

Racecourses



Terrorism threat to racecourses

- It is likely that terrorist actors would have the intent to conduct attacks at racecourses in the UK.¹ This is likely due to the high number of attendees at racing events that are staged over large areas of land and the symbolic value that any attack against a high-profile event with global media coverage and VIP guests would receive.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a racecourse 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 could have the capability to conduct a high sophistication attack at a racecourse in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Device (IED), Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIED), or Firearms attack. However, 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.
- It is almost certain that the threat posed to any racecourse in the UK would be subject to change dependent on the public profile of the event. E.g., It is almost certain that terrorist actors would prioritise attacks against high-profile races hosted at major courses such as Royal Ascot, Aintree, Cheltenham Festival, etc., compared to smaller, less-known courses and events.
- The assessments in this report were made using the PHIA Probability Yardstick, for further information please see the Assessment Methodology [section below](#).

Previous terrorist incidents related to racecourses in the UK and overseas

- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct terrorism-related activity against racecourses and racehorses in the UK, including:
 - **1997 Aintree;** Aintree racecourse was evacuated during the 150th Grand National following a bomb threat from the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The group made two separate calls to Aintree University Hospital and a police control room in Bootle. The incident remains the biggest evacuation of a sporting event in British history.²
- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against racecourses globally, including:
 - **2010 Russia;** Reporting suggests an Islamist terrorist conducted an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack at a racecourse in the North Caucasus Republic of Kabardino Balkaria. There was one fatality and 23 others were injured.³

Other potential threats to racecourses in the UK

- Due to the sophisticated search and screening procedures at large/high-profile racecourse grounds in the UK, there is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors could prioritise attacks against a site's external spaces, proximal locations, or at points of security challenge. E.g., Approaches to the ground, external concourses, transport hubs, security checkpoints, etc.
- There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to racecourses in the UK could be heightened by the presence of high-profile individuals. E.g., Royal Ascot is routinely attended by members of the Royal Family. It is almost certain that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to conduct attacks against high-profile individuals.
- There is a realistic possibility that directly engaged staff at racecourses could pose an Insider Threat in several ways, including:
 - Security staff could enable terrorist actors in the UK to access the site with malicious items by bypassing security mitigations and vetting procedures.
 - Staff could grant terrorist actors access to high-profile individuals and/or jockeys in the VIP areas of a racecourse.
 - Individuals associated with horse racing could exploit vehicular access to the site to smuggle attack devices in or to conduct a Vehicle as a Weapon attack.
 - Third party vendors, temporary hospitality staff, or non-vetted service providers could exploit vehicular access to the hospitality areas of a racecourse in order to smuggle attack devices or items into the site.
- There is a realistic possibility that events held at a racecourse as part of a race weekend could alter the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to target any given site. E.g., A live music event during and/or after a race day could attract busy crowds that would be an attractive target for any terrorist actor seeking to conduct an indiscriminate attack.

Continued

- Additionally, there is a realistic possibility that non-sporting events held at racecourses outside of the racing calendar could alter the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to target any given site. E.g., A conference held at a high-profile racecourse in the UK could attract busy crowds and high-profile individuals that would be an attractive target for any terrorist actor seeking to conduct an attack.
- Although it is highly unlikely that any such event would be designated as terrorism, it is almost certain that Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) Protest groups would have the intent to stage protests at racecourses in the UK. NVDA Protest groups have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to target racecourses in the UK, including:
 - **2023 Epsom**; 33 individuals affiliated with the animal rights group, Animal Rising, were arrested for plotting to disrupt the Epsom Derby. Two of the individuals arrested were detained for invading the course.⁴
 - **2023 London**; 118 animal rights protesters were arrested on suspicion of offences including criminal damage and causing public nuisance after protesters gained access to Aintree racetrack and prevented the start of the Grand National horse race.⁵

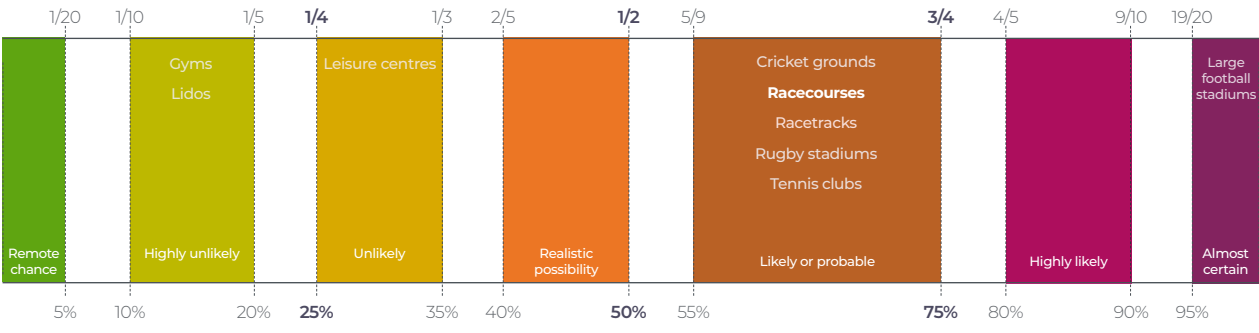
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against racecourses 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 June 2024

For more information please contact solutions@poolre.co.uk

Bibliography

1. Racecourse is defined within this report as a wide, usually circular, path with a grass surface, on which horses race, or the area that includes this path and buildings around it.
2. [The evacuation of the 1997 Grand National: 20 years on - ITV News Granada](#)
3. [May Day bomb blast kills at least one - UPI.com](#)
[Blast hurts over 10 in Russia's Nalchik - The Independent](#)
4. [Protester runs on during horse race as 31 held over Epsom Derby disruption; UK News - Sky News](#)
5. [Protesters delay UK's Grand National horse race, 118 arrested - Reuters](#)

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