

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On July 22, 2018, 29-year-old Faisal Hussain fired a pistol at crowds of people dining at outdoor restaurants on Toronto's popular Danforth Avenue, killing two and wounding 13. The fatalities are identified as a 10-year-old girl and an 18-year-old woman. After a firefight with police, officers discovered Hussain dead in a nearby alley. There are conflicting reports of whether he died of a self-inflicted gunshot or from the firefight with police. Hussain's family lamented his actions and said he suffered from mental health problems his entire life. Two days later, Toronto police declared the shooting unrelated to national security, but ISIS claimed responsibility hours later through its Amaq News Agency. ISIS did not mention Hussain by name, but said that the attack was carried out by "a soldier of the Islamic State ... in response to calls to target the citizens of the coalition countries." (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#), [National Post](#), [Associated Press](#), [ABC News](#))

Terrorists inspired by violent Islamist ideology remain the primary threat to Canada, according to the 2017 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada, released in December 2017 by Public Safety Canada. The report also found that there is "always the potential" for terrorism motivated by extreme right-wing ideologies. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

Overview

Within the past few decades, several hundred Canadian civilians have been killed or injured in incidents related to violent extremism. The Canadian authorities and public have historically viewed extremism and terrorism as a threat both within Canada and abroad. In late January 2015, ISIS's then-spokesman [Abu Muhammad al-Adnani](#) called for increased attacks on Canada in retaliation for the country's then-participation in airstrikes on the terror group. In October 2014, Canadian-born ISIS supporter Martin Couture-Rouleau rammed a car into a group of Canadian soldiers at a shopping center in Quebec, killing one soldier and wounding another in one of the first documented ISIS-inspired vehicular attacks. During the attack, Couture-Rouleau instructed a 911 dispatcher "to alert Canada, the governor and everyone who is responsible for the army" to leave the anti-ISIS coalition. ISIS's *Dabiq* magazine has since reprinted calls to action. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [National Post](#), [Toronto Sun](#), [CBC News](#), [CBC News](#))

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who replaced Steven Harper in November 2015, withdrew Canadian jets from the U.S. coalition against ISIS in February 2016. Trudeau has instead called for increased training of local Kurdish troops, specifically offering "Canada's specialized capabilities—from mobile medical teams, to engineering support, to aircraft that can carry supplies and personnel—on a case-by-case basis." Trudeau has, since his tenure, pledged to challenge Canadian counterterrorism bills, including by repealing parts of Canada's C-51 Anti-Terrorism Act, which grants Canadian police the right to preventative arrest in order to bar suspected terrorists from traveling abroad to partake in terrorist activities. In July 2017, the Canadian government awarded 10 million Canadian dollars (U.S.D. 8 million) and an apology to confessed terrorist and former Guantanamo detainee Omar Khadr. When questioned by journalists about the settlement and apology, Trudeau told reporters, "There is a judicial process underway that has been underway for a number of years now and we are anticipating I think, a number of people are, the judicial process is coming to its conclusion." Khadr had previously accepted a plea agreement from the U.S. government after confessing to lobbing a grenade at U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2002, killing a member of a U.S. Army Special Forces unit. (Sources: [CBC News](#), [Toronto Sun](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Guardian](#), [Star](#), [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [National Post](#), [National Post](#))

Despite apparent policy shifts in the Trudeau government, Canada has historically viewed violent Islamist extremism as one of the leading threats to its national security. In 2017, a slight majority of Canadians continued to consider ISIS a national security threat, with 55 percent characterizing ISIS as a "major threat" to the country. In 2013, the Canadian intelligence service warned Parliament that Canadian recruits had joined every global [al-Qaeda](#) affiliate, adding that these groups had mentioned Canada as a possible target. That year, Canadian authorities thwarted two attacks inspired by al-Qaeda. In 2014, two high-profile attacks by Islamic extremists occurred within the same week: the running over of a soldier by a car and the shooting spree at Parliament Hill. Canada has also experienced attacks waged by right-wing extremists, including the January 2017 shooting at a Quebec mosque. The perpetrator, 27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette, was reportedly inspired by anti-immigrant, far-right ideology. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Pew Research Center](#), [CBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Atlantic](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Royal Mounted Canadian Police (RMCP) work to prevent terrorist attacks at home and abroad. The Canadian government has also launched a host of research initiatives aimed at

