services," *Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies, Swedish National Defence College* (2013), 9; Following France's example, Belgium founded the Anti-Terrorist Mixed Group (AMG) in 1984, which was the predecessor of CUTA in many ways. The executive order guiding its operation was only to be issued in 1991: "Koninklijk Besluit over de Antiterroristische Gemengde Group" [Royal Decree on the Antiterrorist

Some European countries were more hesitant than others to bring together law enforcement, intelligence services focussed on international threat, and domestic security and intelligence services, not least because of the historical sensitivities surrounding political police organisations such as the *Gestapo*, the *Stasi*, and the *Securitate*.¹¹ That is not to say fusion centres can be compared to political police organisations, but for many countries the establishment of such centres is the first time when certain divides between law enforcement and security services were (again) bridged. In several countries, initial resistance to the establishment of fusion centres came from existing security and policing services, who feared potential organisational competitors. Spanish fusion centre CITCO, for example, was looked upon with some suspicion by the two Spanish national organisations tasked with counter-terrorism, who felt that CITCO might encroach on their autonomy or absorb some of their powers and resources. To reduce these fears, the government made clear that “it will not, under any circumstances, be a third law enforcement body”.¹² Similar caveats have been stated during the establishment of fusion centres in other countries.

Comparable to the US experience, European states’ hesitancy to establish fusion centres diminished after they themselves experienced terrorist attacks. For Spain: the Madrid bombings in 2004,¹³ for Italy: the terrorist attack against the Italian military contingent deployed in Al-Nassiriyah (Iraq) in 2003,¹⁴ and for the Netherlands: the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004.¹⁵ In Belgium and Germany, a perceived lack of effective national intelligence and security agency cooperation advanced the establishment of their respective fusion centres CUTA and GTAZ/GETZ.

3. Fusion Centres in Six European Countries

In the six European countries that this report covers, namely Belgium, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom (UK), there are different contexts that lead to the establishment of their respective fusion centres. The current contexts in which they function are also different, particularly concerning their mandate and their organisational structures. The provided selection of fusion centres and their descriptions are based on the responses to the call for contributions issued by ICCT among members of EENeT, focusing on exactly these points.

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Mixed Group], 1991-10-17/51, October 17, 1991,

http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=1994071135&table_name=wet; Danny Stevens, “Van Antiterroristische Gemengde Groep naar Coördinatieorgaan voor dreigingsanalyse,” in *Geheime diensten in België, de Verenigde Staten en over de wereld*, ed. Herman Matthijs, (Brugges: Die Keure, 2006), 36.

¹¹ Andres de Castro Garcia, Florina Cristiana Matei, and Thomas C. Bruneau, “Combating Terrorism through Fusion Centers: Useful Lessons from Other Experiences?,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 30, no. 4, (2017): 723-742, 736.

¹² “Acuerdo del Consejo de ministros del 28 de Mayo de 2004, por el que se crea el Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista.” [Council of Ministers’ Agreement of 28 May 2004 creating the National Antiterrorism Coordination Centre], Consejo de Ministros, La Moncloa, last modified May 28, 2004, <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/referencias/Paginas/2004/c2805040.aspx#CNCoordAntiterrorista> (in Spanish).

¹³ Fernando Reinares, *Al-Qaeda’s Revenge: The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2017).

¹⁴ “A colloquio con il Presidente del Comitato Analisi Strategica Antiterrorismo”, *Gnosis – Rivista Italiana di Intelligence*, no. 1, (2010), <http://gnosis.aisi.gov.it/gnosis/Rivista22.nsf/ServNavig/12>.

¹⁵ Michael Kowalski and Cees Wiebes, “Strategisch kompas voor contraterorisme,” *Magazine Nationale Veiligheid*, (August 2011), 20.

3.1. Belgium: CUTA

In Belgium, the establishment of the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA) in December 2006¹⁶ was the outcome of the acknowledgment of an increasing threat emanating from Islamist terrorism and its parliamentary answer to a European recommendation to establish fusion centres to combat terrorism.¹⁷ This recommendation was the result of a peer-assessment process of security frameworks by European member states, initiated shortly after 9/11.¹⁸ CUTA was also created to solve the chronic problem of a lack of information sharing, coordination, and rivalry between Belgium's intelligence and police services that in the 1990s provided the impetus for a major police reform and the creation of a legal framework for the intelligence service.¹⁹ CUTA replaced Belgium's Anti-Terrorist Mixed Group (AMG) that was by then largely defunct and inefficient, which had an envisaged task that was similar to that of a fusion centre.²⁰ The original plan in 2004 was to restructure the AMG into a new intelligence agency with coordinating competences, but this plan was quickly abandoned in favour of founding CUTA.²¹

The law that established CUTA mandates the execution of three main objectives: 1) the production of broader 'strategic evaluations' concerning threats stemming from terrorism or extremism; 2) the production of 'punctual evaluations' that concisely set

¹⁶ OCAD or "Coördinatieorgaan voor de Dreigingsanalyse" in Dutch, OCAM or "Organe de coordination pour l'analyse de la menace" in French and KOBA or "Koordinationsorgan für die Bedrohungsanalyse" in German. See also: articles 5 and 18 of "Wet betreffende de analyse van de dreiging" [The law regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], July 10, 2006, [http://www.ejustice.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2006071032&table_name=wet](http://www.ejustice.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2006071032&table_name=wet;); and article 16 of "Koninklijk Besluit tot uitvoering van de wet van 10 juli 2006 betreffende de analyse van de dreiging" [Royal Decree regarding the implementation of the law of July 10, 2006, regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], November 28, 2006,

http://www.ejustice.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2006112833&table_name=wet.

¹⁷ See recommendation 4, 6 and 7 listed in Council of the European Union, "Final report on the Evaluation of National Anti-Terrorist Arrangements: Improving national machinery and capability for the fight against terrorism and capability for the fight against terrorism," 12168/3/05, November 18, 2005,

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2012168%202005%20REV%203>; Guy Rapaille and Waute Van Laethem, "European Counterparts of the Belgian Fusion Centre," in *Fusion Centres throughout Europe: All-Source Threat Assessments in the Fight Against Terrorism*, ed. Belgian Standing Committee I, (Antwerp: Intersentia, 2010), http://www.comiteri.be/images/pdf/publicaties/fusion_centres_4.pdf.

¹⁸ See: Council of the European Union. *Conclusions adopted by the Council (Justice and Home Affairs)*. 12156/01, September 25, 2001, para. 15, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2012156%202001%20INIT>.

