



New IRA arrests on British mainland

Berlin motorway attack

Brother of Manchester Arena bomber jailed

Daesh seize key port in northern Mozambique

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Monthly Threat Update

August 2020

Threat overview

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 terrorism to the UK:



Threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism to Northern Ireland:



Threat Overview

There were no terrorist attacks in Great Britain in August 2020. However, police did arrest several individuals in England and Northern Ireland on suspicion of preparation of terrorism acts. In Europe, a suspected Islamist extremist drove his car into several other vehicles near the centre of Berlin, injuring six people. This attack was unique amongst vehicular impact attacks as it was the first to target non-stationary individuals.

Further afield, Daesh-linked militants captured the port town of Mocimboa de Praia in northern Mozambique, located close to the region's major natural gas exploration projects. While this incident marks a major success for Daesh's local affiliate, Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), it is unlikely to galvanise support for the group internationally, in the manner that the group's success in Iraq did in 2014-16.



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New IRA arrests on British mainland

On 22 August, police arrested Dr Issam Bassalat, a Scottish resident of Palestinian extraction, at Heathrow Airport on suspicion of preparation of terrorist acts. A further nine people were arrested in Northern Ireland as part of Operation Arbacia, an ongoing investigation into the New IRA. The charges against Bassalat relate to a meeting in County Tyrone in July where members of the New IRA were allegedly present.

Violent Dissident Republicans continue to demonstrate the intent to target the British mainland. However, their ability to do so is constrained by ongoing counter-terrorism operations and the limited reach of terrorist networks outside of Northern Ireland. While the arrest of Bassalat may point to a renewed effort by the New IRA to recruit agents outside the Province, it probably does not reflect a major change in the capabilities of the group, or its ability to conduct attacks in Great Britain.



British armed police patrol the new Terminal 5 building at London's Heathrow Airport in west London. (SHAUN CURRY/AFP via Getty Images)

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Police officers and forensic experts secure evidences at the site where a motorcycle crashed with a car, probably the car used by an alleged offender to cause several accidents on the A 100 highway in Berlin on August 19, 2020. (Photo by Odd ANDERSEN / AFP) (Photo by ODD ANDERSEN/AFP via Getty Images)

Berlin motorway attack

On the evening of 18 August, an Iraqi refugee drove his car into several other vehicles on a motorway near the centre of Berlin, injuring six people. Police and local prosecutors have said that the attack was motivated by Islamist extremism, although prosecutors indicated the attacker also suffered from psychological issues.

Germany has experienced several high-profile Islamist attacks over the last five years, including vehicular impact attacks. Requiring little preparation or know-how, the methodology has been favoured by terrorists with limited tradecraft and few resources. Traditionally, the tactic has been used against pedestrians and stationary targets. This is the first time an attacker has targeted other vehicles on the road.

Since a spate of lethal vehicular impact attacks in 2016, authorities in Europe have protected crowded places against the threat using hostile vehicle mitigation (HVM) measures. It is unclear if the unusual target selection of the attacker was in response to the hardening of other potential targets with HVM, or whether it was motivated by other factors. Regardless, vehicles provide their occupants with a measure of protection, so future vehicular impact attacks are likely to continue to target more vulnerable stationary targets.

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Brother of Manchester Arena bomber jailed for 55 years

Hashem Abedi, the brother of the Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi, was jailed for 55 years on Thursday, 20 August. Hashem Abedi assisted his brother in the planning of the bombing in May 2017. This is the longest determinate prison term handed down in British history. As Hashem Abedi was under 21 at the time of the attack, the law prohibits the imposition of a whole life order (a life sentence with no minimum term).

This sentencing shows the willingness of the British judicial system to impose stringent sentences against those convicted of preparing acts of terrorism. This sentence follows several new pieces of legislation that came into effect in the last nine months, following high-profile attacks in London Bridge and Streatham, where the attackers had been recently released early from prison, despite being convicted of terrorism charges. Terrorism offenders are now ineligible for automatic release and cases must be reviewed on an individual basis by a risk committee.



A Police van carrying Hashem Abedi the younger brother of Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi arrives at Westminster Magistrates' Court on July 18 2019 in London, England. Photo by Luke Dray/Getty Images)

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Daesh fighters - propaganda photo

Daesh-aligned militants captured the port town of Mocimboa de Praia in Cabo Delgado Province, northern Mozambique on 12 August. The town is near some of Africa's largest natural gas projects. Islamist extremists have been active in the region since at least 2015 and have effectively exploited local grievances to make gains in the region, with attacks against security forces increasingly common from 2017. In June 2019, Daesh's official media outlets claimed an attack in the country under the banner of Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), and elements of the insurgency have publicly pledged allegiance to the group.

While the capture of the Mocimboa de Praia represents a major success for the insurgency, it is unlikely to galvanise international support for Daesh in the manner that the group's success in Iraq did in 2014-16. Despite significant gas finds, the region is isolated, sparsely populated, and is devoid of the symbolic significance of other areas captured by Islamist groups in recent years. While the Mozambican Government's counter-terrorism efforts have been lacklustre, the insurgency is unlikely to be able to hold significant territory in the event of an intervention by regional or international security forces.

Interesting reads:

UK court lifts bar on evidence transfer over Islamic State 'Beatles'

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-usa-security-court/uk-court-lifts-bar-on-evidence-transfer-over-islamic-state-beatles-idUSKBN25M1LK?il=0>

NYPD ambush suspect had interest in Islamic extremism

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/feds-nypd-ambush-suspect-interest-islamic-extremism-72632132>

UK drone terror attack plotter accused acquitted

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-53891097>

US seizes millions of dollars from Islamic State and Al-Qaeda's cryptocurrency accounts

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/08/14/us-seizes-millions-dollars-islamic-state-al-qaedas-cryptocurrency/>

Engineered Pathogens and Unnatural Biological Weapons: The Future Threat of Synthetic Biology

<https://ctc.usma.edu/engineered-pathogens-and-unnatural-biological-weapons-the-future-threat-of-synthetic-biology/>

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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**

Government advice

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