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GROUP

**SGS**<sup>TM</sup>  
SENTINEL GROUP  
SECURITY

# Intelligence Update October 2018





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## Key Notes

The UK Threat Level is currently assessed to be **SEVERE**

The **SEVERE** level still means that a terrorist attack is highly likely and might well occur without warning.

Helen Ball, former senior national coordinator for counter-terrorism policing, made it known in January 2015 that the authorities were running an exceptionally high number of investigations. This is unlikely to have changed in 2018. These include lone attacks and more complex conspiracies.

Despite the high threat level from terrorism and the incidents described below, the risk of the general public being caught up in a terrorist attack is very low.

## Current UK Threat Level

The current threat level for international terrorism in the UK is **SEVERE**. This means that an attack is highly likely. The threat level was reduced to **SEVERE** from **CRITICAL** on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017, after being up-rated for a period of two days.

The level had been raised from **SUBSTANTIAL** in 2014 in response to on-going events in Iraq and Syria. The security agencies believe that al-Qaeda and its apparently well-supported and now-independent offshoot, the Islamic State, may be presently planning attacks on Western targets that might well include domestic targets in the United Kingdom

The threat level was temporarily uprated to **CRITICAL** on two occasions during 2017. It was uprated on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017, following an attack in Manchester, before being reduced to **SEVERE** again on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2017. It was uprated again on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017, following an attempt to detonate an explosive device on the London Underground. It was reduced to **SEVERE** on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

## Number of disrupted plots disclosed

The Home Office released its latest statistics regarding arrests made in connection to terrorism-related offences in the twelve months ending 30th June 2018, the most recent date. There were 351 arrests (98 fewer arrests than the previous reporting period; a 22% fall). The decrease in the number of arrests follows an anticipated decrease in the number of arrests that were necessary as a result of executed attacks (London and Manchester). Of those 351 arrests made in the above twelve-month period, 120 (34%) resulted in a charge, of which, 92 (77%) were for a terrorism-related offence. 184 persons were released without charge. 29 people were released on bail pending further investigations. Of the 92 persons charged with a terrorism-related offence, 48 had been prosecuted, of which, 46 were convicted.

## Current Threats

The majority of terrorist plots in the United Kingdom have been orchestrated by British nationals radicalised by extremist propaganda and the UK's foreign policy in the Middle East over the past 15 years. While many would not have travelled to the Middle East, Libya or Afghanistan to join jihadi groups operating in those regions, there is an increasing concern for the security services of returning foreign fighters resettling back in the UK. These fighters – with newly acquired combat skills, including bomb-making – have the potential to plan attacks under direction from the Islamic State or al-Qaeda hierarchy, on their own initiative, or might radicalise others to do so.

Terrorists will continue to aim for “soft” targets in urban areas of the country – most notably in major cities – due to the greater chance of success. Past attacks and threats have centred on public transportation, the commercial aviation sector, and public buildings and venues. This will likely remain the case due to the publicity and economic damage terrorist attacks have on such targets in major cities – particularly complex attacks involving multiple terrorist operatives and coordinated to occur more-or-less simultaneously.



## **Change in majority arrest ethnicity**

The Home Office reports an increase in the proportion of those of persons arrested for terrorism-related arrests identifying as White. Arrests of White persons accounted for 38% of terrorist-related arrests, an increase of four percentage points on the previous year and make up the largest proportion of arrested terrorism suspects for the first time since 2005. The increase in support for far-right extremism, whose adherents are mostly White individuals, is a major present concern to the authorities. Four right-wing plots have been thwarted since March 2017.

## **Raids as part of ongoing investigation into support for banned group**

Raids by counter-terrorism officers in Birmingham, Halifax and Nottingham resulted in the arrest of five suspects on suspicion of their membership of the proscribed right-wing group National Action. Membership of a proscribed organisation is an offence contrary to Section 11 of the Terrorism Act 2000. A ban on membership of National Action came into force in December 2016. Their arrests follow ongoing investigations by officers from the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit.

## **Plotters hoped to conduct attack using driverless car**

The trial began in September of Andrew Star, 32 and Farhad Salah, 23. They are jointly charged with preparing an act of terrorism in support of the so-called Islamic State. Their alleged plot is believed to have involved a hope that they could conduct an attack by manufacturing a vehicle-borne explosive device which involved use of a driverless car controlled by a laptop. They also jointly organised the transfer of funds totalling £100 to a recipient in Turkey. The prosecution allege that these funds were intended for an individual with links to ISIS.

## **Concern over imminent release of convicted extremist**

The Government has expressed concern about the imminent release from prison in October of Anjem Choudhary, an extremist known to have been involved in the proscribed organisation al Muhajiroun. Mr. Choudary is due to be released on licence as he approaches the mid-way point of his five-and-a-half-year sentence for glorifying terrorism and encouraging support for the so-called Islamic State. He was sentenced in September 2016, having already spent five months in custody. The authorities believe that his ongoing influence over others means that he should be considered genuinely dangerous.

## **Scrutiny of advocacy organisation**

The National Coordinator for Prevent, the agency responsible for the implementation of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, sent correspondence to CAGE, a London-based organisation claiming to be an advocacy group for those prosecuted for terrorism offences. The letter sent to CAGE requests the removal from an online platform of a video deemed "deliberately misleading" and does not give adequate representation of the policy. It is claimed in the video that Prevent is leading to children being removed from family homes over false claims that they are being radicalised by their parents.

