

# UK Terrorism Databases



## Explainer



*DISCLAIMER: CST's Terrorism Databases online cover cases from 2013 to the present; however, the Explainer analyses figures from 2013 to 2021. This data is accurate as of 23 June 2022 and is subject to change.*

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# CST'S UK TERRORISM DATABASES

CST has created two new terrorism databases to track executed attacks and foiled plots in the United Kingdom, from 2013 to the present.

CST's Terrorism Databases present a methodical insight into the chronology, sequence and details of UK terror attacks and plots. Tracking terrorism attacks and plots over time can be confusing and time-consuming. CST's databases help simplify the process. The databases strive to depict the UK's terror threat landscape as accurately and soberly as possible. They record attacks and plots perpetrated by jihadist extremism, right-wing extremism, single-issue extremism and 'undetermined' ideologies.

UK Counter Terrorism Policing and the UK Security Service (MI5) regularly provide updated figures on foiled attack plots, but they do not list each plot publicly. The absence of a public record makes it difficult for researchers, practitioners, security officers and members of the public to keep track of all terrorism incidents. It is also challenging to keep a record of foiled plots because not every case is necessarily obvious or easy to classify.

CST's databases should help stimulate a constructive discussion on terrorism trends in the UK, as well as the challenges of identifying what should (or should not) be counted as terrorist attacks and thwarted attack plots. Answers to these questions are not self-evident and the inclusion or exclusion of certain incidents can provoke vigorous debates.

Ultimately, however, CST's core aim in launching these databases is to provide a central portal on UK attacks and plots and to offer clear and timely summaries to help track UK terror trends. The databases are designed to be user-friendly, as well as operationally and analytically relevant. What originated as an inhouse record of foiled plots should hopefully serve as a valuable public resource. CST will regularly update the databases with new developments and will periodically back date records for incidents before 2013.

The following Explainer outlines the unique features of CST's databases, as well as the criteria used for including and excluding incidents. It provides an assessment on the over-arching trends in attacks and plots in the UK. To provide further context, the Explainer also analyses why terrorism threats are part and parcel of CST's core work and how CST proactively works to counter these threats.

## UNIQUE FEATURES

CST's Terrorism Databases include several important features.

### Fully filterable and searchable databases

The databases are user-friendly, filterable and fully searchable using key search fields. This allows users to identify trends by expanding or narrowing queries according to desired criteria.

#### UK TERROR ATTACKS

<b>Key Terms</b>	<b>Date From</b>	<b>Date To</b>	<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Target Type</b>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="DD/MM/YYYY"/>	<input type="text" value="DD/MM/YYYY"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>
<b>Modus Operandi</b>	<b>Weapons</b>	<b>Number of Attackers</b>	<b>Hostile Reconnaissance</b>	<b>Anti-Jewish Targeting</b>
<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>
<b>Region Targeted</b>	<b>Distance Travelled</b>	<b>Transport Used</b>		
<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="button" value="SEARCH"/>	

#### UK FOILED TERROR PLOTS

<b>Key Terms</b>	<b>Date From</b>	<b>Date To</b>	<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Target Type</b>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="DD/MM/YYYY"/>	<input type="text" value="DD/MM/YYYY"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>
<b>Modus Operandi</b>	<b>Number of Plotters</b>	<b>Hostile Reconnaissance</b>	<b>Anti-Jewish Targeting</b>	<b>Anti-Jewish Sentiment</b>
<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="text" value="ALL"/>
<b>Region Targeted</b>				
<input type="text" value="ALL"/>	<input type="button" value="SEARCH"/>			

### Clean and clear results

The database interface is organised and clean. The default setting shows the name of each entry and information about Ideology, Modus Operandi and Target Type. Clicking on 'Incident Summary' reveals a Fact File and summary for each incident.

<b>Explosion outside Liverpool Women's Hospital – 2021</b>			<b>Incident Summary +</b>
<b>Ideology</b> Undetermined	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Undetermined	
<b>Sir David Amess MP murder – 2021</b>			<b>Incident Summary +</b>
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Stabbing	<b>Target Type</b> Politician, Indoor venue	
<b>Marks &amp; Spencer Burnley stabbings – 2020</b>			<b>Incident Summary +</b>
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Stabbing	<b>Target Type</b> Indoor venue, Individual civilian	

## Fact File and summary

Each entry has its own Fact File detailing essential information on the Region Targeted, Hostile Reconnaissance, Number of Attackers/Plotters and more.

Immediately underneath the Fact File is a summary of the attack or plot, with archived links to UK police and Crown Prosecution Service press releases, judges' sentencing remarks (where available), coroners' reports (where applicable), media reports and other resources.

In general, locating all this information requires searching across numerous sources online and offline. CST's databases integrate the information in a single portal.

<b>Manchester Arena suicide bombing – 2017</b>			<b>Incident Summary –</b>
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Suicide bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Indoor venue	
<b>Date</b> 22 May 2017	<b>Region Targeted</b> Greater Manchester	<b>Country Targeted</b> England	
<b>Weapons</b> IED	<b>Number of Attackers</b> 1	<b>Hostile Reconnaissance</b> In person	
<b>Number of Locations</b> 1	<b>Fatalities</b> 22	<b>Injuries</b> 1000	
<b>Perpetrator Status</b> Killed	<b>Anti-Jewish Targeting</b> No	<b>Distance Travelled</b> Within 1-5 miles	
<b>Transport Used</b> Vehicle, Public transport			
<b>Summary</b> On 22 May 2017, Salman Abedi (aged 22) perpetrated an ISIS-inspired suicide bombing in the foyer of the Manchester Arena as an Ariana Grande pop concert was drawing to a close. The explosion killed 22 and physically injured 237 others, 91 of whom were classed as being either "very seriously" or "seriously" injured.			

CST endeavoured to keep the inclusion and exclusion criteria as straightforward and strict as possible. The databases adhere to the definition of terrorism codified in UK legislation – see 'Annex I' below.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ['Terrorism'](#), Crown Prosecution Service; [Terrorism Act 2000](#), Legislation.gov.uk

# DATABASE CRITERIA

An act of terrorism must include the use or threat of specific actions for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause and be intended to influence the government or an international governmental organisation, or to intimidate the public or a section of the public.

Lord Anderson QC, the UK's former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (IRTL), explained the necessity of including ideology in the context of terrorist acts, as follows:

*"Ideologies are a necessary pre-condition for terrorist acts, which must seek to advance (in the words of TA 2000 s1, which conforms in this respect to international norms) 'a political, religious, racial or ideological cause'. Many people nurse grievances, with diverse origins in family circumstances, childhood experiences or the frustrations of adult life. Some are even motivated by those grievances to commit acts of violence. But they will not be terrorists unless they seek to justify their violent acts by reference to ideological (including political, religious or racial) factors. Ideologies which are invoked to justify acts of violence may fairly be described as extreme, or extremist."*<sup>2</sup>

CST's UK Foiled Terror Plots database focuses on cases in which the defendants were convicted for offences relating to preparations for terrorist acts in the UK, specifically to attack planning contrary to Section 5 of the Terrorism Act 2006.<sup>3</sup>

Cases need to include evidence of actual attack planning and fit the UK definition of terrorism, rather than cases of suspects encouraging others to attack by posting violent incitement or calling for violence, for example.

CST's database on foiled plots has excluded terrorism cases in which defendants had an extremist ideology, acquired weapons and/or built explosive devices, but the charges and trial included no mention or evidence of actual attack plotting. In many cases, these defendants were convicted of other terrorism or criminal offences. These are important cases that form part of the wider threat landscape, but they remain outside the purview of CST's Terrorism Databases. Additionally, for legal considerations, CST's Foiled Terror Plots database does not include terrorism cases in which defendants were charged but acquitted of terror attack planning. These cases are kept on a separate list of attack plot acquittals.<sup>4</sup>

CST's decision to exclude acquittals partly accounts for disparities between UK Counter Terrorism Policing and MI5 statistics on foiled terror plots and CST's figures. Reproducing a precise list of foiled plots is difficult given the absence of an official public record. CST's Terrorism Databases represent a best faith effort to include, as accurately as possible, the number of terror plots foiled in the UK.

Over the last decade, the UK and the West have faced a dynamic terrorism threat environment, which has placed great strain on police and security services. Since 2013, the UK has seen around 26 executed (or 'completed' or 'successful') terrorist attacks and over 40 terrorist attack plots foiled, at the time of writing. Most of these incidents were perpetrated or planned by individuals inspired by jihadist and right-wing extremist ideologies, but instances include single-issue extremism and those with undetermined ideologies.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> David Anderson QC, ['The Terrorism Acts in 2014'](#), Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, September 2015: paragraph 9.4, p. 55

<sup>3</sup> [Terrorism Act 2006](#), Legislation.gov.uk

<sup>4</sup> [UK Foiled Terror Plots database](#)

<sup>5</sup> CST's database does not include data on Northern Ireland-related terrorism (NIRT)

# TERRORISM TRENDS IN THE UK

From 2013 to 2021, attacks in the UK have included a variety of executed or planned attack methods (or modus operandi), primarily involving stabbing, vehicle ramming, planted bombing, suicide bombing and others. Terrorists have mainly acted as lone actors or small groups, though some have conspired to attack in larger groups. In many cases, terrorist offenders were also consumers and/or activists within broader online terror networks that spread hateful ideologies and incited violence.

CST attaches great importance to tracking both attacks and foiled terror plots in the UK. Focusing only on executed attacks offers an incomplete picture of the risks and threats. CST's Terrorism Databases and infographics therefore provide data for both attacks and plots.

Dr Petter Nesser of the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) has written extensively about the importance of studying both attacks and plots. He argues that to *"understand the scale and nature of the threat we must not only study successful attacks — but also look at the plots foiled by counterterrorism efforts"*.<sup>6</sup> Nesser also explains that overlooking plots risks misreading the threat landscape:

*"The attacks that are launched are what is left after security services have done their job of foiling plots. We need to include the foiled attacks to gain a better understanding of the threat. If we only look at launched attacks, we risk being unprepared to face tomorrow's threat... Another reason is that only focusing on launched attacks distorts the analysis of trends in how terrorists organize and operate."*<sup>7</sup>

Tracking foiled plots is time-consuming and challenging, but it is essential to determine key trends and patterns. This includes developments in planned attack methods, target selections, the ideological profile of the plotters and much more.

Unlike executed attacks, foiled plots tend to fade quickly from public consciousness. They are more easily forgotten, with the specifics of the plots difficult to recall and key lessons becoming muddled in a sea of details. CST's UK Foiled Terror Plots database helps disentangle these details, providing essential facts and summaries for attack plans that have been disrupted since 2013.

The purpose of this Explainer is not to drill down into all the trends; however, highlighted below are some of the crucial lessons gleaned from the over-arching trends of attacks and foiled plots.

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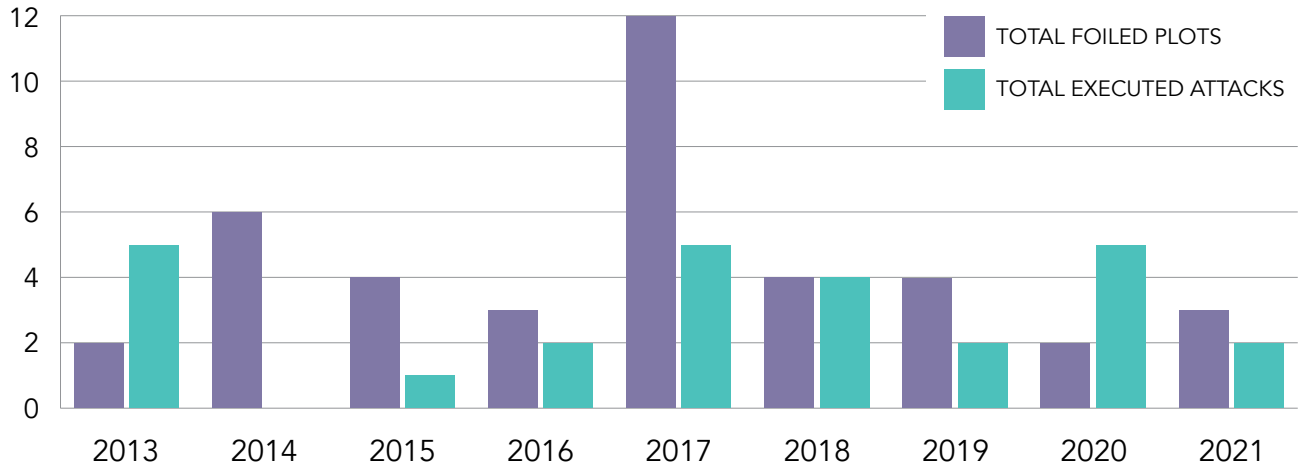
<sup>6</sup> Petter Nesser, ['Europe hasn't won the war on terror'](#), *Politico*, 5 December 2018

<sup>7</sup> Sara Brzuszkiewicz, ['A Conversation with Petter Nesser on Foiled Terrorist Plots – Part 1'](#), *European Eye on Radicalisation*, 11 December 2018

