











# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Our country - and all countries - have to confront a generation-long challenge to defeat Al-Qaeda inspired terrorist violence.” UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, 25 July 2007.

## **1 THE UK IS NO STRANGER TO TERRORISM BUT THE CURRENT RISE IN HOME-GROWN ISLAMIST EXTREMISM PRESENTS AN UNPRECEDENTED THREAT TO BUSINESS AND SOCIETY AT LARGE**

With a focus on mass casualties and major economic damage combined with the use of suicide bombers, home-grown terrorism has the potential to have a significant impact on the business community. Any organisation can find itself caught up in a terrorist episode and not just as a result of physical proximity, something which is often underplayed

## **2 ANALYSIS OF INCIDENTS TO DATE IDENTIFIES A NUMBER OF COMMON THEMES WHICH CAN HELP COMPANIES TO MANAGE THE RISK**

Some businesses and organisations are more vulnerable than others to terrorism, and a focus on certain targets using specific techniques means that the risk is likely to have a relatively predictable impact on the private sector. This analysis can be helpful in managing the risk at organisation level.

## **3 BUSINESS NEEDS TO GET BETTER AT GATHERING INFORMATION FROM THE RIGHT SOURCES AND USING IT TO GUIDE STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS**

Government departments and agencies and other independent sources all offer a wide range of expertise and have an appetite for dialogue with business. They can provide high-quality advice and guidance for companies and are often underused.

## **4 CORPORATE RESPONSE TO HOME-GROWN TERRORISM RISK ESSENTIALLY INVOLVES THE STRENGTHENING OF EXISTING RESILIENCE MECHANISMS BUT NEEDS A POSITIVE MINDSET TOWARDS SECURITY**

A corporate culture which sees security as a business enabler, a well thought-out HR policy, and effective business continuity planning all play an important role in protecting against terrorism.

## **5 IN THE LONG-TERM, ERADICATION OF THE HOME-GROWN TERRORISM THREAT IS A GENERATIONAL CHALLENGE WHICH REQUIRES AN ACTIVE PARTNERSHIP ACROSS SOCIETY**

The Al-Qaeda ideology has taken a hold among young Islamic populations, including that of the UK, and eradicating it will take time and sustained effort from government, the private sector and wider society.

## **6 THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO BOTH THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORT AGAINST TERRORISM**

The private sector can do a lot to help with the engagement of Islamic communities whose young people are the most vulnerable to the Al-Qaeda ideology. Investment and HR decisions designed to help marginalised and economically disadvantaged communities, active engagement in counter-radicalisation activity and involvement in public debate on issues relating to terrorism will not by themselves solve the problem, nor provide immunity from attack. But they all have an important part to play in creating a climate which is less receptive to the Al-Qaeda message.

# PART 1

## MEASURING THE HOME-GROWN TERRORIST THREAT

The UK has long faced terrorism; however, the current strain of “home-grown” terrorist plots presents a particularly menacing and constant threat. Broadly unpredictable and eager to cause mass casualties, extremist Islamist terrorism in the UK has the potential to inflict significant damage on the business community. This report assesses the current information on home-grown terrorism in an objective way to provide business leaders with some key points on how to mitigate the direct threat to their operations and to offer ideas on how they can help mitigate the threat to society as a whole.

A number of consistent themes and factors can be seen amongst “home-grown” plots in the UK in particular. The list below draws on information from recent attempted or successful plots to draw out a few key themes to bear in mind when considering the level of threat that your particular business might face:

### **1** MULTIPLE CO-ORDINATED ATTACKS AGAINST HIGH-PROFILE ICONIC TARGETS

Including financial institutions, nightclubs, shopping centres and other symbols of ‘decadent’ western consumerism; and critical national infrastructure nodes.

### **2** A CONSISTENT FOCUS ON MASS TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Both domestic and international.



## **3 AN EMPHASIS ON MASS CASUALTIES**

A readiness to resort to suicide-bombing techniques.

## **4 A DESIRE FOR HIGH MEDIA IMPACT**

Either through choice of iconic target, or especially brutal tactics.

## **5 A TENDENCY FOR ATTACKS TO OCCUR IN LATE SUMMER**

Possibly explained by the fact that terrorist groups may have spent the spring preparing attacks in camps in Northwest Pakistan.

While by no means comprehensive, this list gives business leaders some key pointers when trying to step back and analyse exactly what the threat might mean for any given individual business.

# MEASURING THE HOME-GROWN TERRORIST THREAT

At various times during the 20th century the United Kingdom faced terrorist threats: Russian anarchists, Irish republicans, Middle Eastern groups and the supporters of various causes, such as animal rights, have all perpetrated acts of terrorism on the UK mainland. With the successful implementation of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, the threat from Irish republicanism is now much diminished.

Animal rights groups have undertaken acts of sabotage against individuals and companies thought to be involved with or to benefit from experiments on live animals. To date attacks have been carefully targeted and such groups show no inclination to engage in indiscriminate violence. Moreover, recent evidence suggests these groups are losing what popular appeal they once enjoyed. Anti-globalisation groups both in the UK and elsewhere have shown a readiness to engage in direct action which has the propensity to become violent. But none of these groups have yet undertaken activity that can be characterised as terrorism.

