



7 Questions about the Counterterrorism Alert System in the Netherlands

7. What are the specific characteristics of the Dutch Alert System?

- The Dutch system was developed **to protect economic sectors** swiftly and systematically. Consequently, the system does not provide a general threat assessment for the Netherlands as a whole, but rather focuses only on specific threats to those sectors.
- The Counterterrorism Alert System is **intended for professionals** that may have to deal with a terrorist threat. In contrast to the colour-coded systems in other countries, it aims primarily at security professionals, not at the general public.
- The **public has no special responsibilities** beyond remaining alert to unusual situations. Of course the public will be informed if the measures taken are likely to lead to inconveniences.
- The **measures are not compulsory**, as this would entail enacting new legislation. The participating economic sectors take part voluntarily, on the basis of a series of agreements with the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.
- The Alert System is a **form of public-private partnership**, with the public and private sectors working together closely to make the Netherlands more resistant to terrorist threats.
- The system makes **use of existing competences and jurisdictions** without introducing new statutory or otherwise binding provisions.
- The Alert System is intended to **temporarily increase resilience** in response to a specific terrorist threat. It is explicitly not intended to improve the quality of security within companies or sectors on a long-term basis. This remains the responsibility of the sectors themselves.

The NCTb helps to make the Netherland a safer place to live

The task of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism is to minimise the risk and fear of terrorist attacks in the Netherlands and to take prior measures to limit the potential of terrorist acts. The NCTb is responsible for the central coordination of counterterrorism efforts and ensures that cooperation between all the parties involved is and remains of a high standard.



Counterterrorism Alert System (ATb)

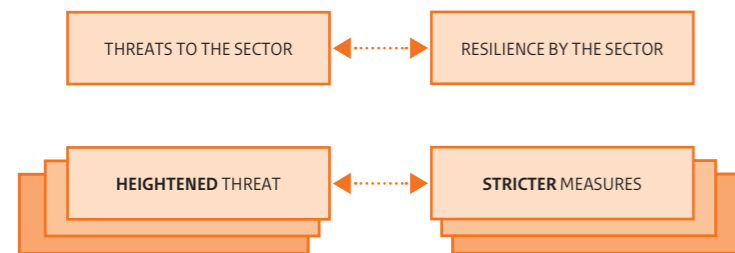
1. What is the Counterterrorism Alert System?

The Counterterrorism Alert System is an early-warning system that alerts companies and police services of impending terrorist threats. Its main focus is to enable participants to take the necessary security measures quickly. These measures are coupled to four states of alert. The more that is known about the specifics of a threat, the higher the alert level will be. Obviously a higher level of alert results in more drastic security measures.

Threat-related intelligence for the purposes of the system is supplied by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb).

2. What is the purpose of the Alert System?

The Alert System, was designed to minimise the chance that a terrorist attack will take place. If the available intelligence gives cause to believe that one or more economic sectors face a specific threat, additional security measures will be put into place. These measures are specifically tailored to the nature of the threat at hand.



The key is to balance the terrorist threat on the one hand with the internal resilience of economical sectors on the other. The role of the NCTb is to coordinate the proces of translating terrorist threats to security measures for economic sectors.

3. Whom is the Alert System meant for?

The Alert System is intended for major economic sectors and local authorities. The focus is on the country's critical infrastructure. But for a potential terrorist the list of attractive targets is not limited to objects, or systems of objects, with a pivotal financial or economic function. Today's terrorists are principally interested in inflicting human casualties and destroying symbols of Western society. On the basis of these criteria the NCTb has approached certain sectors to determine whether they should participate in the system. The website english.nctb.nl indicates which sectors are connected to the system.

The system was not designed to communicate with the general public. However, if it becomes necessary to raise the threat level, the public will be notified about the threat and the reasons behind raising the alert level. This is the responsibility of the Minister of Justice, the coordinating minister for counterterrorism.

4. What are the benefits of the system?

In the event of a terrorist threat, the system offers:

- a standard 'catalogue' of measures per threat level and sector;
- the possibility of tailoring measures to the threat;
- the assurance that coordinated action is being taken by both private sector and the government;
- nationwide coordination of security measures in both the technical and administrative sense.

In addition to these four main benefits, the Alert System has a number of other advantages. Economic sectors, for example, are notified of the threat-related intelligence that is specifically applicable to them. This information is updated at least every six months. In many instances the cataloguing of security measures acts as an incentive for companies to enhance their own security management practices. Furthermore, the system promotes the exchange of best practices between sectors at both the regional and the national level. The system also acts as a national forum, where security managers from the business community and representatives of intelligence agencies and the police can meet and exchange information. In the event of a crisis it is important that the various actors form a strong network.

5. How does the system work?

The Alert System consists of four threat levels (standard, low, moderate and high). In principle all sectors start out at 'standard', the level that corresponds to the normal package of security measures for a given sector. The decision to raise or lower the level depends on appraisals of the severity and likelihood of a terrorist attack. Each level is coupled with category of security measures, as can be seen in the table below:

Threat level	Possible measures
Standard/basic	→ Prudent precautions, normal operational management
Low	→ Staff alerted, heightened degree of internal supervision, police surveillance
Moderate	→ Security checks at points of entry, heightened police surveillance, certain processes stopped or re-routed
High	→ Access to the facility blocked, evacuation, services discontinued, security checks by heavily armed personnel

6. How does the Alert System work in practice?

Broadly speaking, the alert process consist of four phases:

