

# Service stations



## Terrorism threat to service stations

- It is highly unlikely that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to conduct attacks against service stations. Previous terrorist attacks in the UK have demonstrated the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct mass-casualty, high-profile attacks in proximity to major sites.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a service station in the UK would be conducted by an individual or small cell using a low sophistication methodology. E.g., Vehicle as a Weapon, Bladed or Blunt Force Weapons, 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 service stations 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](#).

### Previous terrorist incidents related to service stations in the UK and overseas

- Although there has not previously been a terrorist attack in the UK that has directly targeted a service station, terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks in proximity to service stations in the UK, including:
  - **2023 Birmingham;** On 20 January 2023, Oliver Lewin, 38, was sentenced to six-and-a-half years for plotting to target transmitter masts and transport infrastructure, including the M1 motorway. Lewin was inspired by conspiracy theory-based misinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Had Lewin successfully conducted an attack against their intended targets, there is a realistic possibility that service stations in proximity to the incident could have been affected.<sup>1</sup>
  - **1974 Hartshead;** An explosive device hidden inside the luggage of a coach carrying off-duty British Armed Forces personnel and their family members detonated in proximity to Hartshead Moor Service Station. There were 12 fatalities, and 38 others were injured. Hartshead Moor Service Station was used as a first aid post as the closest accessible location following the attack.<sup>2</sup>
- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against service stations globally, including:
  - **2023 Israel;** On 20 June 2023, two individuals conducted a firearms attack at a service station near the Jewish settlement of Eli in the West Bank. Four individuals were killed and several others were injured. Israel's military said the perpetrators were " Hamas-affiliated terrorists". Hamas later claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>3</sup>

### Other potential threats to service stations in the UK

- It is almost certain that any terrorist actor with the intent to conduct an attack against a service station would have open access to the site and the capability to conduct uninterrupted hostile reconnaissance due to the relaxed security posture and publicly accessible nature of service stations in the UK.
- 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 stage protests at service stations in the UK in response to government and private sector inaction on climate change and the cost-of-living crisis. NVDA Protest groups have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to target service stations in the UK, including:
  - **2022 Surrey and Kent;** Just Stop Oil protesters were arrested after smashing display glass and gluing themselves to petrol pumps during a protest at Cobham services in Surrey and Clacket Services in Kent.<sup>4</sup>
  - **2022 UK;** "Slow-moving convoys" of protesters campaigning against high-fuel prices disrupted motorways throughout England, Wales, and Scotland.<sup>5</sup>
  - **2022 London;** Just Stop Oil protesters blocked three service stations on the M25 in an attempt to put pressure on the government to end new oil and gas projects. Protesters allegedly damaged fuel pumps and glued themselves to forecourts. 20 individuals were arrested.<sup>6</sup>
  - **2021 London;** Insulate Britain protesters walked on to the M25 in several locations, causing major disruption on multiple junctions on the motorway. 19 individuals were arrested.<sup>7</sup>
- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at service stations could pose an Insider Threat to service stations in the UK, including:
  - Staff employed at service stations could gain access to petrol tanker vehicles and facilitate the use of such a vehicle to conduct an attack. E.g., Vehicle as a Weapon or Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) attacks.

Continued

- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the intent to exploit service stations in the UK in order to gain access to material that could be used to conduct an attack. Terrorist actors in the UK have previously demonstrated the intent to exploit petrol stations to facilitate terrorism-related activity, including:
  - **2006 UK;** On 07 November 2006, Dhiren Barot, 34, was convicted for plotting synchronised attacks in the UK. Barot was inspired by an Islamist ideology and intended to conduct the attack on behalf of al-Qa’ida. Part of the Barot’s plan was to hijack petrol tankers that would later be used to ram into a target.<sup>8</sup>

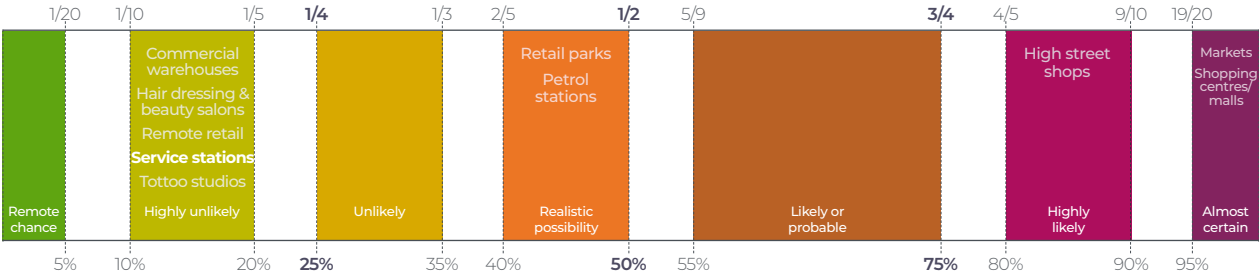
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against service stations 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: 10 February 2025

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



## Bibliography

1. COVID conspiracy theorist Oliver Lewin jailed for planning terror attack to 'topple government', UK News - Sky News
2. Welcome to the Spenborough Branch of The Royal British Legion - Spenborough Branch
3. Eli shooting: Four shot dead by gunmen at West Bank service station, World News - Sky News
4. Climate protesters Just Stop Oil damage petrol pumps at motorway service stations - more than 20 arrested, UK News - Sky News
5. Fuel price protesters block motorways across parts of England and south Wales,UK cost of living crisis - The Guardian
6. Just Stop Oil protesters block service stations on M25 in second day of action, Environmental activism - The Guardian
7. Insulate Britain protesters arrested walking on to M25, Insulate Britain - The Guardian
8. Al-Qaeda plotter jailed for life, UK - BBC News

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