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

understanding and combatting the threat of violent extremism. Internationally, the Canadian Armed Forces have provided aircraft and assistance to the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, as well as the NATO-led training of Afghan forces. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Islamic Extremism

In February 2013, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) alerted Canadian Parliament that the country was increasingly vulnerable to violence resulting from domestic Islamic extremism. Indeed, Canada remains at risk from domestic jihadist cells, as well as from attacks carried out by radicalized individuals. In October 2014, two Canadian Islamic extremists carried out high-profile attacks within the same week. On October 20, Quebecer Martin “Ahmad” Couture-Rouleau killed one soldier in a car-ramming attack. Two days later, Montreal native Michael Zehaf-Bibeau embarked on a shooting spree at Parliament Hill, killing 24-year-old soldier Cpl. Nathan Carillo. Both Couture-Rouleau and Zehaf-Bibeau had previously attempted to travel to Syria to fight with extremist groups. (Sources: [The Star](#), [CBC](#))

In addition to lone wolf attacks, Canada may also be vulnerable to domestic ISIS networks. On February 3, 2015, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) raided an alleged ISIS cell in Ottawa. Three young men were arrested and charged with financial and ideological support of ISIS. Two of the men believed to be fighting alongside ISIS in Iraq or Syria were charged in absentia. The RCMP declared the raid part of the ongoing “Project Servant,” a national security investigation that began in December 2012. (Sources: [CBC](#), [CBC](#), [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#))

Samy Metwally, an imam at an Ottawa mosque, said in January 2015 that the Canadian Muslim community has experienced a surge of converts following the October 2014 attack on Parliament Hill. Metwally expressed concern that converts are vulnerable to radicalization and “become persuaded by misinformation on the Internet.” (Source: [National Post](#))

Foiled Attacks

Canadian authorities have prevented incidents of would-be Islamic extremism, intercepted in the planning stages of the attack. In April 2013, for example, Chiheb Essaghaier and Raed Jaser were arrested and charged with conspiring to attack a passenger train traveling between Toronto and New York. According to the Canadian police, the pair was receiving support from al-Qaeda elements located in Iran. The elements provided support consisting of “directions and guidance,” but were reported not have not received assistance from the state of Iran. This was the first known al-Qaeda plan or attack within Canada. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

In July 2013, Canadian authorities arrested John Muttall and Amanda Korody and charged them with conspiring to bomb the British Columbia Legislature Building using improvised explosive devices during Canada Day festivities. The Canadian police reported that the plan was inspired by al-Qaeda ideology, and that the conspirators had converted to Islam a few years earlier. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Huffington Post](#))

Right-Wing Extremism

Canada is not immune to right-wing extremism. Public Safety Canada’s 2017 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada found that while the extreme right is “not an ideologically coherent group,” there is “always the potential” for terrorism motivated by right-wing ideologies. According to Public Safety Canada, right-wing extremists are particularly active online, utilizing chat forums and online networks. A 2016 study published in the *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* journal found that at least 100 right-wing extremist groups were active in Canada in recent years, most notably in Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia. Groups and individuals subscribing to right-wing extremist ideology have been responsible for a number of violent incidents in the country, including the high-profile shooting of three police officers in New Brunswick in June 2014 by lone-wolf Justin Bourque. Bourque had reportedly previously posted pro-gun and anti-government messages on social media. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [National Post](#), [Vice News](#), [Studies in Conflict & Terrorism](#))

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

In January 2017, a suspected far-right extremist gunman opened fire at the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City during Sunday evening prayers, killing six people and wounding 19 others. The shooter, 27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette, was reportedly known by Quebec-based activists for holding nationalist, anti-feminist views. He was reported to have been inspired by anti-immigrant, far-right ideology. The shooting came on the same weekend that Justin Trudeau announced that refugees would be welcome in Canada, directly following President Donald Trump's ban on citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries. Canada accepted more than 39,000 Syrian refugees in 2016. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Foreign Fighters

