

# Cinemas



## Terrorism threat to Cinemas

- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the intent to conduct an attack against cinemas due to their easily accessible nature and the routine gathering of people both inside and outside their sites. There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to cinemas could also be dynamic and dependent on the genre and/or subject of films being shown at any given site.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a cinema 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 a cinema in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIED), or Firearms attack. The complicated 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 assessments in this report were made using the PHIA Probability Yardstick, for further information please see the Assessment Methodology [section below](#).

## Location based threats to cinemas in the UK

- It is highly likely that there is an increased terrorism threat to cinemas in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that cinemas 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 cinemas that are located in smaller towns and cities in the UK due to the lack of other suitable targets in the nearby area compared to more urban environments.

## Previous terrorist incidents related to cinemas in the UK and overseas

- At this time, there have been no previous terrorist attacks against cinemas in the UK.
- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against cinemas globally, including:
  - 2014 Pakistan:** Islamist terrorists conducted an Explosives attack using a grenade against a large group of people viewing a film at a cinema. There were 13 fatalities and up to 20 wounded.<sup>1</sup>
  - 2010 Afghanistan:** Islamist terrorists conducted Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIED) and Firearms attacks on multiple locations, including shopping centres, the central bank, and two cinemas. Media reporting suggests that at least four security forces and one civilian were killed. 38 were wounded.
  - 2002 Bangladesh:** Media reporting suggests that Islamic Shashantantra Andolon (ISA) conducted an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack against a cinema hall and a circus tent in the Satkhira District of Bangladesh. There were two fatalities and another 35 were injured.<sup>2</sup>
  - 2002 Bangladesh:** Unknown perpetrators conducted a complex Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack against four Bangladeshi cinemas at the end of Ramadan. There were 17 fatalities and roughly 300 were injured.<sup>3</sup>

## Other potential threats to cinemas in the UK

- It is highly likely that there would be a heightened threat to cinemas at peak times. E.g., Cinemas almost certainly have a higher footfall around Christmas, weekends, bank holidays, or following the release of a new major blockbuster.
- There is a realistic possibility that the terrorist threat to cinemas could be heightened by surrounding facilities within or in proximity to the site. E.g., Cinemas that form part of a multi-facility site (E.g., shopping centres with cafés, restaurants, clothing retailers, etc.) could become impacted by terrorist actors in the UK seeking to conduct mass-casualty, indiscriminate attacks at a multi-facility site.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist actor with the intent to conduct an attack against a cinema would have open access to the public foyer area of any cinema site in the UK and the capability to conduct uninterrupted hostile reconnaissance.
- There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to cinemas could be dynamic and dependent on the genre and/or subject of films being shown at any given site. E.g., An extreme right-wing or Islamist terrorist could seek to conduct an attack during the showing of a film associated with the LGBTQIA+ community. Although no such event has been designated as terrorism, cinemas have previously faced criticism as a result of the films shown at their site, including:
  - 2022 UK:** Cineworld, cancelled all screenings of "The Lady of Heaven" after branches were picketed by Muslim

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activists. Activists claimed the film to be "blasphemous" and more than 117,000 signed a petition to get the film removed from all UK cinemas.<sup>4</sup>

- **2022 Scotland:** The screening of an allegedly controversial film about transgender rights was cancelled following student protests at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>5</sup>
- **2019 UK:** A film about gangs was removed from nearly 100 cinemas across the UK after a mass brawl involving teenagers with machetes occurred in Birmingham. Five teenagers were arrested and seven police officers suffered facial injuries.<sup>6</sup>
- There is a realistic possibility that there could be a heightened threat to cinemas in the UK hosting high-profile individuals. E.g., a terrorist actor could attempt to conduct an attack against a high-profile actor or director during a film premiere or red carpet event.
- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at cinemas could pose an insider threat to cinemas in the UK, including:
  - Third party security staff and/or in-house staff could enable terrorist actors in the UK to access a cinema with malicious items by allowing such individuals to bypass any security mitigations in place at that site.

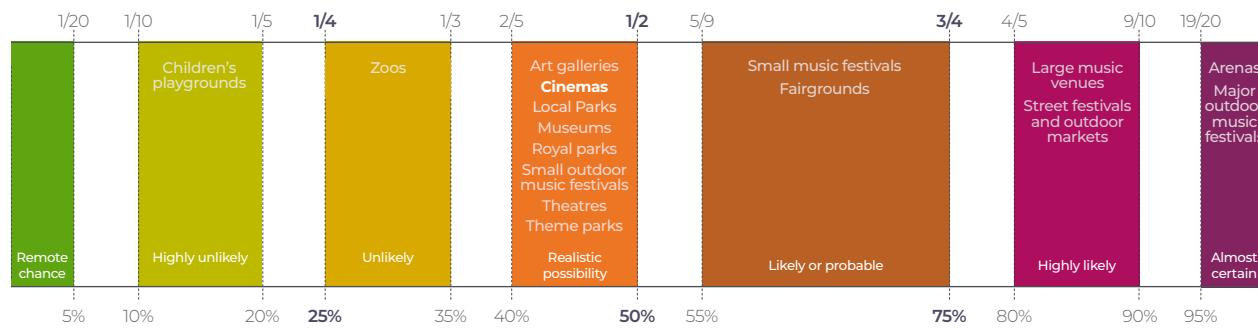
## Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against cinemas within the arts, culture and entertainment sector.

Terrorist intent can be defined as the desire and/or determination of an individual to conduct an attack against any given site.

The intent of terrorist actors to conduct an attack against the arts, culture and entertainment sector in the UK is subject to change based on the assessments outlined in this report.

**Note:** The terrorism threat to any given site is not based solely on intent, but also the capability of terrorist actors in the UK as outlined in this report. Terrorism threat is also mitigated by the UK's countrywide terrorism risk mitigation infrastructure including both public and private security and safety capabilities.



## Assessment Methodology

The assessments made in this report have been made using the Professional Head of Intelligence's "Probability Yardstick" (above). The Probability Yardstick is a standardised instrument used to provide a professional standard for intelligence assessment.

- **Almost certain:** An event has a greater than 90% chance of occurring.
- **Highly likely:** An event has a 76% to 90% chance of occurring.
- **Likely:** An event has a 55% to 75% chance of occurring.
- **Realistic possibility:** An event has a 40% to 54% chance of occurring.
- **Unlikely:** An event has a 25% to 39% chance of occurring.
- **Highly unlikely:** An event has an 10% to 24% chance of occurring.
- **Remote chance:** An event has a less than 10% chance of occurring.

## Time spans

- **Short Term:** 0–6 Months.
- **In the next 12 months.**
- **Medium Term:** 12 months–5 Years.
- **Long Term:** 5+ Years.

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**Intelligence cut-off date: 05 February 2024**

For more information please contact [solutions@poolre.co.uk](mailto:solutions@poolre.co.uk)

## Bibliography

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Bombs hit cinemas in Bangladesh; South Asia, World - BBC News
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