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Monthly *Threat* Update

January 2022



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Threat Overview

There were no terrorist attacks in Great Britain this month. However, in Texas, a British man took four hostages at a Synagogue and demanded the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani scientist also referred to as "Lady Al Qaeda". The hostages were released, and the hostage taker was killed by the FBI. A number of arrests have been made in the UK in relation to the incident.

Damian Hinds MP, Home Office Minister for Security and Borders, has this month released a report summarising the findings of the public consultation for the proposed Protect Duty legislation. The legislation, which will require owners/operators of Publicly Accessible Locations to take measures to protect the public against terrorism, received significant support and it is anticipated a Bill will go before Parliament later this year.

Following the 2015 terror attack in Tunisia, the holiday firm, TUI, have reached a settlement with survivors of the attack, although a judge had previously ruled that TUI were not blame for the deaths. The settlement was reached without any admission of liability or fault on TUI's part.

Elsewhere, the use of explosive laden drones in both the UAE and Iraq again highlights the threat of terrorist use of drones. Although these attacks were not against Western targets, the continued interest in drones demonstrates a clear intent by terrorists to utilise the technology.

There has also been a conviction in Great Britain this month in relation to a 2018 incident in Edinburgh involving the use of an IED. The man, understood to have links to a Mexican eco-terror group, pleaded guilty to planting the device.

British gunman killed by FBI after taking four hostages in a Texas Synagogue siege

On 15 January, an armed British man took four hostages in the Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. After a 10-hour stand-off, all hostages escaped unharmed, and the gunman was shot dead by an FBI SWAT team. The offender was identified as 44-year-old Malik Faisal Akram from Blackburn, who travelled to Texas via JFK International Airport in New York two weeks prior to the incident. Upon arrival in the US, Akram illegally acquired a weapon from a US citizen, who has since been arrested; Akram spent the two weeks leading up to the event living in homeless shelters in Dallas, Texas. Following the synagogue attack,



SWAT team members deploy near the Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas at a synagogue where a man claiming to be the brother of a convicted terrorist has reportedly taken several people hostage. Photo ANDY JACOBSON/AFP via Getty Images

two teens were arrested in Manchester before being released, and four other individuals from Manchester and Birmingham were also arrested. Three currently remain in custody.

During the siege, Akram demanded the release of his "sister" Aafia Siddiqui. Siddiqui is a Pakistani scientist (also known as "Lady Al Qaeda") serving an 86-year sentence in a US jail in Dallas for possessing 1kg of sodium cyanide, planning attacks on targets in New York, and attempting to shoot US soldiers in Afghanistan. Siddiqui made a statement through her lawyer, distancing herself from the attack and denied any association with Akram.

British gunman killed by FBI after taking four hostages in a Texas Synagogue siege (continued)

However Siddiqui has been a popular cause among militant jihadists who regularly demand her release.

Questions have been raised regarding Akram's ability to obtain a US visa given his prior criminal convictions for violent disorder, harassment, theft and driving offences, and his three previous imprisonments between 1996 and 2012.

It has also since been revealed that Akram was twice referred to Prevent, the UK's counter-extremism programme, in 2016 and 2019. Although, it remains unclear whether or not Akram engaged with Prevent as it is a voluntary programme. Further to this, Akram was under investigation by MI5 for four weeks in late 2020

following a six-month trip to Pakistan. However, he was not deemed to pose a terrorist threat and was placed on the "former subject of interest" list, which considers flight bans and active surveillance disproportionate to former subjects' risk.

