

Theatres



Terrorism threat to Theatres

- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the intent to conduct an attack against theatres due to their easily accessible nature and the routine gathering of large crowds of people both inside and outside their sites.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a theatre 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 theatre 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 theatres in the UK

- It is highly likely that there is an increased terrorism threat to theatres in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that theatres located in proximity to iconic sites and/or busy public spaces could be impacted by a Marauding Terrorist Attack in proximity to their site.
 - E.g., Although not the direct target of the attack, a Marauding Terrorist Attack in proximity to Covent Garden underground station could impact multiple theatres in the vicinity of the station.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could seek to conduct an attack against theatres 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 theatres in the UK and overseas

- At this time, there have been no previous terrorist attacks against theatres in the UK. However, individuals have previously demonstrated the intent to target theatres in the UK by malicious means, including:
 - **2022 London**; Although not an act of terrorism, Hammersmith Apollo was evacuated after receiving a hoax bomb threat during a concert by an Iranian singer. Media reporting suggests that the Metropolitan Police received an anonymous call “making a threat towards a music venue”. The motivation behind the hoax remains unclear.¹
- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against theatres globally, including:
 - **2022 India**; An individual posing as a “central agency official” reportedly called the police and named a number of locations that would be attacked by terrorists. A theatre was named as one of the possible locations. The motivation behind the hoax remains unclear.²
 - **2015 France**; Three Islamist terrorists conducted a Firearms and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack against the Bataclan concert hall in Paris during a complex attack on the city. There were 90 fatalities and several others were injured.³
 - **2002 Russia**; Media reporting suggests that 40 Chechen rebels took 912 people hostage during a performance of a popular musical in a Moscow Theatre. There were over 120 fatalities and the stand-off lasted for 57 hours.⁴

Other potential threats to theatres in the UK

- Dependent on the security presence and entry procedures at theatres in the UK, there is a realistic possibility that any terrorist actor with the intent to conduct an attack against a theatre would have open access to certain sites and the capability to conduct uninterrupted hostile reconnaissance.
- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at theatres 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 a theatre with malicious items by allowing such individuals to bypass any security mitigations in place at that site.
 - In-house staff could grant terrorist actors access to high-profile guests or performers in the back-stage areas of a theatre.

Continued

- There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to theatres in the UK could be dynamic and dependent on the nature of the event or performance hosted at the site. E.g., An extreme right-wing or Islamist terrorist could conduct an attack during a performance featuring a high-profile member of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- There is a realistic possibility that there could be a heightened threat to theatres in the UK hosting high-profile individuals. E.g. An Islamist terrorist actor could attempt to conduct an attack against a member of the royal family during their visit to the theatre.
- It is highly likely that the threat posed to any theatre in the UK would be dynamic and dependent on the notoriety of the theatre. It is almost certain that high-profile and symbolic theatres would be attractive targets for terrorist actors in the UK, rather than smaller, rural, and bespoke theatres.
- Although it is unlikely that any such event would be designated as terrorism, it is likely that Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) Protest groups would have the intent to stage protests at theatres in the UK. NVDA Protest groups have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to target theatres in the UK, including:
 - **2023 London;** Five “Just Stop Oil” activists conducted a protest on a theatre stage during a performance of Les Misérables in London’s West End. The performance was stopped and did not resume.⁵

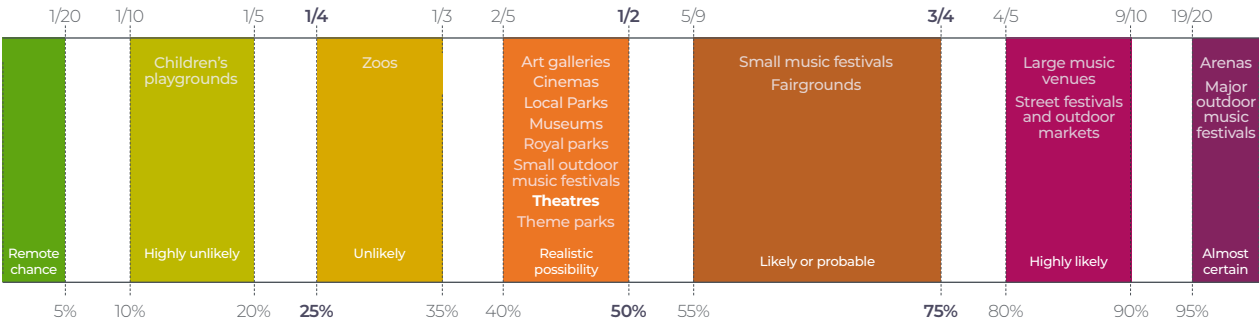
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against theatres 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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Bibliography

1. [Hammersmith: Eventim Apollo evacuated after 'bomb threat' at concert by Iranian singer Dariush Eghbali - yahoo.com](#)
2. [Mumbai: Hoax call received about terror attacks in a mall, hotel and theatre; Mumbai News - The Indian Express](#)
3. [What happened at the Bataclan? - BBC News](#)
4. [Moscow theatre siege: Questions remain unanswered - BBC News](#)
5. [Just Stop Oil: Five charged after protesters disrupt Les Misérables - BBC News](#)

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