

G4S THREAT REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2021

National Security

In September, Sadiq Khan announced an additional GBP 400,000 investment to support communities in countering extremism, tackling the rise in hate crime offences and keeping vulnerable groups safe from radicalisation. The investment is part of the Shared Endeavour Fund, launched in 2020, which aims to deliver projects that tackle all forms of violent extremism.

The announcement comes as lockdown restrictions have contributed to a growing risk of radicalisation, with more people spending time online at home, away from support networks and at greater risk of exposure to harmful content. There has also been a rise in online disinformation and conspiracy theories, which has been used by extremists to create division and promote hate and violence.

Cressida Dick, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, has also urged tech companies to take a more active role in protecting people against terrorism and other forms of online harm, as extremists are increasingly relying on the use of technology to influence and radicalise people.

Civil Unrest

As in previous months, **environmental activism** remained the key driver of protest activity across the UK in September, and members of the Extinction Rebellion (XR) activist group and Insulate Britain continued to stage acts of protest across the country. Protest activity by XR declined compared to the month of August as XR's new round of protest action, entitled the "Impossible Rebellion" concluded in early September. The two weeks of protests saw protesters targeting businesses and blocking roads throughout London, resulting in more than 500 arrests. However, the frequency of protests and attendance are both likely to increase significantly in October ahead of the COP26, scheduled to take place in **Glasgow** between 1 and 12 November.

Throughout the month of September, activists from **Insulate Britain** carried out a series of disruptive demonstrations along the M25 and major roads in the southeast, causing travel disruptions for tens of thousands of people. More than 200 people have been arrested. The group, an offshoot of Extinction Rebellion, is calling for the government to insulate homes in the UK to help cut carbon emissions. It wants heat-saving measures installed in social housing by 2025 and all homes by 2030.

Protests related to **COVID-19** continued to take place after in September in the **UK** and **Ireland**. Throughout September, hundreds of people gathered in London, Cambridge, Newcastle and other main cities to oppose COVID-19 **vaccination for children** and 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. Following the government's decision to extend the vaccine rollout to all children aged 12 to 15 across the UK from October, anti-vaccine groups have also organised demonstrations targeting schools across the country. These groups are using the messenger app, Telegram, to encourage parents to gather outside schools to protest against the government's vaccination program.

Natural Disasters/The Environment

In September, the UK announced it will commit GBP 3.1 million in aid to minimise the humanitarian impact of natural disasters. Part of the funding will be targeted to support NGOs anticipate and react to disasters in countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, DR Congo, Pakistan, Philippines and Zimbabwe. During the announcement, UK Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, James Cleverly, warned that conflict, COVID-19 and climate change are driving unprecedented levels of humanitarian need and urged aid agencies and donors to "do humanitarian aid differently". He argued for the use of technology and forecasting to pre-empt disasters such as flooding, drought, or disease outbreak, to reduce their impact on the most vulnerable.

The UK government also stated its commitment to protecting vulnerable communities from disasters, as well as addressing, minimising and averting the loss and damage caused by the impacts of climate change. With natural hazards increasing in both frequency and severity as a result of climate change, preparedness and disaster risk finance have been gaining increased attention in the government's agenda.

Political

On 20 September, the UK government held an emergency meeting with the energy industry and consumer groups as gas reached record price levels. Prices of natural gas have increased by 70 percent since August 2021 and 203 percent since January. Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to reassure over the gas supply shortages that will result in higher power bills for consumers during the coming winter and the possibility of more small British energy firms collapsing from higher costs.

While there is currently no shortage of fuel, the shortage of lorry drivers – which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and post-Brexit immigration rules – has led petrol companies to warn of rationing, which in turn led to long queues at petrol stations. In an effort to mitigate the crisis, the government announced that temporary visas will be granted for HGV drivers.

Cyber Security

In Ireland, a new report by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) found that the centre is “under-resourced and over-tasked” compared to its global counterparts, and lacks the “organisational design or capacity to achieve all of the objectives” of Ireland’s cybersecurity strategy. The report follows a large ransomware attack that targeted Ireland’s health system in May 2021, which resulted in a loss of EUR 100 million. A study released earlier this year ranked Ireland as the sixth-least cyber-secure nation in Europe and among the worst when it came to commitments to cybersecurity.

Head of UK’s Strategic Command, General Sir Patrick Sanders, announced that the UK’s armed forces are planning to make significant investments in cybersecurity capabilities and skills over the next several years. He stated that to build an effective strategy, it is necessary to change operations consider all five dimensions of warfare, which includes sea, land, air, space and cyber. This re-evaluation ranges from prioritizing the protection of digital communications, bolstering defensive and offensive cybersecurity capabilities, and building skills.

International Security

On 15 September the US, Australia and the UK signed a new security agreement, known as AUKUS, which will allow Australia to build a fleet of at least eight nuclear-powered submarines. The precise form of assistance will be defined over the next 18 months; however, it will involve the sharing of cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence and undersea technology. The pact is seen as an attempt by the three nations to counter increased regional tensions caused by the rapid expansion of China’s military capabilities.

China has condemned the agreement as “extremely irresponsible” and the deal has created a major diplomatic crisis with France. France, who saw a multi-billion dollar military contract to purchase submarines cancelled as a result of the agreement, recalled its ambassadors to the US and Australia shortly after the announcement. The French government also cancelled a defense summit, which was due to take place between the French and British ministers, escalating tensions between both nations.



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