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THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY AGENCY'S TERRORIST PREVENTION ON INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREVENTION OF EVENTS RELEVANT TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Summary

Any offensive response to terrorist activities triggers a spiral of violence and does not contribute significantly to eliminating the phenomenon of terrorism from social life. Moreover, terrorist organizations, using social media, cause terrorism to be presented as an alternative ideology to the surrounding consumerism and materialism these days. Taking this into account, the concept of terrorist prevention is becoming increasingly important. The article presents the role and tasks of the Internal Security Agency with particular attention to terrorist prevention, which the Terrorist Prevention Center of the Internal Security Agency is responsible for carrying out, the impact of terrorism on the functioning of the state on the example of Afghanistan, mechanisms to combat and minimize terrorist threats in the European Union, as well as institutions carrying out, in the United States of America, tasks aimed at terrorist prevention.

Key words

national security, internal security agency, terrorism, prevention

Introduce

Internal security of the country is a fundamental value for all citizens and institutions operating in the country. The primary task of the state is to create the best possible conditions for the realization of national interests, as well as to achieve strategic objectives in the field of national security. We can include, among others, guarding independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty and ensuring the security of the state and citizens, as well as ensuring the conditions for sustainable and balanced social and economic development and protection of the environment¹. It is important that the achievement of the stated goals correlate with such values as independence and sovereignty of the state, security of citizens, freedom, human and civil rights, human dignity, justice, national identity and heritage, democracy, solidarity, international order and environmental protection.

The Republic of Poland is exposed to terrorist threats. This is primarily influenced by such factors, as the constant activity in Europe of Islamic killers ISIS², and the aggressive policies of the Russian Federation and Belarus. The pursuit of policies aimed at attempting to disrupt the proper functioning of the state through, for example, provocations on the Polish-Belarusian border, diversionary activities (arson), as well as the introduction of disinformation in the media, social media, etc. fits the definition of terrorism³.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, Poland has had the second, on a four-stage scale, CRP⁴ and BRAVO⁵ crisis alert degrees. The higher degrees have been introduced, by the Prime Minister, on the basis of Article 16(1)(1) of the Law on Anti-Terrorist Activities of June 10, 2016⁶. On this basis, the services are required to maintain increased vigilance against possible terrorist incidents and disruptions in ICT systems that disrupt the security of electronic communications or threaten the availability of electronic services provided.

Every democratic state is directly responsible for building and ensuring safe living conditions for all citizens. In Poland, among other things, institutions whose main tasks are to identify, prevent, counteract and physically combat terrorism are used for this purpose. One such is the Internal Security Agency (ABW). This is a special service that plays an important role in taking care of the country's internal security. In particular, attention should be paid to the wide range of projects aimed at preventing, combating and countering terrorism (terrorism prevention).

1 National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland. Warsaw, 2022, p. 6.

2 Government of the Republic of Poland. Terrorism as a current challenge. <https://www.gov.pl/web/rcb/terroryzm-aktualnym-wyzwaniem> [accessed on 16.01.2026].

3 W. Dietl, K. Hirschmann, R. Tophoven, *Terroryzm*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2009, p. 11.

4 BRAVO-CRP, means that the public administration is obliged to conduct increased monitoring of the state of security of ICT systems.

5 BRAVO, is introduced when there is an increased and foreseeable threat of a terrorist event. It means that the services have information about the potential threat, and as a result, the public administration is obliged to be particularly vigilant.

6 Act of 10 June 2016 on anti-terrorism activities (Journal of Laws 2024, item 92).

Terrorism prevention is handled by the ABW's Center for Terrorism Prevention (CPT ABW), established on April 1, 2018⁷. The unit deals with counterterrorism prevention in the broadest sense. a key element of the Center's activities is the dissemination of knowledge on the prevention of terrorist threats, via the organization of conferences, trainings and workshops. CPT ABW, through the recruitment of officers with broad competence, acquisition and expansion of knowledge, as well as domestic and foreign cooperation, effectively prepares Polish institutions and society on how they should recognize, respond and behave in situations that can be classified as terrorist threats.

The first chapter of the article presents, in brief, the phenomenon of terrorism, its destructive impact on the functioning of the state, as well as mechanisms to combat and minimize terrorist threats in the European Union. The next chapter describes the role and tasks of the Internal Security Agency with particular attention to terrorist prevention. The third chapter is a description of the tasks carried out by the Terrorist Prevention Center of the Internal Security Agency, and the tools used by the unit to counter terrorism and its consequences. The next chapter presents the institutions carrying out, in the United States of America, tasks aimed at terrorist prevention.