By the end of 2017, there were just more than 190 overseas extremists with ties to Canada, according to Public Safety Canada's 2017 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada. According to the report, the Canadian government is aware of approximately 60 foreign fighters who have since returned to Canada. In November 2016, CSIS Director of Operations Brian Rumig reported that the number of foreign fighters traveling from Canada to conflicts abroad had "leveled off." (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Canadian Security Intelligence Service](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [Macleans](#))

In response to the terrorist threat, Canada has increasingly imposed peace bonds—a court order requiring an individual to "keep the peace" for up to one year—on radicalized individuals suspected of planning to travel to conflict zones for the purpose of terrorist activities abroad or of intention to wage domestic terror attacks. Those individuals placed under peace bonds are subject to a variety of conditions, including a potential Internet ban. Suspects may also be placed on a terrorist watchlist and denied passport applications or have their valid passports revoked. As crown prosecutor Lynn Décarie has said, "This is a preventive measure, it's not a charge." (Sources: [National Post](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

In addition to joining ISIS abroad, Canadians have also joined al-Qaeda outfits abroad. In February 2013, the CSIS told Parliament that Canadians were involved in every al-Qaeda affiliate group globally. CSIS also warned that these affiliate groups had listed Canada as a target. In January 2013, Algeria's Prime Minister claimed that two Canadians were among [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#) terrorists who held an Algerian natural-gas plant and dozens of hostages under siege. The Canadian government confirmed that two young men from Ontario "who had embraced an extremist ideology" died while carrying out the deadly attack in the Algerian desert. Authorities have managed to stop several Canadians before they can join terrorist affiliates overseas. In July 2014, Mohamed Hersi became the first Canadian to be convicted of an attempt to travel abroad to join a terrorist group after attempting to join [al-Shabab](#), al-Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia. (Sources: [CBC](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [CBC](#))

Before traveling abroad to join an extremist or terrorist group abroad, some radicalized Canadians have stopped in northern Alberta to procure jobs at oil sands, using their earnings to finance their terrorist activities. According to an Edmonton police chief, "you can make a whole bunch of money in a very short period of time... and you can do it in relative anonymity." The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confirmed that Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, the terrorist behind the Parliament Hill shooting in 2014, had worked at the oil sands before launching his attack. According to police, Zehaf-Bibeau had wanted to fight with extremists in Syria but had been unable to acquire a passport. (Sources: [National Post](#), [CNN](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

September 2017 Edmonton Ramming Attack

On September 30, 2017, an assailant in a Chevrolet Malibu drove through a traffic barricade outside a Canadian Football League game at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Alberta. The attacker struck a police officer with the car before exiting and stabbing the officer with a knife. The attacker then escaped on foot. Police discovered an ISIS flag in the car. Later that night, police pulled over a U-Haul at a drunk-driving checkpoint and discovered the driver's license had a similar name as that under which the Malibu was registered. The driver sped off. Police pursued the truck into downtown Edmonton where the driver struck and injured four pedestrians before flipping the truck over. Altogether, five people were injured but no fatalities were reported. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [CBC News](#))

Police arrested the suspect and identified him as Abdulahi Hasan Sharif, a 30-year-old Somali refugee. Canadian

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

authorities had previously investigated Sharif for extremist views in 2015 after a former coworker reported that he had espoused “genocidal beliefs” about polytheists. But authorities deemed Sharif to not be a threat. After the ramming attack, police charged Sharif with five counts of attempted murder, four counts of criminal flight causing bodily harm, one count of dangerous driving, and one count of possessing a weapon for a dangerous purpose. Authorities did not level any terrorism-related charges but said such charges may be added if the investigation warrants. (Sources: [Toronto Star](#), [CBC News](#), [CBC News](#), [CBC News](#))

January 2017 Mosque Shooting

On January 29, 2017, a suspected right-wing extremist carried out a deadly shooting at the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City during Sunday evening prayers, killing six people and wounding 19 others. The shooter—27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette—was reportedly inspired by anti-immigrant, far-right ideology. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau immediately referred to the incident as a “terrorist attack on Muslims.” (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#))

