

Train stations



Terrorism threat to train stations

- It is almost certain that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to conduct attacks against train stations due to their publicly accessible nature, the large crowds of people that gather at such sites, and media attention that any such incident would receive.
- It is highly likely that the threat posed to any train station in the UK would be dependent on the profile and footfall generated by each station. It is highly likely that terrorist actors would prioritise attacks against major UK train stations due to the increased symbolism and likely media attention received by any such attack. E.g., London King's Cross, Edinburgh Waverley, Manchester Victoria, etc. rather than smaller, more rural stations.
- It is highly likely that any attack conducted against a train station 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, Fire as a Weapon, etc.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors could have the capability to conduct a high sophistication attack against a train station in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) 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.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a train station 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 any such attack would target large crowds of people in busy areas of any given station.
- It is highly likely that the threat posed to train stations in the UK would be dynamic and subject to change based on the time of day and specific events throughout the year as terrorists in the UK would seek to conduct attacks in peak, high footfall periods. E.g., Rush hour, night-time economy, New Years Eve, Christmas Eve, etc.
- 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 train stations in the UK

- It is highly likely that there would be a heightened terrorist threat to train stations located in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or other major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that train stations located in proximity to iconic sites and busy public spaces could be impacted by a Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) in proximity to their site.
- There is a realistic possibility that there could be a heightened threat to train stations situated within or adjoined to other transport hubs (airports/bus stations) or large venues. For example, in 2017, Salman Abedi, 22, conducted a Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIED) attack at Manchester Arena. Prior to detonating the device, Abedi had arrived at Manchester Victoria tram stop and used the station concourse lift to reach the City Room, where he later conducted his attack.¹

Previous terrorist incidents related to train stations in the UK and overseas

- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against train stations in the UK, including:
 - 2023 London;** On 02 June 2023, Matthew King, 19, was sentenced to life imprisonment for planning to commit a terrorist attack in London. During King's attack planning, he conducted hostile reconnaissance at railway stations in the UK and had been found to be recording police officers. King was inspired by an Islamist ideology and had previously wanted to travel to Syria to join Islamic State.²
 - 2018 Manchester;** Although not officially designated as terrorism, on 31 December 2018, Mahdi Mohamud, 26, conducted a Bladed Weapons attack against two civilians at Manchester Victoria Train Station. In 2019, he was sentenced to life imprisonment after pleading guilty to three counts of attempted murder and one count of possessing information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism.³
 - 1992 London;** The Irish Republican Army (IRA) conducted an Improvised Explosive Device attack at London Bridge train station. 28 people were wounded.⁴
 - 1991 London;** The Irish Republican Army (IRA) conducted Improvised Explosive Device attacks against Victoria and Paddington train stations in London. There was one fatality and 38 others were injured. Media reporting at the time suggested that all of London's rail terminus stations were closed, disrupting the journeys of 470,000.⁵
- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against train stations globally, including:
 - 2025 Austria;** On 10 February 2025, a 14-year-old was arrested on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack on a Westbahnhof train station in Vienna. Reporting suggests that the suspect became radicalised online and was inspired by an Islamist ideology.⁶

Continued

- **2024 Pakistan;** On 09 November 2024, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for a Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIED) attack at a train station in the southwestern city of Quetta, Pakistan. There were 26 fatalities and more than 50 others were injured.⁷
- **2024 France;** Although not officially designated as terrorism, an individual conducted a Bladed Weapons attack at the Gare de Lyon railway in Paris. It was later confirmed that the individual was carrying a hammer as well as a knife during the attack. Three individuals were injured.⁸
- **2023 France;** Although not officially designated as terrorism, French police shot and wounded a woman who was allegedly making threats at a train station in Paris after fearing for their safety. Reporting suggests the individual made threats to blow herself up and shouted "Allahu Akbar".⁹
- **2020 Netherlands;** On 20 March 2020, Gokmen Tanis, 38, was sentenced to life imprisonment after he conducted an Islamist inspired Firearms attack on a Utrecht tram in 2019. There were three fatalities and five others were injured.¹⁰
- **2017 Belgium;** On 20 June 2017, an Islamist terrorist was shot by Belgium police after a failed Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack at Brussels Central Station. Investigators reportedly believed the device failed to detonate because of the poor preparation of the explosive. There were no fatalities or injuries.¹¹
- **2016 Germany;** On 18 July 2016, Riaz Khan Ahmadzai, 17, conducted a Bladed Weapons attack on a train in Wurzburg, Germany. Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack. Five individuals were injured.¹²
- **2015 France;** On 21 August 2015, Ayoub El Khazzani, conducted an Islamist inspired Firearms attack onboard a Thalys train. Khazzani was overcome by passengers on the train. Two individuals were wounded.¹³
- **2004 Spain;** On 11 March 2004, Islamist terrorists conducted a complex, high-sophistication Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack against commuter train lines into Madrid. Ten devices were detonated, while another three failed to explode. There were 193 fatalities and over 1,800 were injured.¹⁴

