London Terror Attack
Post-Incident Report
04 June 2017
Executive Summary

- At approximately 22:08hrs on 3 June 2017, three men travelling aboard a rented white van drove into a crowd of pedestrians on London Bridge in central London. The van then continued on to Borough Market where the assailants attacked patrons of restaurants and bars in the area with long knives.

- There have been seven confirmed fatalities, in addition to three assailants who were shot dead by the police. Approximately 48 were injured.

- The assault, which has been assessed by the UK authorities as a terrorist attack, has not been claimed by any group as of the time of writing. However, the assailants, who shouted jihadi slogans while carrying out the attacks, followed tactics in line with those used by both radicalized individuals and organized cells in past incidents claimed by the Islamic State (IS) in the UK and mainland Europe over recent months. Presently, the authorities are considering whether to raise again the terrorist threat level from severe to critical. Further attacks, involving the use of rudimentary weapons are assessed as likely in the UK and neighboring European countries over the short-medium term.

- Areas frequented by large gatherings of people, such as commercial shopping districts, tourist sites, sporting/music events and centers of governance, will continue to prove highly attractive targets to militant supporters, in order to inflict maximum civilian casualties at minimal costs.

The Incident

At approximately 22:08hrs local time on 3 June 2017, three men onboard a rented white van drove into pedestrians at about 50mph on London Bridge in central London. After striking several people, the assailants then abandoned the vehicle at the end of the bridge, proceeding on foot towards Borough Market wielding 30cm-long knives and stabbing people on their way. At the market, the three men, shouting jihadi slogans such as “in the name of Allah”, ran through the crowded area, entering a number of pubs and restaurants in the area, stabbing anyone in sight. Some eyewitnesses reported some of the victims had their throats slit and others were stabbed many times. Reportedly, crowds in the bars fought back, throwing glasses, bottles and chairs at the attackers.

Within eight minutes of the initial report, police were on the scene and opened fire, killing the three attackers. A British Transport Police officer was stabbed in the face as he responded to the incident at London Bridge. Authorities responded to a third incident, a stabbing at Vauxhall, but have assessed it was not connected to the events in the London Bridge area.

Loud explosions were heard in the vicinity of the first two attacks, the fourth and latest at about 1:49am local
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The police later confirmed they were controlled explosions. This information followed reports and images of the assailants with canisters strapped to their bodies. The Police later denied the use of any explosives during the attack, saying the attackers were wearing hoax suicide vests.

The area and nearby railway stations were closed, including Waterloo East, London Charing Cross and London Canon Street. London Bridge and Borough metro stations have been closed and trains are passing straight through. Three London hospitals in the vicinity, Guy’s Hospital, St Thomas’ NHS Foundation hospital and the Evelina Children’s Hospital, treating the victims of the attack, have been placed in lockdown. The River Thames, which was also closed, has been reopened to boats. A large area on the south bank of the River Thames remained cordoned off with a heavy police presence. Borough High Street is still totally sealed off a couple of hundred metres from the market. Police are reported to be clearing streets, bars and restaurants around Borough Market and London Bridge. Guests at some hotels in the vicinity of the attacks have been reportedly evacuated. The SAS has been reportedly been deployed to central London. A security operation was reported in east London at about 07:00 local time on 4 June, at what is believed one of the attacker’s home, with local sources affirming five people were arrested in the raid.

The UK police have confirmed that seven people died and approximately 48 more were injured as a result of the attack. It is unclear how many were killed on London Bridge, and how many died in Borough Market. Latest reports have informed that a number of foreign nationals were affected in the attack, including four French nationals, one Spanish, a Canadian fatality and two Australians.

Analysis & Assessment

The attack on London Bridge, and subsequently Borough market, has been categorised as a terrorist incident, and a full counter-terrorism investigation is being carried out by the Counter Terrorism Command. The incident, the second in the city and third in the country in less than 11 weeks, is the deadliest attack in London since the 2005 suicide bombings which targeted the London transport system and caused 52 fatalities.

In the run-up to the attack, security forces throughout the country had been on very high alert for militant activity following the vehicular attack at Westminster on 22 March 2017 and which left at least four people dead and 40 other injured, and a suicide bomb attack outside a concert in Manchester that resulted in 22 fatalities and 59 injuries. Additionally, this attack took place a few days before the UK is set to run General Elections, scheduled for Thursday 8 June. As a result of the attack, UK political parties have suspended their electoral campaigns for the general election, the second time in two weeks. Some parties, including the Prime Minister’s Conservatives, are planning to resume campaigning activities on Monday 5 June. While there was speculation regarding a possible postponement of the election, the government has expressed its resolution to go ahead with the stipulated date.
The attack has not yet been attributed by any terrorist group and the identity of the perpetrators remain unclear. However, the incident, utilizing a mixture of rudimentary weapons, including at least one vehicle and knives, bears a strong similarity to other Islamic State (IS) linked “lone wolf” style attack methodology in the UK and other European cities over the past six months, including the London and Manchester attacks in March and May 2017 respectively. Meanwhile, pro-ISIS channels have celebrated the attack and heralded it as “the black days we’ve promised”. Moreover, this attack has followed a call by IS on its followers, particularly those residing in Europe, to “rise up in all-out war on infidels in the West”. “Attack them in their homes, their markets, their roads and their forums” read the statement issued on 26 May, the first day of the month of Ramadan.

This rudimentary but high-impact attack targeting two of London’s landmarks, follows a decrease in the official UK terrorism threat levels from “critical” to “severe” on 27 May 2017. The rating had been previously increased to in highest level, critical, in the aftermath of the bombing in Manchester, assessing a future attack to be “imminent”, resulting in the deployment of armed soldiers to the streets, in support of the police. The reduction in the threat levels has been severely criticized in the aftermath of this most recent attack. At the time of writing, it remains unclear if the UK authorities will increase the official threat levels once again. The Prime Minister however, has called for tougher measures against terrorism, including new international agreements to regulate the internet.

Islamist terrorist groups, including IS, usually use the Ramadan holiday to mount more significant terrorist attacks, and promise their followers extra benefits for dying in such attacks during the holy month. One week into Ramadan, at least 149 people have been killed in Islamic extremist-linked attacks around the world. Further attacks can be expected in the coming weeks.

**Impact for the Hospitality & Shopping Sector**

London and its numerous landmarks, will remain a target for terrorist groups and radicalized individuals. The possibility of further attacks targeting areas frequented by large crowds will remain high. The attack in London Bridge and Borough Market was significant as it targeted one of the most visited areas in the city, both by tourist and locals, managing to inflict mass casualties while attracting substantial media attention. The shopping and entertainment sectors will remain particularly vulnerable to such attacks. Former plots foiled by the UK’s security services have shown that commercial districts have often been identified as potential targets by extremist groups for attacks.

The UK’s robust intelligence and security services have been successful over the last decade in preventing terrorist attacks before they reach the delivery stage. A total of five plots have been disrupted since March, according to the UK authorities. However, despite the large number of counter-terrorism measures, there are still a number of limitations preventing security services from being able to fully avert such incidents, particularly those with rudimentary weapons and low levels of coordination. Thoroughfares, such as London Bridge, cannot be made completely invulnerable owing to their very purpose, i.e. for the transit of vehicles and pedestrians. Furthermore, knife wielding terrorists will still possess the ability to infiltrate highly crowded areas largely unimpeded. While investigations on the Manchester bombing are still ongoing, it is believed that possible future attacks in the UK, owing to a lack of sophisticated terrorist networks and strict arms controls, will likely be staged by radicalized “lone wolves” with basic weaponry.
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