

# Markets



## Terrorism threat to markets in the UK

- It is almost certain that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to conduct attacks against markets in the UK due to their publicly accessible nature and the large crowds that gather at such sites.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a 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 have the capability to conduct a high-sophistication attack at a market in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIED), 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 potential attacks.
- The large crowds that gather at markets almost certainly provide an attractive target for indiscriminate terrorist attacks. As such, it is highly likely that any terrorist attack against a market in the UK would be conducted by an Islamist-inspired individual due to the ideologically driven intent to conduct indiscriminate attacks against members of the public.
- It is highly likely that there would be a heightened threat to markets during festive periods and holidays. E.g., Markets with a higher footfall during the Christmas period or during summer and spring bank holidays. It is almost certain that large crowds that gather during busy periods would be an attractive target for terrorist 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 markets in the UK

- It is likely that there would be a heightened terrorist threat to markets in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that 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.

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

- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against markets in the UK, including:
  - **2017 London;** On 03 June 2017, Khuram Butt, Rachid Redouane, and Youssef Zagbha conducted a Marauding Terrorist Attack. The small cell first conducted a Vehicle as a Weapon attack against civilians on London Bridge before conducting a Marauding Bladed Weapons attack against civilians in proximity to Borough Market. There were 8 fatalities and 48 others were injured. The perpetrators were inspired by an Islamist ideology.<sup>1</sup>
- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against markets globally:
  - **2024 Germany;** Although not designated as terrorism, on 20 December 2024, Taleb al-Abdulmohsen conducted a Vehicle as a Weapon attack against civilians at a Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany. Six people were killed and at least 200 others were injured. The motive for the attack remains unclear.<sup>2</sup>
  - **2024 Germany;** A 37-year-old was arrested by German authorities on suspicion of plotting an Islamist inspired attack against a Christmas market. The individual had reportedly disseminated posts on social media glorifying Islamic State and photographed a Christmas market in Augsburg. The individual had allegedly talked about wanting to drive a car through the market.<sup>3</sup>
  - **2023 Germany;** Two teenagers aged 15 and 16 were arrested by German authorities on suspicion of planning an Islamist inspired attack on a Christmas market or a synagogue. The pair had allegedly used the Telegram messaging app to discuss using home-made incendiary devices or a van to carry out the attack.<sup>4</sup>
  - **2022 Iran;** On 16 November 2022, two individuals conducted a firearms attack against a public market in the Iranian city of Izeh, Khuzestan. The attack was conducted during anti-government protests and targeted protesters and security personnel. There were seven fatalities and over 15 others were reportedly injured.<sup>5</sup>
  - **2019 Austria;** Austrian authorities foiled a plot to carry out a series of terror attacks, including an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack at Vienna's Christmas Market. The plot allegedly involved three individuals, including a 24-year-old leader who had previously attempted to reach Syria to join Islamic State.<sup>6</sup>
  - **2018 France;** On 11 December 2018, Cherif Chekatt, 29, conducted a marauding Firearms attack in proximity to a crowded Christmas Market in Strasbourg. There were five fatalities and 12 were wounded. Chekatt was inspired by an Islamist ideology and was known to German security services.<sup>7</sup>
  - **2016 Germany;** On 26 November 2016, a 12-year-old attempted to conduct an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack against a Christmas Market in Ludwigshafen. The device failed to detonate. The individual planted another explosive device near the city's town hall on 05 December 2016. Reporting suggests that the individual was inspired by Islamic State and may have received instruction from an unknown Islamic State member.<sup>8</sup>

Continued

Other potential threats to markets in the UK

- 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 any market in the UK where there is vehicular access to the pedestrian areas of such sites. E.g., On 19 December 2016, Anis Amri, 24, conducted a Vehicle as a Weapon attack against a Christmas Market in Berlin. There were 12 fatalities and over 50 others were injured. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack and later released a video in which Amri pledged allegiance to its leader, Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi.<sup>9</sup>
- It is almost certain that any terrorist actor with the intent to conduct an attack against a market in the UK would have open access to the site and the capability to conduct uninterrupted hostile reconnaissance due to the publicly accessible nature of markets in the UK.
- There is a realistic possibility that there could be a heightened threat to any market with a pronounced link to a minority culture. E.g., On 28 July 2024, two men reportedly set fire to pride flags on a stall at a market in Norwich, UK. The individuals also reportedly set fire to business premises in proximity to the market. Up to £10,000 of damage was allegedly caused to a shop. Although not designated as terrorism, the incident was treated as arson and as a hate crime.<sup>10</sup>
- There is a realistic possibility that the presence of high-profile politicians, media figures, or major celebrities could lead to an increased threat to markets from individuals with terrorist intent. E.g., A political leadership candidate could be targeted during their visit to a market in the UK.

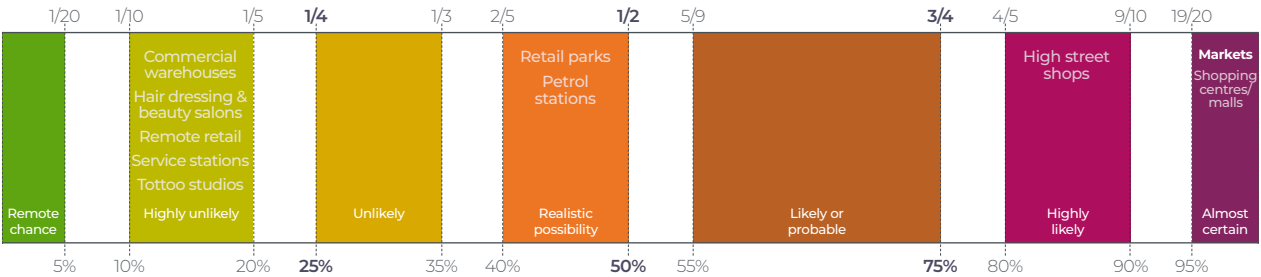
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against markets 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: 24 February 2025

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# Bibliography

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