

How dangerous are released terrorist prisoners and what is being done to manage this risk?

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Pool Re SOLUTIONS Understanding Risk Threat Level Government advice

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Monthly Threat Update May 2022

This month:
How dangerous are released terrorist prisoners and what is being done to manage this risk?

Threat Overview

This month, Pool Re Solutions provides an insight into the concern about released terrorist prisoners and the threat they may pose in the UK.

We also examine conviction and sentencing data for terrorism charges in Great Britain, comparing figures between March and April.

Finally, we provide a roundup of significant terrorism-related events across advanced market countries. This includes a warning from police about the possible threat to the Her Majesty's Jubilee celebrations, the arrest of a right-wing teenager in Germany and the continued use of social media by extremists and violent actors to plan and execute attacks.

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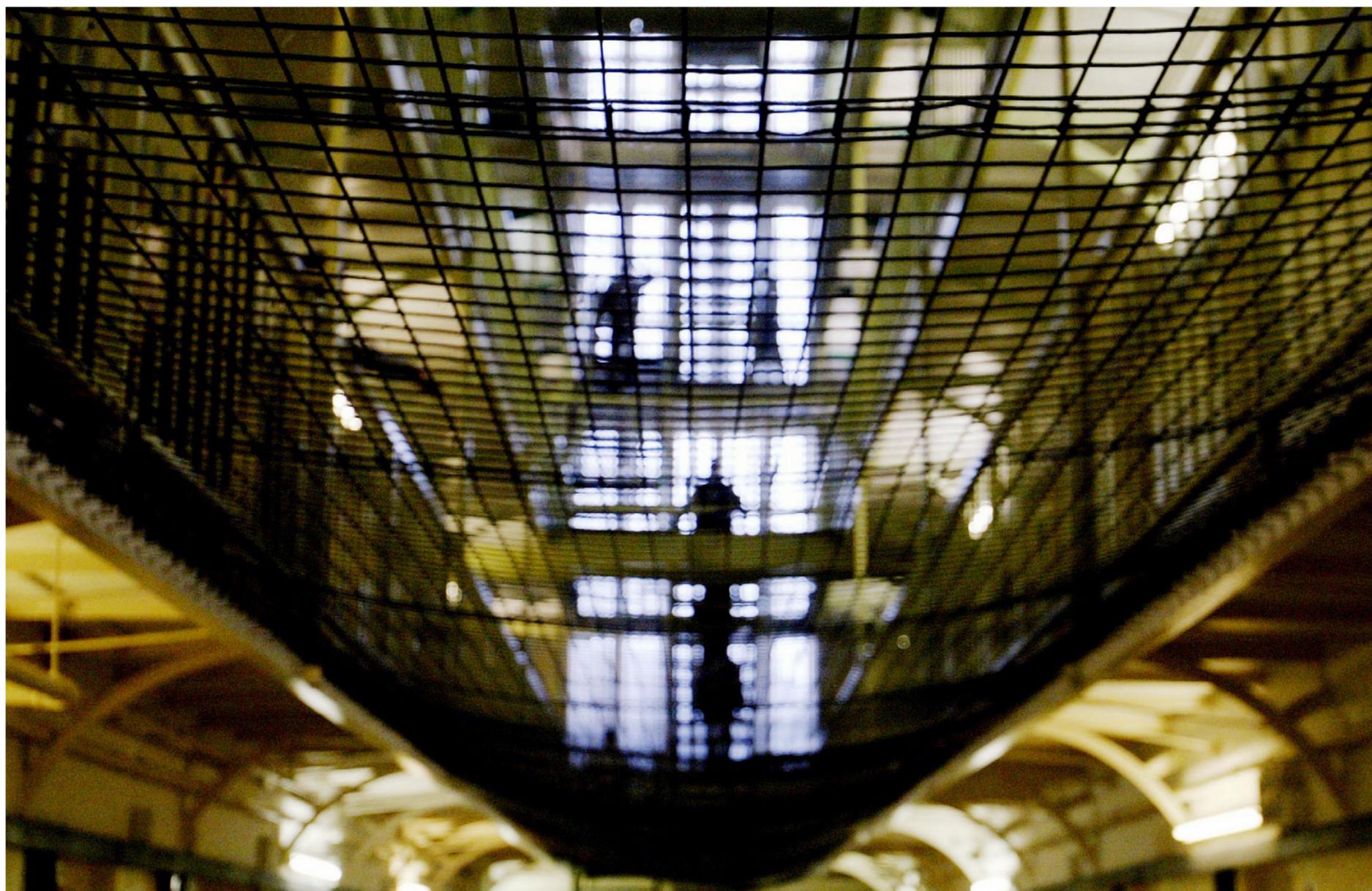
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How dangerous are released terrorist prisoners and what is being done to manage this risk?