Canadian authorities charged Bissonnette with six counts of first-degree murder and five counts of attempted murder. He was reportedly known by Quebec-based activists for holding nationalist, anti-refugee, anti-feminist views, which he shared on social media. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

October 2014 Extremist Attacks

On October 20, 2014, Quebecer Martin “Ahmad” Couture-Rouleau ran over two soldiers in his car in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu near Montreal, killing one. The Canadian police shot him dead. Couture-Rouleau, a convert to Islam, reportedly drove from the scene of the attack [boasting](#) about “striking in [the] name of Allah.” Canadian police claimed that he acted alone. [According](#) to the police, Couture-Rouleau had tried to fight in Syria, but failed, compelling him to bring “terror home instead.”

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confirmed that Couture-Rouleau had attempted to travel to Turkey in July 2014, but authorities seized his passport. Couture-Rouleau was one of 90 people in Canada on a radicalized watch-list, and Canadian security officials were monitoring him. He had been posting extremist content on various social media profiles for months before the attack. (Sources: [Daily Mail](#), [Just Security](#), [The Star](#), [The Star](#))

On October 22, 2014, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau went on a shooting spree at a national war memorial and a Parliament building in Ottawa. An eyewitness [reported](#) hearing Zehaf-Bibeau yell “for Iraq” before shooting and killing 24 year-old soldier Cpl. Nathan Carillo. Parliament security killed Zehaf-Bibeau in a shootout. (Source: [CBC](#))

Zehaf-Bibeau grew up in eastern Canada, and spent time in Libya before moving to western Canada. He had an extensive criminal record and was sympathetic to Islamist radicalism, according to authorities. Then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper blamed ISIS-inspired radicalism for the assault. (Source: [New York Times](#))

Sources claimed that Zehaf-Bibeau was in the process of applying for a passport with the intent to travel to Syria, but that the process was stalled by security measures preventing Canadians from joining extremists overseas. However, Canadian authorities conceded that Zehaf-Bibeau had [not](#) been identified as a security threat prior to the attack. The RCMP was unaware that the perpetrator had been in Ottawa. (Sources: [Globe and Mail](#), [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#))

According to the RCMP, before the attack, Zehaf-Bibeau recorded but did not distribute a video in which he appeared “quite lucid and quite purposeful.” (Source: [New York Times](#))

- **September 30, 2017:** An assailant in a Chevrolet Malibu drives through a traffic barricade outside a Canadian Football League game at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Alberta. The attacker strikes a police officer with the car before exiting and stabbing the officer with a knife. The attacker then escapes on foot. Police discover an ISIS flag in the car. Later that night, police pull over a U-Haul at a drunk-driving checkpoint and discover the driver’s license has a similar name as that under which the Malibu is registered. The driver speeds off. Police pursue the truck into downtown Edmonton where the driver strikes and injures four pedestrians before flipping the truck over. Police arrest the suspect and identify him as a 30-year-old Somali refugee whom Canadian authorities had previously investigated for extremist views but deemed to not be a threat. Altogether, five people are injured but no fatalities are reported. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [CBC News](#)