MI5 and the Counter Terrorism Police (CTP) investigate between 3,000 and 4,000 active subjects of interest (SOI) at any given time; however, according to the BBC, there are around 40,000 SOIs no longer under active investigation. There have been several other instances of terrorism involving former SOIs including: Fishmongers' Hall in 2019, Parsons Green in 2017 and the London Bridge and Borough Market attack in 2017. This incident reignites the discussion



FBI Special Agent In Charge Matthew DeSarno speaks at a news conference near the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue. Photo by Brandon Bell/Getty Images

over whether individuals downgraded to former SOIs still pose a threat to society. It is impossible for MI5 to continuously monitor all former SOIs, as resources available to MI5 and CTP are not unlimited. As such, it is a realistic possibility that there will be further attacks committed by individuals previously known to MI5. It is alleged that police were attempting to contact Akram up to three weeks before the attack, although the reasoning behind this and whether it was linked to his former SOI status is unclear.

Instances of British citizens travelling to the US or other Western countries to carry out terrorist acts is uncommon, although Akram's case highlights potential short-comings in the US visa system.

British citizens travelling abroad to commit terrorism is a rare occurrence in the post-Caliphate era, with returning foreign fighters posing more of a risk in the UK. The main threat to the UK remains unsophisticated attacks undertaken by so called 'self-initiated' Islamist or Right Wing extremists.

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Protect Duty Consultation review

On 10 January, Damian Hinds MP, Home Office Minister for Security and Borders, released a report

summarising the findings of the public consultation for the proposed Protect Duty legislation. The report,

however, did not provide any insight into what the Government has decided to include in the legislation.



Photo: Alamy Live News.

The legislation will require owners and/or operators of Publicly Accessible Locations (PALs), defined as any place to which the public has access, on payment or otherwise, to take appropriate measures to protect the public from terrorist attacks.

Currently there is no legislative requirement for organisations to consider or implement security measures to counter terrorism; however, following the 2017 Manchester Arena attack, the Government committed to improving the safety across PALs to protect the public.

The consultation received significant support, with 71% of the 2700 respondents agreeing measures should be in place at PALs to protect the public. The findings also highlighted a requirement for clear definitions of roles and

responsibilities, and a need for measures to be proportionate to location size and the number of employees. The consultation also identified the need for clear advice and guidelines relating to self-assessments. This is something the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), with support from Pool Re, is addressing, through the development of a new digital platform called Protect UK, due to launch at the Security and Policing conference in March.

The high number of responses to the consultation highlight the complex nature of the proposal. There remains a demand for clarity regarding what actual requirements will be included, and who will be responsible. However, although no timeframe has been outlined, the Government have



committed to take forward the Protect Duty Legislation and it is anticipated a Bill will be presented to Parliament later this year.

Our full review of the Protect Duty Consultation Report, written by the Solutions' team, [can be found here](#).

TUI agrees a settlement with survivors and families of victims of the 2015 Sousse terror attack

In June 2015, an Islamist terrorist armed with a gun carried out an attack at a hotel complex in Sousse, Tunisia leaving 38 people dead, including 30 Britons. All of the British families at the resort booked their holiday through British travel agent TUI and consequently, at an inquest in London in 2017, legal counsel for the families claimed lives could have been saved had TUI conducted a security audit prior to the attack. The inquest also revealed that some survivors said they were told by TUI that Tunisia was "100% safe", despite official travel advice warning of the high threat of terrorism in the country at the time. While a judge ruled TUI were not to blame for the deaths, the families pursued civil claims



A hotel employee collects the mats for sun loungers at the beach of the Imperial Marhaba Hotel in Sousse, Tunisia. At least 39 people were killed in the terror attack in the beach resort Sousse. Photo: ANDREAS GEBERT/DPA/Alamy Live News

for damages totalling £10 million.

On 06 January, TUI issued a joint statement with the law firm representing

over 80 people in the case, expressing further heartfelt condolences and announcing that a settlement had been reached. The settlement

was reached without admission of liability or fault on TUI's part.

This tragedy and the recent compensation settlement

highlight the responsibility of travel agents to ensure the safety of their customers to the highest possible level based on Foreign, Commonwealth & Development (FCDO) travel advice. The FCDO currently states: 'terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Tunisia and there have been a number of attacks in recent years.' Whilst British nationals have not been targeted since the Sousse attack, there have been other Western interests targeted in 2019 and 2020. The level of terrorism across all of North Africa and the Sahel remains high and it is very likely that further attacks against government, police and military targets will occur. Attacks against

Western targets cannot be discounted.