¹⁹ Attitudes in the 80s and 90s between different Belgium services were colloquially called the 'guerre des polices' or 'guerre des flics', which translates to the 'war of the cops' and linger on today. See for example: "La guerre des polices, c'est reparti: La preuve avec une note interne," *DH.BE*, October 10, 2017, <https://www.dhnet.be/actu/faits/la-guerre-des-polices-c-est-reparti-la-preuve-avec-une-note-interne-59dbaf4bcd70461d268449cb>; and Herman Matthijs, "Towards a New Secret Service in Belgium?," *European Journal of Intelligence Studies: Capita Selecta*, (2007): 88-89; J. Delepière, "Une approche commune et intégrée de l'analyse de la menace terroriste: la création de l'Organe de coordination pour l'analyse de la menace (OCAM-OCAD)," in *Geheime Diensten: A licence to kill*, ed. Herman Matthijs (Brugge: Die Keure, 2007), 13-14; Lionel Delval, "Société du risqué et gestion des crises: les pouvoirs publics belges sont-ils organisés pour faire face à un risque majeur?," in *1915-2015: Het verhaal van de Belgische militaire inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdienst / 1915-2015: l'Histoire belge du service de renseignement militaire et de sécurité*, eds. Marc Cools et al. (Antwerpen: Maklu, 2015), 422-424.

²⁰ AGG or 'Antiterroristische Gemengde Groep' in Dutch, GIA or 'Groupe Interforces Antiterroriste' in French. See: Hugo Gijssels, *De bende & co: 20 jaar destabilisering in België* (Leuven: Kritak, 1990), 187; Evi Heilderweirt, "Van Antiterroristische Gemengde Groep (AGG) naar Coördinatieorgaan voor de Dreigingsanalyse (OCAD): een juridische analyse," (Masterthesis, Universiteit Gent, 2018), 11-12, https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/479/278/RUG01-002479278_2018_0001_AC.pdf; Piet Pieters, "Terrorisme en extremism," *Panopticon*, no. 2 (2007): 68-75; Danny Stevens, "Van Antiterroristische Gemengde Groep naar Coördinatieorgaan voor dreigingsanalyse," in *Geheime diensten in België, de Verenigde Staten en over de wereld*, edited by Herman Matthijs (2006), 32-34; and Jos Vander Velpen, *De CCC: De staat en het terrorisme*, (Berchem: EPO, 1986), 84-85; A Dutch speaking documentary from 1984 called "Terroristenjacht (CCC)" or "Terrorists hunt" mentions the AMG (referred to as *Interforces* in the documentary), it is accessible through this URL: http://euscreen.eu/item.html?id=EUS_14932D1102884D329B33444241943DB3.

²¹ Herman Matthijs, "Een nieuwe geheime dienst? Het O.C.A.D.," in *Geheime Diensten: A licence to kill*, ed. Herman Matthijs (Brugge: Die Keure, 2007), 92-95; Matthijs, "Towards a New Secret Service in Belgium?," 70 and Piet Pieters, "Terrorisme en extremism," 69.

out a level of threat; and 3) to maintain relations with similar organisations abroad.²² CUTA is not governed by Belgium's law on the intelligence and security services, but instead has its own law. It is not a third security service, which is why it cannot gather intelligence itself. CUTA also does not have a policing status, as is explicitly stated in its foundational legal texts.²³ Thus, CUTA is predominantly a strategic unit. To execute its objectives, CUTA relies on classified information provided by a legally defined group of eleven support services to provide the unit with the necessary information.²⁴ These eleven services are legally obliged to automatically send all relevant intelligence they have on 'extremism' and 'terrorism' to CUTA, excluding raw intelligence.²⁵

CUTA falls under the immediate responsibility of an independent magistrate who in turn is directly linked to both the minister of Justice and the minister of the Interior.²⁶ It therefore is not integrated or part of a wider ministry or other Belgian federal state structure. By employing personnel coming from its support services on a five-year cycle, CUTA ensures close operational links with those services. It also employs its own staff, guaranteeing a degree of independence and its own identity, loyalty and culture.²⁷

3.2. Germany: GTAZ and GETZ

Germany has two fusion centres: the GTAZ (*Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum* – Joint Counterterrorism Centre) and the GETZ (*Gemeinsames Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum* – Joint Counter Extremism and Counter-terrorism Centre). GTAZ was founded in December 2004 and is responsible for Islamist terrorism, while GETZ, founded in November 2012, focuses on right-wing, left-wing and foreign (non-Islamist) terrorism, counterintelligence and the non-proliferation of nuclear materials and weapons.²⁸

9/11 was a key factor leading to the establishment of GTAZ, but the services remained an experiment of sorts in a country where close collaboration of police and intelligence

²² Articles 2, 8 and 10 of "Wet betreffende de analyse van de dreiging," [The law regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], 2006-07-10/32, July 10, 2006; see also: Piet Pieters, "Terrorisme en extremism," 2007, 70; Matthias van Hoey, "België's Coördinatieorgaan," 2019, 14-19; "Evalueren, analyseren, coördineren: OCAD en de strijd tegen terreur." *Actua Leges*, 2018, 1-2 [Unpublished, September 2018]; and Wauter van Laethem, "Het Coördinatieorgaan voor de dreigingsanalyse: een punctuele analyse," *Vigiles* 4, 2007, 113-115.

²³ See preamble "Koninklijk Besluit tot uitvoering van de wet van 10 juli 2006 betreffende de analyse van de dreiging". [Royal Decree regarding the implementation of the law of July 10, 2016, regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], 2006-11-28/33, November 28, 2006.

²⁴ CUTA's original seven support services are: the Belgian State Security service, the Military Security service, the Belgian Police, Customs and Excise, FPS Mobility and Transportation, Immigration Office, the FPS Foreign Affairs. The four new support services are: the Directorate General for Prison Facilities, the Service for Worship, the Directorate General Crisis Centre and the Treasury. See Article 2 of "Wet betreffende de analyse van de dreiging." [The law regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA]. 2006-07-10/32, July 10, 2006; and Article 2, para. g of "Koninklijk Besluit tot uitvoering van de wet van 10 juli 2006 betreffende de analyse van de dreiging," [Royal Decree regarding the implementation of the law of July 10, 2016, regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], 2006-11-28/33, November 28, 2006.

²⁵ See article 6 of "Wet betreffende de analyse van de dreiging," [The law regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], 2006-07-10/32, July 10, 2006.

²⁶ See article 5 of "Wet betreffende de analyse van de dreiging," [The law regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], 2006-07-10/32, July 10, 2006.

²⁷ Gudrun Persson, *Fusion Centres – Lessons Learned: A study of coordination functions for intelligence and security services*, 12; Article 7 of "Wet betreffende de analyse van de dreiging" [The law regarding the analysis of threat, founding CUTA], 2006-07-10/32, July 10, 2006; "Koninklijk Besluit betreffende het personeel van het Coördinatieorgaan voor de dreigingsanalyse" [Royal Decree concerning the personnel of CUTA], 2007-01-23/30, January 23, 2007; Herman Matthijs, "Towards a New Secret Service in Belgium?," 81.