The past decade has seen a general increase in the number of people convicted for terrorism-related offences in England and Wales, with an accompanying rise in the number of terrorist prisoners. This year, between 90 to 100 terrorist prisoners will be considered for release in England and Wales and, if recent trends hold, approximately half of these prisoners will be released. Between 2013 and 2021, 443 terrorist prisoners were released,¹ averaging roughly 50 former prisoners back on the streets each year.

There have been long standing concerns regarding the potential danger posed by these individuals. Indeed, four of the last six successful terrorist attacks in England and Wales have all been



carried out by either released prisoners (Fishmongers' Hall, Streatham and Reading) or by current prisoners still serving their sentences (HMP Whitemoor). Apart from the Reading attack, these cases involved prisoners with previous convictions for terrorism-related offences. In November 2019, Usman Khan killed two people at Fishmongers' Hall and injured three others before being shot dead by police officers. Khan had spent eight years in prison after being convicted for planning terrorist attacks and had been released for almost a year. It was a tragic irony that the event at Fishmongers' Hall had been designed to showcase the successful rehabilitation of former prisoners. Just over two months later in February 2020, Sudesh Amman injured two people in an attack in Streatham, before he too was shot dead by police officers who had him under close surveillance. Amman had been

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How dangerous are released terrorist prisoners and what is being done to manage this risk? (continued)

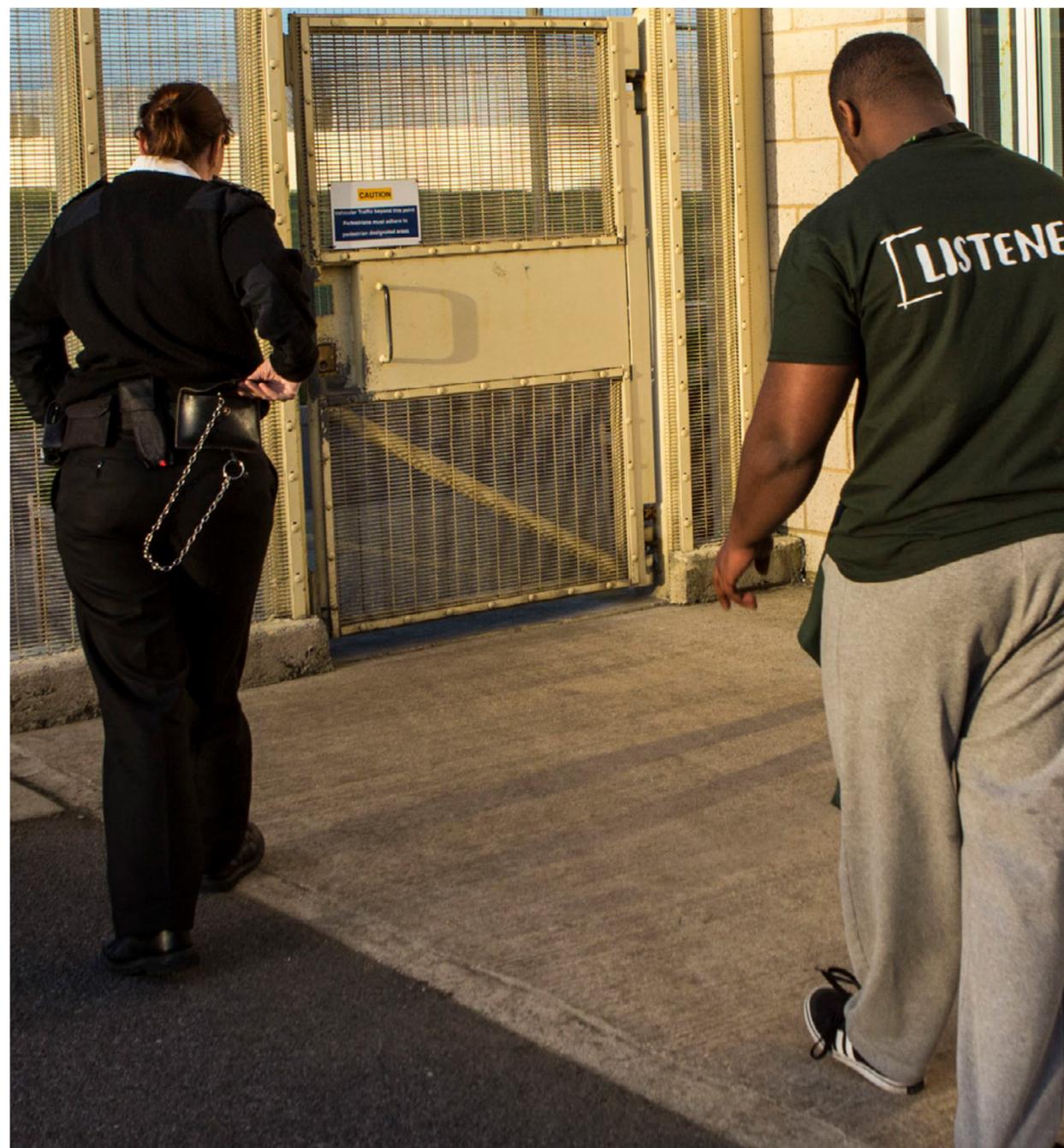
released from prison just ten days earlier. He had spent 20 months in prison after being convicted of possessing and disseminating documents useful to terrorists.

