



# Monthly *Threat* Update

July 2020



## Threat overview

Threat from terrorism to the UK:

**Critical:** an attack is highly likely in the near future

**Severe:** an attack is highly likely

**Substantial:** an attack is likely

**Moderate:** an attack is possible but not likely

**Low:** an attack is highly unlikely

Threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism to Northern Ireland:

*There were no terrorist attacks in Great Britain this month, but counter-terrorism police did arrest four men suspected of plotting a 'low-sophistication' attack which involved plans to behead a Shia cleric.*

Separately, the Home Office proscribed the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD), a Neo-Nazi group, on 17 July. The group originated in the Baltic states but had an increasingly international membership prior to its alleged disbanding in January 2020. This proscription highlights the growing focus of the UK's security apparatus on the increasing far-right terrorist threat.

Further afield, police in Italy seized 14 tonnes of amphetamines in the port city of Salerno. A police spokesperson said that the drugs were likely produced by Daesh in Syria, with the proceeds from their sale going towards funding its operations. In Germany, the Defence Minister restructured the Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK), Germany's special forces regiment, following a review into the prevalence of right-wing extremism in its ranks.

## Contents

Police disrupt Islamist plot to behead Shia cleric

Home Office proscribes Neo-Nazi Feuerkrieg Division (FKD)

Italian police seize pills allegedly manufactured by Daesh

Christchurch attacker use drone in pre-attack reconnaissance

German special forces unit to be disbanded over far-right extremism concerns

Shamima Begum allowed to return to UK to appeal citizenship case

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[Further peril analysis...](#)

Police disrupt  
Islamist plot

Home Office  
proscribes FKD

Italian police  
seize pills

Christchurch  
attacker uses  
drone

German special  
forces unit to be  
disbanded

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allowed to return  
to UK

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## Police disrupt Islamist plot to behead Shia cleric

Police in London and Leicestershire arrested four men on 09 July on suspicion of planning a terrorist attacks. Three of the men were released without charge, but Shayab Aweys Munye Abu was charged with the preparation of terrorist acts. According to media outlets, the individual bought a sword and planned an attack against a Shia imam of a mosque in an undisclosed location within the UK.

The choice of target in this instance is unusual. Would-be Islamist terrorists in Great Britain tend to favour indiscriminate mass casualty attacks rather than targeting specific individuals. However, religious particularism is a major driver of Islamist extremism across the globe, with attacks on religious targets common in the Middle East. While targeted attacks against symbolic individuals using low-complexity methodologies are a significant concern for police and intelligence services, they are typically less likely to cause any damage to property or widespread business interruption.



Robin Schmiemann during a neo-Nazi and right-wing supporters protest march to voice their anger at the reporting by journalists Julian Feldmann, David Janzen and Andre Aden on November 23, 2019 in Hanover, Germany. (Photo by David Speier/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

## Home Office proscribes Neo-Nazi Feuerkrieg Division (FKD)

On 17 July, the Home Office proscribed the far-right, Neo-Nazi Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). FKD is a small, international organisation that originated in the Baltic states, and was allegedly led by a 13-year-old Estonian boy. The group has some presence in the UK; in September 2019 police arrested a 16-year-old member of the group for plotting shootings and arson attacks in the Durham area. The group also claimed responsibility for a bombing in Vilnius, Lithuania, in October 2019.

FKD are the third neo-Nazi organisation to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation, highlighting the growing importance placed on the threat of far-right terrorism by the UK's security apparatus. However, some media reports note that FKD disbanded in January 2020, following the arrest of one of its supporters for planning a bombing in Helsinki, Finland. The extent to which the group remains operational internationally is unclear.

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drone**

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Some 14 tons of amphetamines in the form of 84 million captagon tablets were found hidden in three containers in the port of Salerno (Photo by dpa Picture-Alliance)

## Italian police seize pills allegedly manufactured by Daesh

On 1 July, Italian police confiscated 14 tonnes of amphetamines in Salerno. Police believe the drugs, worth approximately €1bn, were smuggled from Syria by traffickers linked to Daesh. The Islamist group has a record of producing the drug for consumption by its fighters and for sale abroad. Italian authorities said they were investigating whether the shipment was destined for local organised crime groups (OCG).