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **January 29, 2017:** A suspected right-wing extremist—27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette—opens fire at a mosque in Quebec City, killing six people and wounding eight others. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau refers to the incident as a “terrorist attack on Muslims.” Bissonnette is arrested and charged with six counts of first-degree murder and five counts of attempted murder. Sources: [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#)
- **August 10, 2016:** Canadian police in southwestern Ontario shoot ISIS supporter Aaron Driver after he detonates a homemade explosive in the back of a taxi. He dies shortly thereafter. Driver had reportedly planned an imminent attack on a crowded urban area, and had pledged allegiance to ISIS Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a video provided to Canadian police by the FBI. ISIS’s Amaq News agency claims responsibility for the explosion soon after it occurs. Sources: [CBC News](#), [National Post](#), [SITE Intelligence](#)
- **April 25, 2016:** The Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf Group beheads Canadian citizen John Ridsdel, reportedly hours after the deadline for his ransom expires. Prime Minister Trudeau calls the incident an “act of cold blooded murder.” Ridsdel had been held by the Abu Sayyaf Group since September 2015. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **March 14, 2016:** Canadian citizen Ayanle Hassan Ali is suspected of stabbing two Canadian soldiers at a military recruiting center in Toronto. Ali tells police, “Allah told me to do this. Allah told me to come here and kill people.” Authorities are reluctant to label the incident a terror attack. Toronto’s police chief Mark Saunders says that “one statement” does not determine a motive. Sources: [CNN](#), [CBC](#)
- **October 22, 2014:** Canadian Michael Zehaf-Bibeau goes on a shooting spree at Parliament hill in Ottawa, killing 24 year-old soldier Cpl. Nathan Carillo. Parliament security shoot Zehaf-Bibeau dead. Prime Minister Stephen Harper blames ISIS-inspired extremism for the attack. Sources: [CBS](#), [New York Times](#)
- **October 20, 2014:** Quebecer Martin “Ahmad” Couture-Rouleau kills one Canadian soldier by running him over with a car in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, near Montreal. The Canadian police shoot him dead. Couture-Rouleau was a convert to Islam and on a list of known radicals. Source: [Daily Mail](#)
- **July 2013:** John Muttall and Amanda Korody were arrested and charged with conspiring to bomb the British Columbia Legislature Building during Canada Day festivities. The Canadian police reported that the plan was inspired by al-Qaeda ideology. Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Huffington Post](#)
- **April 2013:** Chiheb Essaghaier and Raed Jaser were arrested and charged with conspiring to attack a passenger train traveling between Toronto and New York. The pair supposedly received support from al-Qaeda. This was the first known al-Qaeda plan or attack within Canada. Source: [The Globe and Mail](#)
- **June 2006:** Canadian police arrested 18 individuals associated with a homegrown extremist cell plotting to blow up the Parliament building, kill the Prime Minister, and take members of parliament hostage. The individuals had assembled an improvised explosive device three times stronger than the bomb used in the Oklahoma bombing, which killed 168 people. Known as the “Toronto 18,” the group consisted of radicalized men, all of who were residents of Canada, and most were Canadian citizens. Five of the individuals were teenagers. Officials said they had trained together in a camp inside Canada, and that they were inspired by al-Qaeda ideology. According to authorities, the group’s members were “motivated by an interpretation of Islam which required an attack upon the near enemy, including the Canadian military and Parliament.” Sources: [Dawn CTV News](#), [National Post](#)
- **April 2004:** A Jewish elementary school was firebombed in Montreal. A note left at the school said the attack was in retaliation for the Israeli army’s killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin in March. Sleiman Elmerhebi, 19, was arrested and later found guilty. Source: [CBC](#)
- **December 1999:** Ahmed Ressam was arrested and convicted of planning to bomb Los Angeles International airport. The attack was planned as part of the 2000 millennium attacks. He hid explosives in his car, which he took on a ferry from Victoria, British Columbia, to Port Angeles, Washington. Authorities arrested him as he attempted to leave the ferry. Ressam has lived in Canada since 1994 where he was given political asylum under false pretenses. From March 1998 to February 1999, he trained in an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan. Ressam claimed that it was during this training period that he began to plan to attack U.S. targets. Source: [Frontline](#)

Domestic Counter-Extremism

Legislation

Since the September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States, Canada has escalated its counter-extremism efforts by passing several bills into law—including the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001 and the Combatting Terrorism Act of 2013—that

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

have influenced Canadian counterterrorism policy.

In response to the 9/11 attacks, the Canadian government passed Bill C-36, or the “Anti-Terrorism Act,” which received Royal Assent on December 18, 2001. The bill resulted in the expansion of the Criminal Code, adding “Part II.1- Terrorism” as an addendum to the document. Part II.1 contains numerous provisions regarding the financing of terrorism, including the freezing and forfeiture of property of property. It also establishes a list of designated terrorist entities. (Sources: [Canadian Department of Justice](#), [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