Following these two attacks, the government has released statistics on re-offending by terrorist prisoners. The most recent statistics show that between 2013-2020 more than 387 terrorist prisoners were released, and seven of these were subsequently convicted for another terrorism-related offence, giving a re-conviction rate of 1.8%.² The re-offending rate rises to 2.3% once the cases of Khan and Amman are included. This overall low rate of reconviction is consistent with international statistics on re-offending by released terrorist prisoners, which has found their re-offending rates are low and in general far lower than the reconviction rates seen with other types of offenders.³

Nevertheless, in a context where roughly 50 terrorist prisoners are

released each year, the current rates still mean that approximately one of these former prisoners can be expected to commit further terrorist offences at some point in the future. When that offending potentially involves attacks the consequences can be extremely serious.

Concerns about the small minority who do re-offend has prompted an overhaul in how these offenders are handled. In response to Fishmongers' Hall and Streatham, the government introduced the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020. Previously, terrorist offenders were automatically released on licence at the half-way point of their sentence. Now they are only eligible for release once they have served at least two-thirds of their sentence. Further, release is not automatic at this stage but requires a risk assessment and approval from the Parole Board. If the Parole Board decides against release, the prisoner would have to serve their full sentence.



Additional measures were added in the Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Act 2021 which increased the length of sentences for terrorist offences and abolished any possibility of early release for serious offenders who received Extended Determinate Sentences. The Act also brought in a requirement that all released terrorist prisoners spend at least 12 months on licence and all adult offenders can be required to take polygraph tests as part of their risk management.

These new measures joined a range of well-established frameworks and mechanisms for assessing and managing the risk with released terrorist prisoners. One especially important element is the Extremism Risk Guidance (ERG 22+) framework which is used for risk assessment of terrorist prisoners in custody and while on probation. The ERG was launched by the National Offender Management Service (now HM Prison & Probation Service) in 2011 and currently assesses

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How dangerous are released terrorist prisoners and what is being done to manage this risk? (continued)

terrorism-related offenders on 22 factors which are believed to be related to extremist offending (the “+” in the title is a reflection that the framework will consider other factors beyond the 22 if they are shown to be relevant to a particular case). In the early years following the ERG’s introduction, the framework was criticised over a lack of publicly available information with questions being raised about its reliability and scientific basis. Much more information and research about the ERG has become available in recent years, to the point that of all the risk assessment frameworks designed for use with convicted terrorist offenders available internationally, the ERG is now almost certainly the framework with the most extensive and strongest evidence base.