## Trends over the years

Terrorist activity has been persistent in the UK every year from 2013 to 2021. CST's database shows 26 terror attacks and at least 40 foiled plots between 2013 and 2021:

### Total Attacks & Plots: 2013 - 2021

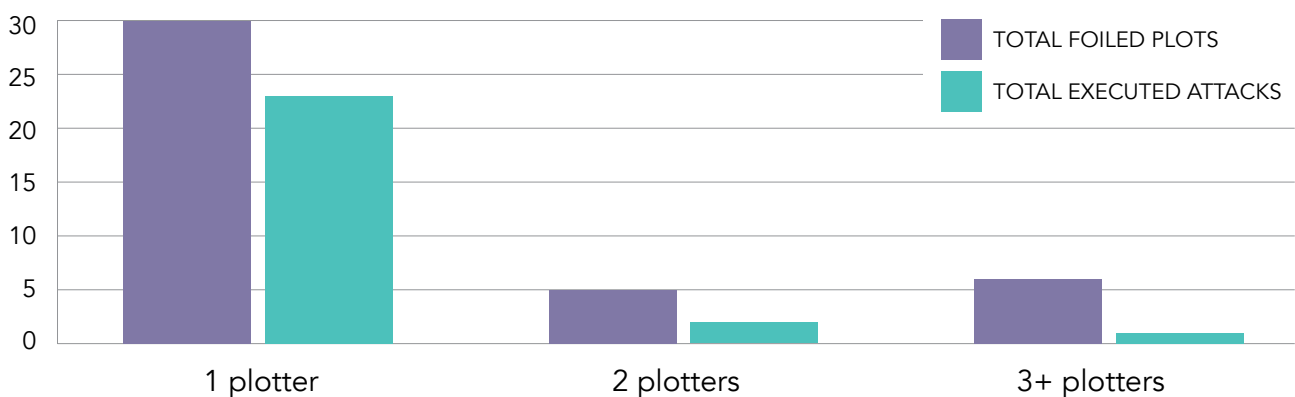


Since 2013, most of the foiled plots in the UK involved offenders planning to attack alone or in pairs, although there are examples of offenders also planning attacks in groups of three or more. Similarly, lone actors perpetrated the attacks in the UK in all but three terrorist incidents, except for the following:

- 2020 HMP Whitemoor attack: two inmate attackers
- 2017 London Bridge/Borough Market attack: three attackers
- 2013 murder of Lee Rigby: two attackers

Overall, the patterns in perpetrator types in the UK fit with broader trends observed in recent years for terrorism attacks and plots in Western countries perpetrated by jihadist and right-wing extremism.<sup>8</sup>

### Attacks & Plots - Group Types: 2013 - 2021



<sup>8</sup> For example, see Nafees Hamid and Cristina Ariza, [Offline Versus Online Radicalisation: Which is the Bigger Threat? Tracing Outcomes of 439 Jihadist Terrorists Between 2014–2021 in 8 Western Countries](#), Global Network on Extremist and Technology (GNET), 2022; [European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2021](#), Europol, 2021; Jacob Aasland Ravndal, Madeleine Thorstensen, et. al., ['RTV Trend Report 2021: Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe, 1990-2020'](#), C-REX Research Report, University of Oslo, 2021

2014 is the only year without a recorded terrorist attack, though six plots were foiled that year. Otherwise, every other year saw both executed attacks and foiled plots.

Twice in 2017, following the Manchester Arena and Parsons Green Underground bombings, the UK threat level was raised to its highest level of CRITICAL, meaning an attack is ‘highly likely in the near future’.<sup>9</sup> On both occasions, the threat level was reduced to SEVERE a few days after each incident, once police and security services were satisfied that other plotters were not still at large, and other attacks were not imminent.

2017 saw five fatal attacks and 12 foiled plots, which accounts for the most plots thwarted in a single year to date. Most of the attacks and plots were related to jihadist extremism, particularly to terrorism offenders inspired by Islamic State (ISIS). However, 2017 did see one terrorist attack and at least two plots related to right-wing extremism.

At the time, UK authorities repeatedly stressed that the scale and tempo of the threat had dramatically increased after March 2017, following Khalid Masood’s ramming and stabbing attack in Westminster. In June 2017, following the fatal ISIS-inspired attacks on London Bridge and Borough Market, then Prime Minister Theresa May highlighted how “*terrorism breeds terrorism*” and attacks inspire copycat attacks:

*“In terms of their planning and execution, the recent attacks are not connected. But we believe we are experiencing a new trend in the threat we face, as terrorism breeds terrorism, and perpetrators are inspired to attack not only on the basis of carefully-constructed plots after years of planning and training – and not even as lone attackers radicalised online – but by copying one another and often using the crudest of means of attack.”<sup>10</sup>*

In October 2017, the then Director-General of MI5, now Lord (Andrew) Parker, observed similarly and emphasised how the attack planning process had shrunk:

*“We’ve also seen that terrorism breeds terrorism. Would-be attackers take encouragement from the acts of others and can be galvanised into taking action themselves. Acts of violence become normalised in their twisted thinking.”*

*“These threats are sometimes now coming at us more quickly, whether crude but lethal attack methods – for example using a knife or a vehicle – or more sophisticated plots when in today’s world terrorists can learn all that they need online to make explosives and build a bomb. Attacks can sometimes accelerate from inception through planning to action in just a handful of days. This pace, together with the way extremists can exploit safe spaces online can make threats harder to detect and give us a smaller window to intervene.”<sup>11</sup>*

In 2018, Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu, then serving as the Senior National Coordinator for UK Counter Terrorism Policing, described these terrorism trends and emphasised the impact that Khalid Masood’s attack had in inspiring others:

*“But what he [Khalid Masood] did achieve was that he gave fellow violent extremists the understanding*

<sup>9</sup> [‘Threat levels prior to July 2019’](#), UK Security Service (MI5)

<sup>10</sup> Theresa May, [‘PM statement following London terror attack’](#), Prime Minister’s Office, 4 June 2017

<sup>11</sup> Speech by Andrew Parker, [‘Being MI5’](#), UK Security Service (MI5), 17 October 2017

that the U.K. was not such a hostile place to launch attacks and that by using this simple methodology you could succeed. Some violent extremists admired him for actually going ahead and doing it. Some criticized him for not doing a very 'good job.' But at the end of the day, what it did say to them was that 'my plot could work. What I have been thinking of doing, I could actually do.'"

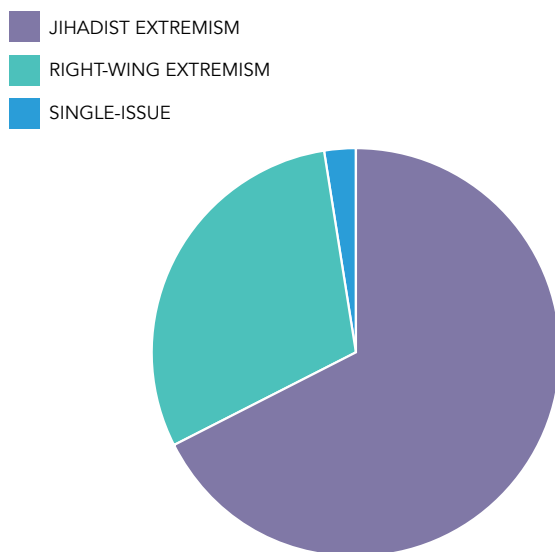
"In terms of plots, the trend is towards less sophistication, more amateurism. We've not seen a growth of extremists. We've seen more conversations among extremists expressing the belief they can launch successful attacks here. So definitely the pace of plotting activity we're looking at has gone up. But then that was predictable as well."<sup>12</sup>

Masood's attack was lethal and devastating, despite being crude and low sophistication. His attack lowered a "barrier to entry" for other UK-based extremists to plan similar attacks, demonstrating that attacks were possible and needn't be complicated to terrorise the public.

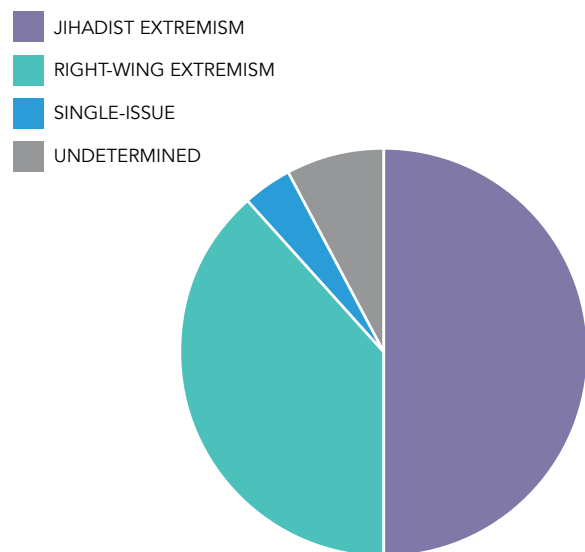
## Trends in ideology

Jihadist extremists perpetrated 13 attacks, and right-wing extremists perpetrated ten attacks. Note that a single terrorist (Pavlo Lapshyn) perpetrated four separate right-wing terrorist attacks between April and July 2013.

**Plots by Ideology: 2013 - 2021**



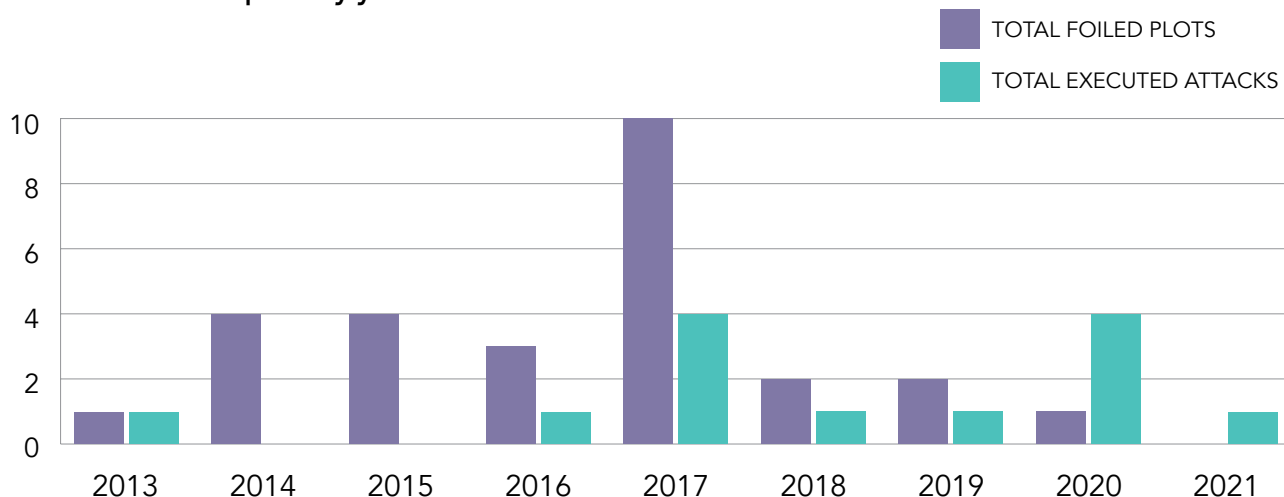
**Attacks by Ideology: 2013 - 2021**



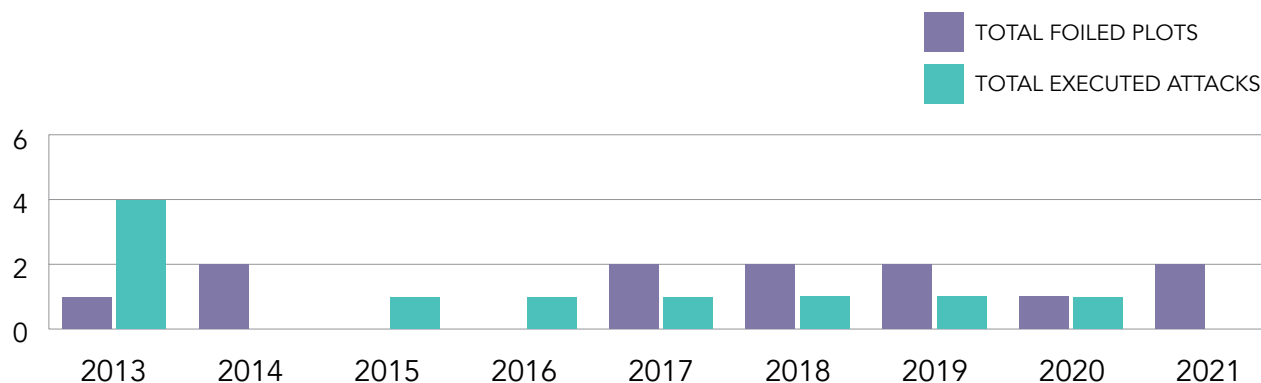
Jihadist extremists overwhelmingly accounted for the largest proportion of plots, but right-wing extremist plots have increased year-on-year since 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Raffaello Pantucci, 'A View from the CT Foxhole: Neil Basu, Senior National Coordinator for Counterterrorism Policing in the United Kingdom', CTC Sentinel, Volume 11, Issue 2, February 2018

### Jihadist attacks & plots by year



### Right-wing extremist attacks & plots by year



The databases include one instance of a single-issue terrorist attack in which a Greek national, motivated by eco-extremism/anarchism, perpetrated a failed bombing in a park in Edinburgh in 2018.