## **Investigation into Indian Sikh separatist activity**

West Midlands Police Counter Terrorism Unit carried out searches at properties in Birmingham, Coventry and London as part of an investigation into alleged Sikh extremism on the Indian subcontinent. It was claimed by a representative of the Sikh community that the agencies of the British state are being used by the Indian government to monitor parts of the activist Sikh community. It is understood that a Sikh separatist movement has been active in the West Midlands since 1984.

## **Charges under Explosive Act against Cardiff residents**

Edward John Harris, 27 and Natalie Parsons, 51, both resident in Cardiff, were charged with six total counts of making or possessing an explosive substance with intent to endanger life, an offence under Section 4 of the Explosives Act. The substances Triacetone, Triperoxide and Hexamethylene Triperoxide Diamine were found at a property at which they jointly reside. Their reasons for being in possession of the above substances has not been divulged to public sources. Both Harris and Parsons were also charged with six counts of possessing a document containing information useful to terrorism, an offence under Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000. Despite being in possession of these items it was disclosed that counter-terrorism officers have found no evidence of a specific threat to the city.

*There have been a number of terrorist and public order incidents over past months, particularly aimed at the police, as well as incidents related to ongoing domestic political issues that at present appear to remain irresolvable. Security sources are advising that the threat posed by dissident republicans is presently higher than at any time since the Omagh bombing fourteen years ago. Their targets remain the police and security services. Frequent alerts take place in urban centres upon the discovery of suspicious items and viable devices. Many alerts are hoaxes.*

*However, for many people in the Province, daily lives continue in relative safety and normality. Nevertheless, care should always be taken to avoid known strongholds of either the dissident 'Republican' or 'Loyalist' factions.*

The threat level for Northern Ireland-related terrorism is set separately for Northern Ireland and Great Britain. In Northern Ireland it is **SEVERE** and in Great Britain **MODERATE**. The threat level reduction was decided on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

## Paramilitary style shootings remain prevalent in the province

In the twelve-month period to August 2018 there have been nineteen victims of paramilitary style shootings by vigilante groups active across Northern Ireland. Three such incidents occurred in August 2018, the most in any one-month period over the recording period. Paramilitary style shootings occur as part of an ongoing form of vigilante justice to deal quickly with so-called anti-social activities. There were a further fifty-four paramilitary style assaults resulting in both major and minor injuries to victims.

## Shots fired in residential location

Two shots were fired at a house in north Belfast on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018. It was reported that the shots, fired from an unrecovered firearm, were fired through the front door of the property. The residents of the property were present there at the time of the incident but were not injured. Sources attributed the incident to operatives from the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). Those responsible may have been seeking to intimidate the residents but no indications as to why they were apparently directly targeted have been disclosed.

## Strike action and protest by Uber couriers



Couriers employed by Uber Eats held a series of protests outside the organisation’s operating premises on Aldgate, before moving to Trafalgar Square. Some reporting has indicated that action in support of this protest was spontaneous in nature but our understanding is that this action had some limited co-organisation by the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) and Independent Workers of the World (IWW) unions in response to recent changes to the organisation’s payment structure in London, Manchester and Birmingham. The image shows a union banner suggesting that action against Uber had been planned for some time prior to the start of this protest and a period of simultaneous strike action. Those present at the protest believe that the changes will bring unnecessary hardship to those choosing employment with Uber Eats.

The organisation suggests that those changes will help increase earnings during busy meal request periods, and for the first time introducing minimum payment guarantees of between £9-11 an hour. The change was introduced following feedback that suggested that most preferred higher earnings during busy mealtime hours, even if that meant lower earnings during less busy periods.

The Industrial Workers of the World union has called for a UK-wide strike of food delivery couriers (namely those working for Uber Eats and Deliveroo) on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2018, perhaps in order to capitalise on the above protests. At the time of release no other unions have released similar requests. It is possible that some form of direct action will occur outside Uber’s operating premises on Aldgate but there is no intelligence available to confirm that this will definitely be the case.

## Right wing attendance on Old Bailey

The court case against the far-right activist Tommy Robinson began at the Central Criminal Court on the morning of 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and was subsequently opened and adjourned. This was not expected and it was assumed that court proceedings at the Central Criminal Court would last for several days.

Some disruption lasting several days had been anticipated but the adjournment meant that this would not be the case. Mr. Robinson’s release from custody on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 was noteworthy because a number of prior protests in support of eventual later release by members of the right-wing resulted in minor disruptions to public order. It is understood that the Metropolitan Police had put plans in place on 1<sup>st</sup> August to deal effectively with any anticipated further disorder should appeal judges not have found in Mr. Robinson’s favour on that occasion. However, City of London Police disclosed that during the mass attendance of supporters on Old Bailey on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018 only one arrest was made for the offence of breach of the peace.

The judge hearing the case intends to receive written submissions before making a ruling at a later date. The judge’s ruling will determine whether there will be a substantive hearing into charges relating to contempt of court. At this point no date for a further hearing has been disclosed officially but a number of outlets have reported that Mr. Robinson has been required to return to the Central Criminal Court on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018.



In addition, City of London Police disclosed that it had been made aware of video footage uploaded to an online location that was filmed inside the Central Criminal Court when Mr. Robinson was present there. The footage was shared by a supporter of Tommy Robinson. It is illegal to take photographs or film inside courts in England and Wales, or in their precincts and the person responsible for producing the footage is likely to face their own charge relating to contempt of court.

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