A further crucial element to risk management in these cases are Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).⁴ MAPPAs were established in 2001 and

were initially focused on improving the monitoring and management of convicted sexual and violent offenders, but the approach is also used for released terrorist offenders. MAPPA involves probation offices, prison services, police, and other stakeholders working closely together to assess and manage the released prisoner. Released prisoners will have licence conditions set which typically can include wearing a tag, curfews, restrictions on where they can go, who they can meet with, on internet use, on mobile phone use, etc. Breach of these conditions can lead to a recall to prison.

There have been 27 terrorist attacks in England & Wales over the past decade, two of which have been carried out by released terrorist prisoners. The low overall re-offending rate does not suggest that we will see a significant increase in the frequency of these type of attacks. In terms of casualties, however, both of the

attacks by the released terrorist prisoners are in the top half of attacks. The median number of casualties across all attacks is just 1 per incident. For the released prisoners the average is 3.5 per incident (this does not include deaths of the perpetrators). Had they not been under surveillance, monitoring and other restrictions, the impact would almost certainly have been even higher.

Overall, while policy and practice approaches to managing and assessing risk for released terrorist prisoners have transformed over the past decade, some important questions still remain. In particular, while the available evidence suggests that re-offending rates for released terrorist prisoners are very low, our understanding of the minority who do re-offend is poor. Current research does not provide much insight into the processes and risks around released prisoners who re-engage with terrorism and we currently lack information on what distinguishes

them from the majority who do not reengage and what important warnings signs might be. Going forward, there is an urgent need for more work in this area.



About the author:

Andrew Silke is Professor of Terrorism Risk Mitigation & Resilience at Cranfield University, a post co-sponsored by Pool Re. He is head of Cranfield’s Counterterrorism, Intelligence, Risk & Resilience (CIRR) group and is widely recognised as a leading expert on terrorism and low intensity conflict.

Notes

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/terrorists-prison-uk-release-parole-board-b1983928.html>
2. https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/writtenanswers/search?search_term=Terrorism+Prisoners%27+Release&order_field=datenew
3. For example see: Silke, Andrew, and John Morrison. Re-offending by released terrorist prisoners: Separating hype from reality. *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, 2020; Renard, T. (2020). ‘Overblown: Exploring the Gap Between the Fear of Terrorist Recidivism and the Evidence.’ *CTC Sentinel*, April, 1-11..
4. Wilkinson, B. (2014). “Do Leopards Change Their Spots?: Probation, risk assessment and management of terrorism-related offenders on licence in the UK.” In A. Silke (ed.), *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism*. Routledge, 259-269; Marsden, S. V. (2016). *Reintegrating extremists: Deradicalisation and desistance*. Springer.

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UK Terrorism Offence Data: May Update

In April 2022, the authorities sentenced four individuals in relation to terrorism convictions. This is a reduction in activity compared to March, during which the authorities charged four and convicted four individuals for terrorism offences and sentenced a further three others in relation to terrorism convictions.

April's activity consisted solely of individuals being sentenced for convictions they received in the months previously with no further convictions since March. It is unlikely that this is an indication of a reduction in terrorist activity and is more likely to be a result of backlogs in criminal courts. The pandemic led to significant delays within criminal courts and, as a result magistrates were given permission in May to issue prison sentences of up to 12 months for a single offence to take some pressure off the crown courts.

It is possible the higher number of charges and convictions in March compared to April were a result of several longer term investigations culminating simultaneously. Although, early indications from May's data suggest a continuation in this lower level of terrorism-related convictions and charges, but an increase in terrorism arrests, particularly of teenagers. Terrorism-related legal activity has remained somewhat stable throughout the first third of 2022 and is on par with that seen last year. However, this month's reduction may be the first indication of a change in activity levels across Great Britain.

