

UK: Man charged with terrorism offences following attempted improvised explosive device attack outside Leeds hospital

UK: Independent Iranian news outlet forced out of London by reports of threat

UK: Two prominent media figures sent threatening letters by affiliates of UK Proscribed Far Right Terrorist Group

UK: Serving British Army serviceman charged with terror and explosive offences

World: Police targeted in Pakistan as suicide bomber kills over 80 in mosque blast

References

Threat Level  
Government advice

Pool Re SOLUTIONS



# Monthly Threat Update February 2023



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References

Threat Level  
Government advice

Pool Re SOLUTIONS

# News Roundup

by Oliver Hair Pool Re Junior Threat Analyst

## UK: Man charged with terrorism offences following attempted improvised explosive device attack outside Leeds hospital

A student nurse was arrested outside the maternity unit at Leeds St James' Hospital after being found in possession of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and an imitation firearm on 20 January 2023. The suspect had allegedly constructed a viable pressure cooker bomb.<sup>1</sup> The suspect is alleged to have been inspired by Islamist ideology. Reports have suggested that the

same individual had previously, on two occasions, conducted hostile reconnaissance at a military base in Yorkshire.<sup>2</sup>

The suspect has been charged with the preparation of an act of terrorism, the possession of an imitation firearm with the intent to cause fear or violence and keeping an explosive with intent to endanger life or property.<sup>3</sup>



### Assessment

- It is almost certain that terrorist actors will maintain the intent to conduct attacks in the UK using high-sophistication tactics such as IEDs in the long term.
- The basic materials used to construct the device in this incident demonstrate the accessibility of certain precursor materials in the UK. **Once materials are obtained, there is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the capability to construct an IED for attacks.** However, the multiple phases involved in the construction of an IED present greater opportunity for disruption by UK security services and police.
- **It is almost certain that terrorist actors will maintain the intent to target hospitals or medical facilities across the UK.** This incident is the second targeting of a hospital in England in the past 18 months, following the [attack conducted outside Liverpool Women's hospital](#) in 2021. Terrorist groups have also previously demonstrated the intent to conduct random attacks on hospital facilities globally.
- **It is almost certain that terrorist actors in the UK will maintain the intent to target military sites and personnel.** This has been demonstrated by the hostile reconnaissance that took place in this incident, the murder of soldier Lee Rigby outside a barracks in 2013 by two Islamist-inspired terrorists, and multiple other disrupted plots in the past 10 years.
- It is alleged that the suspect was encouraged online to target the hospital, however, the source of the encouragement remains unclear. **It is almost certain that online communications and publications will continue to inspire individuals to engage in terrorist activity in the UK in the long term.**
- The suspect is alleged to have obtained online instructions on how to construct an IED. **It is almost certain that terrorist actors in the UK will maintain the ability to access terrorism-related materials online** including propaganda, IED construction manuals, and other guides relating to committing terrorist attacks.

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World: Police targeted in Pakistan as suicide bomber kills over 80 in mosque blast

References

Threat Level  
Government advice

Pool Re SOLUTIONS

## News Roundup

### UK: Independent Iranian news outlet forced out of London by reports of threat

As of 18 February 2023, media reporting has suggested that the independent television network, Iran International, has been forced to relocate its headquarters from Chiswick Business Park in West London to Washington DC after “imminent and credible threats to the lives of their journalists” were made.<sup>4</sup> The move comes amidst calls made for the UK government to proscribe Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a result of the alleged threat posed to individuals and businesses across the UK.<sup>5</sup> On 16 February 2023, Matt Jukes, the head of the UK’s Counter-Terrorism Police, revealed that the Islamic Republic of Iran had made 15 attempts to kidnap or kill British residents since the start of 2022.<sup>6</sup>

On 13 February 2023, a 30-year-old Austrian national was charged with terror offences after allegedly carrying out hostile reconnaissance at the network’s headquarters at Chiswick Business Park.<sup>7</sup>

#### Assessment

- It is almost certain the IRGC will remain a threat to the UK through the maintenance of an extensive and highly capable network of covert assets and proxy groups that wittingly or unwittingly seek to subvert and influence the stability and prosperity of the UK.
- **It is unlikely that any actions conducted by the IRGC in the UK would pose a significant or directed threat to property.** Instead, it is likely that the IRGC would maintain the intent to target specific individuals who denigrate or oppose the Iranian regime.
- **It is almost certain that threats made by the IRGC to British nationals and residents have further damaged UK-Iranian diplomatic relations.** As the relationship worsens there is a realistic possibility that individuals sympathetic to the

Iranian State could develop the intent to engage in malicious activity against UK organisations or individuals in the long term.