Terrorism and its impact on the functioning of the state

Terrorism is a tool through which terrorist organizations can affect the disruption of social, political and economic life of a country. Even individual terrorist attacks destructively affect the functioning of society⁸.

The United States of America (USA), since the largest terrorist attack in world history on September 11, 2001⁹, has sharply redefined its counter-terrorism strategy. a controversial law, called The USA Patriot Act of 2001, was introduced, which significantly expanded law enforcement's counter-terrorism powers, such as the right to detain indefinitely without trial non-U.S. citizens deemed a threat to national security¹⁰. The law, due to numerous protests by Americans, expired in 2005. In addition, the events of September 11, 2001 contributed to the creation of new institutions aimed at combating and countering terrorism, as well as expanding the powers of existing special services. The attack, carried out by al-Qaeda, did not significantly affect the economy of the country¹¹, while it negatively affected the sense of security of millions of Americans and people around the world.

7 K. Wacławek, *Terrorism prevention guide*, Warszawa 2021, p. 8.

8 M. Moskiewski, J. Socha, *Terroryzm jako problem etyczny*, Studia Gdańskie XVIII-XIX (2005-2006), Gdańsk, p. 51.

9 S. Koziej, *11 września: przyczyny i skutki*, Zeszyty Naukowo-Teoretyczne PWSBiA, (2002)1, p. 138.

10 E. Waśko Owsiejczuk, *Wpływ wojny z terroryzmem na reelekcję George'a W. Busha*, Studia podlaskie tom XIX, Białystok, 2011, p. 232.

11 W. Dietl, K. Hirschmann, R. Tophoven, op. cit., p. 148.

Despite this, the European Union (EU) for many years shied away from introducing more radical measures that could more effectively affect the fight against terrorism. The situation began to change in the second decade of the 20th century. This state of affairs was influenced by the irresponsible strategy of helping immigrants, the war in Ukraine, as well as the high level of terrorist threat.

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has visibly stepped-up efforts to protect member states from terrorism¹². Among the measures taken are:

- Creation of a specialized unit. On January 25, 2016, the European Center for Combating Terrorism was established.
- Expanding Europol's powers. Europol, an EU police agency, supports the exchange of information between national police authorities.
- Cutting off funding to terrorists. The European Parliament's amendment, in 2018, of the Anti-Money Laundering Directive. Increased transparency on business ownership, as well as the market related to virtual currencies and anonymous credit cards.
- Improving external border controls. In April 2017, systematic external border controls were introduced for all people entering the EU – including EU citizens.
- Temporary border controls. Due to the migration crisis, as well as the increase in cross-border terrorist threats, since 2015, many Schengen countries have introduced temporary controls at their borders.
- Securing external borders. The European Border and Coast Guard should have a permanent service of at least 10,000 border guards by 2027. The European Border Guard is intended to fight cross-border crime and could also carry out border controls and manage migration at the request of an EU country.
- Use of air passenger data. Obligated airlines operating flights to and from the EU to transfer their passengers' data (name, date of travel, itinerary, payment method) to national authorities.
- Strengthening information exchange. Implementation, in 2018, of legislation strengthening the Schengen Information System (SIS). New types of alerts have been introduced for cases related to terrorist activities. SIS allows the Police and Border Guard to enter and check alerts on wanted or missing persons and lost or stolen property.
- Controlling the possession and acquisition of weapons. The revised Firearms Directive closes loopholes that allowed terrorists to use reprocessed weapons.
- Preventing radicalization. The European Parliament, in April 2021, approved legislation requiring Internet companies (e.g., Facebook, YouTube) to remove terrorist content or prevent access to it within an hour of receiving an order from relevant authorities.

The European Union's counter-terrorism strategy is built on the base of four pillars: protection, prevention, prosecution and response. In addition, the European

¹² European Parliament. How to stop terrorism: an overview of European Union actions. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/pl/article/20180316STO99922/jak-zatrzymac-terroryzm-przeglad-dzialan-unii-europejskiej> [accessed 12.01.2026].