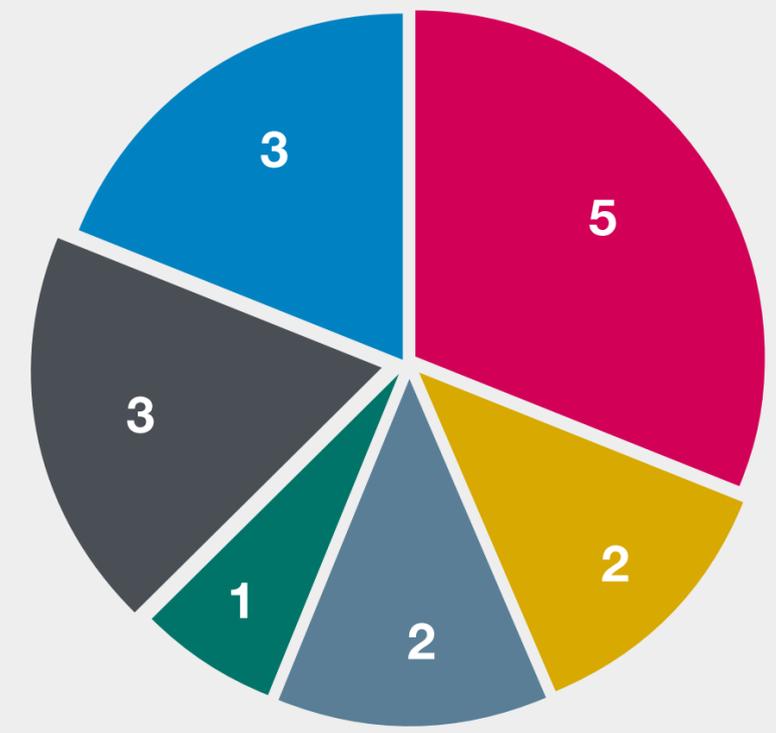
Note: Several individuals in March were charged with more than one offence so appear multiple times on the diagram.

No. people charged, convicted or sentenced for terrorism offences in April 2022



- Possession of an article for terrorist purposes
- Dissemination of a terrorist publication
- Preparation of Terrorist Acts
- Encouragement of Terrorism

No. people charged, convicted or sentenced for terrorism offences in March 2022



- Membership of a proscribed organisation
- Collection of information useful for an act of terrorism
- Publishing a statement encouraging terrorism
- Possessing a document containing information useful to terrorism
- Possession of an article connected with an act of terrorism

Source: Pool Re internal data sources

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News Roundup

UK: Met Police warn of terrorism threat to Jubilee parties

In the run up to the Queen's Jubilee weekend, the Metropolitan Police have warned that celebrations could present attractive targets for terrorists. Estimated numbers suggest 10 million Britons will participate in celebrations, creating large crowds that could be targeted.

A big focus of the five-page report sent to event organisers was on vehicular impact attacks and how to mitigate them. Whilst it might be tempting to remove street furniture, including bollards, to make space for parties and celebrations, police have advised organisers against doing so. The document also suggests that organisers ensure they have a way to alert the public to dangers should an attack occur, as reaction time to incidents

can help reduce the number of casualties and amount of damage caused.

Despite this warning by police, there is no indication of specific intelligence suggesting street parties and celebrations will be targeted. Rather this advice from CT police will help to ensure that organisers and the public are aware of the threat and also have plans in place to mitigate risk or respond to attacks.



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News Roundup

Germany: Police arrest teenager for planning a Nazi terror attack

Police in Germany arrested a 16-year-old after discovering his plot to carry out a Nazi terror attack against a school. The investigation found 16 pipe bombs, and anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim materials, although the devices did not appear to have detonators. Police believe the teenager was plotting to target his current or previous school and was doing so alone.

Germany has seen a number of right-wing incidents in recent years, including an attack in Hanau in 2020, where 10 individuals were shot dead, and five others were injured. This is consistent with the global trends indicating an increase in right-wing terrorism,



Police officers carry evidence from a suspect's home in Essen, Germany, May 12, 2022, in North Rhine-Westphalia state. A 16-year-old boy was taken into custody on suspicion of planning attacks against at least one school in the city. Photo Getty Images/

including in the UK. Right-wing Prevent referrals overtook Islamist referrals for the first-time last year, and the head of MI5, Ken McCallum, previously discussed the growing threat from right-wing extremism. Whilst there has been

an increase in right-wing activity, this is yet to materialise into an increase in violent action, however the situation is being closely monitored.

UK: Teenagers arrested for terrorism offences

On 17 May, a 13-year-old in London was arrested for sharing terrorist material online. A further two teenagers were arrested in London later the same week on suspicion of encouraging terrorism as part of a separate investigation. Elsewhere, another teenager was arrested in Derbyshire, also for encouraging terrorism.