The databases also include two examples of attacks with undetermined ideology because authorities had not established a specific ideological motivation for the attack.

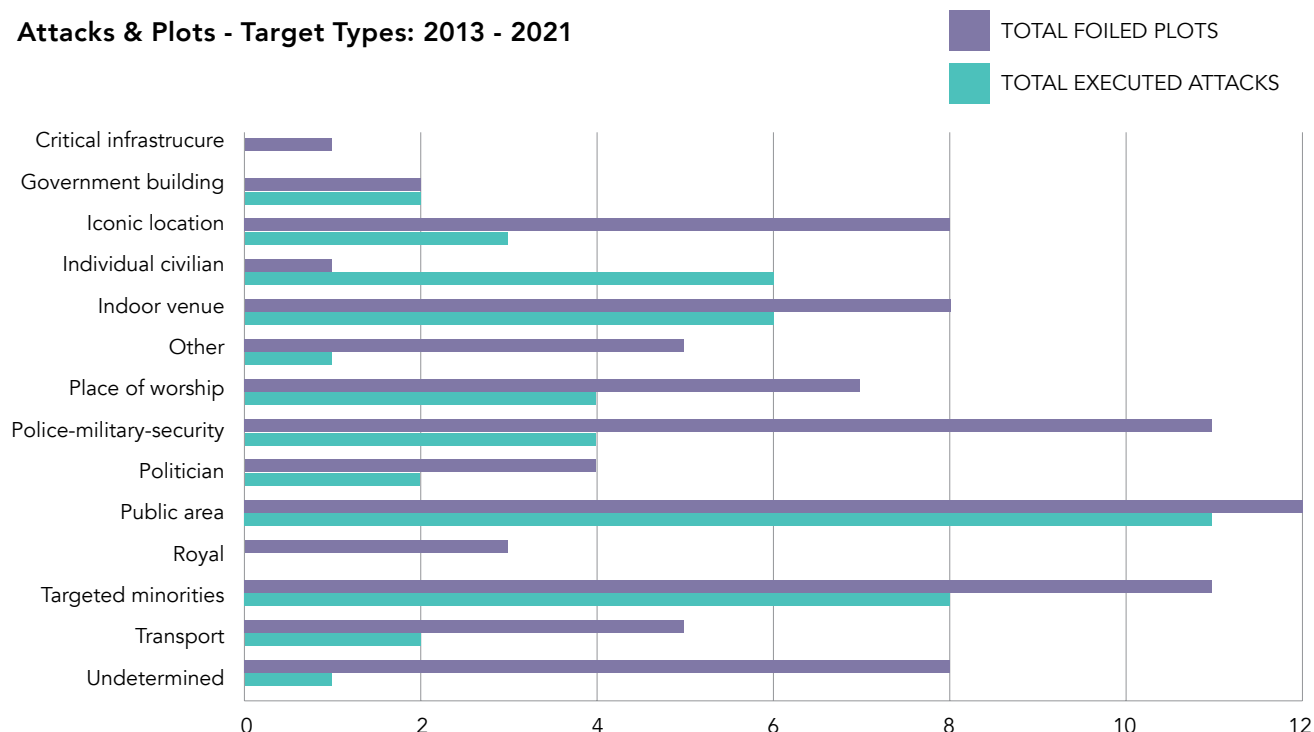
The uptick in attacks and plots linked to jihadist extremism in the UK also fits a wider pattern of terrorism incidents across Western countries during this period. Many of these incidents were inspired by, or linked to, global jihadist groups such as ISIS, al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda affiliates. From 2013 to 2019, the West experienced over 90 jihadist terrorist attacks, ranging from numerous attacks and plots perpetrated by lone actors and small groups to large-scale, coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015) and Brussels (March 2016) involving multiple terrorists.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Reinier Bergema and Olivia Kearney, [‘Rise O Muwahhid, Wherever You May Be: An Analysis of the Democratization of the Terrorist Threat in the West’](#), International Center for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), 12 May 2020

## Trends in target selection

Identifying target types that terrorists selected or considered to attack in the UK is an essential component of CST's databases.<sup>14</sup> Analysing target selection patterns can assist with protective security guidance across society, including the protection of UK Jewish community assets.

### Attacks & Plots - Target Types: 2013 - 2021



From 2013 to 2021, the most common targets attacked or considered were openly accessible, crowded spaces. In CST's databases, these target types are classed as **iconic locations**, **indoor venues**, **places of worship**, **public areas** and **transport**.

Such locations represent 'soft targets' for terrorists because they are designed for easy access, public enjoyment and efficient movement. This includes mass transit systems and leisure venues, such as parks, high streets, restaurants, bars, hotels, as well as sport and music stadiums. These locations are difficult to 'harden' without fundamentally changing their intended purpose and public appeal.

The Soufan Center, an independent research and policy centre focusing on global security issues, described cogently the challenge of securing soft targets of terror:

*"Unlike symbolic or high-value targets such as government buildings, there is no way to truly harden soft targets. Parks are designed for leisure, and for easy access and movement. Mass transit is designed to move people efficiently. Both would cease to fulfill their designed functions if onerous security measures were implemented. Furthermore, adding security on the perimeter of a soft target simply changes the strike zone. Terrorists are looking for high body counts; a crowd at a checkpoint for a park or a metro is just as attractive as a crowd inside a park or metro."*<sup>15</sup>

Between 2013 and 2021, **public areas** were the most common targets attacked, as well as **targeted minorities**, **indoor venues** and **individual civilians**.

<sup>14</sup> Each target type coded in the databases is defined in Annex III

<sup>15</sup> ['TSG IntelBrief: The Soft Targets of Terror'](#), The Soufan Center, 29 March 2016

Attacks at these three target types included incidents at the following kinds of locations, most or all of which were easily accessible and soft targets:

- **High streets:** the 2020 Streatham stabbing attack and the 2019 Finsbury Park ramming attack
- **Parks:** the 2020 Reading stabbing attack and the 2016 murder of Imam Jalal Uddin
- **Pedestrian bridges:** the 2020 Westminster Bridge attack and the 2017 London Bridge/Borough Market attack
- **Concert stadium:** the 2017 Manchester Arena suicide bombing
- **Outdoor restaurants and bars:** the 2017 London Bridge/Borough Market attack

In terms of foiled terror plots, terrorist offenders mainly considered attacking **targeted minorities, police-military-security, places of worship, indoor venues, iconic locations** and **public areas**.

CST's databases also show that UK-based terrorist offenders often considered attacking multiple targets. Therefore, a single plot and single attack often includes data for multiple targets.

For example:

- **Murder of Sir David Amess MP – October 2021**

In the database entry for the fatal stabbing of Sir David, the target type is listed as both **politician** and **indoor venue** because he was targeted inside his constituency surgery in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. The surgery was inside a local church, but no evidence yet suggests that the venue was selected because it was a **place of worship**.

- **Westminster Bridge and Parliament attack – March 2017**

In the database entry about the vehicle ramming and stabbing attack against pedestrians on Westminster Bridge and Parliament, the target types are listed as **iconic location** (Westminster/Parliament), **government building** (Palace of Westminster) and **police-military-security** (police officer).

Jihadist extremists were more likely to consider targeting **police-military-security, iconic locations, public areas** and **indoor venues**. By comparison, right-wing extremists were more likely to plan attacks against **targeted minorities** and **places of worship**. None of the right-wing extremists appeared to plot attacks against iconic locations.

Between 2013 and 2021, target selection preferences have shifted. From 2014 to 2017, plots against **police-military-security** targets were dominant among jihadist extremists, but much less in the years since.

In August 2017, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dean Haydon, when he was Commander of the Met's Counter Terrorism Command (SO15), explained that in the preceding 12 months most of the terror plots and attacks were primarily focused on attacking police, military and government officials. By contrast, Haydon noted that the four terrorist attacks in the UK since March 2017 were indiscriminate and targeted the public.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Nomia Iqbal, [Interview with Dean Haydon](#), BBC Asian Network, Big Debate, 8 August 2017

Additionally, CST's research suggests that the attractiveness of attacking military, police or security targets from 2013 to 2017 was partly linked to two factors: (1) the jihadist-inspired murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in May 2013, who was targeted for being a British soldier; and (2) the speeches of Islamic State's then leading figure and spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani.

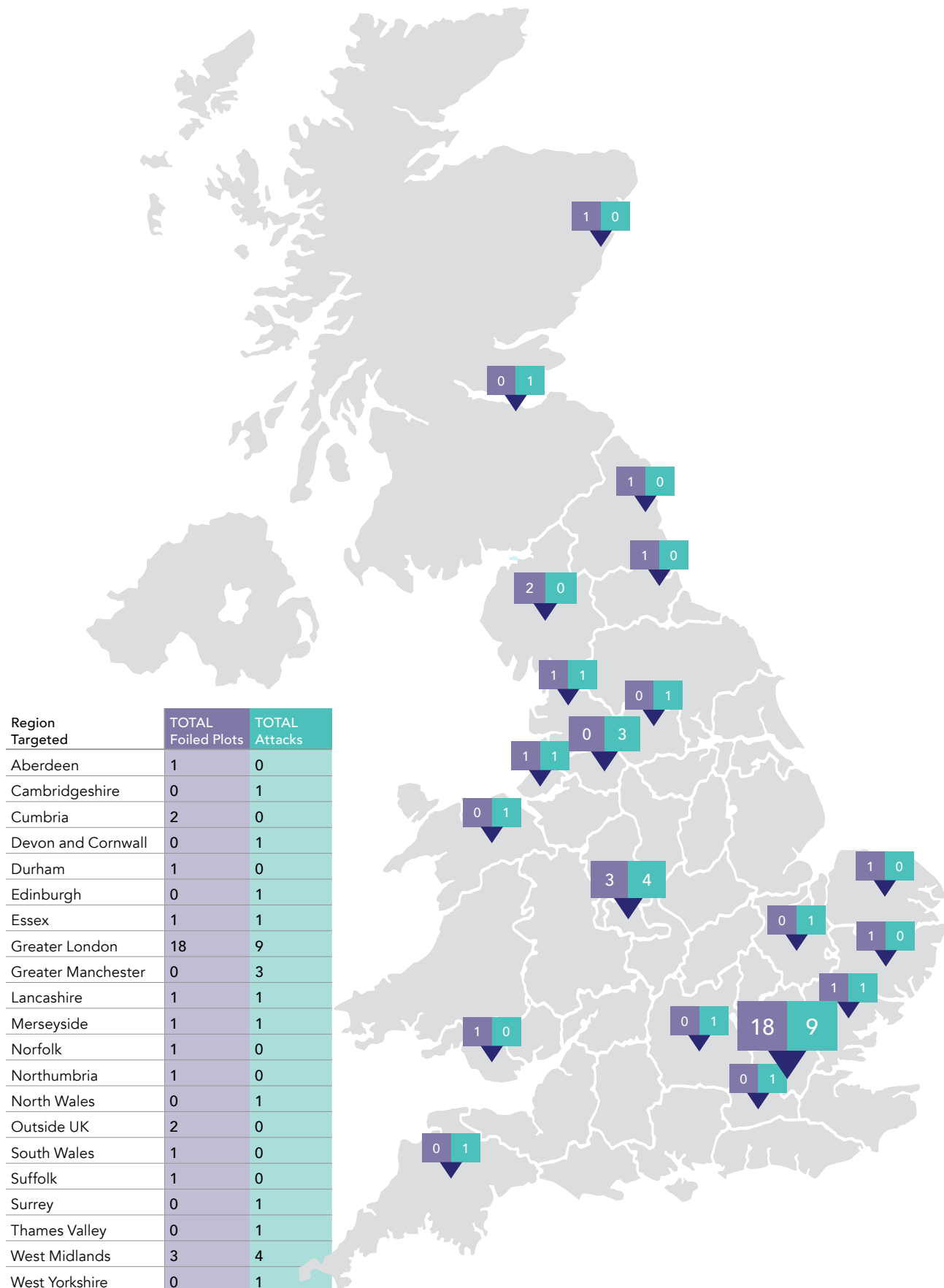
Lee Rigby's murder inspired at least five separate jihadist extremists to plan attacks, as well as at least one right-wing extremist to perpetrate a stabbing attack as "revenge" for Rigby's killing.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, CST's database includes at least four plots that were motivated specifically by al-Adnani's speeches, in which he explicitly incited followers in the West to attack military/security targets.

