

# Commercial warehouses



# Terrorism threat to commercial warehouses

- It is highly unlikely that terrorist actors would have the intent to conduct an attack against commercial warehouses in the UK. Previous terrorist attacks in the UK have demonstrated the intent of terrorist actors to conduct mass-casualty, high-profile attacks in proximity to major sites. Commercial warehouses are highly unlikely to be attractive targets for terrorist actors in the UK.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a commercial warehouse 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 commercial warehouse 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 would 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](#).

## Previous terrorist incidents related to commercial warehouses in the UK and overseas

- At this time, there have not been any designated terrorist attacks directly targeting commercial warehouses in the UK. However, individuals with malicious intent have previously targeted warehouses in the UK, including:
  - **2025 Croydon;** On 23 January 2025, an individual conducted a Bladed Weapons attack at a Sainsburys and Argos warehouse in Croydon, south London. Five individuals were injured. The Metropolitan Police said it believed all those involved knew each other. The investigation remains ongoing.<sup>1</sup>
- Terrorist actors in the UK have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to exploit commercial warehouses and their storage facilities, including:
  - **2004 UK;** Police disrupted a Luton-based group who plotted to conduct a mass casualty attack against nightclubs, pubs, and shopping centres in the UK. Five al-Qa'ida-linked individuals were later convicted and 600kg of ammonium nitrate had been found alongside instructional materials of how to turn it into a lethal explosive. The ammonium nitrate was reportedly stored at a self-storage facility in West London. Two individuals with links to the group were later responsible for the 7/7 London bombings against the London transport system.<sup>2</sup>
  - **1996 London;** Three members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) reportedly conducted a raid at a warehouse in London. It was reported that the purpose of the raid was to retrieve firearms and explosives from inside storage containers within the warehouse.<sup>3</sup>

## Other potential threats to commercial warehouses in the UK

- Although it is unlikely that commercial warehouses would be directly targeted by terrorist actors in the UK, there is a realistic possibility that individuals could have the intent to use commercial warehouses to store weaponry and/or hazardous materials when plotting to conduct an attack.
- There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to commercial warehouses could be dynamic and dependent on the nature of the tenant at any given site. For example, commercial warehouses storing large amounts of chemical substances could face a heightened threat from terrorist actors seeking to steal materials in order to construct Improvised Explosive Devices.
- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at commercial warehouses could pose an insider threat to commercial warehouses in the UK, including:
  - Staff could grant terrorist actors access to monitored and/or restricted substances and items, bypassing applicable restrictions on the purchase of certain materials.
  - Staff could exploit their access to a commercial warehouse to store attack weaponry or hazardous materials. E.g., Explosives, chemicals, etc.
- Although it is 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 target commercial warehouses in response to the nature of the business and/or the materials held at the warehouse. NVDA protest groups have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to target commercial warehouses in the UK, including:
  - **2024 Bristol;** On 06 August 2024, activists from Palestine Action allegedly broke into an Elbit Systems UK warehouse. Reporting suggests that a repurposed prison van was used to smash through fencing before members of the group damaged items within the warehouse using sledgehammers. Two responding police officers and a security guard were injured.<sup>4</sup>
  - **2023 Wales;** An activist affiliated with Palestine Action was convicted of conspiracy to commit criminal damage following a pro-Palestine protest at the factory of an electronics manufacturer in eastern Wales in December 2022. The activists reportedly entered the factory floor before smashing computer screens,

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- spraying paint, and setting off smoke grenades. The protest reportedly caused up to £1.2 million of damage.<sup>5</sup>
- **2023 Coventry;** Mass pickets and protest action forced Amazon to shut down a warehouse in Coventry. Media reporting suggests that approximately 100 Amazon workers and 300 trade unionists and campaigners protested outside the warehouse.<sup>6</sup>
- **2021 UK;** Media reporting suggests that activists from Extinction Rebellion protested outside of 15 Amazon warehouses on Black Friday. Blockades outside the company's distribution centre's allegedly prevented some lorries from entering and leaving the site.<sup>7</sup>
- Although no such incident has yet been designated as terrorism, commercial warehouses have previously been impacted by malicious acts carried out on behalf of hostile foreign states, including:
  - **2024 Birmingham;** On 22 July 2024, an incendiary device caught fire at a DHL warehouse based in the suburb of Minworth, outside Birmingham. Reporting suggests that the blast was strong enough to have brought down a cargo plane, had the device been loaded aboard. British investigators alleged that the device formed part of a wider campaign conducted by the Russian state across Europe, including a similar incident at a DHL site in Leipzig, Germany, in late July 2024.<sup>8</sup>
  - **2024 London;** Two British men were charged with helping Russian intelligence services after a suspected arson attack on a Ukraine-linked business in London. A large fire broke out at a warehouse on an industrial estate in March 2024, which the prosecution said was started using an accelerant such as petrol.<sup>9</sup>
- It remains unclear if any such incident would be designated as terrorism in future.

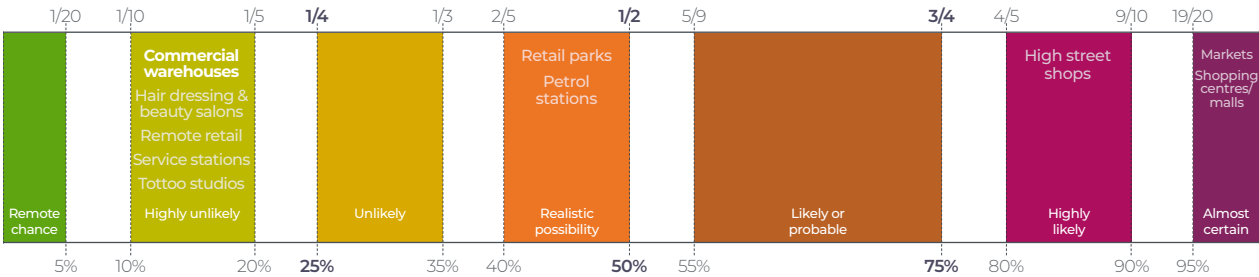
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against commercial warehouses within the retail & wholesale 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 retail & wholesale 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 2025

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

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