

Terrorist use of Vehicles as Weapons

UK Terrorism Offence Data: June Update

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Monthly Threat Update June 2022

Threat Overview

This month, Pool Re Solutions provides an insight into the use of hostile vehicles by terrorist actors and the threat this method poses in the UK.

We also examine conviction and sentencing data for terrorism charges in Great Britain, comparing figures between April and May.

Finally, we provide a roundup of significant terrorism-related events across advanced market countries. This includes the arrest of a man charged with terrorism following a mass-shooting in Norway, the emerging threat posed by 3D-printed weapons in the UK, and a warning from British intelligence chiefs about the possible threat of an attack at the Commonwealth Games, among other developments.



Terrorist use of Vehicles as a Weapon

On 08 June, a car was driven into pedestrians on a street in Berlin, killing one person and injuring 14 others. The incident highlights the damage that vehicles used as a weapon (VaW) can cause, both to people and the infrastructure that around them.

Use of VaW in terrorist attacks is not a novel tactic; vehicles have been used in building ramming attacks since the 1980's, and in the West, the use of vehicles to target people began to accelerate after a 2006 attack at the University of North Carolina. Extremist groups such as Islamic State understood the high impact of this low complexity tactic and, as a result, have encouraged the use of vehicles in attacks.



BERLIN, GERMANY - JUNE 08: Police investigators stand near a car that plowed into pedestrians and then smashed into a Douglas perfume store on June 08, 2022 in Berlin, Germany. (Photo by Sean Gallup/Getty Images)

In 2014 Islamic State (IS) spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani called for attacks by any means possible, including running people over in cars, which they explain can be easily acquired, and releasing several videos encouraging supporters to act. They also regularly publish articles in Rumiyah, an English-language magazine run by IS, outlining low complexity attack methods to use involving everyday items, and in 2017 released information explaining the best vehicles to use in hostile attacks.

Many attacks carried out using this low complexity method result in significant numbers of casualties. In 2016, 86 people were killed when a truck was driven into crowds of people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, and later the same year a further 12 people were killed when a truck was driven into one of the Berlin Christmas markets.

Terrorist use of Vehicles as a Weapon (continued)

The ability to cause indiscriminate mass casualties makes vehicular impact attacks an attractive method for terrorists, as do the limited capabilities needed to plan and execute such an attack. Limited attack plans, or a lack of plans all together, make detecting VaW attacks more difficult for counter-terrorism police than with higher complexity methods, such as explosives, which require an extensive level of planning to execute successfully.

Acquiring vehicles to use in an attack in the UK is also relatively easy to do, despite improved regulations introduced in the UK following several attacks involving vehicles across the UK and Europe in 2016 and 2017. While regulations make renting larger vehicles like trucks more difficult, smaller vehicles, such as cars, can still be acquired relatively easily, or vehicles may even be stolen.

Vehicles used as a weapon may also feature in multi-layered attacks. These attacks see terrorists employing a variety of

methods within the same attack. The 2017 attack targeting London Bridge and Borough market highlights how VaW could be used as part of a larger, more complex attack. A van was driven into pedestrians on London Bridge, before it was crashed and abandoned by attackers, who went on to use bladed weapons to continue their assault. Within the vehicle, police also found 'petrol bombs', demonstrating an intent to use fire as a weapon during the attack.

Multi-layered attacks involving VaW can create even larger casualty numbers than those using vehicles as the sole method of attack. Therefore, as attackers are forced to use smaller vehicles in attacks due to improved rental regulations for larger vehicles, there is a realistic possibility that the UK could see more multi-layered attacks involving VaW in the near to medium term.

Vehicular impact attacks are most likely to be used to target people gathered in large crowds



Policemen pass by the truck which drove through the Christmas Market by the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche killing at least nine people and injuring at least fifty in Berlin, Germany on December 19, 2016. (Photo by Emmanuele Contini/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

in outdoor public spaces, as there is little evidence to suggest that terrorists may use vehicles to damage buildings to target those inside. Many outdoor spaces, including parks and outdoor dining spaces, are surrounded by roads that can be utilised by attackers to reach the public socialising in these spaces.

