

UK Threat Monitor Monthly Report

June 2017



Executive Summary

- ◆ No change to UK threat levels or attacks against the retail sector were recorded in the UK over the past month. Of the two terrorist attacks conducted during the reporting period however, one directly targeted the hospitality sector. There remains a strong likelihood of further militant activity, which includes potential attacks against shopping centres and commercial districts. At the time of writing, the threat of a terrorist attack in the UK remains **MEDIUM** to **HIGH**.
- ◆ Following Islamist extremist calls to intensify hostilities during the Islamic month of Ramadan, there has been a high frequency of attempted and successfully perpetrated terrorist attacks in the UK and continental Europe. The deadliest occurred on the evening of 3 June in London, when three Islamic terrorists travelling aboard a rented white van drove into a crowd of pedestrians on London Bridge. The van then continued on to Borough Market where the assailants attacked patrons of restaurants and bars in the area with long knives, killing eight people in total and wounding a further 48. The three assailants were shot dead by armed police at the scene.
- ◆ On 19 June, an extremist attempted to conduct a terrorist attack on the busy Champs-Élysées shopping street, but died whilst crashing his vehicle into a police van. The following day, a terrorist attempted to detonate a suitcase bomb inside Brussels Central Station, but the device only partially exploded, causing no casualties (except the suspect who was also shot and killed by police). The above incidents, including the London Bridge and Borough Market attacks, all followed methodologies inspired by radical Islamic propaganda, namely the indiscriminate targeting of civilians in high density areas, i.e. pedestrians on busy thoroughfares, visiting social venues and at crowded transport hubs. Popular shopping districts also remain a credible target for radicalised individuals and extremist groups seeking to generate mass civilian casualties, as could have occurred in the Champs-Élysées attempted attack.
- ◆ European and UK security services have been active in the monitoring and apprehension of suspected terrorists in the wake of recent attacks, and over the past month, conducted the arrests of three jihadists in Madrid, a suspected knifeman outside of the Houses of Parliament, three terror suspects in East London and the arrest of two men reportedly connected with the Manchester bombing.
- ◆ The increase in Islamic militancy over the past two years has been followed by a significant growth in individuals and groups associated with the extreme far-right. This was violently demonstrated by a vehicle attack on Mosque-goers near the Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park on 19 June, which killed one and left another ten civilians injured. Despite the growth of the far-right and Islamophobia across the UK, the hospitality and commercial sector is unlikely to be targeted by far-right groups or their sympathizers.
- ◆ Recent terrorist activity has resulted in increased security at places of worship and shopping centres. Anti-ram barriers have also been emplaced at key bridges to protect pedestrians from hostile vehicles. Despite the end of Ramadan, conditions are expected to remain heightened and further acts of terrorism likely to be planned and attempted across the UK. A credible threat to the retail sector is maintained by such activity. The current UK government threat level for international terrorism remains at “SEVERE”.

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UK Threat Levels

Threat Type	Location	Capability	Intent	Threat
Direct attack by terrorist/ militant group in AO.	United Kingdom	Medium	High	HIGH
	London	Medium	High	HIGH
Kidnap threat to client personnel by terrorist and militant groups in AO.	United Kingdom	Low	Low	LOW
	London	Low	Low	LOW
Violent criminal attack against client personnel in AO.	United Kingdom	Low	Low	LOW
	London	Medium	Low	LOW
Petty criminal activity against client personnel in AO.	United Kingdom	Low	Medium	MEDIUM
	London	Medium	Medium	MEDIUM
General threat of public disorder/ civil unrest in AO.	United Kingdom	Low	Medium	LOW
	London	High	Medium	MEDIUM
Public disorder/ civil unrest – specifically directed against client personnel and locations.	United Kingdom	Low	Low	LOW
	London	Low	Low	LOW

Outlook & Analysis

UK authorities remain in a heightened state of alert following recent terrorist attacks in the UK, and at the time of writing, there remains a credible threat to the retail sector from insurgent groups. The Westminster attack of 22 March, the Manchester bombing of 22 May and the London attack of 3 June were all committed by extremist Islamic radicals and all targeted civilians in densely populated locations, including areas frequented by tourists. The London Bridge attackers utilised similar rudimentary tactics to Khalid Masood, the Westminster terrorist, by striking pedestrians with



Armed police respond to the London Bridge and Borough Market attack, killing the three assailants within eight minutes. (LNP)

a vehicle on a bridge, where escape points are limited, and then attacking civilians with bladed weapons. The Finsbury Park attacker also used a vehicle to stage his attack, demonstrating this tactic is not limited to Islamic terrorism. To cause maximum commotion during their assault, all three men also wore fake suicide belts made of disposable water bottles covered in masking tape. This new tactic has not previously been employed and may be indicative that the attackers intended to take hostages, or even deliberately planned to be shot dead by police and therefore be considered “martyrs” by other extremist supporters. The security services have come under criticism for not preventing the attack given the identity of the attackers and their respective histories – one of the suspects, Khuram Butt, was known to the UK authorities for his association with the banned Islamic hate group al-Muhajiroun, and another, Youssef Zaghba, was known to the Italian authorities for having attempted to

join jihadist groups in Syria. Due to the high number of suspicious individuals currently on the Security Service's (Mi5) watch-list however, counter-terrorism forces are only able to prioritise those deemed most high-risk, of which Butt and Zaghba did not feature. Furthermore, the simple method of the attack and the lack of planning and sophistication required would have attracted little suspicion from the authorities.