Other terrorist threats to train stations in the UK

- It is highly likely that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to target trains travelling between stations due to their busy compartments, limited security, and poor egress options, leading to a greater number of casualties and making them attractive targets for terrorist actors in the UK.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors with the intent to travel by train to conduct a terrorist attack, or the intent to target trains directly, could accidentally trigger sensitive Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) whilst moving through stations. Similarly, if challenged by police, security, or members of the public whilst in the station, there is a realistic possibility that actors could deliberately or unintentionally advance their attack plans if met with resistance.
- Although it is highly unlikely that any such event would be designated as terrorism, it is highly likely that Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) Protest groups would have the intent to stage protests at train stations in the UK. NVDA Protest groups have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to target train stations in the UK, including:
 - **2025 Manchester;** On 03 May 2025, approximately 300 people marched through Manchester and occupied Manchester Victoria railway station. The march was reportedly intended to "demand trans+ liberation" and had been organised by the Manchester Trans Liberation Assembly.¹⁵
 - **2023 UK;** Throughout the end of 2023, tens of thousands of protesters joined rallies and sit-ins at rail stations across the UK to stop travellers from catching trains.¹⁶ Affected stations included; London King's Cross, London Waterloo, Liverpool Lime Street, Manchester Piccadilly, Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central, etc.
- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at train stations in the UK could pose an Insider Threat in several ways, including:
 - E.g., Staff employed at rail companies operating within or out of any UK train station could be impressionable and willing to share inside information, conduct malicious acts using rail infrastructure, or sabotage control centres in exchange for monetary rewards.
 - E.g., In-house staff and/or third-party providers could enable terrorist actors in the UK to access the site and/or trains with malicious items by allowing such individuals to bypass security mitigations and vetting procedures in place.
- There is a realistic possibility that the threat to train stations in the UK could be heightened due to the presence of high-profile individuals. E.g., Individuals with terrorist intent could seek to target high-profile individuals including politicians, celebrities, influencers, etc.
- Due to the busy and crowded nature of train stations, it is highly likely that potential terrorist actors would be able to conduct hostile reconnaissance without detection and to develop an understanding of the security mitigations, best access points, and most suitable areas to target.

Continued

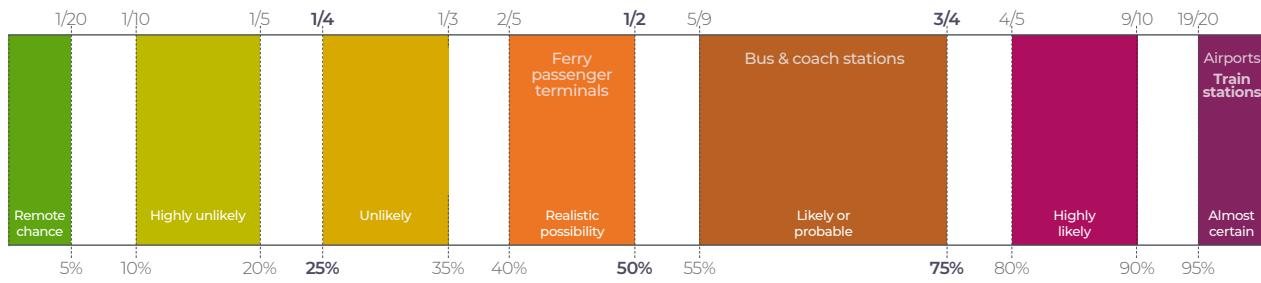
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against train stations within the transport 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 transport 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.

Continued

Intelligence cut-off date: 12 May 2025

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

Bibliography

1. Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume 1: Security for the Arena - GOV.UK
2. Terror-plotting Essex teenager jailed for life after mother reports him, Crime - The Guardian
3. A man who stabbed three people during a planned attack at Victoria Train Station on New Year's Eve has been jailed for life - Greater Manchester Police (gmp.police.uk)
4. BOMBING IN LONDON LEAVES 28 INJURED - The New York Times (nytimes.com)
5. Man killed, 38 hurt, as IRA switches target to stations, Northern Ireland - The Guardian
6. Austria arrested teenager over foiled plot to attack Vienna station - Reuters
7. Pakistan: At least 26 killed in train station bomb blast, World News - Sky News
8. Three wounded in stabbing spree at major Paris train station - The Telegraph
9. Police open fire after alleged threats by woman on Paris train, Paris - The Guardian
10. Dutch tram attack killer sentenced to life in jail - Reuters
11. Brussels bombing: Station attack device contained TATP, initial assessment shows - CNN
12. Germany axe attack: Assault on train in Wuerzburg injures HK family - BBC News
German train stabbing: De Maiziere warns of lone attacks - BBC News
13. French Thalys train attacker 'tried to kill me three times' - BBC News
14. The 3/11 Madrid Bombings: An Assessment After 5 Years - Wilson Center
15. Activists protest and occupy train station for trans+ rights - Socialist Worker
16. Tens of thousands join pro-Palestinian marches and sit-ins across UK - BBC News
Palestine supporters arrested at Waterloo 'sit in' amid dozens of marches, as... - LBC
Hundreds of pro-Palestine protesters stage sit-in at Liverpool Street station demanding ceasefire - ITV News
London Pro-Palestine protesters occupy Edinburgh and Glasgow railway stations - The Times

Pool Re Solutions Limited
Equitable House 47 King William Street London EC4R 9AF

poolre.co.uk

Disclaimer

The contents of this document including any opinions are for information purposes only and for your own use.
None of the contents should be construed as the provision of advice.

Although Pool Re Solutions Limited ("PReS"), its group companies, agents and staff (together the **PReS Entities**) have taken reasonable care that the information contained in this document is accurate at the time of this document, no representation or warranty (including liability towards third parties), expressed or implied, is made (or accepted) as to its accuracy or completeness or fitness for any purpose by the PReS Entities. The PReS Entities have no obligation to update the information contained in this document or notify you of any such updates or provide any additional information which may be relevant to the information contained in this document. Under no circumstances will the PReS Entities be liable for any direct, indirect, incidental, special or consequential loss or damage caused by reliance on or use of this information.

The terms and conditions of this legal notice shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of England and Wales.