Commission is directing the EU's security strategy towards fighting organized crime, cybercrime, counterterrorism and counter-radicalization. Another important element of EU policy is to facilitate cooperation among member states in the areas described above.

It should be noted that EU security policy has evolved in recent years. This has been influenced by an irresponsible strategy to help immigrants, the war in Ukraine, as well as the still high level of terrorist threat, despite a noticeable decrease in terrorist attacks in 2022¹³.

While the European Union, including its member countries, has implemented systemic solutions affecting the prevention and combating of terrorism, there are countries that, through the actions of terrorists, have lost their autonomy, their structures have been completely destroyed, while human rights, especially women's rights, are not respected there at all and respected. Among the state over which terrorists have taken complete control is Afghanistan.

In the third quarter of 2021, the last North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and United States of America soldiers were withdrawn from Afghanistan. This allowed the 20-year civil war to end. Since then, the Taliban have taken over the country. In some ways, this has contributed to the fictitious improvement in the security of the country¹⁴. The state now operates solely on Taliban terms, and Afghanistan no longer has a democratic system¹⁵. The state's regime has been based on Sharia, which means radical restrictions on civil rights, especially for women. The Taliban are accused by the Afghan people of brutality, which manifests itself, among other things, in public executions¹⁶. In addition, their rule, after two years, has contributed to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The World Food Programme has estimated that more than 15 million people are suffering from hunger in Afghanistan's population of nearly 42 million¹⁷.

As the example of Afghanistan shows, a country can be completely subjugated to a terrorist organization. The Taliban, through two decades of NATO and US activity, did not relent and forced the expulsion of Western forces from Afghanistan. The example presented shows that terrorist organizations are very determined to achieve their goals. This approach is also influenced by religion, which is deliberately used to attract and rally allies to carry out terrorist attacks.

13 CAT ABW Threat Prevention Department. Europol TE-SAT 2023: summary of terrorist and extremist threats. <https://tpcoe.gov.pl/cpt/aktualnosci/2432,Europol-TE-SAT-2023-podsumowanie-zagrozen-terrorystycznych-i-ekstremistycznych-w.html> [accessed on 17.01.2026].

14 P. Kugiel, *Afganistan po dwóch latach rządów talibów*, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, NR 111, 2023, p. 1.

15 P. Kugiel, *Zamknięcie rozdziału – wycofanie wojsk USA z Afganistanu*, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, NR 32/2021, p. 1.

16 Polish Press Agency. Two years after the Taliban takeover, hunger prevails in the country. <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/afganistan-dwa-lata-po-przejeciu-wladzy-przez-talibow-w-kraju-panuje-glod> [accessed on 14.01.2025].

17 World Food Programme. Afghanistan. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan>, [accessed on 14.01.2026].

The role and tasks of the Internal Security Agency

Currently in Poland we can distinguish five separate special services, viz: Internal Security Agency, Foreign Intelligence Agency (AW), Central Anti-Corruption Bureau (CBA), Military Counterintelligence Service (SKW), Military Intelligence Service (SWW)¹⁸. Each has statutorily assigned responsibilities and tasks, while all fall within the sphere of public security.

On June 29, 2002, the Internal Security Agency and the Foreign Intelligence Agency began operating on the basis of the Law on the Internal Security Agency and the Foreign Intelligence Agency of May 24, 2002. The ABW and AW took over responsibilities from the abolished State Protection Office. The ABW has jurisdiction over the protection of the state's internal security and its constitutional order, while the AW has jurisdiction over the protection of the state's external security¹⁹.

The Internal Security Agency, as a special service, is subject to control and supervision exercised by the organs of the tripartite government (legislative, executive and judicial) and organs of state control and protection of the law, such as the Supreme Audit Office, the Ombudsman and, civil society²⁰.

The Internal Security Agency is a special service, in the structures of which officers with specific professional qualifications, physically and mentally capable of service in armed formations, requiring special service discipline, to which one must be strictly obeyed serve.

The President of the Council of Ministers, after consulting with the President of the Republic of Poland, the College and the Parliamentary Commission for Special Services, appoints the Head of the Security Agency²¹. He reports directly to the President of the Council of Ministers, who has the authority to determine (on the basis of orders) the internal organization, or outline the direction of activities²². In turn, the Head of the ABW, on the basis of orders, determines the internal structure and detailed tasks of the agency (the detailed structure of the Agency is shown in Table 1). The Head of the Agency also has the authority to create, transform and liquidate training centers (determining their structure, tasks and rules of operation to the extent not covered by other regulations), and

18 K. Chochołowski, *Służby Specjalne w Polsce*, Sofia 2021, p. 143.

19 Act of 24 May 2002 on the Internal Security Agency and the Intelligence Agency (Journal of Laws 2024, items 812, 1222, 1562, 1684, 1871).

