

G4S THREAT REPORT

MARCH 2021

National Security

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) confirmed in March that they have moved a worker from Larne port, along with his family, to a secure location after the individual received death threats from loyalist paramilitary group. The move is the first relocation of a terrorist target in Northern Ireland since 2011 and marks a significant escalation in tensions in the region.

The threats come amid the ongoing debate around the Northern Ireland Protocol, which sees checks on goods coming into Northern Ireland. Loyalist groups and paramilitary groups have condemned the NI protocol, claiming NI should not be subject to checks as it is part of the UK. In February, the EU, as well as the UK and Irish governments had condemned threats made against port workers for carrying out their jobs and the PSNI had increased the frequency of patrols to ensure the safety of staff after a brief suspension of checks.

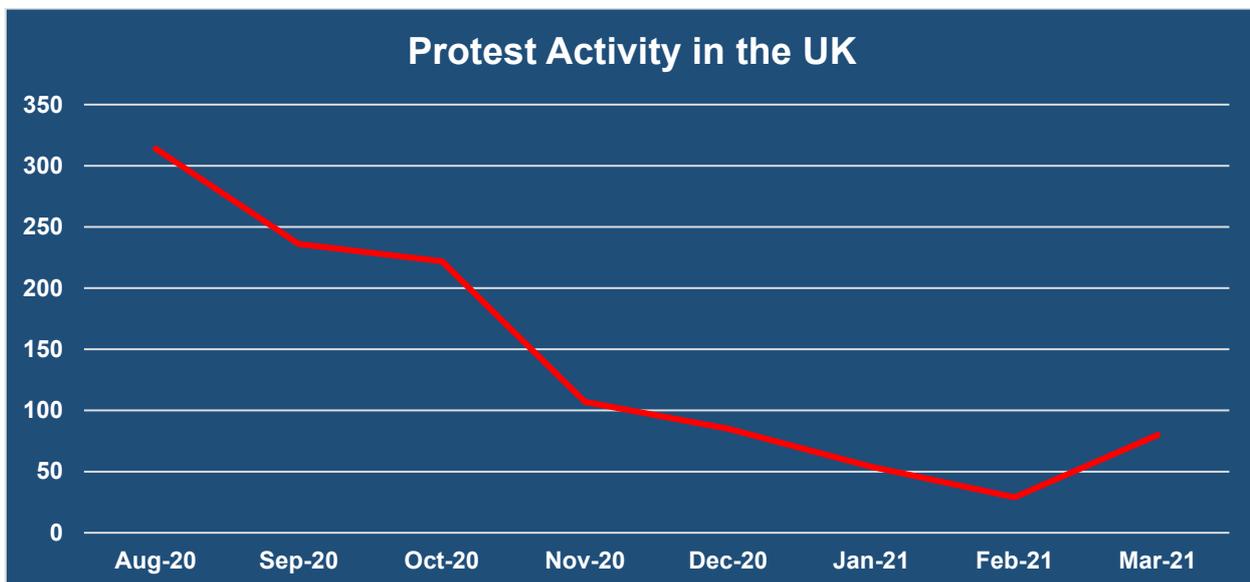
Amid heightened paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland, loyalist paramilitary groups have also made threats against journalists, including a Sunday World crime reporter whose name appeared on a wall beside an image of a target. While the rhetoric has so far failed to manifest as a physical attack, it is plausible that rogue elements of paramilitary groups may seek to target those who oppose their views.

Civil Unrest

Protests throughout the month of March predominantly centered on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts bill, which is currently under debate in parliament. Critics claim the bill would give the police additional powers to crack down on protests and other forms of civil unrest, and have argued the bill would restrict citizens' ability to protest freely. The first protests against the bill broke out in London after video footage and images showed police using heavy-handed tactics to remove participants from a vigil for Sarah Everard, a woman allegedly murdered by a police officer after failing to return home in early March.

The following day, several thousand protesters gathered outside Scotland Yard and marched to Parliament Square, chanting slogans including "kill the bill". Protesters then marched through central London and staged further demonstrations in central London early into the following week, disrupting traffic in the area. Protests against the bill later broke out in Bristol, attended by several hundred people and leading to clashes between police and demonstrators. Police arrested at least three people for arson attacks against police vehicles and Bridewell police station. Similar protests against the bill have taken place in Manchester and other cities in the UK, and organisers have announced plans to host further demonstrations countrywide over the Easter bank holiday weekend.

Separately, protests took place in Batley, West Yorkshire in late March after a teacher showed images of the Prophet Muhammed during a blasphemy lesson in a religious education class. The school suspended the teacher amid an investigation into the incident. Demonstrators said the images had offended the Muslim community in the area, sparking a debate about subjects covered in religious education classes.



Natural Disasters

Storms and heavy winds affected parts of the UK in March. On 11 March, heavy winds measuring 90mph overturned a lorry on the A69 between Hexham and Corbridge in Northumberland, disrupting traffic in the area for several hours. During the same week, heavy winds also overturned a lorry on the A53 in Stoke-on-Trent and disrupted train services in Tonbridge after winds blew garden furniture on the tracks. The adverse weather also disrupted ferry services between Dover and Calais in France. Weather across the UK improved into late March, with the country recording high temperatures of 24 degrees on 30 March.

Political

On 22 March, MPs voted against an amendment to the Fire Safety Bill from the House of Lords aimed at protecting leaseholders and tenants from the financial costs of replacing highly flammable cladding. The Lords had proposed the government pay for repairs and then recoup the money from developers, but MPs have claimed the amendment was unworkable and would lead to delays in making buildings safe. Since 2017, leaseholders have paid upwards of several thousand pounds per property for building safety works such as new cladding and changes to emergency exits. Opposition MPs have criticised the government for failing to take responsibility for the issue and the bill has not returned to the Lords for further debate.

Cyber Security

Several cyber-attacks have targeted businesses and organisations across the UK in March. A series of ransomware attacks have targeted schools across the country including the Harris Federation schools in London and Essex and the Redbourne Upper School and Community College in Bedfordshire. On 17 March, the University of Northampton confirmed it was targeted by a cyber-attack against its IT and telephone systems.

The UK's cyber security centre has previously warned of a spike in the number of attacks targeting educational establishments. Another attack in March targeted the Ministry of Defence (MoD) academy website, based in Shrivenham, Oxfordshire. The attack knocked out the academy's IT network, and media reporting quoted sources as saying the attack came from a 'foreign power'. Approximately 39 percent of UK businesses experienced a cyber-attack over the past 12 months.

International Security

The UK and the EU remain in an ongoing debate about COVID-19 vaccine exports. The EU's internal market commissioner has said the EU would block the export of AstraZeneca vaccines produced within its borders after the company failed to meet its commitment to the bloc.

The UK has urged the EU to show solidarity in its response as blocking the shipments will likely slow the UK's vaccination rate. However, the UK's past-paced vaccine rollout since December 2020 has enabled it to begin easing restrictions while countries such as France reimpose lockdowns. Passengers arriving in the UK from red list countries are required to undergo a 14-day hotel quarantine as part of attempts by the government to prevent new strains of the virus from circulating in the country.



CONTACT US

UK: 08459 000 447
enquiries@uk.g4s.com

2nd Floor, Chancery House,
St. Nicholas Way,
Sutton,
Surrey,
England, SM1 1JB

Ireland: 1 890 447 447
g4ssales@ie.g4s.com