

Street festivals and outdoor markets



Terrorism threat to street festivals and outdoor markets

- It is highly likely that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to conduct attacks against street festivals and outdoor markets in the UK due to their publicly accessible nature and the routine gathering of large crowds at such sites.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a street festival or outdoor market 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 prioritise the use of a Vehicle as a Weapon to conduct an attack against street festivals or outdoor markets in the UK where there is vehicular access to the pedestrian areas of such sites.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the capability to conduct a high-sophistication attack at any street festival or outdoor market in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices, 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 such potential attacks.
- The large crowds that gather at street festivals and outdoor markets almost certainly provide an attractive target for indiscriminate terrorist attacks. As such, it is likely that any terrorist attack against a street festival or outdoor market 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 street festivals and outdoor markets in the UK

- It is likely that there is a heightened terrorist threat to street festivals or outdoor markets in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that street festivals and outdoor markets 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 street festivals and/or outdoor markets 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 street festivals and outdoor markets in the UK and overseas

- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent to conduct attacks at street festivals and outdoor markets:
 - **2016 Berlin Christmas Market;** An Islamist-inspired terrorist conducted a Vehicle as a Weapon attack at a Christmas market in Berlin, resulting in 12 fatalities and more than 70 injured.¹
 - **2018 Strasbourg Christmas Market;** An Islamist-inspired terrorist conducted a Marauding Firearms and Bladed Weapons attack at the Strasbourg Christmas Market. The attack resulted in 5 fatalities and wounded 11 individuals.²

Other terrorist threats to street festivals and outdoor markets in the UK

- It is likely that there would be a heightened threat to street festivals and outdoor markets during festive periods and holidays e.g., street festivals and outdoor markets with a higher footfall during the Christmas period or during summer and spring bank holidays. It is almost certain that the large crowds that gather during busy periods at such sites would be an attractive target for terrorist attacks.
- It is almost certain that any terrorist actor with the intent to conduct an attack against a street festival or outdoor market would have open access to the site and the capability to conduct uninterrupted hostile reconnaissance due to the typically relaxed security posture and publicly accessible nature of any street festival or outdoor market in the UK.
- There is a realistic possibility that staff and vendors at street festivals and outdoor markets could pose an insider threat in several ways, including:
 - Third party security staff and/or in-house staff could enable terrorist actors in the UK to access the site with malicious items by allowing such individuals to bypass any security mitigations and vetting procedures in place.
 - Third party vendors and or in-house staff could exploit vehicular access to the site available to suppliers to bring in high-sophistication attack methodologies or to advance low-sophistication attack capabilities. For example, a third party vendor could conduct a Fire as a Weapon attack on a burger van, causing it to explode and potentially injure festivalgoers in proximity to the incident.

Continued

- There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to street festivals and outdoor markets would be dynamic and dependent on the nature of the event being celebrated:
 - E.g., it is almost certain that terrorist actors would have the intent to conduct attacks against street festivals celebrating a royal coronation or other ceremonial events due to the symbolic value of such an attack and the high footfall such an event would attract.
 - E.g., a street festival celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community could be targeted by individuals inspired by an Extreme Right-Wing ideology.
- Although it is highly unlikely that any such event would be designated as terrorism, there is a realistic possibility that Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) protest groups could have the intent to stage protests at street festivals or outdoor markets in the UK. NVDA protest groups have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to target street festivals and outdoor markets in the UK, including:
 - **2019 London, Extinction Rebellion** activists occupied Smithfield Market in Farringdon, the UK's biggest meat market.³ The protest reportedly lasted 18 hours.⁴

Bibliography

1. Berlin Christmas market attack - latest news, breaking stories and comment - The Independent; 2016-12_Berlin-terrorist-attack.pdf (europa.eu)
2. Strasbourg shooting: What we know - BBC News
3. Extinction Rebellion activists occupy Smithfield Market and set up fruit and veg stalls | London Evening Standard | Evening Standard
4. Animal Rebellion blockade London's Smithfield Market - BBC News

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