20 P. Burczaniuk, *System nadzoru i kontroli nad służbami specjalnymi w Polsce – stan obecny na tle analizy prawno – porównawczej wybranych państw. Postulaty de lege ferenda*, [w:] Piotr Burczaniuk (red.), *Uprawnienia służb specjalnych z perspektywy współczesnych zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa narodowego. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego – Centralny Ośrodek Szkolenia im. gen. dyw. Stefana Roweckiego „Grota”, 2017.

21 Act of 24 May 2002 on the Internal Security Agency and the Intelligence Agency (Journal of Laws 2024, items 812, 1222, 1562, 1684, 1871).

22 T. Kuczur, T. Lewandowski, *Rola ABW w systemie bezpieczeństwa III Rzeczypospolitej – uwarunkowania normatywne, Przedsiębiorstwo i Prawo* 2018, s. 54.

may create teams of a permanent or ad hoc nature, determining their name, personnel composition and detailed scope and mode of operation²³.

Table 1. Structure of the ABW

Department Number	Organizational units
I	Department of ICT Security
II	Counterintelligence Department
III	Criminal Procedure Department
IV	Department for Protection of Classified Information
V	Department of Operational and Technical Support
VI	Department of Internal Security and Audit
VII	Strategic Threats Department
VIII	Department of Information, Analysis and Forecasting
IX	Anti-Terrorism Center
X	Terrorist Prevention Center
Office Number	
A	Legal Office
B	Forensic Research Bureau
D	Chief's Office
E	Records and Archives Office
F	Finance Office
K	Human Resources Office
L	Logistics Office
Training center	Central Training and Education Center

Source: own compilation, based on Order No. 163 of the Prime Minister of September 26, 2018 on granting the statute of the Internal Security Agency, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism/joint-terrorism-task-forces>, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/nctc-how-we-work> [accessed on 04.01.2026].

The Internal Security Agency, as a special service established to protect the constitutional order of the Republic of Poland, focuses the implementation of its tasks on protecting the internal security of the state and citizens. The fundamental task of the ABW is to protect the state against planned and organized activities that may pose a threat to the independence or constitutional order of Poland, disrupt the functioning of state structures or jeopardize the fundamental interests of the country²⁴. The

²³ Ustawa z dnia 24 maja 2002 roku o Agencji Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego oraz Agencji Wywiadu. (Dz. U. z 2024 r. poz. 812, 1222, 1562, 1684, 1871).

²⁴ Internal Security Agency (ABW). Tasks. [https://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/zadania/63, Zadania.html](https://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/zadania/63,Zadania.html) [accessed on 20.01.2025].

Agency's duties include obtaining, analyzing and processing information about dangers (Table 2 details the tasks of the ABW).

Table 2. Tasks of the ABW

Type of task	Task description
Counterintelligence	Neutralizing the activity of foreign intelligence services and countering espionage. Poland, due to its membership in NATO and the EU, as well as its geopolitical location, is of interest to foreign secret services.
Combating terrorism	The ABW has a statutory obligation to identify terrorist threats and prevent terrorist acts. The unit responsible for recognizing terrorist threats is the Anti-Terrorism Center. The unit responsible for disseminating knowledge about the possibility of preventing events relevant to national security is the ABW Terrorist Prevention Center. The unit specializes in terrorism prevention in the broadest sense.
Counteracting WMD proliferation	Proliferation is the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery to so-called risk countries. The objects of proliferation also include materials, raw materials, equipment and knowledge that can have dual use, i.e., both in the civilian and military sectors
Combating economic crimes	A threat to the economic security of the state is the embezzlement of public funds and tax fraud. One of the manifestations of criminal activity in the business sphere is „money laundering.” Poland's credibility in the international arena is determined, among other things, by transparency in the absorption of EU funds and their proper use.
Combating organized crime	The main areas of activity of criminal groups in Poland are crimes of an economic, drug and criminal nature. In order to legalize or hide assets from criminal activities, groups use corruption mechanisms and money laundering.
Fighting corruption	Corruption crime can occur in any area of social life. Making political, social and economic decisions dependent on financial or personal benefits distorts the mechanisms of democracy and the free market.
Protection of classified information	The Internal Security Agency is responsible for ensuring the proper protection of classified information, especially those marked „secret” and „top secret.”
Analysis and information	The agency is obliged to obtain, analyze and process all information that may be relevant to the protection of the state's internal security and its constitutional order. The Head of the ABW transmits them to the President of the Republic of Poland, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, as well as, in accordance with its competencies, to the relevant ministers.

