

G4S THREAT REPORT

JUNE 2021

National Security

The UK government announced this month that it intends to recruit more than 1,500 new trainee probation officers to support the Probation Service.

The increase in staffing numbers is aimed at improving the supervision of offenders which the government has said will likely lead to reduced levels of crime by repeat offenders. The new recruits will be added to the 1,000 already recruited so far over the past year; a record number in the history of the probation service.

The increase in funding for the probation service is likely linked to failings highlighted by the November 2019 Fishmoger's Hall attack in London when an individual on parole killed two people, prompting an inquiry into how the probation service engages with those who have been released from prison after serving time for terrorism-related offences.

The inquiry into the attack, published on 28 May, concluded that failings by the police, MI5 and the probation service all contributed to the attack.

Civil Unrest

In June, protest activity in the UK centered on the 47th G7 summit, which took place in Cornwall from 11 to 13 June. Activists from a wide variety of interest groups gathered in the area to stage protests. Environmental activists featured prominently during the summit, as G7 leaders discussed climate change and the environment as part of their talks. Activists from Extinction Rebellion (XR), and other environmental activist group held a march attended by several hundred people in Falmouth.

Another group known as Surfers Against Sewage held a paddle-out at Gyllyngvase beach near Falmouth to protest against ocean pollution, attended by several hundred people. In Falmouth, activists also staged protests over issues including Palestine, Kashmir and the ongoing conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia. Police praised protesters for remaining peaceful during the summit, citing the “festival” atmosphere in the area during the summit.

Various activists groups also staged protests in London to coincide with the G7 summit. Several thousand people marched towards Downing Street on 12 May as part of the “Resist G7: Day of Action for International Justice”, including groups expressing solidarity with Palestine which was attended by former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Anti-lockdown protests continued to take place across the UK in June after the government pushed back the June 21 date for removing lockdown restrictions. Police arrested at least 14 people at a demonstration near Westminster, London claiming participants became hostile and obstructive. Further delays to easing restrictions or any restrictions on freedom of movement for those who do not receive the vaccine will almost certainly trigger further protests in the short to medium term.

Natural Disasters

A report completed by the ABI (Association of British Insurers) and Flood Re has concluded that flooding presents the greatest natural disaster risk to properties in the UK. The report found that one in six properties in England and Wales are at risk of flooding, compared with one in ten across Scotland and one in 34 for Northern Ireland.

The findings are released ahead of a consultation on the UK government’s spending review, in which departments outline their resource and capital budgets. The director of ABI said that the report makes a “compelling case” for increased spending on flood defences nationwide. The findings show that poorly maintained flood defences have a reduced lifespan which ultimately increases their cost. This comes after six of the last ten wettest years on record have occurred since 1998, highlighting the risk posed to properties in the wake of climate change.

Political

Edwin Poots resigned as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in Northern Ireland (NI) on 18 June, just one month after stepping into the role. Poots is due to remain in the role until his successor is elected. Poots has almost certainly resigned due to opposition against his nomination of MLA Paul Givan as Northern Ireland’s new first minister by members of the DUP. His resignation comes amid a period of heightened tension in NI over the Northern Ireland protocol.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has accepted an apology by UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock after pictures of Mr Hancock showing an alleged affair with an aide surfaced in late June. A Labour party spokeswoman has called for Hancock’s resignation, claiming an affair with an taxpayer funded aide whom he personally appointed is an abuse of power and conflict of interest.

Cyber Security

The Chief Executive of the National Cyber Security Centre, which is part of Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), has said that hackers carrying out ransomware attacks now pose a greater risk to UK national security than online espionage by hostile states.

She noted that cyber criminals pose a risk to citizens and businesses, including suppliers of critical national infrastructure. The number of ransomware attacks globally has increased by more than 60 percent over the past year, with notable attacks in 2021 targeting Ireland's Health Service Executive and the Colonial Pipeline in the US. At the G7 summit, world leaders pledged to address the shared threat from criminal ransomware attacks.

International Security

On 13 May, the UK placed sanctions on Libyan al-Kaniyat militia group and its leaders, Mohamed al-Kani and Abdurahem al-Kani, citing human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law.

The sanctions involve asset freezes and travel bans, and UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has said the sanctions are aimed at holding the group and its leaders to account for their actions. The group is affiliated with General Khalifa Haftar, a Libyan warlord who opposes the UN-backed government in Tripoli, but who is supported by the UAE, Russia and Egypt.



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