Now that summer is here, the increase in people spending more time in parks and open spaces presents more target opportunities to terrorists planning to use VaW. Several outdoor events will also be taking place this year, including carnivals, festivals, pride events, and the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. These events are likely to attract large crowds, providing attractive targets for terrorists, particularly for lower complexity methods including VaW.

Nonetheless, there are methods that can be used to mitigate against vehicular impact attacks. Physical security measures can protect public spaces and

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Terrorist use of Vehicles as a Weapon (continued)



Security barricades placed on the pavement blocking Tower Bridge from any potential terror attack in London, England, United Kingdom. (Photo by Mike Kemp/In Pictures via Getty Images Images)

events by preventing vehicles from accessing streets and other publicly accessible locations where the public gather. Street furniture, such as planters or statues, can provide discreet and community-conscious protection against vehicles, or more noticeable measures, such as bollards, can be used.

The introduction of more mitigation measures following an increase in VaW attacks in

2016 and 2017, including Nice, Berlin and London Bridge and Borough Market, has proved effective in deterring further attacks. Many towns and cities in the UK, as well as specific venues, introduced mitigation measures in the aftermath of these attacks, and continue to use these measures today. Wimbledon employed a temporary 'ring of steel' around their event following attacks in 2017, using barriers to block roads and

protect the public queuing outside the event, and these measures continue to be used at the Championships. Similar measures have also been used at the British Formula 1 Grand Prix and at Royal Ascot.

Some locations implemented more permanent vehicle mitigation measures, including vehicle barriers on London Bridge and other London bridges, and sculptural

mitigation measures outside football stadiums and train stations. These mitigation measures are all designed to protect the public against vehicular attacks and guidance on assessing the risk from VaW, and ways to mitigate against it, can be found on the [Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure \(CPNI\) website](#).

It is a realistic possibility that terrorists in the UK will continue

to use vehicles to carry out attacks in the near to medium future. The impact of a successful attack involving a vehicle could be significant, both in the number of casualties and the economic consequences that may occur as a result of business interruption and loss of attraction.

Consequently, the continued use of hostile vehicle mitigation measures should continue to be encouraged across all UK towns and cities to protect both members of the public and the infrastructure that surrounds them. Although smaller towns and suburban areas may not consider themselves to be at risk of VaW attacks, these attacks are not limited to larger cities like London or Manchester. Therefore, it is important for councils and businesses across the UK to seek the advice of CT professionals (CTSAs and CPNI) and continue to invest in vehicle mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood of an attack in the future.

UK Terrorism Offence Data: June Update

In May 2022, the authorities charged two and convicted one individual for terrorism offences and sentenced a further four individuals in relation to terrorism convictions. This is a slight increase in activity compared to April, during which the authorities sentenced four individuals in relation to terrorism convictions.

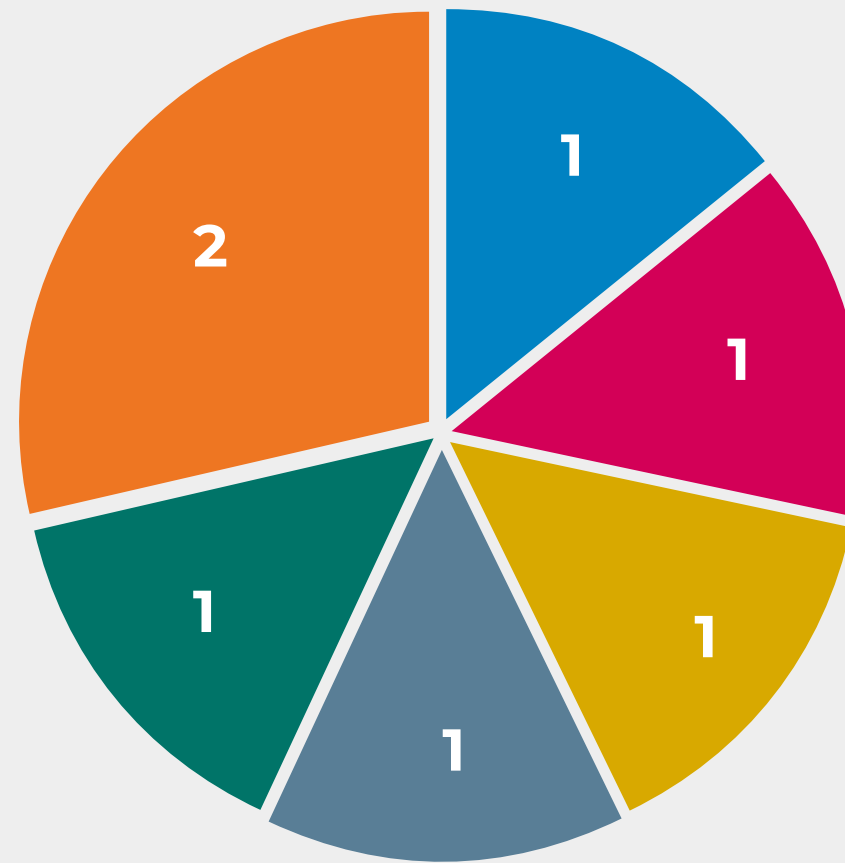
Whilst May's data indicates a possible increase in terrorist activity compared to April, the rates are more similar to that seen in February and March. One individual was sentenced and a further individual convicted of membership of a proscribed group during May which were both culminations of long term investigations.