Source: own compilation, based on the website of the National Security Agency, <https://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/zadania/analizy-i-informacje/51,Analizy-i-informacje.html> [accessed on 31.01. 2026].

In carrying out all of the aforementioned tasks, the Internal Security Agency may use operational and procedural powers. The Agency acquired procedural powers on the basis of the Law on the Internal Security Agency and the Intelligence Agency of

May 24, 2002. On the basis of the Law, officers acquired the authority to give orders to people to behave in a certain way within the limits necessary to perform activities (legitimizing, detaining a person, searching persons and premises, personal inspection, preventive checks) or to perform other official activities undertaken in order to carry out the statutory tasks of the Agency, or to avoid an imminent threat to the security of persons or property – when this is necessary for the efficient and lawful performance of these activities or to avoid the obliteration of traces of a crime²⁵.

In order to increase the efficiency of its tasks, as well as to exchange information and experience, the Internal Security Agency cooperates with international organizations and Polish and foreign institutions. Among the most important we can include, among others: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union (EU), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Police, Border Guard, Treasury Control Inspection and Military Police.

In addition, the Head of the Agency performs a coordinating function, in order to prevent events of a terrorist nature, consisting of operational and reconnaissance activities undertaken by the Internal Security Agency, the Foreign Intelligence Agency, the Military Counterintelligence Service, the Military Intelligence Service and the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau by the Police, the Border Guard, the Inspector General of Fiscal Control and the Military Police²⁶. The activities conducted include observing and recording, using technical means, the image of events in public places and the sound accompanying these events. The above means that the Head of the Internal Security Agency may make recommendations to the entities and special services mentioned above to remove or minimize the terrorist threat that has occurred. The cited example shows that the Head of the ABW performs a number of tasks in the field of security and public order, related to countering and combating terrorism²⁷.

Terrorist Prevention Center of the Internal Security Agency

On April 1, 2018, the newly formed unit “The Terrorism Prevention Centre of Excellence of the Internal Security Agency” (CPT ABW) began its operation. Its main tasks include effective protection against surveillance, as well as terrorist threats. The indicated tasks are to be achieved primarily by carrying out effective prevention, which will be aimed not only at the physical elimination of threats, but also at educating the public²⁸.

25 P. Kęsek, *Uprawnienia śledcze Agencji Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego jako instrument w działaniach służących poprawie bezpieczeństwa państwa*, Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego Warszawa 2020, p. 241.

26 Act of 24 May 2002 on the Internal Security Agency and the Intelligence Agency (Journal of Laws 2024, items 812, 1222, 1562, 1684, 1871).

27 S. Gładysz, *Zakres uprawnień organów państwa w świetle zagrożenia terrorystycznego*, Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego nr 18/2018, p. 120.

28 CAT ABW Threat Prevention Department. About us. <https://tpcoe.gov.pl/cpt/o-nas/1659,Centrum-Prewencji-Terrorystycznej-to-jednostka-Agencji-Bezpieczenstwa-Wewnetrzne.html> [accessed on 04.02.2026].

A fundamental element of the ABW CPT's activities is the dissemination of knowledge on the prevention of terrorist threats. This task is carried out, among other things, through the organization of training courses, workshops, as well as the development and preparation of educational materials. Trainings are dedicated to various communities. Among others, we are talking about the services responsible for combating terrorism and ensuring public order, as well as employees of public institutions. The target groups are listed below:

- Ministry of Interior and Administration;
- Police;
- Border Guard;
- Prison Service;
- Office for Foreigners;
- Labor Office;
- Fire Department;
- National Tax Administration;
- State Protection Service;
- Institute of National Remembrance;
- Government Security Center;
- Voivodship Office²⁹.