²⁸ "Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum (GTAZ)," Bundeskriminalamt, accessed October 17, 2018, https://www.bka.de/DE/UnsereAufgaben/Kooperationen/GTAZ/gtaz_node.html; "Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum," Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, accessed October 17, 2018, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/gemeinsames-terrorismusabwehrzentrum-gtaz>; "Gemeinsames Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum (GETZ)," Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, accessed October 17, 2018, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/das-bfv/getz>.

agencies is generally avoided and prevented by the “*Trennungsgebot*” that stipulates separation of these two types of organisations.²⁹ The Federal Minister of the Interior at the time stated that the GTAZ was needed to solve the issue of an insufficient flow of information between security authorities before 2004 and he indicated that plans for reform and a platform like GTAZ dated back to 1997.³⁰

The establishment of GETZ can be traced back to the attacks of the right-wing terrorist group *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* NSU, whose actions came to light in 2011. This resulted in the founding of the Joint Centre of Defense against Right-Wing Extremism (*Gemeinsame Abwehrzentrum gegen Rechtsextremismus/-terrorismus* - GAR). One year later, the Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt* - BKA) and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* – BfV) created GETZ, which subsumed GAR.³¹ Then Federal Minister of the Interior Hans-Peter Friedrich argued for the establishment of GETZ with its broad mandate, so as to avoid having separate subsequent centres or platforms created to deal with left-wing extremism and proliferation.³²

Both GTAZ and GETZ do not have security service status or police powers. They solely consist of delegated members of the institutions that take part in its various working groups. For GTAZ, daily work is conducted in nine working groups, whereas GETZ consists of seven working groups.³³ All directors of the participating institutions can retract their involvement and their delegated employees at any time. The decision to not form standalone authorities, but to establish the fusion centre capacity as a platform is the result of Germany’s strong policy of keeping police and intelligence organisations separated.

GTAZ and GETZ act as platforms for communication and cooperation between German police, intelligence and other stakeholders.³⁴ They are both set up as joint counterterrorism efforts with a focus on threat analysis and attack prevention through the pooling of expertise.³⁵ GTAZ has no director and is housed by the BKA in Berlin-Treptow. GETZ was modelled after GTAZ, with a similar structure, but is conjointly

²⁹ Tobias Kumpf, *Die Kontrolle der Nachrichtendienste des Bundes* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr Kovac, 2014), 61, 87; Richard Warnes, “Germany,” in *Considering the Creation of a Domestic Intelligence Agency in the United States*, ed. Brian A. Jackson (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009): 100-102, 105, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a497839.pdf>; “Nachrichtendienste in Deutschland,” *Innere Sicherheit*, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, accessed October 24, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/innenpolitik/innere-sicherheit/135216/nachrichtendienste?p=all>.

³⁰ Detlev Borchers, “GTAZ: 10 Jahre gemeinsame Terrorabwehr,” *Heise Online*, October 29, 2014, <https://www.heise.de/newsticker/meldung/GTAZ-10-Jahre-gemeinsame-Terrorabwehr-2437668.html>.

³¹ “Gemeinsames Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum (GETZ),” Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, accessed September 12, 2018, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/das-bfv/getz>.

³² Christian Tretbar, “Friedrich will Terrorabwehrzentrum mit Ländern weiterentwickeln,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 15, 2012, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/alles-unter-einem-dach-friedrich-will-terrorabwehrzentrum-mit-laendern-weiterentwickeln/7380058.html>.

³³ GTAZ working groups: Daily Briefing (Tägliche Lagebesprechung); Threat Assessment (Gefährdungsbewertung); Operative Information Exchange (Operativer Informationsaustausch); Risk Management (Risikomanagement); Cases and Analyses regarding Islamist Terrorism (Fälle/Analysen zum islamistischen Terrorismus); Possible Islamist/Terrorist Actors (Islamistisch-terroristisches Personenpotenzial); Deradicalisation (Deradikalisierung); Transnational Aspects (Transnationale Aspekte); Aliens Law Procedures (Statusrechtliche Begleitmaßnahmen); GETZ working groups: Phenomenon-oriented Assessment (Phänomenbezogene Lage); Possible Actors (Personenpotenziale); Organisation Bans (Organisationsverbote); Case Analysis (Fallanalyse); Threat Assessment (Gefährdungsbewertung); Analysis (Analyse); Operative Information Exchange (Operativer Informationsaustausch). See: Mark Holzenberger and Albrecht Maurer, “Allgegenwärtig, aber wenig bekannt: Der Polizeiliche Staatsschutz in Deutschland,” *Cilip*, May 1, 2013, <https://www.cilip.de/2013/05/01/allgegenwaertig-aber-wenig-bekannt-der-polizeiliche-staatsschutz-in-deutschland/>.

³⁴ Bundeskriminalamt, “Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum (GTAZ),” Bundeskriminalamt; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Gemeinsames Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum (GETZ),”; “Eröffnung des Gemeinsamen Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrums (GETZ),” Pressemitteilung, Bundesministerium des Innern, , November 15, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20140304053904/http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2012/11/eroeffnung_getz.html.

³⁵ Ibid.

managed by BfV in Cologne and BKA in Meckenheim. The formal management of GETZ by BKA and BfV means that they offer the infrastructure and housing, but that they have no command over the members other institutions send them.³⁶ The platforms bring together members of several dozen German security authorities on a permanent platform for the first time in German post-war history.³⁷ Up to around 250 employees from the various supporting organisations contribute to GETZ on a daily basis.³⁸ Their participation to meetings of working groups differ depending on topic or are event-related.³⁹

3.3. Italy: CASA

In Italy, 9/11 and more specifically the terrorist attack against the Italian military contingent deployed in Iraq in 2003, triggered the creation of the Antiterrorism Strategic Analysis Committee (*Comitato di Analisi Strategica Antiterrorismo - CASA*) in 2004.⁴⁰ CASA was officially established by a Ministry of Interior Decree and tasked with the implementation of the National Plan for the Management of Terrorist Events that was adopted in May 2004. It was also tasked with assessing and analysing current and future threats.⁴¹ Since the presence of a direct security threat or crisis is determined by CASA, it is linked to the National Crisis Unit: a coordinating body that can be activated to support the Minister of Interior.⁴²

CASA is closely linked to the political authority and serves as a body that coordinates security and intelligence services and related policy. CASA functions as a permanent board, reporting directly to the Minister of Interior, with weekly meetings on the terrorist threat to Italian interests at home and abroad. Relevant information is provided

³⁶ Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, "Krisenmanagement der Nachrichtendienste in Besonderen Lagen – Islamistischer Terrorismus," Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af-islamismus-und-islamistischer-terrorismus/zahlen-und-fakten-islamismus/krisenmanagement-der-nachrichtendienste-in-besonderen-lagen>.

