

High street shops



Terrorism threat to high street shops in the UK

- It is highly likely that terrorist actors would have the intent to conduct attacks against high street shops in the UK due to the high footfall and publicly accessible nature of high street shops in the UK.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a high street shop in the UK would be conducted by an individual or small cell using a low sophistication methodology e.g., Bladed or Blunt Force Weapons, Vehicle as a Weapon, or Fire as a Weapon.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the capability to conduct a high-sophistication attack at high street shops in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices, or Firearms attack. The complex nature of plotting a high-sophistication terrorist attack makes it highly likely that there will be greater opportunity for UK police and security services to disrupt potential attacks.
- The high footfall on high streets in the UK almost certainly provides an attractive target for indiscriminate terrorist attacks. As such, it is likely that any terrorist attack against a high street shop would be conducted by an Islamist inspired individual due to the ideologically driven intent to conduct indiscriminate attacks against members of the public in the UK.

Location based threats to high street shops in the UK

- It is likely that there is a heightened terrorist threat to high street shops in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that high street shops located in proximity to iconic sites and/or busy public spaces could be impacted by a Marauding Terrorist Attack in proximity to their site.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could seek to conduct an attack against high street shops that are located in smaller towns and cities in the UK due to the lack of other suitable targets in the nearby area.

Previous terrorist incidents related to high street shops in the UK and overseas

- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks in proximity to high street shops in the UK, including:
 - **2020 London;** An Islamist terrorist conducted a Bladed Weapons attack against members of the public on Streatham high street in South London. Two individuals were injured.¹
 - **2019 London;** An Islamist terrorist was given a life sentence for plotting a terrorist attack against Oxford Street in London. The individual was convicted of plotting to conduct a Vehicle as a Weapon and Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device attack against members of the public.²
 - **1983 London;** The Irish Republican Army (IRA) detonated a bomb in a side street in proximity to Harrods in Knightsbridge. There were six fatalities, including three police officers, and 75 others were injured.³
- Terrorist actors in the UK have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks in proximity to high street shops globally, including:
 - **2022 US;** An Extreme Right-Wing terrorist was sentenced to life in prison for conducting a Firearms attack against individuals at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. The media reported that the terrorist had posted documents online in which he said he hoped the attack would preserve white power in the US.⁴
 - **December 2016 Berlin;** An Islamist terrorist conducted a Vehicle as a Weapon attack against a Christmas market in Berlin, Germany. There were 12 fatalities and over 70 people were injured.⁵
 - **May 2014 China;** Islamist terrorists conducted a complex high-sophistication attack against civilians at a busy street market. The perpetrators conducted a Vehicle as a Weapon attack while throwing IEDs at surrounding civilians. There were 31 fatalities and roughly 90 people were wounded.⁶

Other potential threats to high street shops in the UK

- It is highly likely that there would be a heightened threat to high street shops at peak times and during festive periods e.g., high streets have a higher footfall around Christmas or during major sales events such as Black Friday or the Boxing Day Sales. It is almost certain that the large crowds that gather for such major sales events would be an attractive target for terrorist actors in the UK.
- It is almost certain that the publicly accessible nature of high street shops in the UK would allow any individual with the intent to conduct terrorist attacks against, or in proximity to, high street shops to conduct regular hostile reconnaissance undetected and have a good awareness of any security mitigations in place at any given site.

Continued

- There is a realistic possibility that the nature of any high street shop could impact the terrorism threat to that site. For example, whilst there has not been a declared terrorist attack related to incel ideology in the UK, there is a realistic possibility that individuals who adhere to an incel ideology could seek to conduct attacks against high street shops that cater specifically to women.
- Although it is highly unlikely that any such event would be designated as terrorism, there is a realistic possibility that Non-Violent Direct Action protest groups could have the intent to stage protests across high streets in the UK.
- There is a realistic possibility that there could be a heightened threat to high street shops associated with a specific minority community. For example, an Extreme Right-Wing terrorist could have the intent to conduct an attack against a Middle Eastern restaurant or shop.
- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at high street shops could pose an insider threat to high streets in the UK, including:
 - Third party security staff and/or in-house staff could enable terrorist actors in the UK to access a major high street shop with malicious items by allowing such individuals to bypass any security mitigations in place at that site.
 - Third party vendors and/or in-house staff could exploit vehicular access routes to the site available to suppliers to bring in high-sophistication attack methodologies or to advance low-sophistication attack capabilities.
 - Directly employed staff could grant terrorist actors access to monitored and/or restricted substances and items in particular shops, bypassing applicable restrictions on the purchase of certain materials.

Bibliography

1. [Streatham terror attack: Terrorist shot dead by police after stabbing two people | UK News | Sky News](#)
2. [Oxford Street terror plotter Lewis Ludlow jailed - BBC News](#)
3. [BBC On This Day | 17 | 1983: Harrods bomb blast kills six](#)
4. [Teen who killed 10 Black people at Buffalo supermarket given life in prison | Buffalo shooting | The Guardian](#)
5. [Berlin Christmas market attack: a graphical guide to what we know so far | Berlin Christmas market attack | The Guardian](#)
6. [Terrorist attack on market in China's restive Xinjiang region kills more than 30 - The Washington Post](#)

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