In 2021, the ABW's Terrorism Prevention Center launched an e-learning portal containing a course on terrorist prevention³⁰. The portal was created as part of the implementation of a European Union (EU) project called the Operational Program Knowledge Education Development (OP WER)³¹. The portal includes specially prepared educational videos, as well as a course on terrorist prevention. The site was created based on the expertise of ABW CPT officers and meetings and consultations at the national and international levels. In addition, the ABW's experience gained over the past years and the information provided, from partner special services, was taken into account. The measures taken resulted in the creation of a special training program on terrorist prevention. The prepared program has been adapted to conduct training in the e-learning formula. The main objective of the course is to increase the anti-terrorism awareness of public administration officers and officials.

Other tools used by the ABW CPT include the Terrorist Prevention Brochure³² and the 4U public awareness campaign – watch out, run, hide, stop the attack³³.

29 Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of the Interior and Administration. E-learning course on counter-terrorism prevention. <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/kurs-e-learningowy-z-zakresu-prewencji-terrorystycznej> [accessed on 10.02.2025].

30 Ibid.

31 Government of the Republic of Poland. National Centre for Research and Development. Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development. <https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/program-operacyjny-wiedza-edukacja-rozwoj> [accessed on 10.02.2026].

32 CAT ABW Threat Prevention Department. Counter-terrorism prevention brochure. <https://tpcoe.gov.pl/cpt/materialy/1816,Broszura-Prewencji-Terrorystycznej.html> [accessed on 10.02.2026].

33 Government of the Republic of Poland. 4U campaign. <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/kampania-4u-uwazaj-uciekaj-ukryj-sie-udaremnij-atak> [accessed on 10.02.2025].

The terrorist prevention brochure is a set of selected recommendations and algorithms for behavior in terrorist situations. Table 3 shows some of the most important practices recommended by the ABW CPT.

Table 3. Terrorism prevention brochure

Type of threat	Description of the threat	Suspicious behavior
Radicalization	A process in which a person or group, influenced by various factors, takes increasingly extreme views and begins to accept the use of violence to carry out their intentions or manifest their beliefs	– Completely severing ties with family and/or friends and maintaining relationships only with new acquaintances. – Justifying the use of violence to defend a cause or ideology. – Establishing relationships with individuals or groups with extremist views. – A sudden loss of interest in school or work. – The use of symbols and signs associated with extremist groups. – belief in the sudden end of the world, martyrdom or other messianic visions. – Expressing hatred against other individuals or groups. – Participation in the activities of an extremist group. – Recruiting or persuading people to join an extremist group or extremist enterprise. – contacting (including via the Internet) groups or individuals known for extreme views. – visiting radical websites and online forums. – planning or committing acts of violence inspired by radical views. – obtaining or seeking to obtain illegal weapons or explosives. – Planning travel to a conflict zone or region where terrorist groups are active.
Mobilization	Preparing to commit an act of violence. Terrorist attacks often require lengthy preparation and contact between perpetrators and others. a high level of public awareness may allow the detection of the signs of such preparations. Potential terrorists may abandon attempts to acquire firearms or explosives for fear of deconspiration of their plans.	– Acquisition of explosives or their precursors. – manufacture of explosives or hazardous substances. – Conducting tests with explosives or hazardous chemicals. – Possession or efforts to obtain firearms or ammunition without a permit. – Acquisition of knives, black-weapons, bulletproof vests or other equipment of a combat nature.

Source: own compilation, based on the website of the Internal Security Agency, tasks, <https://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/zadania/analizy-i-informacje/51,Analizy-i-informacje.html> [accessed on 15.01.2026].

The booklet also provides recommendations and possible behavioral algorithms in situations where terrorist events with the possibility of chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear (CBRN) substances may occur. In addition, it points out the dangers of Cyberterrorism, which specifically targets activities such as hacking attacks, data theft, infecting websites and systems in order to obtain funds for terrorist activities or attacks, as well as conducting propaganda and radicalization activities.

The 4U public campaign is the ABW's recommended course of action in the event of a terrorist attack, bombing and mass killer attack. The procedure is a sequence of four steps to be followed one by one³⁴. Table number 4 shows the 4U procedure.