- **There is a realistic possibility that organisations across the UK could become increasingly vulnerable to Iranian-backed Insider Threat.** An Insider Threat is a person who wittingly or unwittingly uses legitimate access to an organisation’s assets to enable malicious activities.

#### Risk Mitigation

- The activities conducted at Chiswick Business Park on 13 February demonstrate the ability of malicious actors to conduct hostile reconnaissance against UK organisations. Hostile reconnaissance is the information gathering phase of the malicious activity or even terrorism attack planning process.

- Organisations can disrupt hostile reconnaissance through the approach of:
  - Deny (prevent access to useful information, ensuring access to information is difficult through personnel, physical and online security controls);
  - Detect (detect those carrying out hostile reconnaissance, through an integrated security approach including staff awareness and CCTV); and
  - Deter (deter people from carrying out hostile reconnaissance at your site, by promoting a strong security posture and active security messaging).
- Training staff members to be alert to suspicious behaviours will support detection of potential hostile reconnaissance – staff should be encouraged to complete the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) Awareness

training -[Report terrorist or extremist content online – Action Counters Terrorism.](#)

- **If hostile reconnaissance is suspected, this should be immediately reported to the Police.**

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References

Threat Level  
Government advice

Pool Re SOLUTIONS

## News Roundup (continued)

### UK: Two prominent media figures sent threatening letters by affiliates of UK Proscribed Far Right Terrorist Group

Two prominent media personalities have allegedly received hand-delivered letters containing death threats from an unknown sender claiming to be associated with the proscribed right-wing terrorist group, National Action.<sup>8</sup> Black activist, Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, allegedly received a letter at her home address on 20 February 2023 which declared the sender's intention to kill her and her family.<sup>9</sup> The same day, journalist India Willoughby claimed that a letter addressed to her was hand delivered to her accountant's office. The letter allegedly contained threats to kill Willoughby for being transgender.<sup>10</sup> The sender of each letter claimed to be a member of "National Action London" and included the National Action logo.<sup>11</sup> The Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism Command is currently investigating to identify the senders of the letters.<sup>12</sup>



Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu. Photos Getty Images

#### Assessment

- It is likely that the recent delivery of targeted letters under the name of National Action demonstrates the willingness of certain individuals in the UK to affiliate with a proscribed organisation and highlights the continuing attraction of extreme right-wing ideologies.
  - There is a realistic possibility that the individual(s) behind the letters could belong to an offshoot of National Action, indicating that the group may continue to have a number of undirected and decentralised covert cells throughout the UK.
  - It is almost certain that individuals affiliated with the extreme right-wing will continue to oppose immigration and the
- LGBTQIA+ community through protest actions.** Recently, right-wing organisations including Patriotic Alternative and Britain First have staged protests targeting these communities, including at Drag Queen Story Hour<sup>13</sup> events and outside hotels housing asylum seekers; some of these incidents have led to flashpoints with UK police or other protest groups posing threat to both people and property.
- There is a realistic possibility that a small number of right-wing extremists could resort to violence against people and property as a result of their views towards immigrants and the LGBTQIA+ community.

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References

Threat Level  
Government advice

Pool Re SOLUTIONS

## News Roundup (continued)

### UK: Serving British Army serviceman charged with terror and explosive offences

The Metropolitan Police have revealed that a serving member of the British Army has been charged with terror and explosives offences. The 21-year-old is accused of planting a hoax bomb at an RAF base. The accused has been charged with placing three cannisters with wires at MOD Stafford with the “intention of inducing fears that it would explode

or ignite and cause personal injury or damage to property”, in January 2023. The individual is also accused of eliciting personal information about soldiers from the Ministry of Defence Joint Personnel Administration System which was deemed “likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism”, in August 2021.<sup>14</sup>