³⁷ Members of GETZ : Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz - BfV); Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt - BKA); Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst - BND); Public Prosecutor General of the Federal Court of Justice (Generalbundesanwalt - GBA); Federal Police (Bundespolizei - BPol); The German Customs Investigation Bureau (Zollkriminalamt - ZKA); Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - BAMF); Military Counterintelligence Service (Militärischer Abschirmdienst - MAD); State Criminal Police Offices of all 16 German States (Landeskriminalämter - LKA); State Offices for the Protection of the Constitution of all 16 German States (Landesverfassungsschutzbehörden - LfV). GETZ has the same members of GETZ with the addition of Europol, the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Ausfuhrkontrolle - BAFA). Europol, BND and MAD are only occasionally present at meetings of GETZ working groups. See: Cilip, "Allgegenwärtig, aber wenig bekannt: Der Polizeiliche Staatsschutz in Deutschland."

³⁸ Most recent source mentions 229 persons working for GETZ: Deutscher Bundestag, "Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Wolfgang Wieland, Volker Beck (Köln), Jerzy Montag, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN – Drucksache 16/9833," *Drucksache 16/10007*, July 18, 2008, <https://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/16/100/1610007.pdf>; Manuel Bewarder, "Deutsche Terrorabwehr agiert in der rechtlichen Grauzone," *Welt*, April 26, 2016, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article154742382/Deutsche-Terrorabwehr-agierte-in-der-rechtlichen-Grauzone.html>; Bürgerschaft der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, "Schriftliche Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Christiane Schneider (Fraktion DIE LINKE) vom 12.05.09 und Antwort des Senats", *Drucksache 19/3064*, May 19, 2009, <https://www.hamburg.de/contentblob/1581308/2c885327838318e6d072dedb1a33393a/data/2009-kooperation-auslaenderbehoerde-lfv-lka-bamf.pdf>.

³⁹ Deutscher Bundestag, "Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke, Sevim Dağdelen, Heidrun Dittrich, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 17/14766 –," *Drucksache 17/14830*, October 21, 2013, <https://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/17/148/1714830.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Gnosis – Rivista Italiana die Intelligence, "A colloquio con il Presidente del Comitato Analisi Strategica Antiterrorismo."

⁴¹ The Ministry of Interior decree of May 6, 2004, was classified on October 2, 2004, for national security reasons.

⁴² "Comitato parlamentare di controllo sull'attuazione dell'Accordo di Schengen," Lower Chamber Report on the activities of the Counterterrorism Strategic Analysis Committee, March 11, 2015, http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/html/30/indag/c30_flussi/2015/03/11/indice_stenografico.0023.html.

by Italy's law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as well as by foreign partners.⁴³ Moreover, the Minister of the Interior can request additional meetings whenever ongoing events that are deemed relevant for national security give reason to do so.⁴⁴ The primary goal of CASA is to provide the Minister of the Interior with all the necessary information to evaluate risks and to issue subsequent directives. In a top-down model, it is through CASA that coordination of investigative activities is directed and best practices and lessons learned by other countries are discussed.⁴⁵ Also, the Minister of Interior sets the national level of terrorism alert based on the advice from CASA.⁴⁶

Former CASA President Mario Papa defined the centre in 2015 as “the shared house for all law enforcement and intelligence agencies in Italy”.⁴⁷ CASA has a joint operation room that, when in session, is chaired by the Central Director of the Prevention Police or by the Minister of Interior, and hosts the counterterrorism highest representatives of the law enforcement and intelligence agencies, the Financial Police,⁴⁸ and Penitentiary Administration Department.⁴⁹ The law enforcement agencies that are represented in the Committee are the Carabinieri Corps and State Police, who both have general jurisdiction on counterterrorism investigations. The intelligence agencies represented are the Internal Information and Security Agency (AISI) and the External Information and Security Agency (AISE).

3.4. Netherlands: NCTV

In the Netherlands, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 led to a parliamentary debate on the nature and scope of the terrorist threat in the country. In response to the Madrid train bombings in 2004, the number of government agencies involved in counterterrorism increased gradually.⁵⁰ The trigger event that eventually led to the establishment of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), was the murder of Dutch film maker Theo van Gogh by a member of a jihadist terrorist cell in November 2004. That attack led to a call for a more comprehensive and coordinated counterterrorism approach and a

⁴³ For instance, after the Westminster attack on March 22, 2017, CASA convened for an extraordinary meeting and the Scotland Yard Liaison Officer in Rome participated in the meeting. This also happened after the Manchester terrorist attack on May 22, 2017; See Ministry of Interior press releases: “Antiterrorismo: il Comitato analisi strategica intensifica le misure di sicurezza e vigilanza,” Ministero Dell’ Interno, 15 September 15, 2018, <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/sala-stampa/comunicati-stampa/antiterrorismo-comitato-analisi-strategica-intensifica-misure-sicurezza-e-vigilanza>; “Comitato di analisi strategica antiterrorismo dopo i tragici fatti di Manchester,” Ministero Dell’ Interno, accessed September 15, 2018, <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/sala-stampa/comunicati-stampa/comitato-analisi-strategica-antiterrorismo-dopo-i-tragici-fatti-manchester>.

⁴⁴ Parliamentary Annual report, XV Legislature (April 2006 - April 2008), 11-12,

<http://leg15.camera.it/dati/leg15/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/033/001/0000001.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Franco Roberti and Lamberto Giannini, *Manuale dell’antiterrorismo* (Rome: Laurus Robuffo, 2016), 39-40.

⁴⁶ Vittorio Nuti, “Come funziona il Comitato Antiterrorismo”, *Il Sole 24 ore*, August 19, 2017, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2017-08-18/come-funziona-comitato-antiterrorismo-211636.shtml?uuid=AEsgmoEC>.

⁴⁷ Comitato parlamentare di controllo sull’attuazione dell’Accordo di Schengen, “Lower Chamber Report on the activities of the Counterterrorism Strategic Analysis Committee.

⁴⁸ The Financial Police is a specialised force, usually tasked by the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor for the investigations regarding the financing of terrorism. See: “Antiterrorismo”, Guardia di Finanza, accessed November 4, 2018, <http://www.gdf.gov.it/chi-siamo/organizzazione/compiti-istituzionali/antiterrorismo>.

⁴⁹ Penitentiary Administration Department is responsible for monitoring and investigating inmates charged or convicted with terrorist offences, as well as common inmates who are considered at risk of violent radicalization. *Dipartimento dell’Amministrazione Penitenziaria*, “Relazione al Parlamento sull’attività delle Forze di Polizia e sullo stato dell’ordine e della sicurezza e sulla criminalità organizzata,” ed. 2013, 1304-1307, <http://www.camera.it/dati/leg17/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/038/002/00000038.pdf>; Permanent Delegation of Italy to the European Security and Cooperation Organization, “Scambio di informazioni sul codice di condotta relativo agli aspetti politico militari della sicurezza”, Italian Delegation Note Verbale to OSCE, April 2013, 15-16, <https://www.osce.org/it/fsc/101419?download=true>.