Table 4. 4U procedure

Description of the steps	The right response	Additional activities
Watch Out	Paying attention to unnatural events and behavior of people. Information about the potential threat should be given to the emergency number 112.	– Do not disregard bags and packages left unattended. If the owner is not found inform the services of the danger; – if you hear an explosion or gunshots in the distance – you should not move to that area; – do not take photos or videos; – first „U” – BEWARE! – should be used as early as the radicalization and mobilization stage.
Run	If there is an explosion or gunfire, do not approach the area. If there is a possibility, then run away. Do not return to the scene. Informing passing people about the danger.	– It is necessary to escape as quickly as possible and as far away from the place of danger as possible; – leave unnecessary things and start evacuations regardless of the decisions of others; – once in a safe place, inform the services immediately.
Hide	If escape is not possible or is too dangerous, hide.	– Barricade the room; – mute the phone; – move away from windows and doors.
Stop the attack	If it is not possible to hide or escape, action should be taken to thwart the attack. It is necessary to act by surprise and in cooperation with others.	– Fighting an attacker is a last resort and should only be undertaken when there is no other option.

Source: own compilation, based on Homeland Security Agency website, tasks, <https://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/zadania/analizy-i-informacje/51,Analizy-i-informacje.html> (accessed on January 15.01.2026).

³⁴ Website of the CAT ABW Threat Prevention Department, 4U, www.4u.tpcoe.gov.pl [accessed on 11.02.2026].

The procedure outlined was created to increase the security level of citizens. a more informed and educated society is able to effectively counter terrorist threats. To effectively minimize the consequences of terrorist events, proper communication between participants and the services.

The Terrorist Prevention Center of the Internal Security Agency is a unit that has a major impact on building terrorist awareness among citizens. The multi-area activities conducted by the unit include:

- developing training programs;
- developing materials and guides;
- organizing meetings, workshops and national seminars;
- organizing meetings at the international level;
- conducting cooperation with domestic and foreign experts;
- implementing social campaigns;
- conducting terrorist prevention training;
- creating profiled recommendations.

The current geopolitical situation requires the use of specific solutions, for this reason the development and evolution of the ABW CPT should be one of the priority tasks of the Internal Security Agency.

Terrorist prevention in the United States of America

A very important aspect for combating terrorism is international cooperation in the broadest sense. The use of experience, joint training, and exchange of information, as well as drawing inspiration from other special services, can greatly facilitate the implementation of tasks within the country.

A country that, based on its own experience, is betting on terrorist prevention is the United States of America (USA). This state of affairs was caused by the largest successful terrorist attack in history to date. September 11, 2001 was the day that made the world realize that terrorism can threaten even an economic and military power like the US.

Despite the formation of a worldwide anti-terrorist collation, the introduction of the principle of “with terrorists we do not negotiate”, the liquidation of headquarters and key individuals affiliated with terrorist organizations, it turned out that it is impossible to win with terrorism only in this way. Moreover, through such a *modus operandi*, countries fighting terrorism contributed to the deaths of thousands of innocent people. In order to prevent this, it was necessary to reevaluate the way tasks were carried out and also focus on terrorist prevention.

In the United States, we can count the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the National Counterterrorism Center (NCC) and the FBI, among the key institutions involved in terrorist prevention. Table 5 provides a detailed description of the tasks, mentioned institutions, related to terrorist prevention.

Table 4. Terrorism prevention in the DHS, NCC and FBI

Type of service	Description of tasks
Department of Homeland Security	The goal – to protect the American people from terrorist threats. Vision – a safe and resilient nation that effectively prevents terrorism in a way that protects freedom and prosperity. Main directions: – Understanding evolving and emerging threats: Terrorist tactics continue to evolve; terrorists seek complex means of attack, including chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive weapons, as well as cyberattacks; threats can come from abroad or be homegrown; increasing vigilance against new types of terrorist recruitment, inter alia, by engaging the community at risk of being targets of terrorist recruiters. – Improving terrorism prevention: The Department's efforts to prevent terrorism focus on a risk-based approach to security in passenger and cargo transportation systems and at borders and ports; using new technologies to detect explosives and weapons, protecting critical infrastructure and cybernetworks from attacks, and building partnerships for information sharing.
National Counterterrorism Center	Purpose – to lead and integrate domestic efforts to combat counterterrorism, by combining foreign and domestic information, providing terrorism analysis, sharing information with partners and guiding whole-of-government efforts to secure national objectives. Vision – to be an indispensable resource across the country in an ever-changing threat environment, leading unified, agile and resilient operations. Main directions: – Threat analysis: analysis and integration of all intelligence data possessed or acquired, relating to terrorism. – Identity management: statutory responsibility for serving as a central and shared bank of knowledge about known and suspected terrorists and international terrorist groups, as well as their goals, strategies, capabilities, and networks of contacts and support. – Information sharing: ensuring that other agencies with counterterrorism missions have access to and receive the information they need to carry out assigned activities. – Strategic operational planning: statutory responsibility for conducting strategic operational planning of missions throughout the country, integrating all instruments of national power-diplomatic, financial, military, intelligence, internal security. – National intelligence management: integrating the conducted across functions, disciplines and intelligence activities to achieve unity of effort and effect; lead efforts to optimize community performance and capabilities; and advocate on behalf of the community to ensure that the institution is aligned to support national strategy and policy objectives.