An interesting trend to note is the sentencing of young people for terrorism offences which has been seen across the past five months. Youth

referral orders (community sentences) were given once in each of January, March, April and May, with May also seeing one young person receive a youth custodial sentence. Despite the apparent increase in young people becoming involved with far right extremism, the individuals receiving these sentences were evenly split across far right ideologies and Islamist ideologies.

Terrorism-related legal activity (arrests and convictions) has remained somewhat stable throughout the first five months of 2022 and is on par with that seen in 2021. However, the increase in young people being charged, convicted, and sentenced for terrorism offences is more of an emerging issue compared to 2021 and based on arrest data this trend is likely to continue in the near future.

No. people charged, convicted or sentenced for terrorism offences in May 2022



- Possession of an article for terrorist purposes
- Dissemination of a terrorist publication
- Preparation of Terrorist Acts

No. people charged, convicted or sentenced for terrorism offences in April 2022



- Encouragement of Terrorism
- Publishing a statement encouraging terrorism
- Possessing a document containing information useful to terrorism

Source: Pool Re internal data sources

News Roundup

Norway: Man charged with terrorism after Oslo shooting

On 25 June, two people were killed and 21 others wounded when a 42-year-old man opened fire at the London Pub and two other venues in Oslo, Norway. Police arrested the shooter, seizing a handgun and an automatic weapon, and have charged the suspect with terrorism. The shooter was known to Norwegian security services after being identified as a radicalised Islamist in 2015 and questioned earlier this year.

The attack took place during the early hours at a popular LGBTQ venue before Oslo's annual Pride event was due to take place, leading police to believe that the attack was a hate crime. Organisers of Oslo Pride later cancelled the parade, although Norwegian intelligence services said there was no indication that further attacks were likely.



OSLO, NORWAY - JUNE 25: Flowers and rainbow flags are left along the street near a restaurant where two people were killed and at least 10 were injured when a man opened fire early Saturday morning near a popular gay club. (Photo Rodrigo Freitas/Getty Images)

Nonetheless, the country's terror alert has been raised to the highest level – Extraordinary – and police will carry firearms following the attack.

The attack comes amidst a rising tide of anti-LGBTQ attacks and plots around the globe, including the arrest of members of US

neo-Nazi group Patriotic Front and a crackdown on Pride celebrations by police services in Turkey. As the UK hosts a number of Pride events

throughout the summer, there is a realistic possibility that similar incidents could occur in the UK.

As a result, it is likely that UK police will review security plans for upcoming Pride events, to ensure the safety and security of those who attend as was seen following the Berlin Christmas market attack in 2016. Venues hosting Pride events in the near future should also consider reviewing their own risk-management procedures to ensure best practice is maintained amidst possible threats.

News Roundup

UK: 3D-printed firearms appearing on British streets

The Metropolitan Police have recovered four 3D-printed guns since 2018, highlighting the threat from new and emerging methods and tactics employed by malicious actors. Although 3D-printed weapons require a level of sophistication, the technology necessary to manufacture 3D-printed firearms is rapidly advancing, making it increasingly easy to manufacture weapons at home.

The number of arrests made in connection to 3D-printed guns have also increased in recent years. Since 2019, six people in the UK have been prosecuted in cases involving 3D-printed firearms and experts have highlighted a link between 3D-printed firearms and extremism in the UK, particularly within far-right groups. These groups are known to share instructional documents through so-called “Print, Shoot, Delete” communities online.