⁵⁰ Edwin Bakker and Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, *Barometer van de dreiging: tien jaar Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 2005-2015* (Den Haag: NCTV, 2015), 11, https://www.nctv.nl/binaries/essay-barometer-def_tcm31-32670.pdf.

proper communication strategy toward society regarding the risks of terrorism.⁵¹ The NCTb was formally established in 2005⁵² and renamed ‘National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism’ (NCTV) in October 2012.⁵³

The Netherlands established the NCTb in 2005 “to accumulate, combine, and reorganise the information of intelligence supplying services and administrative and scientific sources for the purpose of integrated analyses and threat assessments on terrorism”.⁵⁴ In October 2012, the NCTb was renamed the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism (NCTV). Its mission is to “keep the Netherlands safe and stable by identifying threats and strengthening the resilience and security of vital interests. Its ultimate purpose is to prevent and minimise social disruption”.⁵⁵ In doing so, the NCTV has a scope broader than counter-terrorism alone, as it also focuses on cybersecurity and crisis management.

Within the NCTV the Department of Analysis and Strategy (DAS) produces the integrated analyses and all-source threat assessments, making it a de facto fusion centre.⁵⁶ Although employees were initially seconded to the NCTV by the intelligence and security services, the department now employs a number of analysts who have had a security screening. The NCTV and thus DAS cooperate closely with the intelligence community and other partners in the counterterrorism and security field, but the NCTV is part of the wider Ministry of Justice and Security and does not have the status of a security service. The main goal of DAS is to provide an indication of national security threats, based on their expertise and intelligence information, both secret intelligence supplied by the intelligence community and open source intelligence they gather themselves.⁵⁷

According to the NCTV’s website, it has “the most complete and up-to-date overview possible of all threats and risks to national security”, that enables the supply of “timely, high-quality threat related products”.⁵⁸ It produces short, medium and long-term analyses, and one of its main products is the so-called “Threat Assessment Terrorism, the Netherlands” (*Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland*, DTN) published every three to four months.⁵⁹ The most important consumers of the assessment are politicians and policy makers.⁶⁰ Within the NCTV, the Department of Counter-Terrorism (DCT) works closely with DAS and focuses its efforts on coordinating the cooperation between the various Dutch organisations that work in the field of countering and preventing terrorism and extremism. Together with these organisations, DCT implements and monitors the NCTV’s National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020.

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⁵¹ Michael Kowalski and Cees Wiebes, “Strategisch kompas voor contraterorisme,” *Magazine Nationale Veiligheid* 9, no. 4 (August 2011): 20.

⁵² “What does the NCTV do?” Organisation, NCTV, 28 accessed September, 2018, <https://english.nctv.nl/organisation/WhatdoestheNCTVdo/WhatdoestheNCTVdo.aspx>.

⁵³ “Instellingsregeling Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding,” *Staatscourant* 127, no. 1 (2005).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁵ “What does the NCTV do?” Organisation, NCTV, accessed 28 September 2018, <https://english.nctv.nl/organisation/WhatdoestheNCTVdo/WhatdoestheNCTVdo.aspx>.

⁵⁶ Kowalski and Wiebes, “Strategisch kompas voor contraterorisme,” 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ “Analysis and Strategy Department,” NCTV, accessed September 28, 2018, <https://english.nctv.nl/organisation/WhoistheNCTV/AnalysisandStrategyDepartment.aspx>.

⁵⁹ “Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands,” NCTV, accessed 28 September 2018, https://english.nctv.nl/topics_a_z/terrorist_threat_assessment_netherlands/index.aspx.

⁶⁰ “About Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands,” NCTV, accessed 28 September 2018, <https://english.nctv.nl/organisation/counterterrorism/TerroristThreatAssessmentNetherlands/about-terrorist-threat-assessment-netherlands.aspx>.

3.5. Spain: CITCO

In Spain, the jihadist attack on commuter trains in Madrid on 11 March 2004 highlighted coordination issues between the two agencies tasked with counter-terrorism: the National Police and the Civil Guard.⁶¹ An investigation that was initiated after the attacks revealed that both forces, together with the Ministry of Defence's intelligence service (National Intelligence Centre CNI), conducted overlapping investigations for two years. The investigation also unearthed that information on several key members involved in the jihadist cell that executed the bombings was not shared between agencies.⁶² The attacks took place two days before the Spanish general election, which was unexpectedly won by the main opposition party (PSOE, Socialist Party). On 28 May 2004, the two-month old government created a national fusion centre dedicated specifically to counter-terrorism intelligence: the National Coordination Centre (CNCA),⁶³ which was later renamed the Counter-Terrorism and Organised Crime Intelligence Centre (CITCO)⁶⁴ following its merger with the Organised Crime Intelligence Centre (CICO). The Spanish government justified the merger of the CNCA and CICO on the grounds of growing connections between crime and terrorism. However, the origins of the merger also had to do with the budget crisis that Spain suffered at the time, requiring budget cuts. This motive was reflected in the official announcement of the creation of CITCO that notes that the initiative aimed to also "achieve financial savings through the optimal use of resources and services."⁶⁵

Spain's CITCO is a non-political structure, attached to the Office of the Secretary of State for Security, which is part of the Interior Ministry. It is staffed by members of the National Police and Civil Guard, in addition to staff from the National Intelligence Service (CNI) and experts from the Spanish Prison Service.⁶⁶ From the outset, the centre set itself the primary objective to serve as a body for "receiving, processing and assessing available strategic information on all forms of terrorism that pose a threat to Spain".⁶⁷ This is done by CITCO through collating and analysing information from the databases of the various Spanish law enforcement and security agencies, as well as information from international databases and from organisations with which it has cooperation

⁶¹ Reinares, *Al-Qaeda's Revenge: The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings*.

⁶² Fernando Reinares, "After the Madrid Bombings: Internal Security Reforms and Prevention of Global Terrorism in Spain," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 5 (2009): 367-388.

⁶³ Acuerdo del Consejo de ministros del 28 de Mayo de 2004, por el que se crea el Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista." [Council of Ministers' Agreement of 28 May 2004, creating the National Antiterrorism Coordination Centre]," Consejo de Ministros, La Moncloa, last modified May 28, 2004, <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/referencias/Paginas/2004/c2805040.aspx#CNCoordAntiterrorista> (in Spanish).

⁶⁴ "Real Decreto 873/2014, de 10 de octubre, por el que se modifica el Real Decreto 400/2012, de 17 de febrero, por el que se desarrolla la estructura orgánica básica del Ministerio del Interior" [Royal Decree 873/2014, of 10 October, amending Royal Decree 400/2012, of 17 February, establishing the general organisational structure of the Interior Ministry], October 10, 2014, https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2014-10398 (in Spanish).

