

G4S THREAT REPORT

AUGUST 2021

National Security

On 12 August, six people, including a child were killed in a mass shooting in Plymouth, southwest England. Police have claimed that the shooter's belief in "incel culture" played a role in the attack. Incel is short for "involuntary celibate", where people who define themselves as incel say they cannot attract a partner despite the fact that they want to be in a relationship.

The movement has been linked to serious violence around the world and some incels advocate violence against women - and the men who are in happy relationships.

A police investigation found that the shooter recently got his firearm returned, after it was previously confiscated over allegations of assault. The case has brought into focus the licensing and certification of guns in the UK, and whether the country's gun laws need to change.

Lord Stevens, an ex-Metropolitan Police commissioner, said that applicants for gun licences should face a 'trawling' of their online content to understand more about them and their views. The United Kingdom has one of the lowest gun homicide rates in the world, and mass shootings are rare. This was the first mass shooting in the country for 11 years.

Civil Unrest

As in previous months, **environmental activism** remained a key issue across the UK in August, and members of the Extinction Rebellion (XR) activist group continued to stage acts of protest across the country. On 24 August, XR began a new round of protest action in London, entitled the 'Impossible Rebellion', which is due to continue for at least two weeks. Several thousand people attended the first day of protests and numbers will likely increase significantly over the coming weekends ahead of the COP26 scheduled to take place in **Glasgow** between 1 and 12 November. Demonstrators have erected a 13 foot table in Covent Garden in central **London** as a focal point for activists to gather and discuss climate issues. Police arrested eight people on the first day of the protests for failing to disperse by 1900hrs but the demonstration passed off peacefully.

The latest round of protests was triggered by a recent report published by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which concluded human activity such as burning fossil fuels has directly contributed to climate change. Over the next two weeks demonstrators intend to gather in central **London** and the Square Mile in the City of **London** and will block roads and stage demonstrations outside the offices of companies perceived as contributing to climate change. Goods deliveries to businesses in these areas have already been affected by the disruptions but police have said they will allow the demonstrators to continue. However, the negative image of fossil fuels portrayed by the group has already led some companies to disassociate themselves from the industry, with Channel 4 dropping BP as a sponsor for the Paralympic games.

Protests related to COVID-19 continued to take place after this date in the UK and Ireland. On 23 August, hundreds of people gathered outside broadcaster ITN's headquarters in **London** to denounce the government's plans to introduce vaccine passports, which they claim would restrict the movements of people who choose not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Images posted on social media by ITN staff showed a small group of protesters who forced their way into the building into the reception, with police standing between them and security barriers into the main building. This follows an incident on 9 August, when a group of anti-vaccine demonstrators tried to gain access to the BBC's old headquarters in White City, west **London**.

Natural Disasters/The Environment

Heavy rains led to severe flash floods across parts of the UK in early August, as scientists claim an increased frequency in extreme weather, such as flooding, is linked to the effects of climate change. On 9 August, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change, released Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis, the first of its three-part Sixth Assessment Report. The report has presented new and stronger evidence that extreme weather events such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall, droughts and hurricanes are becoming more frequent and more likely as a result of the climate crisis. As major environmental disasters continue to take place across the world, climate change will likely magnify existing tensions, create insecurity and continue to fuel civil unrest, likely with more disruptive tactics.

Political

On 18 August, British Parliament was recalled back from their summer break for one day to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, following a takeover by Taliban of Kabul. On 14 August, Taliban militants entered Kabul and took control of the presidential palace after former President Ashraf Ghani left the country. The group took control of the capital without any military clashes following the takeover of several provincial capitals in the previous two weeks. Since the Taliban took control of Kabul on 14 August, the US and its allies have evacuated over 82,000 people from Afghanistan. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, meanwhile, stated that the UK has evacuated 10,000 people from Kabul since that date and it is likely that evacuations will end on 31 August, the deadline for US troops to leave Afghanistan.

Cyber Security

According to newly published data collated by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, individuals and organisations in the UK reported losses of GBP 1.3 billion to fraud and cyber-crime since the start of the year. This is a significant increase from the GBP 414 million reported the previous year. The largest increase in cyber-crime was seen during the first quarter of 2021, which coincides with the UK's second major COVID-19 lockdown.

The most common forms of cyber-crime so far this year have been malicious hacking, fraudulent use of social media accounts and email scams and the biggest losses specifically were reported in Tarian (Wales), followed by London and South West England. Cyber-crime has significantly increase since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to working from home, with cyber security measures often not as robust at home as in office settings.

International Security

August has seen an uptick in illegal border crossing attempts, largely driven by better maritime and weather conditions during the summer months. On 21 August, 828 migrants in 30 small vessels were detained while attempting to cross the English Channel from mainland Europe, setting a new record for crossings reported in a single day. This surpassed the previous total of 592, on 12 August, highlighting concerns around border security and the possibility of people entering the UK without the necessary biometric checks. UK border authorities have labelled these crossings as "unnecessary" and have promised to act with their European counterparts to tackle the organised criminal groups facilitating entry to the UK. The Home Office has vowed to increase prison sentences for those who try and enter the UK illegally to four years, and those who "facilitate" crossings to get a life sentence.

Concerns over immigration increased this week, following the UK government's announcement of a resettlement program that will allow a total of 20,000 Afghan refugees to live in the UK. The movement of migrants from conflict zones, particularly Afghanistan, has raised concerns that people posing a "direct threat" to the UK could have been allowed to enter the UK.



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