

# THE ROLE OF FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS PROFILING METHODOLOGY

**Juris Madžuls**

State Border Guard College, Latvia, e-mail: juris.madzuls@rs.gov.lv

**Abstract.** *The terrorist attacks have highlighted the importance of threats in the cross border dimension in regards to the identification of terrorists, the monitoring of 'subjects of interest' and other terrorism-related actors. The essence of research is determined by the dramatic increase of number of terrorists who perpetrated terrorist attacks and had used all available modes of transport, including legal and irregular options for crossing borders. The aim of the paper is to provide assistance in establishing/strengthening identification and profiling mechanisms in order to better distinguish among different categories of persons.*

*The task of the paper is to analyse risk indicators provided by General Secretariat and compare them with European Border and Coast Guard Agency's developed risk indicators in order to provide a support instrument (methodology for the profiling and identification of the foreign terrorist fighters (hereinafter – FTF) (hereinafter – the Methodology) for risk assessment performed at national level. In order to provide additional support for law enforcement agencies (especially for border guards) the author of the paper will come up with a range of recommendations.*

*Main conclusion: At the national level, it is necessary to develop the Methodology of the FTF. Taking into account Methodology, it is possible to develop a system of risk indicators and apply them in practice to prevent irregular migration, trafficking in human beings etc.*

*Primary methods: content analysis, multidimensional measurement and factor analysis. Achieved results: recommendations made by the author of the paper will improve the border check procedures regarding identification of FTF.*

**Keywords:** *border crossing point, foreign terrorist fighters, indicators, methodology, profiling.*

## **Introduction**

The terrorist attacks which struck Europe over the last years, have reinforced on determination to address comprehensively and collectively the unprecedented threat posed by FTF. The detection and disruption of terrorist travel, both before departure and upon return, has been widely recognised as a key priority. With a view to support the country border authorities in their coordinated implementation of the targeted checks the European Commission (General Secretariat of the Council) has facilitated a process to define common risk indicators. The definition of these common risk indicators is to provide a jointly agreed set of particular travel patterns and risk criteria.

The object of paper: FTF identification methodology. Research period: 2016 – 2018. Research methods: content analysis, multidimensional measurement and factor analysis.

### **Theoretical overview**

Terrorist attacks in Belgium, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, as well as in Turkey, France, Sweden, and other countries, have underscored the importance of a transboundary dimension with regard to the identification of terrorists, monitoring of possible faces of the FTF and other actors related to terrorism. Some of the terrorist attacks are committed by persons who has returned from conflict zones, and some – by the persons who has never been there.

If in 2017 terrorist attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) were committed mainly against national and international armed forces and security agencies, now their targets are mainly local residents. In addition, weak targets, such as the metro station in St. Petersburg, the Russian Federation (April 3, 2017), the concert hall in Manchester, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (May 22, 2017). These attacks, as a rule, have been simple in execution, but led to numerous victims. In some of these acts of terrorism, different means were simultaneously used, as in London on March 22 and June 3, when terrorists used cars and knives. Terrorists had used the simplest means, following the instructions of the late *Abu Mohamed Al-Adnani*, who began recommending such methods as early as in 2014. At the same time in some terrorist attacks, for example, in St. Petersburg, Manchester, and Brussels, homemade explosive devices were also used. Such devices were used in Paris and Brussels in 2015 and 2016; they were also supposed to be used in a number of prevented terrorist attacks that were planned in some European countries.

In Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, ISIL has lost control over all remaining urban areas. The group continues to transform into a terror organization with a flat hierarchy, with cells and affiliates increasingly acting autonomously. The global fight against ISIL will have to focus on the threat posed by less visible international networks. The combination of “frustrated travellers”, ISIL sympathizers, returnees and relocators poses an increased security risk for all states. Attempts by ISIL to infuse money into the licit economy in combination with a greater inflow of funds for reconstruction of recaptured areas will necessitate adjusted counter measures. The flow of FTF has continued to slow, with only individual cases being reported. However, the marked reduction of territorial control by ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic will force many FTF to make a choice

either to join other groups or to leave the region (return home) (Source: UN, 2017).