As can be seen with this case and the on-going legal action taken out by the families of the victims of the Manchester arena attack in 2017, the cost in terms of liabilities can be significant, should it be deemed that inappropriate measures to protect or advise people were in place. Should the potential Protect Duty legislation be implemented, this will reinforce the need for businesses to ensure appropriate risk management, including risk finance, is in place.

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Drone IED attacks continue with three dead at a UAE oil facility; but when will they reach the West?

On 17 January, a drone attack targeted an oil storage facility near Abu Dhabi Airport in the UAE. Fuel tankers were hit by the explosives from the drones and burst into flames, killing three people, and injuring six others. A second explosion caused by a drone occurred nearby but caused minimal damage. Houthi forces in Yemen claimed responsibility for the attack, indicating an escalation in hostilities between the Iranian-backed Houthis and the UAE after tensions were previously

approaching a stalemate. The Houthis claim to have attacked the UAE in the past, particularly with explosive laden drones. However, this incident is the first to cause fatalities and the first to receive public acknowledgement by the UAE authorities. The deaths caused by this attack and the claims from the Saudi-led coalition that three further drones were shot down in southern Saudi Arabia, both point towards a worsening situation for the proxy war in the region.



Photo Alamy Stock Photo

The increasing use of drones carrying Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) provides a unique capability for terrorist groups to conduct targeted explosive attacks at a stand-off distance and, due to the size and flight profile of the drones, they can avoid conventional air defence systems. Of more concern is their ability to attack targets, in particular CNI, from above, known as 'top down attack', circumnavigating physical fences and barriers. This methodology has frequently been used in Iraq, when the Iraqi Prime Minister was targeted in December and further attempted attacks on US air bases in Iraq in January. On 03 January, two drones were shot down by Iraqi air defences approaching a base hosting US forces near Baghdad airport and, on 04 January, two further

Drone IED attacks continue with three dead at a UAE oil facility; but when will they reach the West? (continued)

drones were shot down approaching a US air base west of Baghdad. While it is unclear who was behind the foiled attacks, they come around the time of the second anniversary of the killing of senior Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in a US drone strike. Soleimani commanded the Quds Force, an elite unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, which operate overtly and covertly around the world particularly in Syria and other parts of the Middle East and Africa.

Whilst drone IEDs are being used more frequently outside Western countries, particularly in Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East, there is a likelihood that terrorists, based on their battlefield experiences, will use this methodology to undertake attacks in Europe and the UK.



Workers carry the coffin of Hardev Singh, who was killed on the January 17 drone attack in Abu Dhabi, into an ambulance at the Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport. Photo NARINDER NANU/AFP via Getty Images

drone technology is already being used more frequently. A similar incident occurred in 2014 when a flag denoting Greater Albania, was flown below a drone at a football match between Albania and Serbia.

It is no longer a question of if drones will feature in future terrorist attacks, but when this will occur. It is highly likely that drone IEDs will continue to be used in conflict zones across the Middle East. It cannot be discounted that terrorists will seek to deploy drones in future terrorist plots in the UK whether this is for reconnaissance, disruption or propaganda purposes. The use of drone IEDs in particular in the UK is less likely due to the technical challenges of manufacturing and successfully detonating a viable, airborne IED.