<b>London Armistice Day beheading plot – 2014</b>			<a href="#">Incident Summary +</a>
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Stabbing, Vehicle ramming	<b>Target Type</b> Police-military-security, Public area	
<b>Anzac Day plot – 2015</b>			<a href="#">Incident Summary +</a>
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Stabbing, Vehicle ramming, Shooting	<b>Target Type</b> Public area, Police-military-security	
<b>London moped-enabled shooting plot – 2014</b>			<a href="#">Incident Summary +</a>
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Shooting	<b>Target Type</b> Police-military-security, Public area	
<b>Army of Children plot – 2017</b>			<a href="#">Incident Summary +</a>
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Shooting, Bombing, Vehicle ramming	<b>Target Type</b> Government building, Transport, Indoor venue, Iconic location, Targeted minorities, Other	

<sup>17</sup> Lee Rigby's murder was also followed by a series of anti-Muslim hate crime incidents that are not included in the database

## Trends in UK regions targeted

Looking at the terrorism trends by region is a reminder that the terrorism threat is a national concern.



In terms of executed attacks, Greater London and Greater Manchester were the most targeted regions, followed by the West Midlands. The only attack recorded in Scotland was related to a 2018 failed bombing in Edinburgh that was perpetrated by a Greek national who was motivated by single-issue extremism (eco-terrorism).

In terms of ideology, right-wing extremist attacks tended to be distributed across England, whereas jihadist extremist incidents tended to be concentrated in London and Manchester. When connecting regions targeted with target selections, the picture becomes even clearer that jihadist extremists, more than right-wing extremists, have tended to execute or plan attacks targeting symbols of the state (government, police-military-security) and soft targets such as public areas, indoor venues and iconic locations.

## Trends in terrorist modus operandi

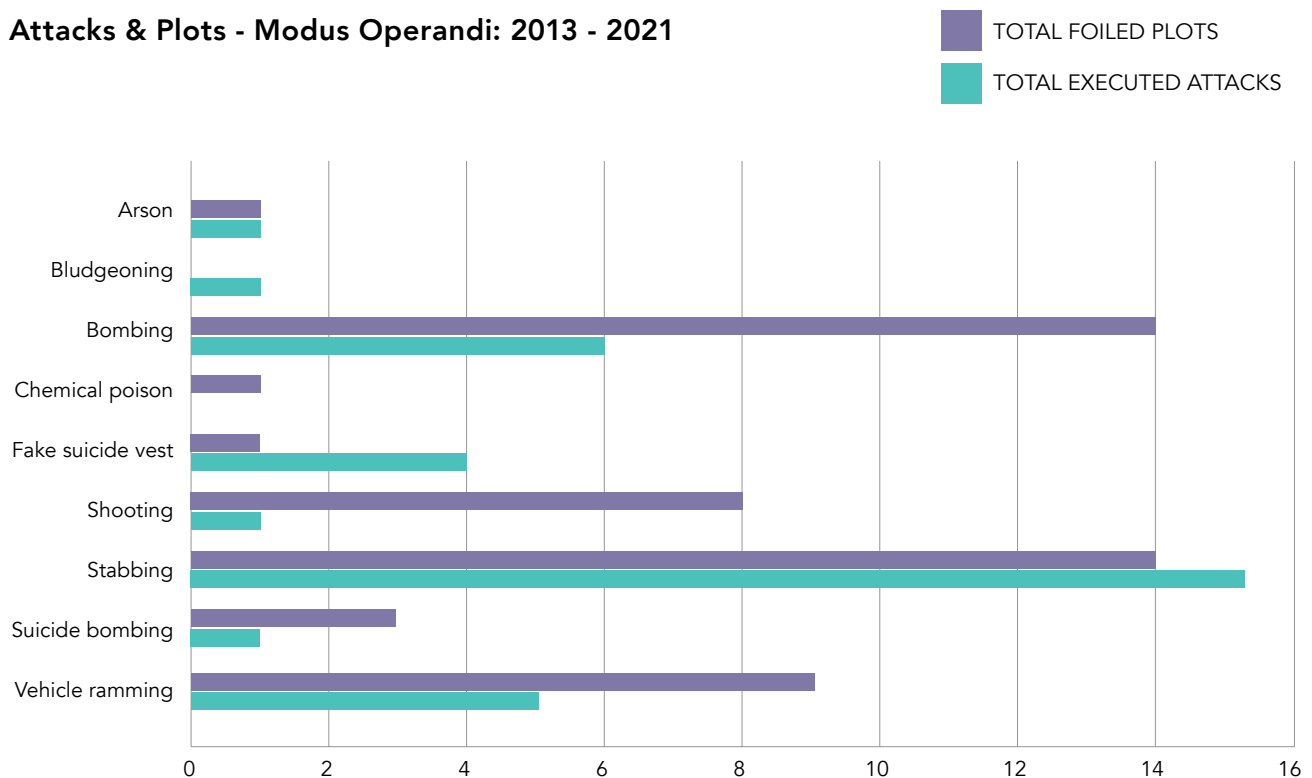
Terrorist attackers and plotters often used, or considered using, more than one attack method; therefore, a single attack and plot often includes data for multiple modus operandi (MOs).

CST's databases have data on at least ten types of attack methods used or planned in the UK:

- Arson
- Chemical poison
- Stabbing
- Bludgeoning
- Fake suicide vest
- Suicide bombing
- Bombing
- Shooting
- Vehicle ramming

*Some plotters also considered other types of MOs, which are identified in the respective database summaries.*

## Attacks & Plots - Modus Operandi: 2013 - 2021



In the UK, **stabbing attacks** using bladed weapons were the most common attack method, followed by **vehicle ramming** and **bombing**.

Note, again, that a single right-wing terrorist (Pavlo Lapshyn) was responsible for three of the seven bombings from 2013 to 2021. He perpetrated three separate bombings outside mosques: two in June and one in July 2013.

In terms of multiple MOs, several terror attacks included two or more attack methods:

#### **Vehicle ramming and stabbing**

- 2017 London Bridge/Borough Market attack
- 2017 Westminster Bridge/Parliament attack
- 2013 Lee Rigby murder

#### **Stabbing and fake suicide vests**

- 2020 Streatham stabbing attack
- 2020 HMP Whitemoor attack
- 2019 Fishmongers' Hall stabbing attack
- 2017 London Bridge/Borough Market attack

#### **Shooting and stabbing**

- 2016 Jo Cox MP murder

In terms of attack methods and ideology, executed **stabbing attacks** was the most common method for both jihadist and right-wing extremists (though the latter perpetrated fewer attacks).

Jihadist extremist plotters overwhelmingly considered **stabbing**, **vehicle ramming** and **planted bombings** as their favoured attack method, whereas right-wing extremists were more likely to consider plots involving **bombing** or **shooting**.

## CASE STUDY: IEDs on Public Transport

From 2013 to 2021, the UK saw seven bombing attacks, including one suicide bombing.

### Explosion outside Liverpool Women's Hospital – 2021

[Incident Summary +](#)

<b>Ideology</b> Undetermined	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Undetermined
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### Edinburgh park failed bombing – 2018

[Incident Summary +](#)

<b>Ideology</b> Single-issue extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Public area
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### Parsons Green train bombing – 2017

[Incident Summary +](#)

<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Transport
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### Manchester Arena suicide bombing – 2017

[Incident Summary +](#)

<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Suicide bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Indoor venue
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### Tipton mosque failed bombing – 2013

[Incident Summary +](#)

<b>Ideology</b> Right-wing extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Place of worship, Targeted minorities
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### Wolverhampton mosque failed bombing – 2013

[Incident Summary +](#)

<b>Ideology</b> Right-wing extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Place of worship, Targeted minorities
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### Walsall mosque failed bombing – 2013

[Incident Summary +](#)

<b>Ideology</b> Right-wing extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Bombing	<b>Target Type</b> Place of worship, Targeted minorities
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An interesting and worrying pattern also emerges from CST's database: nearly all the terrorist bombings involved the attackers transporting their explosive devices on public transport.

In five of the seven attacks involving IEDs, the attackers transported their explosive devices on public transport:

#### Parsons Green train bombing – 2017

Ahmad Hassan took an overground train from Sunbury, Surrey to Wimbledon station and boarded a District Line train shortly after. He carried the IED hidden inside a heavy shopping bag.

#### Manchester Arena suicide bombing – 2017

Carrying a large IED that was hidden inside a 65-liter backpack, Salman Abedi travelled to Manchester Arena using both a taxi and MetroLink.

### **Walsall, Wolverhampton and Tipton mosque bombings – 2013**

Between April and July 2013, Pavlo Lapshyn, a white supremacist and Ukrainian national, perpetrated three bombings outside mosques in the West Midlands and the stabbing murder of Mohammed Saleem. Lapshyn made four separate journeys from his accommodation in Small Heath, Birmingham to commit his attacks, using buses to transport his IEDs and travel to the mosques in Walsall, Wolverhampton and Tipton.

As noted above, in October 2017, the then Director-General of MI5, now Lord (Andrew) Parker, addressed the range of attack types:

*“The threat is more diverse than I’ve ever known. Plots developed here in the UK, but plots directed from overseas as well. Plots online. Complex scheming and also crude stabbings; lengthy planning but also spontaneous attacks. Extremists of all ages, gender and backgrounds, united only by the toxic ideology of violent victory that drives them.”<sup>18</sup>*

The differences among the UK terror plots also indicate that attack plans varied in terms of their crudeness, complexity and maturity. Some of the plotters in the databases, such as the Mirzas, Ethan Stables and Llyod Gunton, planned to undertake crude knife or ramming attacks in 2017 that would have been relatively easy to execute. Other plotters, such as Umar Haque and his co-accomplices, planned relatively complex plots involving multiple attack methods, numerous attackers and many moving parts.

Additionally, terror plots in the UK have demonstrated different levels of development. While “plot maturity” is not a precise measure, different plotters were clearly at different stages of the planning process at the point of arrest and disruption. This means that some plotters who planned “spectacular” terrorist attacks were at the very earliest stages of planning and the attacks were mostly aspirational, not imminent. Again, Umar Haque claimed to have radicalised 55 children in the school where he taught and whom he planned to use as part of an “army” to launch multiple attacks in the UK; however, his plans were long-term.

Nevertheless, Parker’s warning remains crucial to consider: *“Attacks can sometimes accelerate from inception through planning to action in just a handful of days.”* Just because an attack plot is focused on a long-term plan does not preclude conditions on the ground from changing and prompting attackers to advance their attack date. In August 2017, for example, the jihadist attacks in Catalonia adopted a cruder attack method of vehicle ramming as a secondary option, after their primary plan of perpetrating bombing attacks failed due to premature detonations in their bomb factory.

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<sup>18</sup> Speech by Andrew Parker, ‘[Being MI5](#)’, UK Security Service (MI5), 17 October 2017

## Trends in anti-Jewish targeting

UK Jewish communities were actively considered as attack targets in two jihadist extremist plots thwarted in 2017, as well as two right-wing extremist plots in 2019 and 2020. In 2021, a defendant arrested in Leamington Spa is accused of allegedly planning a right-wing terrorist attack and allegedly building a homemade firearm as part of a “mission” of fighting in a religious war against Jews and other targets of right-wing terrorists.

Leamington Spa man's plot (alleged) – 2021			Incident Summary +
<b>Ideology</b> Right-wing extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Undetermined	<b>Target Type</b> Undetermined	
Essex teenager 3D gun plot – 2020			Incident Summary +
<b>Ideology</b> Right-wing extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Shooting	<b>Target Type</b> Individual civilian, Targeted minorities	
Durham teenager plot – 2019			Incident Summary +
<b>Ideology</b> Right-wing extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Shooting, Bombing, Arson	<b>Target Type</b> Transport, Public area, Place of worship, Targeted minorities, Other	
London Jewish community attack plot – 2017			Incident Summary +
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Shooting	<b>Target Type</b> Public area, Targeted minorities, Royal, Politician	
Birmingham stabbing plot – 2017			Incident Summary +
<b>Ideology</b> Jihadist extremism	<b>Modus Operandi</b> Stabbing	<b>Target Type</b> Place of worship, Targeted minorities, Police-military-security	

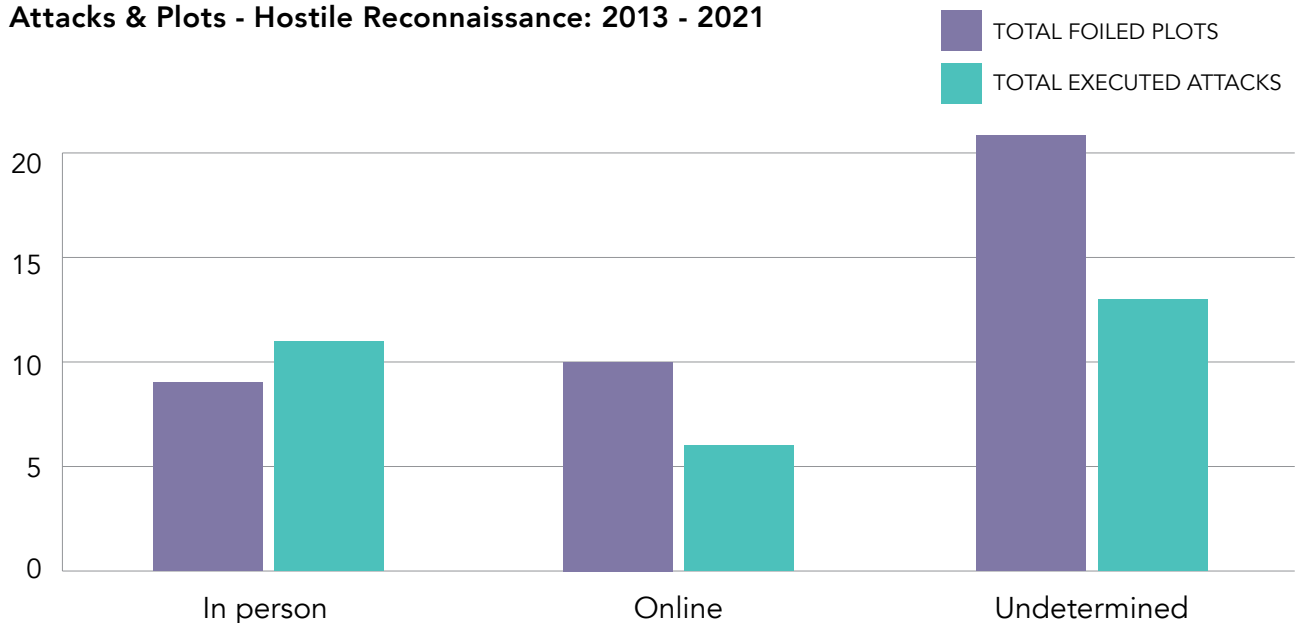
The details of these plots are summarised in each entry in the UK Foiled Plots database. They are a stark reminder that Jewish communities in the UK and worldwide remain high value targets for a diverse range of terrorists and ideologically motivated extremists. See the section titled ‘Terrorism Threat and CST’s Work’ below for further discussion.

