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PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

Inquiry into extremist movements and radicalism in Australia

Questions on notice

29 April 2021

Australian Federal Police

QoN Number: 01

Question:

Senator FAWCETT: Gentlemen, in paragraphs 31 and 32 of your submission you talk about continuing detention orders and high-risk terrorists – the resource implications, essentially, of having to monitor people when they’ve been released from detention. As you look at ideologically motivated extremism – and you describe that earlier in your submission as a far more disparate group, with rapidly changing allegiances – do you find a similar level of continuing allegiance and intent that you expect will require ongoing control orders for people who have been convicted and sentenced? Or is your experience to date, on the basis of the disruptions you’ve made, that the extent of adherence to ideologically driven violent extremism is not as deep rooted and sustained?

Mr Lee: In the context of our high-risk terrorist offender cohort, their ideology is all religiously motivated violent extremism. That will continue. We are seeing evidence that, in most, that is being maintained. In terms of ideologically motivated violent extremism, we do not have any in the high-risk terrorist offender cohort at the present time. I’m not in a position to comment on that at the moment. But what I would say is that what we are seeing through our investigations is the intent for violent extremist or terrorist activity with that adherence to violent extremism – that cannot be as clear-cut in certain circumstances as what we are seeing with the religiously motivated violent extremist cohort, if that makes sense, Senator.

Senator FAWCETT: It does, but where my question is going to is resourcing, in that if you are seeing a rise in ideologically motivated terrorism or extremism, if the two were compatible in terms of extent of adherence, such that even post a custodial sentence or intervention you require monitoring and control orders and things, then there’s going to be a very large resource implication. If, however, you are seeing that the sustained allegiance is not as strong, then it calls logically for more resources for early intervention to try and break that nexus such that you no longer have that obligation for either intervention or monitoring.

Mr Lee: It’s probably too early for us to determine that at the present time. We would just need to look at that on an individual, case-by-case basis. But I think at the present time, while we have the increase in the investigations for ideologically motivated violent extremism, some of those broader issues around the ability to disengage and reintegrate over the longer term, or even the medium term, it’s probably too early for us to be able to comment on that.

Senator FAWCETT: Are you aware of any of your counterpart agencies in the US, the UK or Europe doing any work in this space?

Mr Lee: No, I’m not, but we would be happy to take that on notice, if you wish.

Answer:

In the time available, preliminary consultation has occurred through AFP international liaison posts in the US, UK, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. This preliminary engagement has not identified

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any specific work done by international partners which provides indicative trends as to the sustained allegiance by adherents of Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremist (IMVE) to their extremist views, including adherence to such views post incarceration for related offences.

Further consultation directly with partner agencies and their in-country stakeholders is required to provide the Committee with a more fulsome response.

While there is comparatively more information available (both internationally and domestically) on the recidivism rates and organisational allegiances of Religiously Motivated Violent Extremist (RMVE) offenders, there are currently too few IMVE offenders within the AFP's High Risk Terrorist Offender cohort to provide sufficiently accurate insights on the subject matter in an Australian context. For example, of the 133 people charged as a result of 61 counter-terrorism related operations in Australia, only five individuals were clearly identified as holding IMVE beliefs:

- Four individuals were charged in 2020, and therefore data on trends is very limited.
- One individual is currently serving a 12 year sentence and is not scheduled to be released into the community until 2028.

The AFP undertakes to further consult with international partners and provide the Committee with further information as it becomes available.