In April 2013, Bill S-7, or the “Combatting Terrorism Act,” was passed to amend the Criminal Code. The enactment deems that an individual who boards or attempts to board an airplane to carry out a terrorist attack as defined under section 83.18(1) of the Criminal Code “is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than 10 years.” According to then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the Combatting Terrorism Act was passed to protect against Canadian foreign fighters returning home to carry out terrorist attacks. Although Canada has formally criminalized foreign terrorist fighting, as well as committing, financing, and conspiring to commit acts of terrorism, it is especially difficult to prosecute foreign fighters under Canadian law, due to the high burden of proof needed to show that Canadians who traveled to foreign conflict zones did, indeed, join up with terrorist organizations or commit terrorist acts abroad. (Sources: [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [UNSC Meeting Report](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

In July 2014, Mohamed Hersi became the first Canadian to be convicted for offenses related to Criminal Code section 83.18(1). Hersi was attempting to join al-Shabab in Somalia. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [CBC](#))

In September 2014, the Canadian government announced it would invalidate the passport of any Canadian citizen traveling overseas with the intention of joining an extremist group. Although the government’s right to terminate a passport has existed since 1981, the conflict in Syria and Iraq has given Canadian authorities new reasons to act. This means that Canadian fighters leaving for foreign conflict zones may effectively be left stranded without the ability to return to Canada or possibly other western countries. (Sources: [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [National Post](#), [Reuters](#))

Canadian Parliament passed Bill C-44, dubbed the “Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act,” on February 2, 2015. The law grants the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) increased surveillance capabilities, including expanding operations into regions beyond Canadian borders. The bill also allows CSIS to share information with the group of countries called “Five Eyes,” namely the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. (Sources: [Bill C-44](#), [CBC](#), [New York Times](#))

In May 2015, Canadian Parliament passed Bill C-51, or the “Anti-Terrorism Act” into law. The law grants Canadian police with wide-ranging powers—including preventative arrest—and makes it easier for airport authorities to deny suspected foreign fighters from boarding a plane. The law also strengthens the CSIS’s ability to “disrupt” threats, which might include “providing more information to a would-be terrorist’s family and friends, interfering with a would-be terrorist’s travel plans or intercepting weapons intended for terrorist use.” It also allows more than 100 federal agencies to share Canadians’ personal data, and simplifies the process leading to an individual’s arrest and detainment. The law enables authorities to issue peace bonds based on evidence an individual “may” commit a terror offense, as opposed to the previous standard of issuance that an individual “will” commit a terror offense. Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney celebrated the passage of legislation, declaring, “The [act] will provide our police forces with the tools they need to protect Canadians against serious and evolving threats from terrorist organizations like ISIS.” (Sources: [Globe and Mail](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Before Prime Minister Trudeau took office in November 2015, his party announced its intention to repeal parts of the C-51 bill, including some of the provisions extended to the CSIS. Trudeau’s government plans to ensure that the CSIS acts within the bounds of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms, similar to the United States Constitution. (Sources: [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [National Post](#), [National Post](#))

Trudeau’s government also plans to establish a multi-party committee designed to oversee every government department and agency. This committee—which would report to the Prime Minister—would help to expand the review of Canada’s security agencies. The new government also plans to narrow the definition of “terrorist propaganda,” and is expected to call for a review of the anti-terrorism law after three years. (Sources: [Huffington Post](#), [National Post](#))

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Security Agencies

Canada has a number of authorities and agencies responsible for preventing acts of violent extremism. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is Canada's police force that operates at the national, federal and provincial levels. The RCMP is responsible for preventing crime, enforcing laws and contributing to national security, among other mandates. (Source: [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#))

The RCMP runs various programs, including the Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams (INSET), which are responsible for detecting and preventing potential threats to the Canadian public. INSET were formed in 2002 in response to the 9/11 attacks, and aim to share and analyze intelligence between the RCMP and the CSIS. INSET coordinated the 2013 arrests in which four individuals were arrested and charged with conspiring to carry out a terror attack. INSET were also responsible for arresting suspects involved in the "Toronto 18" plot in 2006. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#))

In April 2014, the RCMP launched the High Risk Traveller Case Management system to identify "high risk travellers" and disrupt their plans to reach conflict zones such as Syria. (Source: [National Post](#))

