

Al Qaeda's recent audio tape, released last week indicates potential threats of attacks in Europe. Recent arrest of terrorist suspects made in the United States, signals a greater threat to come from the West. As the Germans go to the polling stations this week, counter terrorist security forces go on high alert. Not only Germany will take preemptive positions but countries such as the UK, France, Italy and Spain will also take security precautions. The threat of a terrorist attack can never be stopped; only vigilance, country risk, preemptive measures and disaster management preparedness will be of significant value.

Countries in Scandinavia, small and fragile in security awareness of the threats of "homegrown jihadist" and "sleeping cells", should take immediate response in countering terrorism in this region. The Scandinavian countries remain a potential target of the international terrorist group Al Qaeda. The number of "*sleeping cells*" is growing within this region which includes the larger part of Northern Europe.

The fact remains that most of the Scandinavian countries lack data and information on the terrorist groups operating around the globe and the awareness and intelligence levels of its security agencies are considered minimal. The region depends highly on the more advanced European countries for support and assistance. Norway can be considered as one of the countries in the Scandinavia region to have taken considerable steps in the *war on terror*, such as its well trained and equipped Special Operation Forces, its intelligence gathering and sharing among the more advanced countries on terrorism.

A potential threat scenario includes soft targets within the region for Al Qaeda, and as such the authorities should take considerable measures to counter these threats. Al Qaeda knows of the lack of security measures within these countries as "*sleeping cells*" are their main informants as well as infiltrated "*spies*" in government organizations. Homegrown jihadists are sympathizers of what is currently taking place in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Africa.

Although homegrown jihadists are citizens of these nations, they are now relating their support based on the religion and they perceive western governments targeting the Islamic states and its people on the "*war on terror*". Homegrown jihadists are becoming more of a threat than

## Al Qaeda and Homegrown Jihadist: Scandinavian countries will be targets in the future

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otherwise thought of. They are vengeful, bolder and out spoken of the onslaught of their fellow countrymen by these governments.

Homegrown or Sleeping Cells are numbering in Denmark and Sweden within the Islamic migrant community and will eventually have a "spill over" effect on the other small and fragile nations such as Finland where a growing number of migrants have been given asylum from the Finnish government. Countries neighboring Finland; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would be conducive for potential "spill over" effect as well as other European countries not thought off before.

The threat of Al Qaeda in Europe will increase and there will be no stopping of the terrorist group to carry out attacks in any European countries supporting the wars in the Middle East and Africa. The governments of these countries should not take these threats lightly as it can happen any where in Europe where Al Qaeda finds fit to attack. We must remember that no European country can be considered safe from Al Qaeda attacks.

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