New capabilities and the ability to download ready-made templates to print a firearm at home poses a direct challenge for UK law enforcement. Producing 3D-printed weapons at home, rather than purchasing firearms by other means, can reduce the likelihood of early detection by counter-terrorism police and these types of weapons are harder to trace.

However, legislation surrounding the purchase and possession of ammunition means that those able to print a firearm still may not be able to acquire the ammunition necessary to carry out an attack. Furthermore, those wishing to manufacture more complex 3D-printed firearms are unlikely to be able to do so exclusively at home. Multi-shot firearms, for example, may require additional materials including metal sliders, springs, and barrels. For malicious actors seeking to carry out



mass casualty attacks, the cost and increased risk of detection from the manufacture of more complexed firearms may deter their use.

While an attack using this method is therefore unlikely in the near term, as terrorist capabilities improve and information is shared by extremists online, there is a realistic possibility the UK could see attacks involving 3D-printed weapons in the longer term.

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Pool Re SOLUTIONS Understanding Risk Threat Level Government advice

News Roundup

UK: British intelligence chiefs prepare for possible attacks at Commonwealth Games



British intelligence chiefs fear Russian agents may try to carry out an assassination, nerve agent attack or cyber-attack to disrupt the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. The Games are a high-profile event with a global audience, making it a “perfect target opportunity” for malicious actors according to the ex-military intelligence officer and NATO planner, Lieutenant Colonel Philip Ingram.

In response, Britain is set to deploy a fleet of high-tech drones to counter any attempts at an attack; the first time such equipment is said to have been deployed at a major UK event. Specialist troops will also operate unmanned aircraft systems designed to prevent drones from flying. As part of Operation Unity, a range of specialist troops will

be stationed throughout the event including bomb disposal officers, snipers, and undercover agents in a move echoing security arrangements made during the London Olympic Games in 2012.

The move comes amidst a number of other security measures being deployed at major UK events this summer. Police offered Glastonbury festival-goers advice on what to do in the event of a terrorist attack alongside Counter-Terrorism Police’s #BeSafeBeSound campaign. At the Wimbledon tennis championships, new concrete and metal barriers have been erected in order to protect members of the public from VaW attacks, while at Royal Ascot more extensive search procedures and more heavily armed police were deployed.

The introduction of new security measures illustrates novel threats available to malicious actors in the UK. As the range of threat actors increase and develop their capabilities, the risk to businesses, people, and events will continue to rise. The probability of attacks using new and emerging methods is likely to increase in the medium term, as malicious actors continue to seek alternative methods in order to circumvent security and intelligence capabilities.

News Roundup

US: Far-right Buffalo shooter was not considered a risk prior to attack

On 01 June, Payton Gendron was charged with “domestic terrorism motivated by hate” and 10 counts of first-degree murder following a mass shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Authorities first became aware of Gendron in 2021; however, following a psychiatric evaluation, further action was deemed unnecessary.

Gendron claims to have been radicalised online after he began browsing sites including Reddit, 4chan, and 8chan during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also used another online platform, Discord, to share his plans for the attack and a 180-page document describing himself as a fascist, white supremacist and anti-Semite. Gendron outlined the motivation for his attack as the preservation of the ‘white race’ and to encourage others to commit similar attacks, echoing the opinions of other white supremacist attackers, including



BUFFALO, NY - MAY 16: Bullet holes are seen in the window, as federal investigators work the scene of a mass shooting by a young white gunman, being investigated as a hate crime and an act of racially motivated violent extremism. (Photo: Kent Nishimura / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)

the Christchurch and El Paso shooters in 2019.

The Buffalo shooting highlights why longer-term monitoring of

at-risk individuals is necessary to help identify those who continue to be radicalised. It also proves the need for social media providers to take more responsibility in monitoring and removing extremist content from their sites.

Gendron’s attack demonstrates the continued increase in right-wing attacks in the US, a pattern echoed in the UK in recent years. It is likely that attacks carried out by individuals inspired by right-wing ideologies will continue in the UK, with online social media platforms continuing to play a significant role in the growth of far-right ideologies.