## Trends in hostile reconnaissance

Hostile reconnaissance is regarded as the information-gathering phase undertaken by individuals or groups with malicious intent. Pre-attack reconnaissance and information collection remains a crucial part of the attack planning process, regardless of ideology. This stage may even provide the best opportunity to stop an attack before it is executed.

CST's databases include examples of hostile reconnaissance where evidence was available.

### Attacks & Plots - Hostile Reconnaissance: 2013 - 2021



Out of all the executed terror attacks from 2013 to 2021, at least 17 attacks included evidence of the offenders using either (or both) online or in-person hostile reconnaissance, or some form of dry run.

Out of all the foiled terror plots, at least 19 plots involved evidence of plotters engaging in online or in-person hostile reconnaissance. These figures are likely to be significant underestimations due to research gaps. Nonetheless, various forms of hostile reconnaissance do appear to play a role in many of the terrorist attacks and plots.

#### CASE STUDY: Murder of Jo Cox MP – 16 June 2016

Neo-Nazi terrorist Thomas Mair planned his attack against Labour MP Jo Cox over several weeks, researching his victim and the firearm he used. On 15 June, the day before his attack, Mair visited Birstall Library in West Yorkshire and asked if he needed to book an appointment to attend Jo Cox's surgeries.

The next day, Mair waited at a bus stop with a direct line of sight towards the library, where Jo Cox was scheduled to hold her constituency surgery later that day. Mair initially approached the library but returned to his observation point when realising she had not arrived. He then attacked Cox shortly after her arrival, shooting her and stabbing her multiple times. Mair also seriously injured a second victim who intervened.

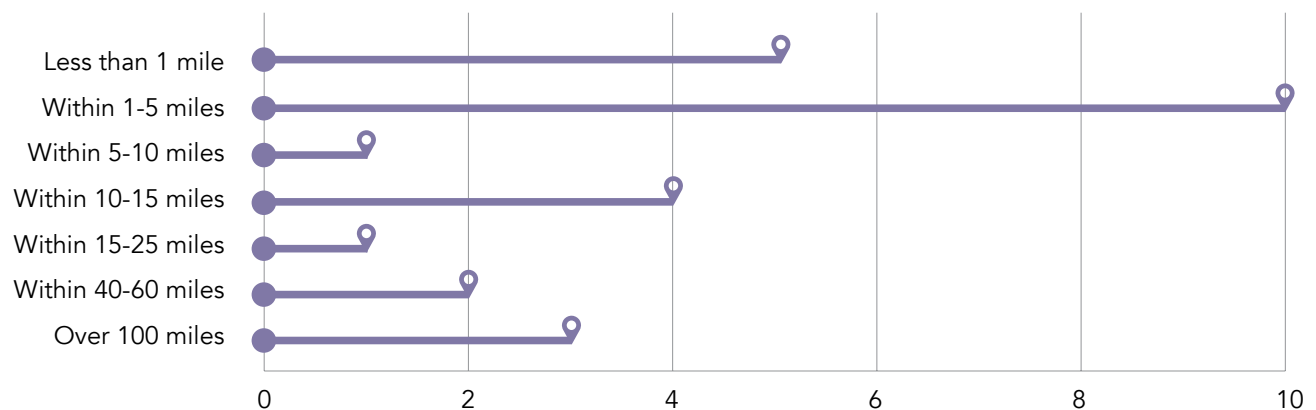
## Trends in attackers' journey-to-crime

The distance an offender is willing to travel for an attack is a crucial component of a terrorist's target selection. Assessing this information can help provide patterns of how close attackers reside to their targets.

CST's UK Terror Attacks database includes data on how far attackers travelled to commit their attacks, as well as the type of transportation they used to arrive at their targets.

According to CST's records, most of the attacks took place within 0-5 miles of the attackers' residence. By contrast, three attackers (Usman Khan, Salih Khater and Darren Osborne) travelled over 100 miles to their targets.

### UK Terror Attacks - Distance travelled by attackers



CST's findings are based on comparatively limited dataset, but they seemingly fit a pattern identified in a wide-ranging University College London (UCL) study<sup>19</sup> by Drs Zoe Marchment, Noémie Bouhana and Paul Gill. They analysed the residence-to-crime travels of 70 terrorists who perpetrated 122 lone actor terrorist attacks in the US and Europe, from 1990-2016.

In criminological literature, the distance an offender travels to commit their crime is called a "residence-to-crime" approach: how far criminals will travel to commit a range of offences such as burglary, rape, homicide or terrorism, among other crimes. In most criminal offences, the general pattern is that the chances and frequency of offences usually decreases as the distance from the perpetrator's home increases, which is called the "distance decay effect".

The UCL study found that the "distance decay effect" for "traditional crimes" applied to lone actor terrorists too. Lone actors tend to travel short distances to commit their attacks and are more likely to attack within their "awareness space": areas with which the criminal is familiar as part of their daily activities. By contrast, attackers with links to a wider network travelled further.

Overall, the authors concluded that the frequency of lone actor terrorist attacks decreases as distance from home locations increases. Lone actors tend to select targets that are in the individual's "awareness space"; within close proximity to the attacker's home location; and relevant to the terrorist's ideology. In Europe, for example, 70% of attacks occurred within five miles of the offender's home. However, the authors also noted that lone actors travelled further for iconic targets than symbolic or arbitrary targets, and further for symbolic targets than arbitrary targets, as well as other factors.

<sup>19</sup> Zoe Marchment, Noémie Bouhana & Paul Gill, 'Lone Actor Terrorists: A Residence-to-Crime Approach', Terrorism and Political Violence, 2018.

## WHAT COUNTS AS A TERRORIST PLOT?

While UK Counter Terrorism Policing and MI5 routinely update figures on disrupted terror attacks, they do not publish a list of these plots. The absence of a public record of foiled plots makes it difficult to keep track of all cases.

Many cases of attack planning are easy to identify due to police statements, CPS press releases, trials and media reports, but other cases are not always clear cut and are often difficult to classify. As noted above, CST's UK Foiled Terror Plots database primarily includes cases in which the defendants were convicted of attack planning offences relating to Section 5 of the Terrorism Act (TACT) 2006.<sup>20</sup>

However, absent an official list of foiled plots, CST has refrained from including cases in its databases that did not specifically involve attack planning. It is also possible that UK authorities believe that some terrorism offenders did in fact plan attacks, even if they were not charged with or convicted of Section 5 TACT 2006 offences.

For inclusion in CST's database, cases need to include evidence of actual attack plotting, rather than cases of defendants "only" having an extremist ideology, acquiring (or trying to acquire) weapons, encouraging others to attack or posting violent incitement.

Additionally, for legal considerations, CST's UK Foiled Terror Plots database does not include terrorism cases in which defendants were acquitted of terror attack planning. These are kept on a separate list of defendants acquitted of terrorist attack planning.<sup>21</sup>

A related challenge is the time lag between the arrest and charging of terrorism suspects for alleged attack planning and the eventual trial and legal outcome of the court cases. To keep CST's information as current as possible, the UK Foiled Terror Plots database includes all cases of suspected terrorist attack planning. This is done with the understanding that the defendants accused of these crimes are innocent until proven otherwise. Any trials resulting in the acquittal of defendants for attack planning will be removed from the databases.

Overall, all these inclusion and exclusion considerations account for some of the disparities in numbers when compared with Counter Terrorism Policing and MI5 figures of foiled plots in the UK.

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<sup>20</sup> ['Terrorism Act 2006'](#), Legislation.gov.uk

<sup>21</sup>

## CASE STUDIES

As an illustration of the challenge of deciding whether a terrorism case includes terrorist attack planning, consider the details in the terrorism cases of Dean Morrice (2020), Filip Golon Bednarczyk (2019), Jack Coulson (2018) and Husnain Rashid (2017).

### Dean Morrice – 2020

The case of Dean Morrice is one example of the challenge of determining what does or does not count as a foiled terrorist plot.

In June 2021, Morrice (aged 34), from Paulton in Somerset, was sentenced to 23 years in prison for sharing far-right terrorist material and possession of explosives.

Morrice was convicted of the following offences:

- Three counts of dissemination of a terrorist publication, contrary to Section 2(1) of the Terrorism Act 2006
- One count of encouraging terrorism, contrary to Section 1(1) of the Terrorism Act 2006
- Four counts of possession of a document or record for terrorist purposes, contrary to Section 58 (1)(b) of the Terrorism Act 2000
- Two counts of having an explosive substance, contrary to Section 4(1) of the Explosive Substances Act 1883

Morrice, who was arrested in August 2020, possessed terrorist material, including a stockpile of chemicals used in homemade explosives, manifestos from far-right terrorists, gun-making manuals and two 3D printers with a weapon partly constructed. His trial marked the first time in a terrorist case that evidence obtained from a 3D printer was brought to court.

Morrice had shared a video of himself wearing a skull mask and strumming a guitar, superimposed onto Brenton Tarrant's footage of the 2019 Christchurch massacre. On his Telegram channel, Morrice posted content that encouraged terrorism, antisemitic imagery, neo-Nazi propaganda and suggested support for a race war. The court heard that the channel had *"unapologetically, unambiguously, pumped out neo-Nazi propaganda which encouraged killing of non-whites and Jewish people"*<sup>22</sup>.

In a statement from Avon and Somerset Constabulary, the head of Counter Terrorism Policing South East also stated that, *"Morrice was stopped before he was able to carry out any physical act of terror but the evidence showed that he actively encouraged terrorism to others with his toxic ideology and had the intention and potentially the capability to commit one himself"*.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, in July 2021, the Director-General of MI5, Ken McCallum, referenced Morrice's case in his annual threat update, which included references to attacks and disrupted plots inspired by Islamist

<sup>22</sup> ['Neo-Nazi accused 'played guitar to mosque attacks footage''](#), BBC News, 10 May 2021

<sup>23</sup> ['Extreme right-wing terrorist sentenced to 23 years'](#), Avon and Somerset Constabulary, June 2021

and right-wing extremism. McCallum said that, *"Morrice was stopped before he was able to carry out any attack, but before his arrest had been actively trying to draw others into his toxic ideology"*.<sup>24</sup>

Morrice was not convicted of a Section 5 TACT 2006 offence relating to preparation of terrorist acts. But do Counter Terrorism Policing and MI5 consider this as a case of attack planning and therefore include Dean Morrice as one of the right-wing terrorist plots they have foiled? Without a clear official indication, it is difficult to know for certain whether Morrice was planning an attack and, if so, how far along he was in his attack planning.

### **Filip Golon Bednarczyk – 2019**

Filip Golon Bednarczyk (aged 25) was arrested on 11 December 2019 on suspicion of being concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act (TACT) 2000.<sup>25</sup> Media reports the following day described it as a foiled right-wing terrorist plot inspired by the Christchurch mosque attacks earlier that year.<sup>26</sup>

On 17 December, Bednarczyk was charged with collection of information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism (contrary to Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000) and making or possessing an explosive under suspicious circumstances (contrary to Section 4 of the Explosive Substances Act 1883).<sup>27</sup>

On 6 May 2020, Bednarczyk admitted seven counts of possessing terrorist material and one of making or possessing an explosive under suspicious circumstances contrary to the Explosive Substances Act. On 24 November, he was jailed for four years, with a further year on licence and subject to a 15-year notification requirement on release.<sup>28</sup>

Bednarczyk, a Polish national, had collected bomb manuals, a two-kilo bag of sulphur powder and a blank-firing pistol. He admitted *"right-wing sympathies"* and researched guns and weapons. He had a copy of Christchurch shooter Brenton Tarrant's manifesto and shared memes supporting the attack.