These arrests demonstrate the increase in those under 18 arrested for terrorism offences. Police confirmed last year that during the pandemic the number of terrorism related arrests fell in every age group, except those under 18. In the year up to March 2021, 13% of terrorism related arrests were in this age group, up from 5% of arrests the year previous.

Although the reason for this increase in teenage arrests is

not confirmed, it is likely that the increased use of the internet and social media during the global pandemic has exposed more children and teenagers to online extremism.

Although none of these teenagers were arrested for planning attacks, it is likely that there are a number of young individuals radicalised online who have the intent to plan and carry out attacks, regardless of their capability to execute them. In the medium term, the increase in under 18s arrested for terrorism offences will likely continue. There is also a realistic possibility that future arrests will pertain to attack planning or attempts to carry out attacks.

You can read more about online radicalisation in our recent [cyber terrorism series](#).

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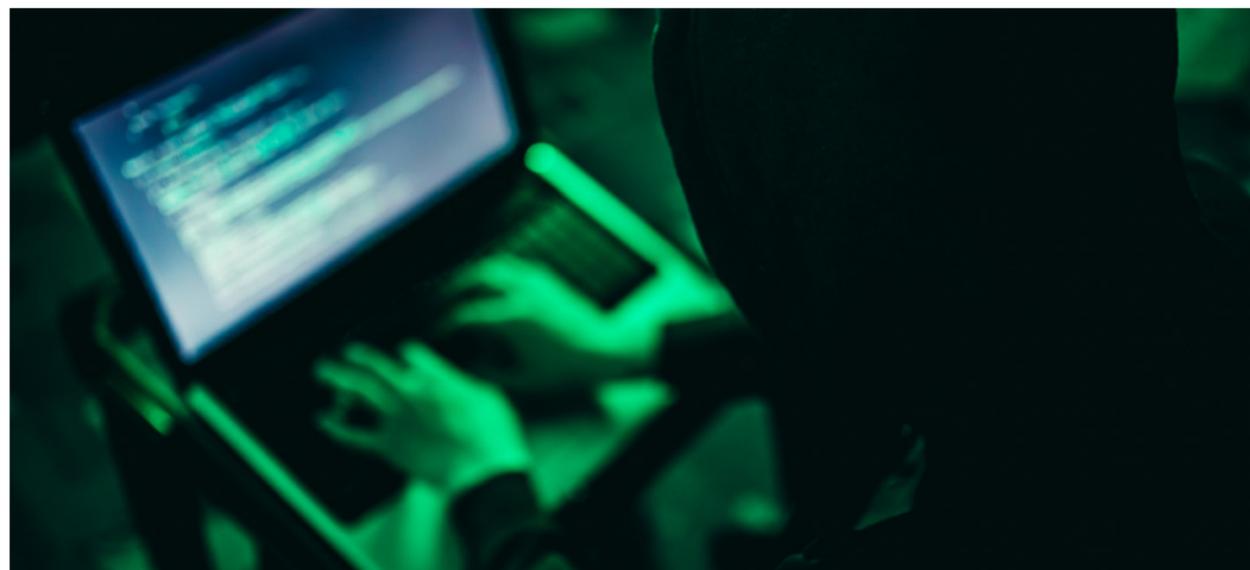
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News Roundup

Russia: Hackers threaten to target UK hospitals in cyber attack



A UK-based hacker was detained in a raid this month after Killnet, a Russian group, targeted government websites in Romania. Following his arrest, the leader of Killnet threatened to target UK hospital ventilators in an attack if the suspect was not released.

Although this attack is not linked to terrorism, it highlights the threat posed by cyber-attacks against UK infrastructure. It demonstrated that cyber threats are credible and

highlights the growing risk that cyber-attacks and cyber terrorism present to national infrastructure in the UK.

To date the UK has not seen a successful cyber terrorism attack against critical national infrastructure that has resulted in property damage or human losses. However, this incident highlights the potential for attacks in the near future to be significant.

US: Social Media played a part in the radicalisation of the Buffalo shooter



People gather at a memorial for the shooting victims outside of Tops grocery store on May 20, 2022 in Buffalo, New York. Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images.

Following the mass shooting in Buffalo, New York on 14 May, prosecutors are investigating the role of social media in the attack. Discussing the attack as terrorism, Attorney General Letitia James highlighted the role of social media and the internet in terrorists spreading hate, and planning attacks.