⁶⁵ See: "El Ministerio del Interior crea el Centro de Inteligencia contra el Terrorismo y el Crimen Organizado (CITCO)," Ministerio del Interior [Interior Ministry creates Counter-Terrorism and Organised Crime Intelligence Centre (CITCO)], October 10, 2014, http://www.interior.gob.es/prensa/noticias/-/asset_publisher/GHU8Ap6ztgsg/content/id/2624738; Fernando Toboso Marqués, "Lucha antiterrorista y organizaciones interministeriales, una solución práctica" [The fight against terrorism and interministerial organisations, a practical solution], *Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado- UNED* (October 2006), <https://iugm.es/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CNCAoctubre.pdf>.

⁶⁶ There is no official updated figure on staff working at CITCO. The latest available formal figure estimated that 60 people were working in 2009. In 2011 a dozen more analysts were added. See: "Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista (CNCA)," La Pagina de ASR, accessed September 28, 2018, <https://www.intelpage.info/centro-nacional-de-coordinacion-antiterrorista.html>; It can be estimated that CITCO currently has more than 200 members, the majority being analysts from the Police and Guardia Civil. Both bodies provide an identical number.

⁶⁷ Acuerdo del Consejo de ministros del 28 de Mayo de 2004, por el que se crea el Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista." [Council of Ministers' Agreement of 28 May 2004 creating the National Antiterrorism Coordination Centre]," Consejo de Ministros, La Moncloa, last modified May 28, 2004, <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/referencias/Paginas/2004/c2805040.aspx#CNCoordAntiterrorista> (in Spanish).

agreements. As part of its mission, CITCO manages a database created expressly for the purpose of operational coordination of the different police investigations conducted in Spain. It detects overlaps in people of interest and draws up procedures to determine which organisation takes responsibility of the investigation. More recently, CITCO keeps track of foreign fighters departing from Spain and monitors them. CITCO was established as a “complementary and auxiliary body”,⁶⁸ not for the purpose of undertaking operational missions but to enhance the effectiveness of Spain’s law enforcement agencies. Accordingly, it does not have the status of a security service.

3.6. United Kingdom: JTAC

The United Kingdom (UK)’s national counter-terrorism fusion centre is the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC).⁶⁹ It was established in June 2003 following the 9/11 attacks in the US, as well as the Bali bombings in 2002 where over twenty UK citizens were killed.⁷⁰ In October 2001, the UK established the Counter-Terrorism Analysis Centre (CTAC) within the Security Service (MI5), which was later replaced by JTAC.⁷¹ In that sense, the UK anticipated the outcome of the ensuing 9/11 Commission, specifically its assertions regarding the lack of information sharing between various agencies in the US intelligence community.⁷²

JTAC was established to “break down institutional barriers between intelligence agencies by the process of co-locating [...] and creating a new shared identity through JTAC membership.”⁷³ It brings together specialists from 16 governmental organisations including members from the various intelligence agencies and the police, as well as analysts from the National Crime Agency (NCA) and Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Normally, these are seconded to JTAC from their parent organisations for a two-year posting. Although JTAC resides in the MI5 headquarters and is accountable to that organisation’s Director General, JTAC is officially considered a separate intelligence entity within the UK’s national intelligence machinery.⁷⁴ It functions as a joint, all-source intelligence agency with a responsibility to fuse, evaluate, analyse and assess all intelligence relating to international terrorism, both domestically and overseas.

JTAC is the only fusion centre in the scope of this report that operates under the same legal framework as the security and intelligence agencies. This allows the sharing of tactical threat information, in addition to strategic threat information. JTAC produces short-term assessments on the level of threat and longer-term assessments “for customers from a wide range of government departments and agencies, as well as

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⁶⁸ Pagina de ASR, “Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista (CNCA).”

⁶⁹ “Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre,” MI5-Security Service, accessed 12 September, 2018, <https://www.mis.gov.uk/joint-terrorism-analysis-centre>.

⁷⁰ Andrew Staniforth, *Blackstone’s Counter-Terrorism Handbook (Police National Legal Database)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 128-9.

⁷¹ Frank Gregory, “An assessment of the contribution of intelligence-led counterterrorism to UK homeland security post-9/11 within the ‘contest’ strategy” in *Homeland Security in the UK: Future Preparedness for Terrorist Attack since 9/11*, ed. Paul Wilkinson (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁷² See 9/11 Commission, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. (New York: Norton & Company, 2005).

⁷³ Frank Gregory, “Intelligence led Counter-terrorism: A Brief Analysis of the UK Domestic Intelligence System’s Response to 9/11 and the implications of the London Bombings of 7 July 2005,” *Real Instituto Elcano*, (July 12, 2005).

⁷⁴ The central intelligence machinery is based in the Cabinet Office (CO) and consists of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS – MI6), the Security Service (MI5), Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), Defence Intelligence (DI) that is a part of the Ministry of Defence, and JTAC itself. See: “National Intelligence Machinery,” HM Government, November 2010, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61808/nim-november2010.pdf.

producing more in-depth reports on trends, terrorist networks and capabilities.”⁷⁵ Under the UK’s over-arching Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST)⁷⁶, and based on its fused intelligence analysis, JTAC is also mandated to set the UK threat level for international terrorism, while MI5 sets the threat level for Irish nationalist terrorism.

4. A Closer Look at Two Themes

From the expert discussions in The Hague and the description of fusion centres given above, two themes emerged as central in the discussion, warranting a closer look. Namely, the development of the role of fusion centres and how fusion centres deal with the collection and sharing of information related to terrorist threat. The following pages look at these themes in more detail.

4.1. Development of the Role of Fusion Centres

Originally, fusion centres were primarily tasked with combining and analysing threat information. Over the years, several fusion centres have also begun coordinating security and intelligence cooperation, as well as the implementation of national action plans. Several fusion centres described in this report have become responsible for the coordination of national programs for the prevention of violent extremism and/or countering terrorism, namely CUTA⁷⁷, NCTV, CASA⁷⁸ and CITCO⁷⁹. The plural composition of most fusion centres facilitates interdepartmental coordination and cooperation, which partly explains the allocation of these additional responsibilities to fusion centres. Their centrality in the collection and strategic analysis of information arguably makes them particularly suitable to be tasked with a coordinating role.

With the exception of CASA and GTAZ/GETZ, all fusion centres that fall within the scope of this research also independently issue national threat levels. CASA provides the assessment on which the subsequent threat level is based and set by political leadership, whereas GTAZ and GETZ both do not provide or issue national threat level assessments.

The use and impact of national threat levels vary across countries. There is a difference between those countries where the execution of specific countermeasures is directly related to the changing of the threat level, such as in the UK, and countries where this is not the case, for example in the Netherlands and Belgium. It is not always clear to the general public that fusion centres that issue national threat levels do not necessarily decide or advise upon subsequent measures.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7th July 2005*, London: Government White Paper, May 2006, 6; “Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre,” MI5 Security Service, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/joint-terrorism-analysis-centre>.

⁷⁶ See: HM Government, *Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom’s Strategy*. Government White Paper. Norwich: HMSO, July 2006, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272320/6888.pdf.