UK: Founder of neo-Nazi group jailed for eight-and-a-half years

On 07 June, Alex Davies was found guilty of being a member of a proscribed terrorist group and sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in prison. Davies was a member and co-founder of the far-right extremist group, National Action, and acted as the group’s chief recruiter, encouraging his followers to provoke a race war.

National Action espouses extreme anti-Semitic and anti-immigration views, utilising the internet to spread propaganda and organise demonstrations. The group was founded in 2013 as a neo-Nazi youth movement and describes itself as a “white jihadist group”.

The group targeted female MPs who were recognised to be in favour of immigration, openly celebrating the death of Jo Cox in June 2016. One member was convicted of making a usable pipe bomb, while another

admitted to plotting to kill MP Rosie Cooper with a machete. Convicted members of National Action have included rail workers, university graduates, a serving British soldier, and a Metropolitan Police Officer.

The imprisonment of Davies highlights the continued efforts made by UK counter-terrorism police to combat the threat posed by extreme right-wing groups. Since National Action was proscribed in 2016, 70 people have been convicted for far-right terror offences and experts have warned that the threat from neo-Nazi groups in the UK remains high.

While their capabilities to carry out violent attacks remain low, right-wing individuals will continue to utilise the internet to spread propaganda and recruit others, and it is likely the UK will see more right-wing arrests and convictions in the near future.

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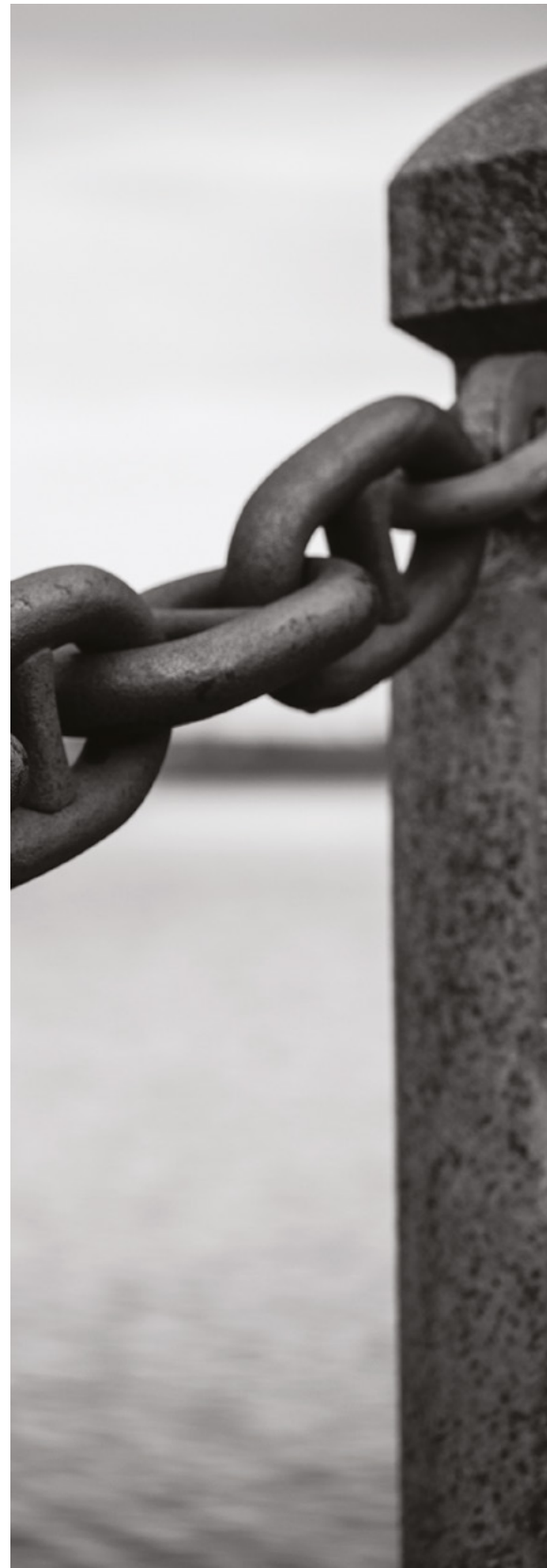
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Threat Level
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 **Risk Awareness**

 **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

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:					
Threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism to Northern Ireland:					

Government advice

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