Returnees present a different challenge. Returnees generally fall into three broad categories (Source: UN, 2015):

- Returnees, who are disenchanted by ISIL as a group and terrorism as an ideology and therefore can potentially be de-radicalized and reintegrated;
- the second, much smaller category includes individuals, who return with the specific aim of conducting terror attacks and therefore present a high risk to United Nations Organization Member States;
- the third category is the most difficult to identify as it includes individuals who have clearly cut ties with ISIL after being disillusioned by ISIL as an organization. However, those individuals remain radicalized and are ready to join another terrorist group should the opportunity arise. Those individuals present a particular challenge as they pose a threat without concrete indications of current connections to terrorist groups.

Who are FTFs? UN Security Council resolution 2178 (September 2014) states that all UN 'Member States shall, consistent with international human rights law, international refugee law, and international humanitarian law, prevent and suppress the recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, and the financing of their travel and of their activities'.

Identifying plus monitoring the travel of known FTFs or 'subjects of interest' is a challenging task, but these risks can be mitigated by making full use of the existing tools, e.g. SIS II, Interpol's databases, etc. Potentially identifying the unknown FTFs or 'subjects of interest' is even more challenging, both at Border Crossing Points (hereinafter – BCP) and between BCPs. Nonetheless, many common risk indicators are relevant for both realities.

BCPs offer authorities with a structured environment for the potential identification of FTFs or 'subjects of interest'. However, the green and blue borders pose many additional challenges, particularly given large and sustained irregular migration movements. The different administrative and/or judicial measures taken by EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries could mean that EU-based prospective returnees might change their planning/travelling *modi operandi*. These could include illegal border-crossing, document fraud, impostors, nationality swapping or

possibly a combination of legal and illegal travel options. The challenges are not only on exit or entry, but also transit movements to other ‘theatres of jihad’. Border-control authorities’ activities offer the legal, administrative and geographical spread to better enhance border and internal security, especially in the common challenge of countering terrorism (Source: FRONTEX, 2018).

Following several terrorist attacks in Europe where the perpetrators intentionally exploited irregular migratory movements, one cannot fail to take the opportunity to see how Member States and Schengen Associated Countries can do better to deter, disrupt detect and detain those who want to indiscriminately inflict harm to innocent communities and undermine Europe’s fundamental values.

In order to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies to deter, disrupt, detect and detain, it is necessary to elaborate FTF’ identification methodology. The purpose of this Methodology is to serve as an aide memoire to the Country border authorities in other words to complement the detailed and classified common risk indicators for FTFs. The persons falling under this risk assessment shall be systematically checked against the databases by border guards at the BCP "first and second line check". The quick reference material provided in this Methodology is meant to raise awareness amongst first-line officers and increase the probability to identify potential ‘subjects of interest’ and send them for detailed second-line checks.

FRONTEX Agency based on European Commission (General Secretariat of the Council) provided Common risk indicators for checks at external borders preparing a booklet “Operationalisation of Common Risk Indicators”. As a best practice from booklet for national methodology development provided by FRONTEX Agency, suggestions on how to better spot possible FTFs during border checks should be taken. This booklet is structured in accordance with three main stages of border check: before person arrives at a BCP, during the first-line check and when a person is referred to the second-line checks.

The indicators and their tentative risk marking are described under the separate headings for each of the three stages and are focused on the table. When relevant, the direction of the travel is referred to separately as is also the type of the border. Each described indicator is also given a tentative risk marking (scale from 1-3) with 1 marked yellow and indicating (Figure 1):

- RED – Indication of possible active involvement of the checked person in the current ‘theatres of jihad’. If only this indicator is present – second-line checks are strongly advised;

- ORANGE – Indication of possible active involvement of the checked person in the current ‘theatres of jihad’. If this indicator is present cumulatively with others – second-line checks are advised
- YELLOW – Indication of possible deception efforts by the checked person. If this indicator is present – the second-line check is advisable if a number of these indicators are present.

