

# Nightclubs



## Terrorism threat to nightclubs

- It is highly likely that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to conduct attacks against nightclubs due to their easily accessible nature, their proximity to busy public spaces, and the routine gathering of large crowds within and in proximity to their sites.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a nightclub 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 nightclub in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIED) or a marauding attack with Firearms. 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 large crowds that gather at nightclubs almost certainly provide an attractive target for indiscriminate terrorist attacks. As such, it is likely that any terrorist attack against a nightclub 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.
- 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 nightclubs in the UK

- It is highly likely that there would be an increased terrorism threat to nightclubs in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that a nightclub 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 nightclubs in the UK and overseas

- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against nightclubs in the UK, including:
  - **2021 London;** On 23 July 2021, Heaven, a nightclub associated with the LGBTQIA+ community, was evacuated for the second time after a "suspicious item" was reported. The nightclub had previously been evacuated in May 2021 following an alleged "intentional hoax".<sup>1</sup>
  - **2007 UK;** On 30 April 2007, five British individuals were jailed for life for plotting an al-Qa'ida inspired bombing campaign against targets across Britain, including, the Ministry of Sound nightclub, trains, and Bluewater Shopping Centre.<sup>2</sup> Media reporting suggests that the individuals were linked to the perpetrators of the 2005 7/7 attacks on London's transport systems.<sup>3</sup>
  - **2007 London;** On 29 June 2007, Bilal Abdullah and Kafeel Ahmed, left a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) outside of Tiger Tiger nightclub in Haymarket, London, but it failed to detonate. Another VBIED was left parked on a nearby street which also did not detonate. The pair travelled to Glasgow the next day and drove a vehicle loaded with gas canisters and petrol into Glasgow Airport's terminal building. On 13 April 2012, Adbullah was convicted for the Tiger Tiger plot. Ahmed died after the Glasgow attack after suffering 90% burns.<sup>4</sup>
- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against nightclubs globally, including:
  - **2025 USA;** On 01 January 2025 at approximately 03:15 local time, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, drove an electric Ford pick up truck into crowds of people that had gathered on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, a notable hotspot for bars, clubs, and restaurants. Jabbar was reportedly inspired by Islamic State. 15 people were killed, and at least 35 others were injured.<sup>5</sup>
  - **2022 Norway;** On 25 June 2022, Zaniar Matapour, 44, conducted a Firearms attack against the London Pub, a popular nightclub among the LGBTQIA+ community in Oslo. Matapour had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State shortly before the attack. There were two fatalities, and eight others were hospitalised. Oslo's annual Pride parade was cancelled.<sup>6</sup>
  - **2017 Turkey;** On 01 January 2017, Abdulkadir Masharipov, conducted a Firearms attack against a crowded Istanbul nightclub during New Year's Eve celebrations. There were 39 fatalities and 69 people were injured. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that it was conducted as revenge for Turkish military involvement in Syria.<sup>7</sup>
  - **2016 USA;** On 12 June 2016, Omar Mateen, 29, conducted a Firearms attack against Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, targeting a predominantly LGBTQIA+ crowd. There were 49 fatalities, and several others were injured. Mateen was reportedly inspired by an Islamist ideology. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack; however, the extent of the group's involvement remains unclear.<sup>8</sup>
  - **2002 Indonesia;** On 12 October 2002, three Islamist terrorists conducted Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks in Bali. The attacks targeted busy night-time economy locations. One of the attackers conducted a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive (VBIED) attack outside the Sari Club. There were 202 fatalities overall.<sup>9</sup>

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Other potential threats to nightclubs in the UK

- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at nightclubs could pose an Insider Threat to nightclubs in the UK, including:
  - Third party security staff and/or in-house staff could enable terrorist actors in the UK to access the site with malicious items by allowing such individuals to bypass any security mitigations in place at that site. E.g., While not related to terrorism, in 2022, following a fatal crush at the Brixton Academy, London, an anonymous member of security staff revealed that prior to the crush, security staff working at the venue would often let in “a couple of hundred” people in exchange for cash. It is alleged that the security contractor was aware of the malpractice and did not intervene.<sup>10</sup> While not terrorism related, this incident shows how vulnerabilities in security can be exploited, leading to fatal incidents.
- There is a realistic possibility that the terrorism threat to nightclubs could be heightened at certain times of year, E.g., New Year’s Eve, Festive Periods, Bank Holiday Weekends, etc. due to increased footfall.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the intent to target specific high-profile individuals hosted by a nightclub in the UK. E.g., The presence of celebrities at a high-profile nightclub could lead to an increased threat from individuals with terrorist intent.
- There is a realistic possibility that the nature of events held at a nightclub could alter the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to target that site. E.g., A nightclub hosting an LGBTQIA+ event could face a heightened threat from individuals who adhere to an Extreme Right-Wing or Islamist ideology.
  - **2020 Norway;** On 25 June 2022, Zaniar Matapour, 44, conducted a Firearms attack against the London Pub; a popular LGBTQIA+ venue in Oslo. Matapour had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State shortly before the attack. There were two fatalities, and eight others were hospitalised. Oslo’s annual Pride parade was cancelled.<sup>11</sup>
  - **2018 UK;** On 05 February 2018, Ethan Stables, 20, was convicted for plotting a Bladed Weapons attack against a pub hosting a Pride Night for Barrow’s LGBTQIA+ support group. Stables was inspired by an Extreme Right-Wing ideology.<sup>12</sup>

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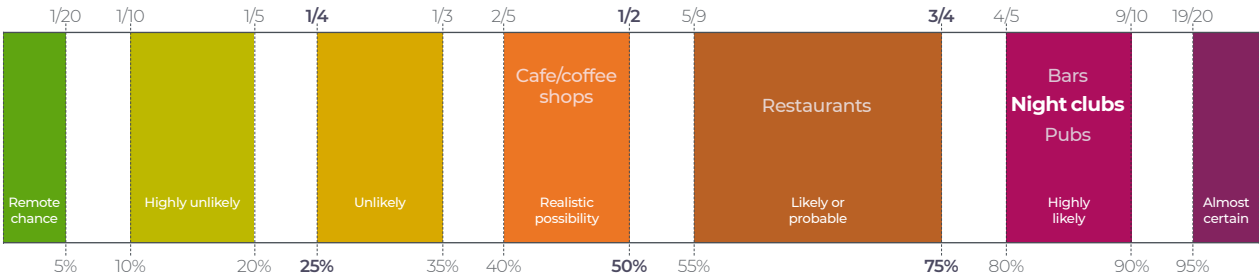
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against nightclubs within the hospitality 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 hospitality 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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