⁷⁷ CUTA became the coordinating service of Belgium’s ‘Action Plan against Radicalism’ (Plan R) in 2015. See: Federal Public Service Home Affairs, “Plan R: The Action Plan against Radicalism”, 2016, http://besafe.jdbi.eu/sites/besafe.localhost/files/u3051/planr_en.pdf.

⁷⁸ A Technical Working Group - made up of CASA representatives - establishes the procedures for implementing preventive initiatives approved by CASA and entrusted to the Police Authorities on the national territory. See: Gnosis – Rivista Italiana di Intelligence, “A colloquio con il Presidente del Comitato Analisi Strategica Antiterrorismo.”

⁷⁹ CITCO designed a strategy known as the National Plan to Combat Violent Radicalisation (Spanish acronym, PEN-LCRV). See: Ministerio de Interior, “Plan Estratégico Nacional de Lucha Contra la Radicalización Violenta” [National Plan to Combat Violent Radicalisation], 2015, http://www.interior.gob.es/documents/10180/3066463/CM_mir_PEN-LCRV.pdf/b57166c1-aaaf-4cod-84c7-b69bda6246f5.

⁸⁰ In Belgium, measures such as ‘Operation Vigilant Guardian’ are sometimes wrongly linked to CUTA’s national threat level and by proxy to CUTA. While CUTA determines the threat level, subsequent measures are not directly related to the threat level or determined by CUTA. See for example: Kenneth Lasoen, “Indications and warning in Belgium:

4.2. Collecting and Sharing Information

Several fusion centres are supported by national laws that obligate other government agencies and organisations to share relevant information with them (CUTA, CITCO, CASA). However, it is unclear to what extent information is actually shared in accordance with these obligations. In Spain, for example, in some cases the different police forces that must coordinate their operations through CITCO, decided to ignore CITCO because they considered CITCO to reduce their efficiency and agility. Some police officers continue to perceive CITCO as a bureaucratic structure that can put police operations at risk.⁸¹

Adherence to legal obligations to share information is often supported through oversight mechanisms. JTAC, for example, has an Oversight Board that is chaired by the Cabinet Office, which monitors how effectively JTAC is engaging with other departments and agencies.⁸² This is to ensure that JTAC provides appropriate intelligence analysis and advice.⁸³ However, it also falls under the Joint Intelligence Committee that can oversee if the other agencies are in turn effectively and sufficiently sharing relevant information with JTAC.

Legal stipulations that obligate agencies to share information with fusion centres, as well as effective oversight mechanisms to see to it that this actually happens, are not always in place. In Germany for instance, there is no obligation for organisations on the state level, or any constituent organisation for that matter, to contribute and delegate staff to the working groups of GTAZ or GETZ. As described in section 3.2, they consist of delegated members of the institutions that take part in various working groups of both platforms, meaning that contributing institutions can retract their involvement and their delegated employees at any time. Still, all local authorities joined the platforms with none of them having retracted their participation.⁸⁴ Without legal obligations or oversight to stimulate such participation in fusion centre capacities, it is even more important for these centres to show their relevance and value to contributing organisations, in order to consolidate their position. This is something that rings true for all fusion centres.

One of the issues that fusion centres face in their mission of combining and analysing threat information, is the classified nature of part of this information. There are legal barriers that make it difficult to exchange information between closed and open circuits. These legal frameworks are there for valid reasons, for instance to ensure source protection for sensitive intelligence sources, like human assets. From the viewpoint of striving for maximal information exchange to come to accurate threat assessments, for instance within fusion centres, it might seem reasonable to reconsider these legal

Brussels is not Delphi," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 7 (March 2017): 929, 931-932; "Kostprijs drie jaar militairen op straat: 140 miljoen euro," HLN.be, January 18, 2018, <https://www.hln.be/nieuws/binnenland/kostprijs-drie-jaar-militairen-op-straat-140-miljoen-euro-a180d595/>.

⁸¹ For an example of an anti-drug operation where the National Police decided not to inform CITCO, see: Cruz Morcillo and Pablo Muñoz, "La Guardia Civil planta a la Policía en el Citco tras la incautación del mayor alijo de heroína," *ABC España*, December 12, 2017, https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-guardia-civil-planta-policia-citco-tras-incautacion-mayor-alijo-heroina-201712050207_noticia.html; and Jesús Rodríguez, "La guerra silenciosa del espionaje," *El País Semanal*, May 30, 2016, https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/05/30/eps/1464559223_146455.html.

⁸² See HM Government, "The Legislative framework of the Agencies," in *National Intelligence Machinery*, November 2010, 2-3, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61808/nim-november2010.pdf.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Based on expert contribution of Prof. Dr. Stephan Humer, who described initial reluctance to contribute by certain federal states of Germany to these platforms. In part in relation to the German adage "Sicherheit ist grundsätzlich Ländersache", meaning security is principally a federal state matter.

barriers. On the other hand, changing these laws could hinder the ability of intelligence or police organisations to build and maintain their information position within their counter-terrorism investigations. It can furthermore be argued that due to the coordination role of many fusion centres and their closer proximity to political authority than security and intelligence services, access to classified information is associated with certain risks. These risks include political influence on assessments and operations as well as the potential use of classified information for political purposes rather than to serve security interests.

There is another risk involved with fusion centres' aim to collect all the data they need in order to come to an accurate threat assessment, namely one related to their capacity. Fusion centres sometimes have problems assessing a sometimes exponentially increasing volume of data. The worry is that they could 'miss the forest for the trees'. There is so much data coming in to be processed, compared, assessed, and 'fused' that there is a risk of failing to identify a critical piece of information, which could then slip through the net. Of particular concern are false positives – that have to be checked and discounted, which can unduly claim significant time and energy.

5. Challenges

European fusion centres face various challenges. Based on the present analysis and the input of experts, three of them are most pressing. They are the issue of independence, the risks involved in fusion centres' general proximity to politics, and the focus that fusion centres have on building relationships, as networking organisations.

5.1. The Illusion of Independence

As became evident in expert discussions, most fusion centres themselves seem to value an independent status and deem it a prerequisite for their ability to fulfil their mission, particularly when it comes to threat assessment. Paradoxically, many fusion centres are dependent on other organisations to fulfil their role, for instance when it comes to collecting information. When it comes to their coordinating roles, many fusion centres have to rely on building and consolidating relations they have with other organisations in order to claim their coordinating role as they have no formal authority – other organisations are often not legally obligated to accept fusion centres' coordinating role. In that sense, speaking of independence when it comes to fusion centres might not be realistic; it might be better to speak of and strive for a form of pragmatic autonomy.

The scope and focus of the activities that a fusion centre is tasked with can also affect their level of autonomy and their effectiveness. For example, being responsible for coordination of national action plans requires the cooperation of other organisations to be implemented. At the same time a fusion centre also relies on its relationship with some of these organisations to provide it with relevant information to combine and analyse. It is potentially difficult for a fusion centre to guard its autonomy when the information needed for its analyses needs to come from partners that a fusion centre is dependent on whilst executing its other tasks.

