

Christchurch terror attack: More than 100 people being monitored by police

Sam Sherwood 07:56, Apr 28 2019

More than 100 people - including white supremacists, Muslim converts and people left disgruntled by the Christchurch terror attack - are being actively monitored by police.

Stuff has obtained part of a top secret list that names those who are of concern to police following the March 15 terror attack. *Stuff* has chosen not to name anyone on the list or contact them for security reasons.

The list, which is understood to have included more than 100 people, includes "disaffected" people with firearm licences, and others with racist and radical views. Police appear to be placing a large focus on social media, with one person making it onto the list for posting "concerning information", including how to make their own live feed on social media.



MONIQUE FORD/STUFF

Deputy commissioner Mike Clement says New Zealanders have been asked to be "particularly vigilant" and report any concerns to police.

Some people are on the list due to retaliation threats following the attack on the two Christchurch mosques on March 15, which left 50 people dead.

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Stuff understands the list was created as part of the intelligence phase of Operation Whakahumanu. The nationwide operation, put into place following the attacks, is coordinated through the Police National Headquarters in Wellington.



ABIGAIL DOUGHERTY/STUFF

Fifty people were killed in the terror attacks, including Nuha Assad's husband Ali Elmadani.

Police deputy commissioner Mike Clement told *Stuff* the operation was designed to reassure New Zealanders.

This includes raising awareness through increased visibility on the streets, and visits to thousands of schools, religious places, businesses and community centres.

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JOSEPH JOHNSON/STUFF

Prince William is farewelled by Imam Gamal Fouda of Masjid Al Noor, at Christchurch's Deans Ave, on Friday.

Since March 15, New Zealanders had been asked to be "particularly vigilant" and report any concerns to police so a proper assessment could be made, Clement said.

"While the number of reports has increased since the Christchurch attack, fundamental to being safe and feeling safe is the willingness of people to report behaviours that concern them.

"As a result of the help of the community [we have] spoken with many individuals across New Zealand and in a few instances interventions including arrests have been undertaken."



ROSA WOODS/STUFF

Prince William met with first responders at the justice and emergency services precinct in Christchurch on Thursday.

He declined to comment on the number of calls made or 'lists' of people police are investigating for "operational reasons".

Canterbury district commander Superintendent John Price also declined to comment on the list's existence, but confirmed there was a group of people whose actions and behaviour had concerned police. He said the intelligence phase of the operation was focused on trying to understand other people who are of interest in the community.

"There may be some concerns around their ideologies, or the fact they may have access to illegal firearms, so that's a large part of that, determining and then acting on that information," he said.



JOSEPH JOHNSON/STUFF

Canterbury district commander Superintendent John Price says the actions and behaviour of some people has concerned police.

"A lot of it is generated through people telling us, looking through social media and other information streams that come into the mix. You scan your information sources, you then analyse those information sources and get to a point you can assess the risk of the threat level."

How intensely those people were looked at depended on their risk to the public, Price said.

"If we consider that people may have access to illegal firearms that would raise a concern, it may be that the people are expressing views that we may think is not aligned with our way as New Zealanders," he said.

"If we think there's an inherent risk through that intel we will act on it depending on how considered the threat is to the community as a whole."

The intelligence model was nothing new, with police regularly using it for other areas of heightened focus to establish more informed information, including family harm, burglaries, volume crime and organised crime.

Clement asked that people remained "vigilant".

"Be aware of your surroundings and if you see something that doesn't look right or is suspicious, report it to police. We would sooner investigate those concerns in a preventative way even if those concerns were unfounded."

Police would maintain a heightened presence across the country at places of worship, schools and public gatherings for the foreseeable future, Clement said.

"The feedback from members of the community has been overwhelmingly positive."

Strategic analyst and former Pentagon official Dr Paul Buchanan said it was positive that police were not solely focused on one community or ideology.

"You're no longer focusing just on Muslims you're no longer focusing on skinheads, you're not looking at them in terms of colour or religion per se, you're looking at them because of the behaviour or the things they say or the things they do."

The demographic of people most concerning tended to be younger men with lower educational status, limited economic opportunity, or who were frustrated in their social lives and alienated from their families.

"They want to find excuses for why life has turned out bad for them," he said.

"Now you can find justification, an excuse for your plight, on the internet, you can be sitting in your bedroom and getting radicalised and no-one will know the better of it unless of course you're using certain phrases or you're looking for stuff that the intelligence services are able to tap into using their algorithms."

Anyone with information of concern can contact their local police station or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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