Tell MAMA, the anti-Muslim hate monitoring group, gathered years of Bednarczyk's extremist posts targeting Muslims, Jews and the gay community online.<sup>29</sup> For example, he once shared an antisemitic meme, which originated on 4chan, showing world leaders wearing Jewish skullcaps.

Following Bednarczyk's sentencing, the then head of the Met's Counter Terrorism Command stated that *"no terrorist-related activity, or imminent threat, was discovered"* following his arrest.

24 Ken McCallum, ['Director General Ken McCallum gives annual threat update 2021'](#), UK Security Service (MI5), 14 June 2021

25 ['Man arrested in Luton under terrorism act'](#), Metropolitan Police Service, 11 December 2019

26 Rebecca Camber and Larisa Brown, ['Far-Right terror plot smashed'](#), *Daily Mail*, 12 December 2019

27 ['Man charged with terrorism offences'](#), Metropolitan Police Service, 17 December 2019

28 ['Man jailed for terrorism offences'](#), Metropolitan Police Service, 25 November 2020

29 ['Far-right terrorist, 26, who admitted possessing explosives and bomb-making document had a long history of online hate'](#), Tell MAMA, 6 May 2020

### Husnain Rashid – 2017

On 22 November 2017, Husnain Rashid, from Nelson in Lancashire, was arrested at his home after using online channels and chat groups to post an immense volume of terrorist-related material, between October 2016 and November 2017.

Rashid was an ISIS supporter who ran a Telegram channel called “Lone Mujahid”. He encouraged lone actors to attack various targets in the UK and around the world. Rashid posted a photograph of Prince George, along with the address of his school, a silhouette of a jihadist and the message: “Even the royal family will not be left alone.”

Other targets included British Army bases, shopping centres, government buildings, the Halloween parade in New York and railway stations in Australia. Rashid also repeatedly incited attacks against UK Jewish communities and provided detailed lists of community locations.

In fact, Rashid’s online posts directly inspired Ummariyat Mirza to consider Jewish targets after receiving Lone Mujahid’s Telegram messages calling for attacks against British Jewish locations (see ‘Terrorism Threat and CST’s Work’ below for more about the database entry for ‘Birmingham stabbing plot – 2017’).

Rashid also helped lone attackers with all types of methods of operation, including the use of IEDs, chemicals and knives. The CPS stated that, “Rashid provided a constant flow of incitement and encouragement to others to commit acts of terror. He provided what he regarded as ‘inspiration’ for suitable targets for so-called ‘lone wolf’ terror attacks”.<sup>30</sup>

Rashid was in communication with a British terrorist in Syria called Omar Ali Hussain (using the pseudonym ‘Rapunzel’), advising him how to make successful attacks. Rashid published a magazine aimed at potential terrorists, distributed the al-Qaida magazine Inspire and aspired to travel to Turkey and Syria to fight for ISIS.

On 31 May 2018, Rashid pleaded guilty to the three offences contrary to Section 5 of the Terrorism Act 2006 and an offence of encouraging terrorism contrary to Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006.<sup>31</sup> Two other charges relating to the dissemination of terrorist publications (contrary to Section 2 TACT 2006) were included in the basis of his guilty plea.

On 13 July 2018, Rashid was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 25 years, concurrent on each of the section 5 charges inclusive. He was also sentenced to 4.5 years’ imprisonment for the Section 1 TACT 2006 charge to run concurrently.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, the first two counts for the Section 5 TACT 2006 offences related to Rashid seeking advice and making plans to travel to ISIS territory, communicating with an ISIS member (Omar Ali Hussain) in Syria and sending Hussain information that could help him commit acts of terrorism. The third count under Section 5 related to Rashid creating the Lone Mujahid brand and publication, uploading resources to help others’ attack planning and assessing better ways to attack venues in the UK and abroad.

<sup>30</sup> [‘R v Husnain Rashid’](#) (2018), Successful prosecutions since 2016, Crown Prosecution Service

<sup>31</sup> [‘Life sentence for terrorist who wanted Prince George dead’](#), Court News UK, 13 July 2018

<sup>32</sup> [‘Jailed for encouraging terror attacks around the world’](#), UK Counter Terrorism Policing, 13 July 2018

Husnain Rashid, however, is currently excluded from CST's Foiled Plots Database. It is not known whether his case is part of CTP and MI5's list of foiled plots. The uncertainty is that Rashid did not appear to be planning to attack a target himself and did not appear to be directly organising someone else to plot an attack.

In April 2019, Rashid's sentence was cut on appeal.<sup>33</sup> The judges at the Court of Appeal upheld his life sentence but reduced his minimum term from 25 years to 19 years.

In fact, Lord Justice Holroyde wrote that Rashid's online postings were intended to incite and encourage attacks, but that this activity cannot be *"properly be described as co-ordinating the activities of whoever might read his posts"*:

*"The scale and frequency of the applicant's internet postings were such that the judge was entitled to find that it was very likely that at least one of those incited and encouraged by the applicant would cause multiple deaths. That, after all, was the purpose for which the applicant unremittingly posted message after message over a period of about a year. Again, however, we do not think that the applicant's online activity can properly be described as co-ordinating the activities of whoever might read his posts."*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> ['Prince George attack plotter has jail term cut on appeal'](#), BBC News, 16 April 2019

<sup>34</sup> [2019] EWCA Crim 797, [Rashid, R. v.](#), England and Wales Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) Decisions, The National Archives, 16 April 2019

# TERRORISM THREATS AND CST'S WORK

Tracking terrorism incidents and studying the modus operandi of ideological extremists has been part of CST's core work since its inception. CST's terrorism database project is part and parcel of this effort. It originated as an internal record in 2017, the year that saw a significant shift in both attacks and plots in the UK.

Protecting British Jews from terrorist attacks drives much of CST's security work. The level of anti-Jewish threat, and the amount of security needed from CST, largely depends on the overall threat of terrorism against the UK.

CST's security training, planning and operations are designed to mitigate against terrorists' modus operandi. Therefore, CST conducts ongoing assessments on terrorist attack methods, ideology, target selection, evidence of hostile reconnaissance, the number of attackers/plotters, the types of weapons and more. These details provide essential operational lessons and identify key trends and patterns. CST's Terrorism Databases are designed to help streamline this threat assessment process for UK-related incidents.

## Anti-Jewish terrorism threats

Jewish communities worldwide remain high value targets for a diverse range of terrorists and ideologically motivated extremists. Jihadist extremists, right-wing extremists, Iran and Hizbollah, as well as other violent extremists, continue to incite violence and target Jews.

In January 2022, Christopher Wray, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), assessed the wide-ranging threats facing Jewish communities:

*"We recognize that the Jewish community, in particular, has suffered violence and faces very real threats from really across the hate spectrum.*

*Homegrown violent extremists, radicalized by Jihadist movements online, foreign terrorists [sic] organizations like ISIS and Hezbollah, state-sponsored groups like the IRGC from Iran, and of course, domestic violent extremists, especially racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists.*

*All of them have expressed an intent and acted to do harm to the Jewish community, both here at home and abroad. And it's because of that that we consider the enduring threats to the Jewish community to be among our very highest priorities."*<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, in 2021, the Norwegian Police and Security Service (PST) and Danish Intelligence and Security Service (PET) both assessed that jihadist and right-wing extremists consider Jews and Jewish facilities to be desirable targets.<sup>36</sup> London's Metropolitan Police assessment is that faith communities in general remain desirable targets for violent extremists.

In recent years, terrorists have plotted and perpetrated attacks on Jewish communities worldwide, targeting synagogues, kosher food shops, community centres, private homes and other locations. They

<sup>35</sup> ['Remarks by Director Christopher Wray to Anti-Defamation League on Hostage Incident in Colleyville, Texas'](#), Federal Bureau of Investigation, 20 January 2022

<sup>36</sup> ['National threat assessment 2021'](#), Norwegian Police and Security Service (PST); ['Assessment of the terrorist threat to Denmark'](#), Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), March 2021

have also targeted Jewish communities on symbolic days, such as the Sabbath and Jewish festivals.

Consider the following significant terrorist incidents:

- **Texas – January 2022**

An armed British national from Blackburn, North West England, took a rabbi and three worshippers hostage inside a synagogue during a Sabbath morning service. The attacker espoused antisemitic views and demanded the release of a Pakistani neuroscientist, allegedly linked to al-Qaeda, imprisoned 20 miles away from the synagogue.

- **Germany – 2021**

German authorities arrested a Syrian teenager allegedly planning a jihadist-inspired attack against a synagogue in Hagen during the 2021 High Holy Days.

- **Germany – 2019**

A right-wing extremist perpetrated a shooting attack outside a synagogue in Halle, Germany during Yom Kippur prayer services. He fatally shot two victims in a kebab shop nearby, neither of whom were connected to the Jewish community.

- **California – 2019**

A right-wing extremist perpetrated a shooting attack inside a Poway, California synagogue during Sabbath and Passover morning prayer services, killing one victim and injuring others.

- **New York City – 2019**

A lone assailant, armed with a machete and knife, stabbed five victims inside a rabbi's house in Monsey, New York during a Chanukah celebration.

- **Pittsburgh – 2018**

A right-wing extremist perpetrated a mass shooting inside a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania synagogue during Sabbath morning services, killing 11 victims and injuring others.

Between 2013 and 2021, the UK saw at least five terror plots that considered targeting UK Jewish communities across the country: two jihadist plots and two (potentially three) right-wing extremist plots.

#### Leamington Spa man's plot (alleged) – 2021

[Incident Summary +](#)

**Ideology**

Right-wing extremism

**Modus Operandi**

Undetermined

**Target Type**

Undetermined

#### Essex teenager 3D gun plot – 2020

[Incident Summary +](#)

**Ideology**

Right-wing extremism

**Modus Operandi**

Shooting

**Target Type**

Individual civilian, Targeted minorities

#### Durham teenager plot – 2019

[Incident Summary +](#)

**Ideology**

Right-wing extremism

**Modus Operandi**

Shooting, Bombing, Arson

**Target Type**

Transport, Public area, Place of worship, Targeted minorities, Other

## London Jewish community attack plot – 2017

[Incident Summary +](#)

### Ideology

Jihadist extremism

### Modus Operandi

Shooting

### Target Type

Public area, Targeted minorities, Royal, Politician

## Birmingham stabbing plot – 2017

[Incident Summary +](#)

### Ideology

Jihadist extremism

### Modus Operandi

Stabbing

### Target Type

Place of worship, Targeted minorities, Police-military-security

These plots included terrorists targeting synagogues or crowds of visibly Jewish people in London, Birmingham and the north of England. Regarding modus operandi, the terrorist offenders in these plots considered using **stabbing**, **shooting** or **firebombing** as potential attack methods.

In addition to these plots, CST's database includes evidence of offenders in at least five other terror plots who expressed violent antisemitic sentiments as part of their terrorist activities and attack planning.

## CASE STUDIES

### Birmingham stabbing plot – 2017

In 2017, Ummar Mirza and his wife Madihah Taheer, both from Birmingham, were convicted for planning an ISIS-inspired knife attack in their home city, between January and March that year. While their final target or targets are not known, they considered attacking the Birmingham Jewish community and local military locations.

They performed online hostile reconnaissance of numerous possible targets, searching Wikipedia lists of Jewish communities in Britain and Jewish areas in London and Birmingham (e.g., Birmingham Central Synagogue).

According to the judge's sentencing remarks, Mirza was inspired to plan a knife attack from Islamic State's *Rumiyah* magazine (now defunct). Additionally, on 27 February 2017, Mirza received a Telegram message from a jihadist extremist that incited violence against Jews, as follows:

*"If you're still in the West! Dress up like a Jew! Go to your nearest Jewish area! Make sure you have plenty of weapons under your coat! Then unleash the pain of Muslims upon these A.P.E.S.!!!"*<sup>37</sup>

The judge also noted that "attached to the message was a list of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom." In fact, this message was disseminated on Telegram by the "Lone Mujahid" account, which was later revealed to be the account of Husnain Rashid, from Nelson, Lancashire (see above).

Furthermore, the judge wrote that on 28 February, the day after receiving the Telegram message encouraging violence against Jews, Ummar Mirza "conducted internet searches for 'Jewish area of

<sup>37</sup> 'The Queen v Mirza and Others', Sentencing Remarks, December 2017

*London', 'Jewish communities in the UK' and 'Birmingham central synagogue'.*<sup>38</sup>

The facts of the case provide a stunning example of violent online material and incitement directly contributing to the target selection process of a terrorist plotter.

### **Manchester Jewish community attack plot – 2011**

As noted, CST intends to back date its terrorism databases to include attacks and plots prior to 2013. Therefore, while the 2011 anti-Jewish plot in Manchester is not yet included, it is important to be aware of the core facts.

In August 2011, Mohammed Sajid Khan and his wife Shasta Khan, both from Oldham, were arrested under the Terrorism Act on suspicion of planning offences between August 2010 and July 2011. In July 2012, they were convicted of plotting an al-Qaeda inspired bomb attack against north Manchester's Jewish community.