Risk marking and Indicator	Direction of travel
Red	ENTRY / EXIT
Orange	ENTRY
Yellow	ENTRY

**Figure 1. Table of Risk Indicators by FRONTEX Agency**

An interesting approach to develop methodology is used by FRONTEX, the “Ask Yourself” text boxes are intended to assist the user in framing and asking the right questions, while the “Caveat” frames aim to warn about certain aspects or practices. The “Inform yourself” and “Check it” text boxes are meant to provide the further contextual or detailed reading on the relative topic.

The author of the paper, after summarizing the best practices, has understood that, in order to create a methodology, it is necessary to group indicators in the following way:

- First line:
  - route of travel to/from the "country of jihad";
  - the purpose of the trip to/from the "country of jihad". It is necessary to distinguish women (Sex Jihad, “Brides of Allah”, “Black widows” approach) and minor border crossing. Separately also Terrorist suicide bombers and Couriers should be described more detailed;
  - specific characteristics of the traveller crossing the border (or group of persons). A number of characteristic features for the suicide bomber man and separately for woman;
  - behavior of the person crossing the border (non-verbal indicators). Specially could be described a battle weary persons and external physical injuries;
  - behavior of the person crossing the border (verbal indicators);

- the appearance of a person, visible signs which indicate that the person is a radicalised;
  - travel documents used for border crossing;
  - traveller's luggage;
  - known or suspicious methods of movement and vehicles.
- Second line:
- details of the purchase of the ticket and payment method;
  - availability of electronic or other storage media and fixation devices (machines) and their accessories;
  - items in personal belongings that cause a certain interest;
  - documents, causing some interest (suspicions).

To collect such kind of the indicators, it would be necessary to strengthen international, regional, and sub-regional cooperation, if appropriate, through multilateral and bilateral agreements. The aims of this cooperation are:

- to facilitate the identification of the threat posed by FTF and prevent them from planning, organizing and committing terrorist acts, or recruiting and inciting other persons to commit such acts;
- to prevent the undetected travel of FTF from or through their territories, especially returning and relocating FTF, expanding the exchange of information in informal (through appropriate channels) and official order for the purposes of identifying FTF, sharing best practices and adopting such practices as well as exploring the routes of travel of the FTF and their family members.

In the opinion of the author, today it is necessary not only to establish and improve cooperation between law enforcement authorities, but also to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation in fighting against terrorism with the private sector, regional organizations, structures, companies and educational institutions. It is necessary to explore the possibility, where appropriate, of applying advanced practical methods in combatting terrorism, taking into account specific conditions, in particular in the collection of digital data and evidence in cases related to terrorism and FTF.

Taking into account the specifics and peculiarities of specialized groups (persons) crossing the border, at the national level, it is necessary to create the working groups that will develop the methodology relevant to a particular country, by adding description of possible profiles and the list of forbidden organisations, groups and etc.

One of the main problems that working groups may face: national level of secrecy regarding the official use of intelligence data concerning threats posed by FTF and individual terrorists as well as their travel routes and travel related details and in the defined order provide such information

domestically to front – line screeners, such as immigration, customs and border security agencies and to share good practices in this regard.

Taking the methodology as fundamentals will allow developing a system of risk indicators and applying them in practice to prevent irregular migration, drug, tobacco, weapons smuggling, human trafficking, etc. The system of risk indicators according to the methodology in comparison to the ability to prevent irregular migration and smuggling attached at paper’s (Table 1).

FRONTEX Agency available assessments confirm that there is "no clear profile" of the European FTF. The common risk indicators do not aim to define such a profile, but to establish a list of patterns and criteria on the basis of the best available information with a view to support relevant authorities performing border checks. Furthermore, the list of indicators shall be revised and tailored to the evolution of the threat posed by the FTF phenomenon.