#### Assessment

- The charges demonstrate the threat posed by Insider Threat to UK organisations and businesses. An Insider Threat is a person who exploits, or has the intention to exploit, their legitimate access to an organisation’s assets to enable malicious activities.
- **There is a realistic possibility that an Insider Threat could be posed by a wide range of actors, including any of the following:** individuals disgruntled with their workplace and/or colleagues; individuals with terrorist intent; hostile foreign states; or individuals with low economic status vulnerable to bribery and corruption.
- A small number of British Armed Forces have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to commit terrorism-related offences, including:
  - 2018 – a British Army Lance Corporal, Mikko Vehvilainen, was jailed for being a member of neo-Nazi group, National Action. In 2017, police found swastika

flags, Nazi memorabilia, and stockpiles of knives, guns, and other weaponry during a raid of his property.

- 2021 – a former British Army driver was jailed for terror offences after gathering explosive substances, crossbows and parts for a 3D-printed gun at his home. Dean Morrice was a neo-Nazi, who had shared violent material online.
- Ministry of Defence figures revealed that between 2019-2022, Prevent referrals reported by serving armed forces personnel included: 20 reports on Islamist extremism, ‘no clear ideology’ and ‘counterterrorism-related activity’ and a further 20 referrals on ‘Far Right Extremism’.<sup>15</sup>

#### Risk Mitigation

- Businesses can reduce the risks they may face from Insider Threat through alignment with the Insider Risk Mitigation Framework - [Insider Risk Mitigation Framework | CPNI](#)
- Any management of Insider Threat should, first, be based upon a risk assessment, identifying the

vulnerability of an organisation to Insider Threat, and what impact this could have.

- Mitigations for Insider Threat are largely procedural and operational measures, including Employment Screening and Vetting, Security Education and fostering a good workplace security culture, as well as establishing policies and procedures to help manage the risk, such as reporting.
- Anonymous reporting procedures should be established, to allow for internal reporting of suspicious behaviours. Where an Insider Threat is suspected, an internal investigation should be established. Where a criminal offence is suspected, an organisation must contact Police as soon as possible. In the event of suspected radicalisation, this should be reported immediately to Counter-Terrorism Police through the following link: [Report terrorist or extremist content online – Action Counters Terrorism](#).

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**World: Police targeted in Pakistan as suicide bomber kills over 80 in mosque blast**

References

Threat Level  
Government advice

Pool Re SOLUTIONS

## News Roundup (continued)

### World: Police targeted in Pakistan as suicide bomber kills over 80 in mosque blast

Media reporting has suggested that at least 80 people have been killed and over 200 injured in a terrorist attack conducted in the high-security area of the city of Peshawar, Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> The attack reportedly targeted policemen during prayer at a mosque using a Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIED); the device allegedly contained 12 kilograms of explosives.<sup>17</sup> Several terrorist actors in the region have claimed responsibility for the attack, while Pakistani officials reportedly suspect Jamat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), a breakaway faction of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), conducted the attack.<sup>18</sup> The perpetrator is reported to have gained access to the high-security area wearing a police uniform and has been identified as a member of a militant network.<sup>19</sup>

#### Assessment

- **It is highly likely that the 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan has created a more permissive environment for terrorism-related activity in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan due to the region's porous borders and limited Taliban security control.**

This has resulted in regular terrorist attacks throughout the region. Recent reporting has suggested that diplomatic negotiations between the Pakistan government and the Taliban to establish better control of the terrorist threat in the region are currently under way.

- **It is highly likely that a high number of individuals with the intent and capability to conduct terrorist attacks are active in the region** following failed negotiations between the Pakistani government and TTP in November 2022.

- It is likely that groups such as the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), Islamic State Pakistan Province (ISPP), and JuA have exploited instability in the region to enhance their own operational capability and outreach.

- There is a realistic possibility that the arrest of several suspects in connection with the attack, interrogations into the families of police officers, and allegations that the perpetrator entered the area using a police uniform could demonstrate division and potential culpability within Pakistan's local security services.

- It is highly likely that terrorist actors in the region would seek to exploit weaknesses within Pakistan's local security services to improve their own operational capability.

- **It is likely that terrorist actors within the region will maintain the capability to conduct attacks using high-sophistication methodologies;** demonstrated by the regular use of IEDs to conduct attacks throughout the region.