The jury heard evidence of the couple's radicalisation, their antisemitic incitement and rhetoric, research into and hostile reconnaissance of Jewish neighbourhoods, and their attempt to build an improvised explosive device.

Mohammed pleaded guilty to engaging in conduct in preparation for acts of terrorism before the trial and was given an indeterminate sentence of 15 years in prison. Shasta was found guilty of engaging in conduct in preparation for acts of terrorism and two counts of possessing a record of information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. She was sentenced to eight years in prison.

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<sup>38</sup> 'The Queen v Mirza and Others', Sentencing Remarks, December 2017

## **CST's work with government, civil servants, police and civil society**

Antisemitism forms a core part of many terrorist groups' ideologies, and this is central to all of CST's work and relationships, including the support and partnership received from Government and police.

CST is repeatedly referenced by Members of Parliament, Government ministers and police as a unique example of best practice in key areas of hate crime; working with police, government, politicians and the civil service; and community cohesion and counter-extremism initiatives.

Most of CST's advisory interactions occur with the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. CST works closely with the Home Office Homeland Security Group (HSG), which includes specific and regular engagements with the Hate Crime Unit; the Homeland Security Analysis and Insight Unit; the Protect, Prepare and Prevent; as well as appropriate ministers and ministerial teams within the Home Office and across government.

CST also regularly shares its expertise through its leading role in many police and other community forums. Since 2017, this has extended beyond hate crime advice to counter-terrorism security advice, following the deadly vehicle ramming attack against Muslim worshippers in Finsbury Park, north London. At the request of police, CST provided security guidance for distribution to mosques by Muslim based organisations Tell MAMA and Faith Associates.

In 2018 and 2019, for example, fatal terrorist attacks targeted places of worship, most notably two American synagogues, one synagogue in Germany, two New Zealand mosques and three churches in Sri Lanka. In response, CST's written security advice for mosques was updated and re-published on CST's website as *Security Procedures for Places of Worship*.<sup>39</sup> This guidance was then promoted with the assistance of Government and police.

## CST's investigative research & monitoring extremism

CST also pursues a range of work to disrupt and counter the threat of violent extremism and terrorism in the UK. CST researchers regularly monitor individuals, groups and networks engaged in extremist and terrorist activities, including extremist websites and social media platforms that deliberately host extremist and antisemitic material.

CST works proactively with mainstream social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube to remove antisemitic material. Extremists, however, are widely active on more peripheral sites, platforms and websites.

In June 2020, for example, CST published a detailed report titled *Hate Fuel: the hidden online world fuelling far right terror*.<sup>40</sup> It exposed a global network of violent neo-Nazis fuelling terrorism and murder by sharing vast quantities of easily accessible, extreme and violent images and posts on social media platforms. This included the violent and inciting content on platforms such as Gab, BitChute, 4chan and Telegram (see also the section on Richard Hesketh below).

CST Blog

**HATE FUEL: THE HIDDEN ONLINE WORLD FUELLING FAR RIGHT TERROR**

11 June 2020



A new report from CST reveals the shocking extent of terror incitement and anti-Jewish hate created and circulated by right wing extremists on social media. Titled *Hate Fuel: the hidden online world fuelling far right terror*, the contents of this report are of essential importance in understanding the growing danger of far right terrorism against British Jews.

## 'Hateful' BitChute video site is first test for Ofcom



Today's edition of *The Times* contains a [report](#) about the huge amount of antisemitic content on the alternative video sharing site, BitChute, following original research by CST. Through some simple searches for neutral, Holocaust-related terms, we found easily accessible and large quantities of video content that either denies, distorts, inverts, or glorifies the Holocaust. CST has repeatedly raised our concerns both publicly and privately about BitChute, which effectively operates as a YouTube equivalent for neo-Nazis, conspiracy cranks, would-be terrorists and other extremists, a problem we first highlighted in our report published last year, [Hate Fuel](#).

## CST's investigative research: counter terrorism and extremism referrals

CST's investigative research is also harnessed to try and detect sources of threat and refer extremists to UK counter-terrorism police. CST investigates and reports to police individuals involved in suspected terrorism, incitement offences and/or posing a physical threat to the UK Jewish community and wider society.

CST is confident that many of these referrals have resulted in the disruption of a variety of terrorist activities, leading to the arrest and conviction of criminal offenders.

<sup>39</sup> [Security Procedures for Places of Worship](#), CST security guidance

<sup>40</sup> [Hate Fuel: the hidden online world fuelling far right terror](#), CST Research Briefing, 11 June 2020

## CASE STUDIES

The following cases are examples of extremist individuals and activities that CST monitored and then referred to police.

### Feuerkrieg Division

CST researchers use open source intelligence (OSINT) techniques to track and expose extremist networks. CST has helped expose the UK branch of the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD), a proscribed right-wing terrorist group in the UK.

FKD, whose name means 'fire war division' in German, is an international neo-Nazi group that calls for violence against non-whites and blames Jews for the ills of society. It was established in October 2018 and has had branches in the UK, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands. FKD seeks to create a white-only ethno-state and embraces the replacement conspiracy theory that claims Jews use immigration to bring about white genocide.

FKD is run by very young activists. Its founder and so-called commander was revealed to be a 13 year old boy in Estonia, and its UK head was also a 13-year-old boy when he committed his first terror offence.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, FKD's beliefs, propaganda and graphics are shared with the very similar Atomwaffen Division (AWD), a violent neo-Nazi group that has been linked to multiple extremist murders in the United States.

Since FKD's establishment, CST has reported its activities to police and Government, providing evidence to the Home Office in support for adding FKD (as well as other similar right-wing extremist groups) to the UK's list of proscribed terrorist organisations. The UK Government proscribed FKD and AWD as terrorist groups in July 2020 and April 2021, respectively.

CST's Hate Fuel report, for example, emphasised the extent of FKD's violent incitement against minorities, especially Jews, as well as calls for violence against the then Chief Constable of West Midlands Police. FKD glorifies white supremacists who have undertaken attacks, including Brenton Tarrant, Anders Breivik, Dylann Roof and John Earnest. Indeed, the UK Government's proscription note states as follows:

*"FKD members have condoned and glorified acts of terrorism. This includes the Charleston church shooting; the Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh; the Oklahoma City bombing; and the Christchurch shooting."*<sup>42</sup>

41 Daniel de Simone, '[Neo-Nazi group led by 13-year-old boy to be banned](#)', BBC News, 13 July 2020; '[Youngest British terrorist sentenced for neo-Nazi manuals stash](#)', Crown Prosecution Service, 8 February 2021

42 [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations](#), UK Home Office

At least one of the foiled plots included in CST's database was planned by a 16-year-old FKD member (Paul Dunleavy) from Rugby, Warwickshire – see entry titled 'Rugby teenager plot – 2019':

### Rugby teenager plot – 2019

[Incident Summary +](#)

**Ideology**

Right-wing extremism

**Modus Operandi**

Shooting

**Target Type**

Undetermined

In May 2021, FKD restarted its activities and currently continues to be active, despite FKD's January 2020 announcement that it planned to stop all recruitment and cease activities.<sup>43</sup>

On 27 January 2022, for example, FKD released on its Telegram chat group photographs of posters that one of its UK-based supporters put up on UK streets. This coincided with Holocaust Memorial Day. The flyers called for violence and incited against different minorities.



Although the FKD activists on Telegram tried to hide the exact location of this activity, CST researchers successfully used OSINT and other investigative techniques to identify the precise locations of the flyers as Islington, north London. CST subsequently shared this information with counter-terrorism police. For more details, see CST's Twitter thread on this incident.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Hannah Rose and AC, [We are Generation Terror!": Youth-on-youth Radicalisation in Extreme-right Youth Groups](#), CST and ICSR (King's College London), December 2021

<sup>44</sup> [@CST\\_UK Twitter thread](#), 4 February 2022

### **Richard Hesketh: antisemitic far-right video streamer**

Following months of monitoring, CST's investigative research led to one of Britain's most prolific antisemitic video streamers being convicted of inciting anti-Jewish hate online. In December 2021, Richard Hesketh, from Greater Manchester, was sentenced to four years in jail after pleading guilty to stirring up racial hatred by posting a series of viciously antisemitic homemade videos on the fringe social media site BitChute.

Hesketh, who also used the name Rick Heskey for his online postings, posted thousands of videos online that attracted millions of views. He used BitChute, a site CST has repeatedly highlighted as a haven for far-right extremists, antisemites and terrorist sympathisers. Hesketh's use of the site typifies the current generation of far-right activists who use social media to spread hatred. In fact, Heskey operated across several platforms, including BitChute, and boasted of having posted around 4,000 videos that attracted over 5.5 million views.

One of his videos celebrated Brenton Tarrant, the far-right terrorist who murdered 51 Muslims at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019. In October 2020, for example, Hesketh shared a video titled 'Jews in the News – Halle Synagogue attacker 1 year on'. The video came shortly after a report from Hamburg, Germany that an individual with a shovel had attacked several community members on their way to synagogue. Heskey stated during this video:

*"if you're gonna go into a synagogue and scare the s\*\*t out of these rat-faced Jews it's like, why would you take a shovel? It's not exactly the best weapon for cleaving people. It's good for bonging them on the head with, filthy Jew sit down."*

In June 2020, CST passed a report of Hesketh's material to the police. The report included 16 pages of screenshots and explanations of Hesketh's activities, antisemitism and the danger he posed to the Jewish community. CST was concerned about Hesketh's ability to create further videos, as well as the damage being done by the videos already on his BitChute account.

In September 2020, his BitChute account was finally suspended for "severe policy violations", at which point CST tracked his digital presence as he moved to multiple smaller platforms to rebuild his stature and following.

In November 2020, Greater Manchester Police raided a house in the Manchester area that belonged to Hesketh. Devices and documents from the house were seized and a detailed investigation was conducted. In August 2021, Richard Hesketh was charged with seven counts of distributing a recording of visual images or sounds stirring up racial hatred, contrary to Section 21(1) of the Public Order Act 1986. On 7 September 2021, Hesketh pleaded guilty to all charges, and, on 3 December 2021, he was sentenced to four years in jail at Manchester Crown Court.

For further details, see CST Blog's 'Richard Hesketh: CST Research Puts Antisemitic Far Right Video Streamer In Prison'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> ['Richard Hesketh: CST Research Puts Antisemitic Far Right Video Streamer In Prison'](#), CST Blog, 3 December 2021

### Shehroz Iqbal: from antisemitic hate crime to terrorism

In November 2020, Shehroz Iqbal was sentenced to six years in prison for ISIS-related terrorism offences, as well as 30 months for unrelated drug offences. Iqbal's case was emblematic of the connection between antisemitism, hate crime and terrorism.

Iqbal had a record of antisemitic hate crimes and anti-Jewish activity in London and online, which began in 2016 and continued throughout the years leading up to his arrest for terrorism. His case shows how antisemitism can be a warning sign of extremism that threatens not only Jews, but the whole of society.

Iqbal's online activity showed that he was descending deeper into a world of Islamist extremism. He showed a growing interest in posts about attacks on Jews and other antisemitic and extremist content. He also developed an online connection to senior figures associated with the Al-Muhajiroun network, the proscribed UK terrorist organisation, and its various successor groups.

Throughout this period, CST tracked Iqbal's threatening behaviour towards the Jewish community, liaised repeatedly with counter terrorism police and provided security advice and reassurance to the individuals and organisations in the Jewish community whom Iqbal targeted.

Iqbal's online activity, specifically the posting of an ISIS propaganda video, ultimately led to his arrest and conviction. In fact, police investigations discovered a video Iqbal made of himself outside the Royal Festival Hall in London, in which he recorded himself calling for various central London locations to be attacked. This second video, distributed by Iqbal to a WhatsApp group of which he was a member, was the basis for the further charge of encouraging terrorism.

For further details on this case, see CST's Research Briefing Pathway to Terror: from antisemitism to terrorism, the case study of Shehroz Iqbal.<sup>46</sup>

### Jack Renshaw: "white jihad" and stirring up racial hatred

In May 2019, former National Action (NA) member Jack Renshaw was sentenced to life imprisonment for his plot to murder a Member of Parliament and a senior police officer in a right-wing terrorist attack. Renshaw's case is included in CST's UK Foiled Terror Plots database – see the entry titled 'Lancashire murder plot – 2017'.

#### Lancashire murder plot – 2017

#### Incident Summary +

##### Ideology

Right-wing extremism

##### Modus Operandi

Stabbing, Fake suicide vest

##### Target Type

Politician, Police-military-security

<sup>46</sup> [Pathway to Terror: from antisemitism to terrorism, the case study of Shehroz Iqbal](#), CST Research Briefing, December 2020

Renshaw's path from far-right student activist to would-be neo-Nazi terrorist is an example of the danger of hateful extremism, and the power of the violent rhetoric that permeates Britain's far right.

