Risks

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CBRN incident



Threat assessment: The probability of an incident in Estonia caused by the malicious or terrorist use of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials within the next five years is considered low. However, technological development and the wider use of drones may increase the likelihood of such an attack in the longer term, as the necessary expertise and equipment are becoming more easily accessible.

Both terrorist groups and radicalised individuals have attempted to carry out attacks in the EU with large numbers of casualties, aiming to exert psychological and economic pressure on society and political decision-making. Terrorist organisations have not yet used CBRN materials in attacks in Europe, but preparations for this have been made. These organisations are intent on acquiring chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials or weapons and are seeking to develop the capability to obtain and use them. Attacks by radicalised lone actors influenced by extremist ideologies also cannot be excluded.

In addition to terrorist organisations, CBRN-related attacks may also be associated with hostile foreign states. CBRN materials have been used in military conflict zones, including in Ukraine, for carrying out attacks. In situations of armed conflict, there is always the possibility that weapons of mass destruction could fall into the hands of terrorist or extremist groups.

In Estonia, CBRN-related incidents have so far been linked to smuggling cases involving CBRN materials for the purpose of criminal profit.

Although rare, incidents involving CBRN materials can have extremely severe consequences. Beyond their immediate effects at the site of the incident, such events may cause uncertainty and panic within society, lead to the spread of misinformation in mass media and social media, and damage the country's reputation.

THREATS

- ✓ According to the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Incident and Trafficking Database (ITDB), as of 2024, there have been 147 incidents worldwide involving radiation sources or nuclear

- material. The occurrence of incidents involving radiation sources cannot be ruled out in the Estonian context either.

- In Estonia, the risk of theft of radiation sources is currently low, and storage facilities for radiation sources apply additional security measures.

- As of 2024, there are 68 major accident hazard and dangerous enterprises in Estonia where large quantities of hazardous chemicals are handled. The likelihood of attacks on chemical storage sites in Estonia is currently low.

- There are states and terrorist groups exploiting advances in biology, including microbiology and genetic engineering, to develop weapons of mass destruction. In Estonia too, it cannot be ruled out that individuals influenced by extremist ideologies might use toxins (such as ricin) to carry out an attack.

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