There is already evidence of criminals in the West making use of drones, possibly due to their widespread availability for recreational and

photographic purposes, although there is no evidence of the criminal community using them for destructive purposes. On 22 January, a Premier

League football match at the Brentford Community Stadium was disrupted by a drone flying above the stadium. The match was paused for roughly

six minutes as security attempted to locate its operator. Whilst this drone was used in a purely disruptive manner, incidents like this demonstrate that

Man convicted of terror offence following 'eco-terrorism' IED incident in Edinburgh in 2018

On 19 January Nikolaos Karvounakis, believed to be a member of the International Terrorist Mafia, a Mexican eco-terror group, was convicted of a terrorism offence after a homemade Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was found in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh in 2018. The device, deemed viable by experts, was hidden inside a cardboard box and contained a black pipe, wiring, and a battery, along with 58 nails and 71g of low explosive powder, made up of match heads and sugar. A fuse had been inserted into a modified bulb, designed to initiate the device.

This IED was similar to a device used in New York in 2017. This device also

contained match heads within a pipe and used a bulb and battery to initiate an explosion. However, unlike in the Edinburgh IED, no shrapnel was involved in this device.

The device in New York detonated and injured the bomber, although it did not function as intended. Similar pipe and coffee jar bombs have also been frequently used in Northern Ireland. Given these devices have demonstrated the ability to cause injury, it is likely the IED placed in Princes Street Gardens, if detonated, would have also caused physical injury to those nearby. However, it is unlikely that significant property damage would have been caused, due to



Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh, where the IED was planted.
Photo: JOHN KELLERMAN / Alamy Stock Photo

the size and location of the device.

Following investigations into the UK's first incident of violent eco terrorism,

Karvounakis was arrested in June 2021 after his DNA was found on adhesive tape within the device, and police discovered he had bought component parts in

DIY stores and online. Links between the incident and Central American extremist group Individualidades Tendiendo a lo Salvaje (ITS) were suspected prior to Karvounakis' arrest, after an email was sent in 2020 containing a link to a picture of the device.

The group, established in 2011, describe themselves as 'eco-anarchists', carrying out acts of violence against people and property in support of environmental issues, and have ideological links to the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski.

Terrorism incidents and plots involving IEDs using homemade explosives continue to occur in the UK. This incident followed the

Manchester Arena bombing and Parsons Green attack in 2017, and most recently, explosives were used by bomber Al Swealmeeen in an incident in Liverpool in November 2021.

As a result of recent incidents involving explosives, new licencing laws and increased restrictions on the purchase of explosive precursors have been introduced. Whilst these aim to mitigate the risk of terrorist use of explosives, it remains a possibility in the medium term. However, in the near term, terrorists continue to be more likely to undertake attacks involving low complex methodologies, such as bladed weapons or vehicle-as-a-weapon attacks.

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On 20 January a court case involving members of a far-right terrorist cell accused of a number of terrorism-related offences began in the UK. Four defendants are accused of disseminating terrorist publications, possessing terrorism articles, encouraging terrorism and possession of a firearm. The group had used a 3D printer to print parts of a firearm and had also showed an interest in manufacturing explosives. The ideology and views possessed by the group, and their actions to build homemade firearms, demonstrate a clear terrorist intent. The trial is ongoing.

Miriam Sebbagh, arrested by UK Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) in 2017, has, this month, been banned from teaching. It was identified she had sent money to individuals involved with terrorism, however, following her arrest, there was insufficient evidence to charge her with terrorism offences.

This month has also seen a number of teenagers convicted of terror offences relating to right wing terrorism in the UK. These convictions follow the release of Home Office statistics in December 2021, highlighting a record number of children were arrested on suspicion of terror offences in the previous 12 months. On 05 January a 17-year-old was convicted of terrorism for planning to attack a mosque and kill 10,000 people, whilst later in the month, a 14-year-old boy became the youngest person in the UK to be convicted of terror offences.

On 19 January Abubaker Deghayes was found guilty of encouraging Islamist violence in a speech directed to around 50 people, including children, at the Brighton Mosque and Muslim Community Centre. Deghayes denies encouraging terrorism, however prosecutors believe his speech demonstrates he is an Islamist extremist and there are other links to Islamist extremism within Deghayes' family. Two of his sons travelled to Syria and were killed fighting for Islamist extremists. Deghayes was granted conditional bail.

