

G4S THREAT REPORT

JULY 2021

National Security

The UK government confirmed on 20 July that the new National Security and Investment Act 2021 will come into effect from 4 January 2022.

Under the new law, investors and businesses will be required to notify acquisitions of qualifying entities in one or more of the 17 sectors of the UK economy defined as sensitive. Notifications will be made to a new dedicated government unit, known as the Investment Security Unit (ISU).

The sectors impacted by the new law include civil nuclear, artificial intelligence, data infrastructure, defense, energy and satellite and space technologies among others deemed sensitive to national security. The law is aimed at giving the government additional powers to investigate and intervene in mergers, acquisitions and other business deals that could potentially pose a threat to the UK's national security.

Civil Unrest

Despite the government lifting all mandatory COVID-19 restrictions on 19 July, protests related to COVID-19 continued to take place after this date in London and other UK cities. On 24 July, several thousand people gathered in London for a 'Freedom Rally' to denounce the governments' plans to introduce vaccine passports, which they claim would restrict the movements of people who choose not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

The protest coincided with similar demonstrations taking place worldwide as part of the 'World Wide Rally for Freedom'. In Ireland, at least 1,500 people gathered in Dublin to denounce the current COVID-19 restrictions, which prohibit those who have not received two vaccine doses from entering indoor hospitality venues, while in Belfast several hundred people gathered to voice their opposition to lockdowns, masks and vaccines. Protests over the same issue led to clashes between demonstrators and police in France, and it is highly likely that further protests will take place in the UK if the government seeks to make vaccines mandatory for healthcare or other workers.

Separately, several thousand people marched in London on 24 July to protest against inequality in the LGBT+ community. Protesters marching as part of the 'Reclaim Pride' movement called on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to improve LGBT+ rights in the UK, with a particular emphasis on Trans rights, which the group says the government has neglected. London's official pride march is due to take place in September 2021.

As in previous months, environmental activism remained a key issue across the UK in July, and members of the Extinction Rebellion (XR) activist group continued to stage acts of protest across the country. Members of the group staged a protest in Milton, Cambridgeshire on 30 July against a planned gas pipeline. The group also marched through Wandsworth in south London in July to protest against what they perceive as Wandsworth Council's inaction on air pollution in the borough. The group is almost certain to continue holding small-scale demonstrations through 2021, but has not announced plans for a coordinated countrywide campaign, as it has done in previous years.

Natural Disasters/The Environment

Heavy rains led to severe flash floods across parts of the UK in July, as scientists claim the country is already experiencing the effects of disruptive climate change. Climate studies indicate that the UK has become 0.9 degrees Celsius warmer and 6 percent wetter over the past 30 years, with more extreme weather such as heatwaves and flooding likely to continue in the future. In response to the recent flooding, the government has announced plans to spend approximately GBP 2.5 billion on flood defence over the next six years. Heavy flooding led to several deaths across parts of Germany and Belgium in July, highlighting the ongoing risk from extreme weather events across Europe.

Political

The Liberal Democrats have called on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to recall parliament for MPs to debate the issue of vaccine passports, after a wording change on the NHS Covid app changed to include a 'domestic' section, which tells users they may need to show their pass and confirm the vaccination status at some locations.

The Liberal Democrats have said the change amounts to the government bringing in vaccine passports 'by stealth' and without the consent of MPs, who the government had previously said would vote on any changes to vaccine requirements. The issue of vaccine passports will likely continue to cause political friction in the coming months as businesses push back against mandatory vaccines for some sectors.

Cyber Security

The UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has announced GBP 700,000 of funding to promote cyber security growth across the country.

The UK Cyber Cluster Collaboration (UKC3), an organisation aimed to support economic growth in the cyber security sector, will use the funding to support businesses in enhancing their cyber resilience. The investment is expected to provide opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing across the industry.

International Security

China has said its Navy is in a high state of readiness in the South China Sea as the UK's Carrier Strike Group, led by the HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier enters the contested area. China has warned the UK not to carry out any 'improper acts', highlighting the ongoing tensions between the two countries as the UK welcomes several thousand former Hong Kong amid a Chinese crackdown on the island.

The UK government has estimated that more than 100,000 people will arrive in the UK from Hong Kong in 2021, and will be eligible to apply for British citizenship after five years, leading to criticism from China who has accused the UK of meddling in domestic affairs.



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