- **It is highly likely that ISKP will remain active in Pakistan in the long term.** Following the defeat of Islamic State in 2017, ISKP has demonstrated the capability to conduct a high level of operational activity throughout the region, including regular cross-border attacks into Pakistan.

#### The Threat to the UK – Why is this report relevant?

- **It is highly likely that any terror networks, affiliates, and covert cells operating in the Middle East are currently focused on accessible regional targets.** It is unlikely that they would have the capability to project a major direct threat to the UK at this time.
- **It is highly likely that the predominant threat posed by global terrorist actors such as ISKP to the UK at this time is from the online radicalisation** of vulnerable UK-based individuals, and the subsequent inspiration to conduct low-sophistication attacks within the UK.
- If ISKP continues to develop its regional capabilities, there is a realistic possibility that the group could develop the capability to conduct directed attacks against the West in the long term.

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## References

Threat Level  
Government advice

Pool Re SOLUTIONS

# References

## UK: Man charged with terrorism offences following attempted improvised explosive device attack outside Leeds hospital

- 1 [Leeds St James's Hospital: Man in court on terror charges - BBC News](#)
- 2 [Leeds nursing student allegedly found with pressure cooker bomb outside St James' Hospital appears in court - Leeds Live](#)
- 3 [St James's Hospital, Leeds, Incident Updates - Counter Terrorism Policing](#)

## UK: Independent Iranian news outlet forced out of London by reports of threat

- 4 [Iran International editor says Tehran threats 'getting out of hand' after TV channel forced to leave UK - Sky New](#)
- 5 [Declare IRGC a terror group after Alireza Akbari killing, Labour urges - The Independent](#)  
[Tom Tugendhat fuels claims of Cabinet row over declaring Iran's Revolutionary Guard as terror group - Daily Mail Online](#)
- 6 [Met police and MI5 foil 15 plots by Iran against British or UK-based 'enemies' - The Guardian](#)
- 7 [Man charged with terrorism offence - Metropolitan Police](#)

## UK: Two prominent media figures sent threatening letters by affiliates of UK Proscribed Far Right Terrorist Group

- 8 [Neo-Nazi threats probed by anti-terrorism police - BBC News](#)
- 9 [Black activist threatened with 'execution' by racist British Neo Nazi group in chilling letter - The Independent](#)
- 10 [India Willoughby on Twitter: "My accountant just called. He's received a letter today - hand delivered - no stamp. Threatening to kill me. Because I'm trans. Full of graphic detail about what they are going to do. Passed on to the police. This is what Brit Media, the GC movement and the Gov have done." - Twitter](#)  
[Statement - investigation into threatening letters - Metropolitan Police](#)
- 11 [National Action is a UK-based right-wing terrorist group, banned in the UK in 2016. National Action was found to have "promoted and encouraged acts of terrorism" including glorifying the murder of Jo Cox MP. Members of national action were also involved in a plot to murder Labour MP Rosie Cooper in 2017.](#)
- 12 [Statement: investigation into threatening letters - Metropolitan Police.](#)
- 13 [Drag Queen Story Hour is an interactive show hosted by Aida H Dee, a British drag queen, where drag performers read stories to young children.](#)

## UK: Serving British Army serviceman charged with terror and explosive offences

- 14 [British Army serviceman appears in court charged with terror offences - BBC News](#)
- 15 [British armed forces flagging rising numbers of servicemen to counter-terror scheme over far-right extremism - The Independent](#)

## World: Police targeted in Pakistan as suicide bomber kills over 80 in mosque blast

- 16 [Taliban denies causing Pakistan mosque suicide bombing that killed 100 - The Telegraph](#)
- 17 [Peshawar, Pakistan blast: Death toll rises to at least 100 in mosque suspected suicide bombing - CNN](#)
- 18 [Jamaat-ul-Ahrar was founded in 2014 after Omar Khalid Khorasani had accused the TTP leadership of deviating from the TTP ideology.](#)
- 19 [Pakistan says mosque bomber wore police uniform, breached security on motorbike - Reuters](#)

UK: Man charged with terrorism offences following attempted improvised explosive device attack outside Leeds hospital

UK: Independent Iranian news outlet forced out of London by reports of threat

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World: Police targeted in Pakistan as suicide bomber kills over 80 in mosque blast

References

Threat Level  
Government advice

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 **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)

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

## Government advice

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Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure

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