Type of service	Description of tasks
Federal Bureau of Investigation	The goal – to create a National Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), based at FBI headquarters.
	Vision – to ensure the free flow of information and intelligence between local JTTFs and beyond.
	Main directions:
	– coordination: the task forces coordinate their efforts largely through the inter-agency National Joint Terrorism Task Force. – Resource creation: serve as a national resource and create familiarity among investigators and managers before a crisis, conducting frequent training to maintain the specialized skills of investigators, analysts and crisis response teams. – Competencies: combine talents, skills and knowledge from the law enforcement and intelligence communities into one team that responds together.

Source: own compilation, based on websites of Homeland Security, FBI, The National Counterterrorism Center, <https://www.dhs.gov/preventing-terrorism-overview>, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism/joint-terrorism-task-forces>, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/nctc-how-we-work> [accessed on 04.02.2026].

The institutions described are guided by the fundamental goal of keeping the security of the American community. Adopting the direction that everyone has a role to play in preventing targeted violence and terrorism, and that the federal government has many resources available to support citizens in this uneven fight, is a strategy that can help to level the scale of terrorism, as well as increase the effectiveness of detection.

Creating state resources including, but not limited to:

- community support;
- grant funding opportunities;
- creating platforms for information exchange;
- conducting research;
- countering bullying, depression, domestic violence;
- mental health support;
- implementing best practices in weapons safety;
- conducting training for communities to reduce the risk of targeted violence, including targeted hate-based violence.

The above resources can positively influence the prevention of the development of terrorism. Properly planned prevention of targeted violence can go a long way in preventing the radicalization of society. This requires a cohesive approach from the community, including educators, law enforcement, health professionals, behavioral and mental health professionals, faith-based organizations, and state, local, tribal and territorial governments³⁵.

35 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Prevention, <https://www.dhs.gov/prevention> [accessed on 04.02. 2025].

Summary

Any offensive response to the activities of terrorists triggers a spiral of violence and does not contribute in a greater way to the elimination of the phenomenon of terrorism from social life. Moreover, terrorist organizations, using social media, cause terrorism to be presented as an alternative ideology to the consumerism and materialism that surrounds us these days. Given this, the concept of terrorist prevention is becoming increasingly important.

Any democratic state that bases its values on freedom, equality and tolerance should build internal security on the basis of offensive counter-terrorism activities of detecting and combating terrorism and proactive prevention activities. Properly conducted prevention contributes, among other things, to eliminating or reducing the impact of significant risk factors for planning or preparing terrorist attacks or weakening/compensating for them by strengthening society and institutions.

The *modus operandi* of the Terrorist Prevention Center of the Internal Security Agency, presented in the article, is part of the canon of activities aimed at taking active steps towards raising awareness of institutions and society, as well as the creation of tools so that people who are at risk of radicalization or are directly in a threatening situation, or have information on such a subject, will be able to behave appropriately.

Dissemination of knowledge about the threats posed by terrorism contributes to building security. CPT ABW's organization of conferences, trainings and workshops, as well as international cooperation with Western institutions contributes to increasing the effectiveness of the activities carried out. Particularly important is the use of experience in terrorist prevention, held by the Department of Homeland Security, the National Counterterrorism Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Poland, Europe, the United States of America and practically every other country or continent are exposed to the phenomenon of terrorism. In order to combat it effectively, increasing emphasis must be placed on taking preventive measures. Effective terrorist prevention does not directly contribute to the death or loss of health in individuals. This minimizes the possibility of retaliatory actions by terrorists and does not fuel the spiral of violence.

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