Next to the need for good relations with other organisations, another way of consolidating the authority needed for a coordinating role without a formal position is being able to have an excellent level of expertise and subject-matter knowledge. It is therefore important for fusion centres not only to have access to information but also to

be able to work with knowledgeable personnel with expertise and excellent knowledge of the field.

5.2. Political Influence

The descriptions in this report of national fusion centres in six European countries show that the majority of them are in close proximity to political authority. Some are organisationally embedded in one or two governmental ministries and are placed directly or indirectly under the final authority of one of the national Ministers, for instance the Minister of Security or the Interior. Some function as direct advisors to parliament or a specific Minister, and in one case a Minister can even head its operations room. Some of those fusion centres claim an autonomous position, and are seemingly able to produce independent advice, threat assessments and sometimes even operational guidance. It is, however, necessary to pose the question of how these fusion centres guarantee their autonomy within this political atmosphere, and can continue to do so in an ever-shifting political climate. A tentative assessment on whether safeguards for such autonomy are now indeed in place, points out that relative autonomy is mostly consolidated on a relationship basis and not formalised. In that sense, and again paradoxically, close proximity to politics and politicians is currently the prerequisite of keeping political influence at bay, as good relations can influence the degree of political involvement. Legal and organisational frameworks, however, at this point often allow for political influence to be exerted, even though that currently seems to be limited and not considered problematic.

Many fusion centres are responsible for the threat assessments that lie at the basis of the national threat level. Fusion centres' proximity to politics might also pose a risk here: political leadership can potentially utilise the authority to set threat levels for political purposes with the value and objectivity of the threat level and its underlying assessments being compromised as a result.⁸⁵

In the face of a sharpening debate on matters regarding terrorism, that seems increasingly politicised in a shifting political landscape, it is important to gain a better insight on how fusion centres deal with the issue of political influence. Even though the current state of affairs in Europe might not yet seem to warrant legal or organisational changes in order to safeguard fusion centres' autonomy, as it is not fundamentally threatened at this point, it is necessary to have a long-term view on this issue.

5.3. 'Human Fusion'

The expert input solicited for this report indicates that fusion centres seem increasingly focused on building and strengthening their networks and relationships within the counterterrorism context. They have to, as it is a prerequisite for them in order to fulfil their mission. Implicitly, this seems to lead to a shift – or expansion – of their role. Next to creating systems and structures to facilitate the fusion of intelligence, these centres seem to undertake a form of 'human fusion' as networking organisations. Their focus on building organisational relationships positions them uniquely to bring together individuals from different intelligence and security agencies and to break down the institutional barriers between them. This can partly be achieved through physical co-location of personnel from different organisations, but also requires an appropriate

⁸⁵ For a description of the "politics of warning", relevant for the discussion on the articulation and communication of national threat levels, see: Lawrence Freedman, "The Politics of Warning: Terrorism and Risk Communication," *Intelligence and National Security* 20, Issue 3 (2005): 379-418.

collegiate and team driven culture to maximise the benefits of fusion. Also, in situations where there is no physical co-location, fusion centres are well positioned to function as an intermediary bridging gaps between organisations with different cultures, languages and frameworks, and increasingly seem to take up the challenge to do so.

6. Conclusion

Fusion centres are bound not by what they are but by the problems that they aim to solve. Most European fusion centres were established as the result of evaluated security and intelligence cooperation, but also of a wider need to respond more effectively to terrorist attacks after an attack happening in the county of establishment. Fusion centres' often-articulated purpose is to improve effective cooperation, information sharing and coordination on counter-terrorism and security. In other words, to "connect the dots", to prevent threats not yet acknowledged, and to enable states to counter them effectively with timely responses. From the description of the six European fusion centres and based on expert input, two central themes and three challenges surfaced as most central in the discussion about their functioning.

The first central theme is the development of the role of fusion centres. By now, fusion centres have often expanded their role, notably by drafting and coordinating national action plans, and by issuing national threat assessments to the wider public. Furthermore, fusion centres seem increasingly focused on building and strengthening their networks and relationships within the landscape of people and organisations working in counterterrorism, in order to consolidate their position needed for their coordinating role. This networking function is also necessary for fusion centres as they are dependent on other organisations to provide them access to information. Similarly, there is no set formula for the organisational structure of fusion centres. However, fusion centres are partly created in the image of centres that were already established in other countries, which results in some convergence of characteristics. There seem to be fusion centres that primarily function as coordination bodies or national security councils of sorts, fusion centres that that can be characterised as information sharing platforms and institutionalised fusion centres that nevertheless can be considered to operate relatively autonomously.

The second theme that surfaced is the way fusion centres deal with the collection and sharing of information. Fusion centres sometimes have access to classified and thus more operational or tactical information, in order to produce accurate threat assessments. Not all fusion centres operate under legal frameworks that allow them to access that kind of information. Even though these legal frameworks complicate the exchange of classified information, they are in place for good reasons, for instance the protection of sensitive sources. Furthermore, there is a potential risk associated with the large volume of data fusion centres are challenged to process. This might dilute their focus, overwhelm their processing capabilities and increase the risk of important pieces of information 'slipping through the net'.

Then there are three challenges that were discussed during the expert meeting in The Hague and also became apparent in the descriptions of the six different fusion centres in this report. Firstly, there is the paradox between the need for fusion centres to be autonomous, for instance in their threat assessments and operational coordination, and their inherent dependence on other organisations to do this work, particularly in acquiring the information they need to do so and the need to consolidate their coordinating role, sometimes without formal authority. In the current context therefore,

instead of speaking about the need for independence, it is more realistic to talk about the need for pragmatic autonomy.

Secondly, fusion centres' usual proximity to the political sphere presents another paradox: there is a need to keep political influence at bay, but in order to do so, fusion centres often need to invest in their relations with political actors in order to influence that dynamic. This is because in the current contexts their autonomy is often not formally safeguarded by legal frameworks. Thirdly, the way in which fusion centres are embedded in state structures is often informed by an intent to improve cooperation between security and intelligence services. Fusion centres, as networking organisations, are well positioned to act as intermediaries, crossing cultures and consolidating relations: they do not just fuse information, but also perform 'human fusion'. This is nevertheless a challenge too: the various organisations are often difficult to 'fuse', as they are quite different from one another, for instance when it comes to their different legal frameworks but also to differences in culture.

To conclude, a cautionary observation with regard to the future and continued purpose of fusion centres can be made. Their usual close proximity to political authority and the general lack of formal legal and organisational frameworks that limit the exertion of political influence, conjures up the risk of political influence on operational coordination in counter terrorism and the assessment of the threat. In a shifting political climate, this issue deserves further reflection.

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Fusion Centres in Six European Countries: Emergence, Roles and Challenges

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