

# G4S THREAT REPORT

APRIL 2021

## National Security

On 12 April, the UK Counter-Terrorism (CT) Police issued a statement warning businesses and the public to remain vigilant against the threat of terrorism as lockdown restrictions ease during the summer months.

The UK security services downgraded the country's threat level from 'Severe' to 'Substantial' in February 2021, meaning an attack is likely. CT police have warned that the easing of lockdown restrictions could provide an opportunity for terrorist actors to operate.

Crowded areas remain an attractive target for terrorists' intent on carrying out mass-casualty attacks, and the easing of restrictions will see large numbers of people once again gathering in urban areas. CT police have also called on businesses to update their security plans and carry out risk-assessments on any new areas such as outdoor spaces.

## Civil Unrest

Despite the ongoing easing of **COVID-19 lockdown** restrictions in the UK in line with government's lockdown roadmap, anti-lockdown protests continued to occur in April. On 24 April, several thousand anti-lockdown protesters gathered on Oxford Street in central London for a 'Unite for Freedom' demonstration. The demonstration included individuals opposed to lockdown restrictions, as well as those opposed to mitigation measures such as mandatory face coverings, social distancing and vaccines.

Other participants also expressed concern around the potential for vaccine passports and an overall curtailment of freedoms by the government. The government is due to lift all COVID-19 restrictions on 21 June; however, it is likely that mitigation measures such as mask wearing will remain in place past this date and restrictions on international travel are almost certain to continue throughout the summer months. It is therefore likely that further protests over these issues will continue in the short-term.

Protests related to the ongoing **'Kill the Bill' movement** also continued to take place in April. A wide variety of interest groups including climate activists, gender equality and Black Lives Matter have all contributed to the protests which are calling on the government not to pass the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. Opponents of the bill claim it will give police additional powers to stop protest activity, a move they say will restrict the rights of citizens to stage protests. Police clashed with protesters in London and Bristol, and arrested several participants at protests over the past month. Organisers have called for countrywide demonstrations over the issue on 1 May.

Climate activist group **Extinction Rebellion (XR)** continued their campaign to raise awareness around environmental issues in April and staged several high-profile events in the UK. On 23 April, members of the group dumped fake coal outside the Lloyds of London offices on Lime Street in the City of London to protest against the insurer's support for the fossil fuel industry.

The publicity stunt follows two previous acts of vandalism by the group in April, when they smashed the windows of the HSBC headquarters in Canary Wharf and a Barclays bank in central London. Lloyds has asked members to stop providing insurance cover for thermal coal, oil sands or Arctic energy exploration from January 2022, and the group's response is likely to embolden XR activists to continue carrying out actions in the UK through 2021.

## Natural Disasters

The UK recorded an average of 13 days of frost in April 2021, the highest number in 60 years. The unseasonable cold snap has prompted fears for crops such as onions. The cold weather has also affected livestock farmers due to a lack of grass for used for animal feeding.

However, the impacts on the UK agricultural sector are less significant than in neighboring France, where frost has destroyed vineyard crops, leading the French government to pledge EUR 1bn in aid to vineyards and farmers.

## Political

Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leader Arlene Foster has stepped down as Northern Ireland First Minister and will resign her role as party leader from 28 May. The move comes after 80 percent of DUP members in Stormont and Westminster signed a letter of no confidence in her leadership.

Pressure has mounted on Foster since the UK's withdrawal from the EU in January 2021, which led to customs checks in Northern Ireland and intense criticism from loyalist groups who felt Brexit had alienated them from the rest of the UK. In March, riots led by loyalist youth groups broke out across the region, leading to the worst violence seen in Northern Ireland in the past decade.

## Cyber Security

Cyber-attacks by ransomware gangs have targeted businesses, schools and universities across the UK and globally over the past 12 months. In response, an alliance of government agencies and technology firms known as the Ransomware Task Force has released a new framework, which aims to disrupt ransomware groups by targeting their financial operations. The UK's Cybersecurity Centre and National Crime Agency (NCA) have contributed to the project, along with Europol, the FBI and Amazon.

## International Security

International aid groups have criticised a decision by the UK government to reduce foreign aid spending from 0.7 per cent of gross national income to 0.5 per cent. A spokesperson for a Syrian NGO has said the move will push a greater number of Syrians into poverty and potentially lead to people seeking income from groups such as Islamic State (IS) who operate in the region and pose a direct threat to UK national security.

On 29 April, the National Security and Investment Act came into law in the UK. The bill strengthens the government's ability to investigate and intervene in mergers, acquisitions and other deals that could pose a threat to UK security. The bill is also aimed at streamlining the investment screening process for investors and businesses.



## CONTACT US

UK: 08459 000 447  
[enquiries@uk.g4s.com](mailto: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](mailto:g4ssales@ie.g4s.com)