In 2014, CST first started receiving complaints about a young far-right activist at Manchester Metropolitan University. At around the same time, CST also began tracking NA's growth. Over the next four years, CST repeatedly reported Renshaw and his associates to police for their extremist, and at times illegal, activities, as well as urging UK Government to proscribe NA as a terrorist organisation – a step the Government took in December 2016.<sup>47</sup>

In February and March 2016, for example, Renshaw addressed, respectively, a private gathering of far-right activists at the Yorkshire Forum in Leeds and a far-right rally in Blackpool. CST obtained footage of both events and identified Renshaw as one of the speakers. After assessing the material, CST reported the incidents to Lancashire Police and West Yorkshire Police, emphasising that Renshaw's words constituted incitement to racial hatred and that he ought to be prosecuted.

In Leeds, Renshaw expressed sentiments that echoed the worst neo-Nazi anti-Jewish incitement:

*"Hitler was right in many senses but you know where he was wrong? He showed mercy to people who did not deserve mercy... So as nationalists we need to learn from the mistakes of the national socialists and we need to realise that, no, you do not show the Jew mercy. The Jew does not deserve any mercy. The Jew is a merchant, a deceiver, he is a Jew. He's nature's financial parasite and nature's social vermin. He needs to be eradicated."*

In Blackpool, Renshaw derided anti-fascists and stated that, *"When the time comes, they'll be in the chambers...and we'll execute them."* Referring to what he described as *"the refugee problem"*, Renshaw declared that, *"it's a symptom of a disease; that disease is international Jewry"*. Describing Jews as *"parasites"* and a *"disease"*, he also complained that they were being allowed to *"live among us"* and *"destroy us"* and claimed there was a *"Jewish master race"* running Europe.

From 2016, NA consciously copied the language and imagery of jihadist propaganda from ISIS and other terrorist organisations. Similarly, Renshaw described himself as a *"white jihadi"*. He sought to achieve his white supremacist goals by emulating the propaganda and tactics of terrorist groups, such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. And in a conscious reference to this mimicry of jihadist terrorist tactics, Renshaw also planned to produce a 'martyrdom video' in which he would explain his motives for having carried out the attack.

On 8 January 2018, Renshaw was convicted on two counts of stirring up racial hatred for the speeches at the Yorkshire Forum event and the Blackpool rally, for which he was later sentenced to a 3-year term of imprisonment. On 12 June 2018, Renshaw also pleaded guilty to charges relating to his plot to murder MP Rosie Cooper and police officer DC Victoria Henderson.

When sentencing Renshaw in May 2019, Justice McGowan detailed Renshaw's longstanding antisemitic mindset and obsession with an international Jewish conspiracy. The judge noted that Renshaw intended to kill Rosie Cooper *"because she was a member of the Labour Party and*

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<sup>47</sup> [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations](#), UK Home Office

*therefore responsible for mass immigration". And Renshaw, in fact, also "saw her as representing the Jewish controlled State oppressing the white community".*

For a fuller analysis of Jack Renshaw's path to terrorism, see CST's report '*White Jihad: Jack Renshaw's journey from far right student to would-be terrorist*'.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> ['White Jihad': Jack Renshaw's journey from far right student to would-be terrorist](#), CST Research Briefing, May 2020

# ANNEX I – UK DEFINITION OF TERRORISM

## Definition of Terrorism – Section 1, Terrorism Act 2000<sup>49</sup>

- (1) In this Act “terrorism” means the use or threat of action where
- (a) the action falls within subsection (2),
  - (b) the use or threat is designed to influence the government or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and
  - (c) the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause.
- (2) Action falls within this subsection if it—
- (a) involves serious violence against a person,
  - (b) involves serious damage to property,
  - (c) endangers a person’s life, other than that of the person committing the action,
  - (d) creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or
  - (e) is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) also [notes](#) as follows: “It is important to note that in order to be convicted of a terrorism offence a person doesn't actually have to commit what could be considered a terrorist attack. Planning, assisting and even collecting information on how to commit terrorist acts are all crimes under British terrorism legislation.”<sup>50</sup>

## Preparation of Terrorist Acts – Section 5, Terrorism Act 2006<sup>51</sup>

- (1) A person commits an offence if, with the intention of—
- (a) committing acts of terrorism, or
  - (b) assisting another to commit such acts,
- he engages in any conduct in preparation for giving effect to his intention.
- (2) It is irrelevant for the purposes of subsection (1) whether the intention and preparations relate to one or more particular acts of terrorism, acts of terrorism of a particular description or acts of terrorism generally.
- (3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable, on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for life.

## Offences with a Terrorist Connection – Counter-Terrorism Act 2008<sup>52</sup>

Schedule 2 of the Counter-Terrorism Act (CTA) 2008 contains a list of offences that a judge could conclude have “a terrorist connection”. This includes murder, soliciting murder, and causing explosion, among others. Section 30 of the CTA 2008 imposes special custodial sentences for offenders of particular concern who have committed offences under Schedule 2.

Numerous cases in CST’s UK Terror Attacks and UK Foiled Plots databases include cases in which offenders were judged to have committed acts with a terrorist connection.

<sup>49</sup> [Terrorism Act 2000](#), Legislation.gov.uk

<sup>50</sup> ‘[Terrorism](#)’, Crown Prosecution Service

<sup>51</sup> [Terrorism Act 2006](#), Legislation.gov.uk

<sup>52</sup> [Counter-Terrorism Act 2008](#), Legislation.gov.uk

## ANNEX II – HATEFUL IDEOLOGIES & GRIEVANCES

CST's Terrorism Databases strive to depict the terror threat landscape in the UK as accurately as possible. They record attacks and plots perpetrated by jihadist extremism, right-wing extremism, single-issue extremism and "undetermined" ideologies. In the UK, most executed and foiled terrorist attacks have come from jihadist and right-wing extremism, with a few exceptions.

Jonathan Hall QC, the UK's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, has described UK terrorism law and policy as being *"ideology and threat neutral"*.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the UK definition of terrorism is not focused on any one source of ideological threat:

*"There is nothing in the UK definition of terrorism, or the individual offences that penalise acts of terrorist violence or precursor behaviour, that expressly, implicitly or de facto tilts the table towards any one source of threat. Importantly, there is no pull towards foreign as opposed to domestic causes. This is not surprising because permanent UK terrorism legislation grew from emergency laws to deal with Northern Ireland-related terrorism, a very domestic form of terrorism. This means Right Wing Terrorism is readily assimilable into UK law and practice."*

*"It is fair to say that this threat-neutrality is successful...the same legislation is used to pursue and convict Right Wing Terrorists as Islamist Terrorists. Statistics on arrests, convictions, prison populations and preventive referrals all bear this out."*<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, ideologies motivating extremist violence are diverse, often eclectic and difficult to classify neatly. In November 2021, Home Office statistics showed that 51% of Prevent referrals were for people with mixed, unstable or unclear ideology.<sup>55</sup> This includes individuals obsessed with mass violence and school mass shootings, as well as individuals who demonstrate a combination of multiple ideologies (mixed), a shift between different ideologies (unstable), or where someone has no fixed or coherent ideology but still poses a potential terrorist threat (unclear).<sup>56</sup>

In April 2021, Jonathan Hall QC, the UK's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, explained that,

*"...police and officials do struggle with what they call mixed unstable unclear ideologies. My own view is that the search for doctrinal purity is not determinative, and many confused individuals will nonetheless advance a political, religious, racial or ideological cause through violence"*.<sup>57</sup>

In July 2021, Hall also discussed other causes that inspire violence but may not appear to obviously fit the definition of terrorism:

*"Instead, there is now consistent evidence of causes which inspire violence but which do not superficially*

<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Hall QC, [‘Three Aspects of United Kingdom Law and Policy on Right Wing Terrorism’](#), Speech delivered at the Global Counterterrorism Forum, 21 April 2021

<sup>54</sup> Jonathan Hall QC, [‘The Terrorism Acts in 2018’](#), Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, March 2020: paragraphs 2.32-2.34.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, England and Wales, April 2020 to March 2021’, [Official Statistics](#), Home Office, 18 November 2021

<sup>56</sup> Also see Matt Dryden, [An Ideological Pick ‘n’ Mix: The Rise of ‘Mixed’ Ideologies and their Implications for Terrorist Violence](#), Henry Jackson Society, March 2021

<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Hall QC, [‘Three Aspects of United Kingdom Law and Policy on Right Wing Terrorism’](#), Speech given at the Global Counterterrorism Forum, 21 April 2021

*appear to be political, religious, racial or ideological at all. Consider the veneration of US school shootings, most notably the Columbine attacks in 1999.*

*"If there is an ideological component, and I think there may well be one, it is a nihilism which seeks the end of days. It has something akin to the revolution of the unhappy or the "beta uprising" carried out by incels or involuntary celibates."<sup>58</sup>*

Since 2013, the UK has seen at least four confirmed plots to commit mass violence, but these did not seemingly fit the UK definition of terrorism under the Terrorism Act 2000 – namely, that the action or threat of action must be to advance a political, religious, racial or ideological cause. These four cases are summarised below but are not included in CST's database.

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<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Hall QC, ['What is the threat to the UK today?'](#), Speech given to Bright Blue, 7 July 2021

## CASE STUDIES

### Kyle Davies plot – 2018

In September 2019, Kyle Davies, aged 19 from Wotton in Gloucester, was sentenced to 19 years imprisonment after being found guilty in July of attempting to import a gun and ammunition with the intent to endanger life.<sup>59</sup> He also pleaded guilty on counts of evading the prohibition on the importation of firearms and ammunition and on counts of making indecent images of children. Davies was accused of planning a shooting attack that was inspired by Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik and the two shooters at Columbine High School. However, a CPS prosecutor stated that, *"Davies' notes did not identify a target and did not demonstrate an ideology or aim that would support a charge under terrorism legislation"*.<sup>60</sup>

### Thomas Wyllie and Alex Bolland plot – 2017

In 2018, Wyllie and Bolland were convicted for planning to murder teachers and pupils at their high school in North Yorkshire.<sup>61</sup> They were 14 years old when they plotted their attack and had aspired to re-enact the Columbine High School shooting. The prosecution claimed that Wyllie's diary contained far-right rhetoric and that he was motivated by a *"far right-wing"* and *"twisted ideology"*.

### Liam Lyburd plot – 2014

Liam Lyburd, then aged 19, from Newcastle, plotted a bombing and shooting massacre at his former school Newcastle College.<sup>62</sup> In 2015, he was jailed for life with a minimum term of eight years. Lyburd was convicted of possessing an arsenal of weapons including pipe bombs and a gun with intent to endanger life. He was interested in Anders Breivik and US school shooters, but his motive was not considered ideological.

### Michael Piggin plot – 2013

In 2013, Michael Piggin, an 18-year-old with Asperger's syndrome, was arrested on suspicion of planning a Columbine-style attack. He had stockpiled pipe and petrol bombs in his bedroom in Loughborough but denied the charges. A jury at his retrial failed to reach a verdict on terrorism charges, and he faced no further prosecution. Piggin pleaded guilty to possessing an offensive weapon and possessing an article for a purpose connected with terrorism. In July 2014, he was detained indefinitely under the Mental Health Act.<sup>63</sup> Two of Piggin's friends were sentenced to community orders after they admitted possessing petrol bombs and bomb parts.

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59 ['Gloucester teenager found guilty of attempting to import a gun and ammunition with intent to endanger life'](#), South West Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU), 22 July 2019

60 Ibid

61 [Regina v. Thomas Wyllie & Alex Bolland](#), Sentencing remarks of Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb DBE, Judiciary of England and Wales, 20 July 2018

62 ['Newcastle teenager given life sentence for bomb plot'](#), Crown Prosecution Service, 25 September 2015

63 ['Michael Piggin detained under Mental Health Act'](#), *Guardian*, 4 July 2014

## ANNEX III - DEFINITIONS: TARGET TYPES

TARGET TYPE	DEFINITION
<b>Critical infrastructure</b>	Facilities, systems, sites, information, people, networks and processes necessary for a country to function
<b>Government building</b>	Facility that houses a branch of government or state institution
<b>Iconic location*</b>	Building or location that is widely known or recognised
<b>Individual civilian</b>	Private citizens who are attacked, either premeditated or opportunistic
<b>Indoor venue*</b>	Building facility with the potential for holding crowds, such as a stadium, conference hall, supermarket, shop, restaurant, bar
<b>Place of worship*</b>	Facility used for religious services
<b>Police-military-security</b>	Public authorities, such as police officers, soldiers, security personnel, emergency responders
<b>Politician</b>	Elected official or electoral candidate
<b>Public area*</b>	Outdoor location that attracts small or large crowds, such as parks, high streets, outdoor restaurants and bars
<b>Royal</b>	Royal family and royal residences
<b>Targeted minorities</b>	Individuals or groups targeted for their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other protected characteristic
<b>Transport</b>	Public transportation, such as trains, transit system, buses, aviation
<b>Undetermined</b>	In the UK, some terrorist offenders have been found guilty of attack planning despite the offenders not identifying targets prior to arrest, as well as cases in which authorities could not determine the target(s)

\* The target types of iconic location, indoor venue, place of worship and public area are often openly accessible crowded spaces and are therefore considered soft targets. Many of these are leisure venues that are difficult to harden without fundamentally changing their intended purpose.