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) is Canada's primary intelligence service, responsible for investigating threats, analyzing information and producing intelligence. According to the CSIS's [website](#), the service's top priority is "countering terrorist violence." The service "strives to prevent terrorist acts from being planned in Canada, from occurring on Canadian territory and from affecting Canadian citizens and assets abroad." (Source: [Canadian Security Intelligence Service](#))

The CSIS is responsible for the Security Screening program, which prevents individuals who pose a threat from entering Canada or gaining Canadian citizenship. "Security Screening serves as a first line of defence against both extremism and terrorism," and is practiced both within Canada and "through its liaison efforts abroad." (Source: [CSIS](#))

Both the CSIS and the RMCP are active members of Canada's Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre (ITAC), a cooperative initiative of intelligence sharing between more than a dozen departments of Canada's legal and intelligence community. The ITAC, originally named the "Integrated Threat Assessment Center," was launched in October 2004. It was formed directly from a measure in the Canadian government's "Securing An Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy," a strategic framework and action plan designed in April 2004 to prevent current and future threats. The ITAC was renamed in 2011 to renew its focus on terrorist threats to Canadian interests. (Source: [Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre](#))

In February 2011, the U.S. and Canada issued an action plan called *Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness*. The action plan coordinates information regarding land and air border crossing, which improves border management and support national security operations. According to the website, the action plan improves "the screening of passengers boarding aircraft and the ability of law enforcement partners to conduct timely investigations into extremist travel abroad." (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

Law Enforcement

Canada has deployed its law enforcement agencies to arrest, monitor, and charge terrorist suspects. In 2016, Canada continued to take action against terrorist suspects, including Kevin Omar Mohamed, arrested in March 2016 on weapons-related charges, and further accused of attempting to leave the country to join al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front. Mohamed had been subject to peace bond restrictions as a result of his terrorist-related activity. Tevis Gonyou McLean was similarly subject to peace bonds when he was charged in December 2016 with issuing threats and attempt to bomb police headquarters in Ottawa. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

In 2017, Canada arrested and charged far-right extremist Alexandre Bissonnette, after Bissonnette opened fire at a mosque in Quebec, killing six people and wounding 19 others. Bissonnette was not charged with terrorism in relation to the incident, but was charged with six counts of first-degree murder and five of attempted murder. In June 2017, shortly after a Canadian-Tunisian man carried out stabbing attack at the United States' Bishop Airport in Michigan, Canadian police were quick to coordinate with their U.S. counterparts, raiding an apartment in Montreal in connection to the attack.

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

The suspect, Amor Ftouhi, was charged in the United States with violence at an international airport and interference with airport security but was not immediately charged with terrorism-related offenses. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [ABC News](#))

Research on Reducing Extremism

The Canadian government has launched various research projects aimed at reducing extremist radicalization and violence within Canada. In June 2011, the government launched the Kanishka Project, created to provide funding to conferences, publications, and research centers aimed towards countering terrorism, including “preventing and countering violent extremism.” (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

The Canadian Safety and Security Program, a federally funded program, also contributes to the body of research regarding violent extremism in Canada. The program’s mandate is to “anticipate, prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters, serious accidents, crime, and terrorism.” The [Safety and Security Program](#) supports research primarily in the science and technology domain, including the need to better understand the psychological and behavioral aspects of domestic violent extremism. (Source: [Defence Research and Development Canada](#))

The Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security was created in 2005 to explore radicalization and violent extremism and their effects on Canada. The Roundtable brings together community leaders to engage the government and Canadian communities in long-term dialogue on security matters and the diversity of Canada’s democratic and pluralistic community. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

Countering Terrorism Financing

Canada is a member of various international bodies designed to reduce the threats from money-laundering and terrorism financing, including bodies like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering. Canada’s financial intelligence unit—the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada—is also a part of the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units. The U.S. State Department has described Canada’s anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism financing (CTF) efforts as “rigorous.” The FATF, in its 2016 report, noted that Canadian authorities have a “good understanding” of Canadian AML/CTF law. However, the FATF notes that high-risk areas like legal counsels, legal firms, and Quebec notaries are not addressed within the confines of existing Canadian AML/CTF law, characterizing the issue as a “significant loophole in Canada’s AML/CFT framework.” (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Financial Action Task Force](#))