Impact for the Hospitality & Shopping Sector

Whilst the London Bridge attack was not specifically directed against the retail sector, the assailants purposefully targeted vulnerable civilians in restaurants and bars. The nature of this attack (i.e. the indiscriminate targeting of civilians in crowded places) is synonymous with the threat posed to the retail sector, and as such, has had a profound impact. Over the reporting period, Harlow Mall in Essex was evacuated due to a bomb scare, Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre in West London was evacuated after a suspicious package was discovered, and Peterborough's Queensgate Centre was evacuated temporarily after a suspicious carrier bag was identified. In each case, police acted quickly and in cooperation with the shopping centre staff to safely evacuate shoppers and secure the sites. Various precautionary measures have been taken at several major shopping centres, including the introduction of random bag searches at Silverburn in Glasgow and Union Square in Aberdeen, and the removal of all or some bins in centres across Shrewsbury and Telford. There also continues to be a large presence of armed police in shopping districts and at key sites/events. To impede the use of rental vehicles as weapons, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner has suggested that the hire of vans may need to be regulated (both the London Bridge and Finsbury Park attacks employed rented vehicles).

The attack on Muslim worshippers by far-right extremist Darren Osborne has been classed as an act of terrorism and is likely to precede further activity against minorities. At present however, there is no indication that the hospitality and commercial sector will be targeted by right-wing groups or their sympathizers. In this context, these groups/individuals are more likely to attack areas frequented by muslim or other minority groups, such as places of worship or community centres. Protest activity organised by the English Defence League caused minor disruptions in Manchester and Liverpool following counter-demonstrations by anti-fascist groups and clashes between the two, but a heavy police presence ensured violence did not escalate uncontrollably. Hard-left activists organised an anti-government protest in London on 21 June, in which hundreds of protestors marched from Shepherd's Bush to Downing Street, but apart from a few scuffles between demonstrators and the police, and fears that the protest would be hijacked by violent opportunists, the crowd disbanded peacefully. Another anti-government demonstration has been planned in London for 1 July, and whilst there is the possibility for leftist anarchist groups to hijack the protest, this movement does not appear to have acquired a mass following, having garnered comparatively limited support on Facebook/social media. There is however the potential for disruption to retail centres along the demonstration route, beginning in Portland Place and ending in Parliament Square.

Significant Incidents

- ◆ **21 June 2017 – Madrid.** Three suspected terrorists of Moroccan descent were arrested in possession of extremist propaganda materials. One of the suspects is believed to have close links with Syria and Iraq.
- ◆ **20 June 2017 – Brussels.** An individual partially detonated a suitcase bomb inside Brussels Central Station, but caused no casualties. Police forces shot and killed the suspect as he ran from the scene.
- ◆ **19 June 2017 – Paris.** A terrorist attempted an attack on the Champs-Élysées by crashing his vehicle into a police van, dying during the incident and causing no further casualties. The suspect was later found to have

had a Kalashnikov rifle, handguns and gas canisters in the vehicle.

- ◆ **19 June 2017 – London.** A far-right extremist drove a van into pedestrians in Finsbury Park, many of whom had attended late night prayers. One man was killed and a further ten injured. The terror suspect was arrested after bystanders detained him.
- ◆ **16 June 2017 – London.** A suspected knifeman was shot with a stun gun by armed police outside of the Palace of Westminster and arrested in close proximity to where Khalid Masood was shot dead on 22 March.
- ◆ **8 June 2017 – London.** Trafalgar Square and Charing Cross tube station were briefly evacuated following the discovery of a “suspicious package”.
- ◆ **8 June 2017 – London.** Three men were arrested in anti-terror probes in East London which were reportedly not connected with the London Bridge attack.
- ◆ **7 June 2017 – London.** A man was arrested on suspicion of terror offences at Heathrow Airport in connection with the Manchester bombing of 22 May.
- ◆ **6 June 2017 – Paris.** An Algerian man attacked a police officer with a hammer near Notre Dame Cathedral.
- ◆ **3 June 2017 – London.** Three extremist militants drove a van into pedestrians on London Bridge, and stabbed multiple people in nearby Borough Market area. Eight people were killed in total and a further 48 injured.
- ◆ **2 June 2017 – Manchester.** Police arrested a man in Rusholme on suspicion of offences contrary to the terrorism act, in connection with the Manchester bombing of 22 May.



Police cordon off the roads around the location of the Finsbury Park vehicle attack on Muslim Mosque-goers.
(Rex Features)

General Recommendations

- ◆ Confirm and ensure all emergency plans and procedures are in place and are understood by staff.
- ◆ Security systems, including vehicle security barriers, access control and CCTV where installed, offer a significant deterrent to terrorist attack and criminality. Ensure effective access control procedures are in place and security systems are fully operational.
- ◆ Awareness and effective information reporting remain effective at thwarting many criminal and terrorist acts even before they have taken place and are in the planning stages. Ensure staff understand the relevant threats and pass information on through the correct channels.
- ◆ During special events and higher profile occasions consider increasing the profile of security if feasible. This can be achieved through simple and effective measures such as implementing high profile patrols, checks and maintaining a visible presence. Often suspicious behavior is spotted first by the public and having a readily available member of staff to report to is key in this information being captured and disseminated correctly.
- ◆ Facilitate effective liaison with all parties, especially the Police, who can offer specialist and locally orientated advice.

Constellis' intelligence analysts and security consultants produce bespoke political and security reports, threat assessments and security risk assessments to inform decisions and to protect people and assets across Europe and the Middle East.



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