**Table 1. The risk indicator system comparison table**  
(Source: compiled by the author)

	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>FTF</b>	<b>Irregular migration</b>	<b>Smuggling</b>
<b>Border checks at the BCP "First line"</b>				
1	Route of travel	✓	✓	✓
2	The purpose of the trip	✓	✓	✓
3	Specific characteristics of the traveller	✓	✓	✓
4	Behaviour of the person (non-verbal indicators)	✓	✓	✓
5	Behaviour of the person (verbal indicators)	✓	✓	✓
6	The appearance of a person, visible signs	✓	✓	✓
7	Travel documents	✓	✓	✓
8	Traveller’s luggage	✓	✓	✓
9	Known or suspicious methods of movement and vehicles	✓	✓	✓
<b>Border checks at the BCP "Second line"</b>				
1	Details of the purchase of the ticket and payment method	✓	✓	✓
2	Availability of electronic or other storage media and fixation devices (machines) and	✓	✓	✓

	theirs accessories			
3	Items in personal things that cause a certain interest	✓	✓	✓
4	Documents, causing some interest	✓	✓	✓

With the help of risk indicators, it is possible to improve risk analysis system. It is necessary to ensure structural units which are involved in border control with established methodology. In a case new indicators will be identified, it is necessary with early warning (*rapid alert*) systems; deliver it in time to all involved structures including to/from neighbouring countries.

In order to improve officials` skills, knowledge and competences in the field of FTF identification and profiling techniques, it is necessary to organize training (*workshops*) using Methodology`s risk indicators as well as to include these topics in education programmes of training institutions. Especially, subjects related to the work with victims of terrorism, suspects, accused or convicted of violating the law and especially children deprived of their liberty, as well as with children who are victims or witnesses of crimes. To improve officials` skills, knowledge and competences in the field of profiling, it is necessary:

- to create methodology on human psychology (*i.e. facial mimicry and body language (signs of lies)*) and to ensure its application within border checks;
- to foster the implementation of “5W” interviewing methodology as well as to elaborate the questionnaires (*use the prepared forms of questions*) for travellers in cases when:
  - border guard doesn’t speak the necessary language (to find out whether the traveller knows general facts related to his country of origin);
  - the traveller shows misappropriated documents (traveller is prepared in advance for questioning) and to ensure its application within border checks;
- to improve the level of professional competences and the general understanding of border guards` activities and procedures carried out during border checks of documents, vehicles, items, the paper author recommends to organize the planned joint exercises (trainings) and competitions on professional preparation which could include not only the test on knowledge in the checking of travellers and their documents and detention of trespassers, but also tasks related to identification, forged documents and interviewing travellers (also in a foreign language);

- at BCP it would be necessary to work out the most common types of travellers with the aim to detect the violators.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

The author of the paper recommends the implementation of profiling techniques which envisage the establishment of effective system that does not require investment of significant financial resources which in turn is an absolute advantage facing the system which is based only on the use of expensive equipment instead of human resources.

The development of methodology, its constant updating and appropriate training of personnel on how to use and interpret it correctly can increase the chance to prevent the possible terrorist acts in the future.

### **References**

1. Resolution 2178 of United Nations Security Council of September 2014 on Foreign Terrorist Fighters, from [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178%20%282014%29](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178%20%282014%29)
2. S/2018/14/Rev.1 – Twenty-first report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, from <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/news/document/s-2018-14-rev-1-twenty-first-report-analytical-support-sanctions-monitoring-team-submitted-pursuant-resolution-2368-2017-concerning-isil-daesh-al-qaida-associated-ind/>
3. S/2017/573 – Twentieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, from <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/news/document/s2017573-twentieth-report-analytical-support-sanctions-monitoring-team-submitted-pursuant-resolution-2253-2015-concerning-isil-daesh-al-qaida-associated-individuals-ent/>
4. FRONTEX. (2018). Operationalisation of Common Risk Indicators. Travelling terrorists and other 'subjects of interest' – Empowering border – control authorities to make better informed decisions, p. 42.