International Counter-Extremism

ISIS

Canada actively participated in airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria under former Prime Minister Steven Harper. The country’s contribution to the U.S.-led coalition, dubbed Operation Impact, was launched in September 2014 when Canada sent 100 Canadian Special Forces to Iraq in an advisory capacity. Canadian airstrikes began in Iraq in early November 2014 and in Syria in late March 2015. (Sources: [CBC](#), [BBC News](#), [CBC](#), [BBC News](#))

The country’s military strategy toward the terror group shifted in November 2015 when Justin Trudeau assumed office and immediately announced his intention to pull Canadian jets from the coalition. Trudeau withdrew all jets in February 2016, but left three aircraft in the Middle East and drastically increased the number of Special Operating Forces in the region, for the purposes of advising and assisting Kurdish forces to liberate territory from ISIS. In June 2017, Canada extended its participation in the fight against ISIS for two years. (Sources: [CBC](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [CBC News](#), [Toronto Sun](#), [Star](#), [Guardian](#))

Other Foreign Military Engagements

Since 2011, Canadian forces have been stationed throughout the Sahel region of Africa as part of Exercise Flintlock, a

Canada: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

counterterrorism initiative designed to bring stability to North and West Africa and reduce sanctuary for extremist organizations. Canadian forces have trained African forces in reconnaissance, land navigation, marksmanship and other military skills. The exercise aids in the campaign against extremist Islamic militants who have taken over a large swathe of Mali. (Sources: [United States Africa Command](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

Canada participated in the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan to help in the defense of the Afghan government and forces. For more than 12 years, Canadian forces trained Afghan national security forces in developing its leaders and establishing “enduring capacity in order to enable accountable Afghan-led security.” Canada’s engagement also focused on promoting regional diplomacy and delivering humanitarian assistance. The deployment officially ended in March 2014. Since the beginning of the mission, more than 40,000 Canadian forces have been deployed to Afghanistan. (Sources: [National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces](#), [CBC](#), [National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

Diplomatic and Financial Endeavors

The Canadian government works on terrorism issues with the United Nations, NATO, the G-7, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, and Interpol. Canadian expertise also contributed to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s (OSCE) policing manual for countering violent extremism, released in February 2014. (Sources: [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

The Canadian government is a founding member of both the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) as well as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The FATF has recommended that its member nations adopt various measures including the criminalization of terrorist financing, the freezing of terrorist assets, and policies designed to ensure that terrorists cannot exploit non-governmental organizations. Canada also co-chairs the Sahel Region Capacity-Building Working Group within the GCTF Forum, which stresses the importance of community engagement to counter violent extremism. (Sources: [FATF](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

Since 2010, Canada has invested more than \$17 million in Interpol, which has benefited “more than 3,000 law enforcement officials globally.” The investments also supported regional operations in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Americas. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

Border Security

Canada works closely with the United States to ensure border security between the two countries, particularly under the umbrella of the bilateral Beyond the Border Initiative and Cross Border Crime Forum. Canada also works to protect its borders through advanced passenger screening methods at international transit points, including biographic and biometric screening. To further screen passengers, Canada checks passenger names and other details against terrorist watchlists, and engages in information sharing with other countries. Canadian agencies tasked with border security include Canada’s Border Enforcement Security Task Force and its Integrated Border Enforcement Teams. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Public Opinion

In 2017, a slight majority of Canadians considered ISIS a national security threat, with 55 percent characterizing ISIS as a “major threat” to the country and 34 percent characterizing ISIS as a “minor threat,” according to polls from the Pew Research Center. In August 2016, polls released by market research firm Ipsos found that 60 percent of Canadians feel like the government is doing enough to protect them from terrorism, and that 61 percent of Canadians feel safe in Canada. That same month, an Ipsos poll found that nearly half—or 47 percent—of Canadians feel desensitized to news of terrorist attacks and violence. (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#), [Ipsos](#), [Ipsos](#))