



Kiwis may be going to Iraq, Syria to be brides

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Young New Zealand women are heading to Iraq and Syria amid fears they are joining the droves of jihadi brides.

Security Intelligence Security director Rebecca Kitteridge revealed yesterday the numbers were on the rise and it was a big concern.

Kitteridge was giving evidence to Parliament's powerful intelligence and security committee, chaired by Prime Minister John Key.

Also giving evidence was acting Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) director Una Jagose.

Kitteridge told the committee there had been a rise in the number of New Zealand women travelling to Syria and Iraq.

"It's something we haven't seen before."

Asked by Key if they were leaving for Iraq and Syria to become "jihadi brides", Kitteridge declined to comment.

Hundreds of young women have been recruited to the Islamic State cause as so-called jihadi brides, few of them returning home.

The terrorist organisation has actively targeted young Western women for the cause.

Kitteridge said after the committee hearing the numbers were small but significant - but declined to give further details.

She again refused to elaborate on what intelligence they had about what happened to the young women on their arrival.

Earlier Kitteridge had told the committee that the number of Kiwis on a terrorist watchlist remained about the same, but the

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Rebecca Kitteridge, SIS director



seriousness with which they were viewed had escalated.

The committee was told of 24-hour surveillance on some but a lack of evi-

dence to charge them, despite concerns they were accessing radicalised material and talking about committing attacks.

"A lot of them seem to be people who may have other problems in their life," Kitteridge said.

"It's not your average person going out to work and happily married and raising kids... it's a pattern of people who are kind of disengaged in some way with a productive life."

They were from a range of backgrounds and represented a "diversity of people".

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