Outside of the UK, on 24 January, an 18-year-old gunman killed a student and injured three others before shooting himself during an attack at Heidelberg University. Despite Germany's strict gun laws, the shooter was able to buy three firearms in Austria prior to travelling to Heidelberg to carry out his attack. Terrorism was ruled out initially; however, police are now investigating a potential link between the shooter and neo-Nazi group "the Third Path", although a motivation for the attack has not been confirmed.

Elsewhere in Europe, Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik attended a parole hearing this month, after serving ten years of his 20-year sentence for his bomb attack in Oslo and subsequent gun attack on Utøya Island in 2011. Whilst Breivik claims he is no longer a threat to society, he has shown no remorse for his attack and concerns were expressed that the parole hearing would be used by Breivik as an opportunity to again voice his extremist views. Breivik called one witness, Swedish neo-Nazi Par Oberg, to testify at his hearing, and made Nazi salutes as he claimed to be reformed. The parole board have now ruled against parole.

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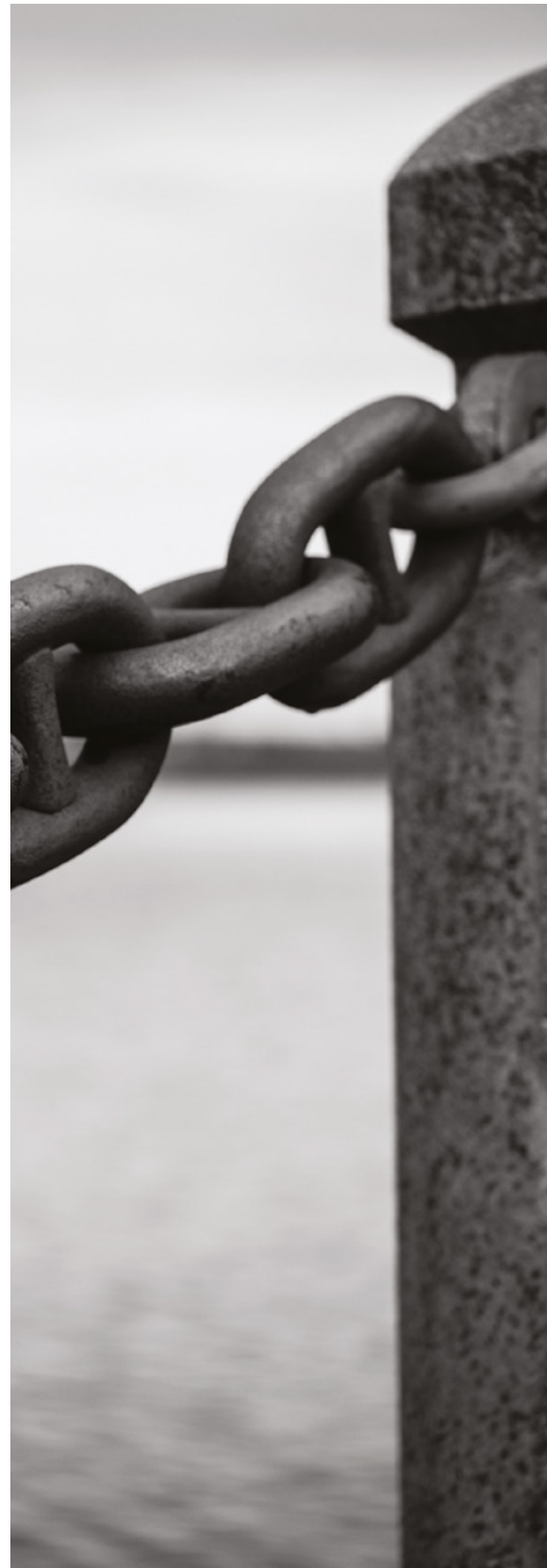
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Understanding risk, enabling resilience

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

Threat level

	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:	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism to Northern Ireland:	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Government advice

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