The attacker, Payton Gendron, shared his manifesto online, hinted at his intent to carry out the attack on

sites including 4chan and Discord, and livestreamed his attack on other social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitch. While some social media platforms removed the livestream minutes after the attack began, it was spread across multiple sites, and other platforms took hours to remove the footage. This allowed the video to be downloaded and viewed millions of times.

Gendron is just one of a huge number of terrorists exploiting

the broad reach of social media platforms to further their goals, spread their ideologies, recruit members, and plan attacks. Despite social media sites improving their security in an attempt to reduce online extremism, terrorists are able to find ways around these measures and continue to be active online.

To learn more about terrorist use of social media, please see our new [cyber terrorism series](#).

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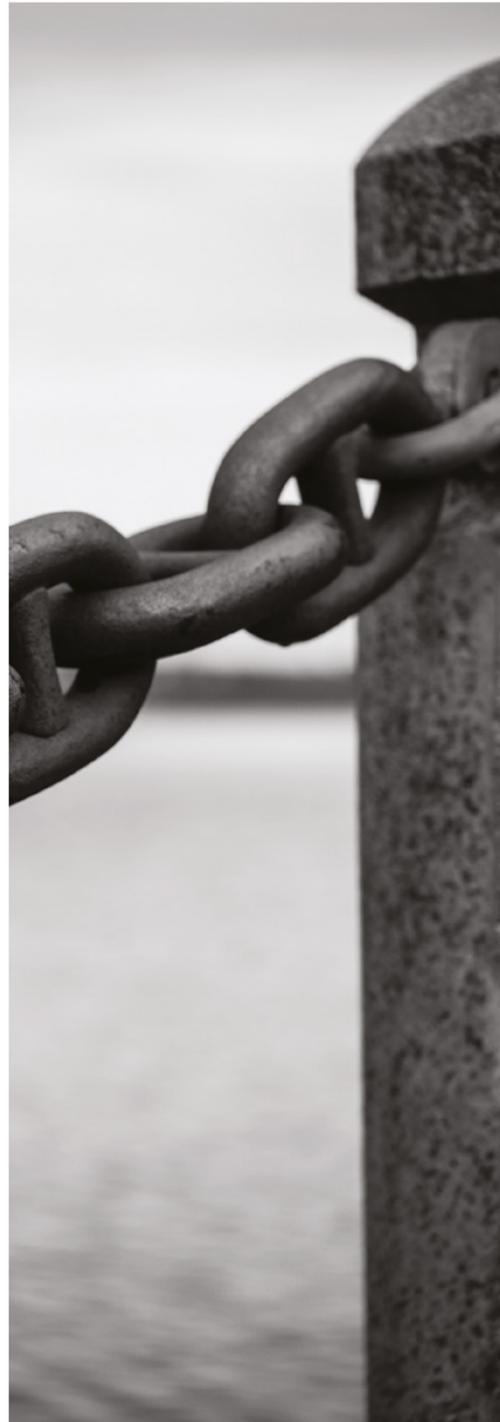
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Threat Level
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 **Risk Awareness**

 **Risk Modelling**

 **Risk Management**

Understanding risk, enabling resilience

Whilst the human cost of terrorism is devastating, the financial impact an incident can have on communities, businesses and economies is generally greater than most realise.

At Pool Re we understand that terrorism is a significant multi-faceted peril that can expose businesses in a complex way. Like many other catastrophic perils, terrorism is a challenge which requires a collaborative approach.

We have been the UK's leading terrorism reinsurer for over a quarter of a century. During this time

our *SOLUTIONS* division have developed a specialist team of experts who can work with you to help you and your Policyholders understand and manage the terrorism threat.

We believe all organisations and businesses can benefit from a better understanding of the terrorism risk solutions available.

To find out more about Pool Re *SOLUTIONS* and how your organisation can take advantage of this service please contact us at: **solutions@poolre.co.uk**

Threat level

	Critical: an attack is highly likely in the near future	Severe: an attack is highly likely	Substantial: an attack is likely	Moderate: an attack is possible but not likely	Low: an attack is highly unlikely
Threat from terrorism to the UK:					
Threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism to Northern Ireland:					

Government advice

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