While the unusually large size of the shipment is likely linked to the collapse in amphetamine production in Europe due to COVID-19, the incident suggests that Daesh has control or significant influence over drug production and distribution networks in the Near East. With the loss of its territory (and attendant tax base and oil receipts), these likely represent an increasingly important revenue stream for the group. As well as financing Daesh operations in the Middle East, connections between the group and Italian OCGs could be exploited to move weapons and personnel into Europe for use in attacks.

## Christchurch attacker use drone in pre-attack reconnaissance

Police in New Zealand announced on 23 July that they had discovered that Brenton Tarrant, responsible for the March 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings, conducted pre-attack reconnaissance of the targets using a commercial drone.

This is believed to be the first confirmed case in the West of a terrorist using a drone in attack planning, although several disrupted plots have incorporated drones as part of the methodology. Drones allow terrorists to remotely surveil targets, reducing the risk of being detected during the attack planning phase.

[Read more about terrorist use of drones here.](#)

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Islamist plot

Home Office  
proscribes FKD

Italian police  
seize pills

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attacker uses  
drone

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forces unit to be  
disbanded**

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to UK**

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Understanding Risk

## German special forces unit to be disbanded over far-right extremism concerns

On 01 July, the German Defence Minister announced a restructuring of the Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK), Germany's elite special forces regiment. The decision followed a review into the prevalence of right-wing extremism (RWE) in the military which found extremist views were widespread in one of the KSK's four companies. The unit in question is to be disbanded and the rest of the regiment is to be further integrated with the regular military in attempt to remedy the issue.

RWE within the German Army became a major concern in 2017 after a soldier was arrested for plotting a terrorist attack which he planned to blame on Syrian migrants. The KSK came under particular scrutiny after one of its soldiers was found to have stolen firearms and explosives. Large volumes of ammunition and explosives remain missing from the KSK's stocks. The incident serves as a stark reminder of longstanding concerns about right-wing extremists infiltrating the military to access weapons, training and intelligence that could be used in attack planning.



JULY 01: German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and General Eberhard Zorn, Chief of Staff of the Bundeswehr, the German armed forces, speak to the media over restructuring the KSK, the Bundeswehr's elite special forces unit (Photo by Mika Schmidt - Pool/Getty Images).

## Shamima Begum allowed to return to UK to appeal citizenship case

The Court of Appeal ruled on 16 July that Shamima Begum, a schoolgirl who left the UK in 2015 to join Daesh in Syria, should be allowed to return to the UK to fight a decision to strip her of British citizenship. The court said that Begum had been denied a fair hearing as she could not make her case from the Roj refugee camp in Syria. Former Home Secretary Sajid Javid made the decision to strip Begum of her citizenship in February 2019.

If she is successful in returning to the UK, Begum face charges related to her time in Syria, which could result in a lengthy prison sentence. Whilst it is possible that Begum's likely very high-profile return may embolden Islamist extremists to mount attacks, it is improbable that it will materially increase the threat of terrorism in the UK.

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seize pills

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attacker uses  
drone

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forces unit to be  
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Building resilience against terrorism risk



**Risk  
Awareness**



**Risk  
Modelling**



**Risk  
Management**

## Understanding risk, enabling resilience

Whilst the human cost of terrorism is devastating, the financial impact an incident can have on communities, businesses and economies is generally greater than most realise.

At Pool Re we understand that terrorism is a significant multi-faceted peril that can expose businesses in a complex way. Like many other catastrophic perils, terrorism is a challenge which requires a collaborative approach.

We have been the UK's leading terrorism reinsurer for over a quarter of a century. During this

time our SOLUTIONS division have developed a specialist team of experts who can work with you to help you and your Policyholders understand and manage the terrorism threat.

We believe all organisations and businesses can benefit from a better understanding of the terrorism risk solutions available.

To find out more about Pool Re SOLUTIONS and how your organisation can take advantage of this service please contact us at:  
**[solutions@poolre.co.uk](mailto:solutions@poolre.co.uk)**

## Government advice

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