At the start of the 21st century the main terrorist threat in the UK comes from Islamist<sup>4</sup> jihadist groups seeking to promote the agenda of Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda organisation. All of these groups are self-forming and predominantly "home-grown", many act autonomously, but some have links to senior figures in Al-Qaeda safe havens who provide them with training and direction. Unlike many previous terrorist organisations whose objectives have been described as "a lot of people-watching but not many dead", Islamist jihadist groups aspire to cause mass casualties and major economic damage. Their readiness to resort to suicide bombing techniques makes them harder to stop than previous generations of terrorists, and they pose a serious and long-term threat to the security of the United Kingdom.

## MEASURING THE THREAT TODAY

The Security Service (MI5) and the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), who are responsible for setting the threat level in the United Kingdom, have currently set it at "severe" - meaning "an attack is highly likely". According to the Home Office, the quantifiable threat to the United Kingdom can be described thus:

### UK TERRORISM THREAT QUANTIFIED

#### Capabilities

- Significant, innovative and potentially unlimited
- Co-ordinated explosions, chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) aspirations

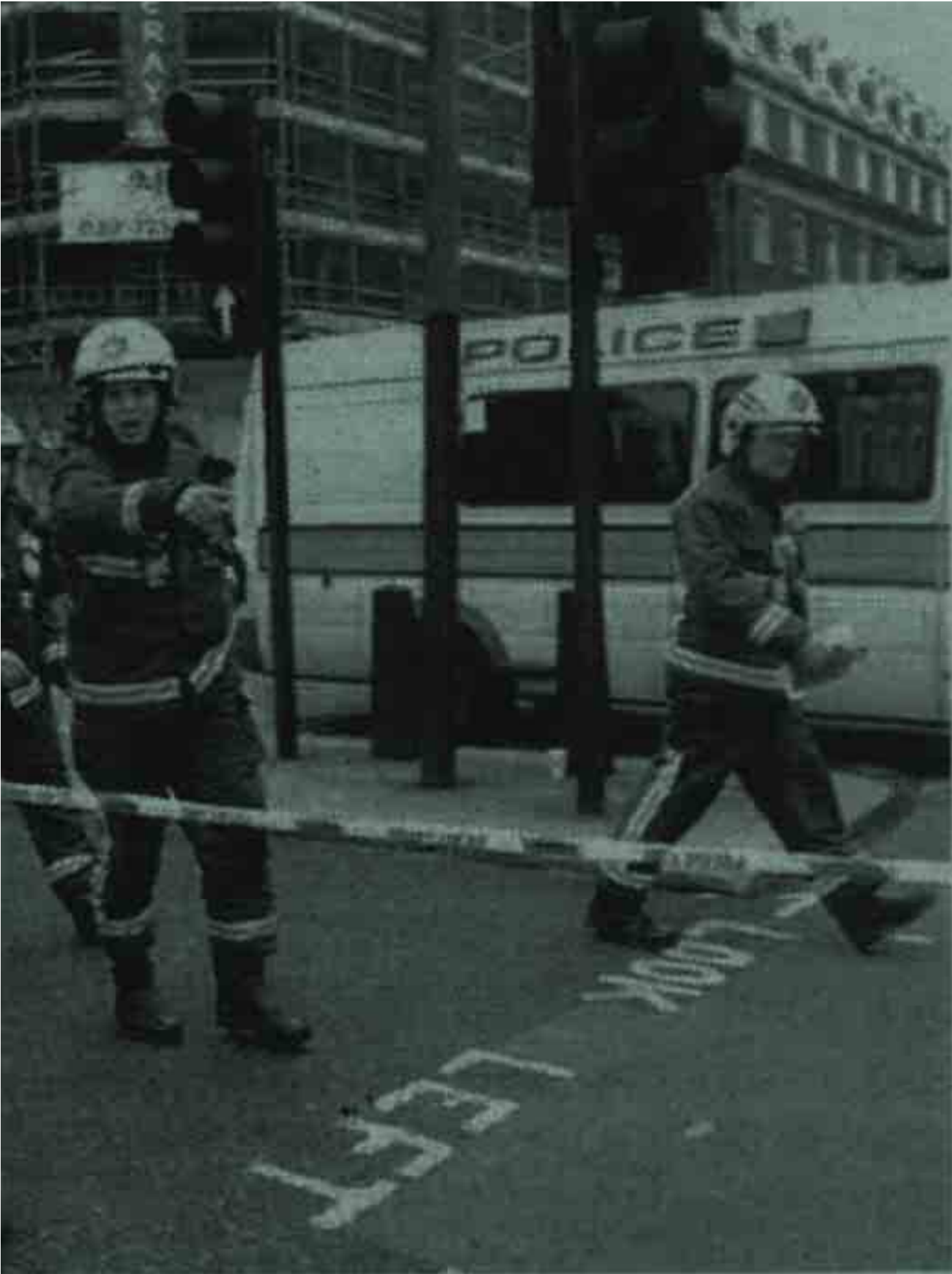
#### Known Scale

- 200 groups
- 2000 identified individuals
- 30 or more plots to kill people and cause damage

#### Unknowns

Increasingly innovative, ambitious and resilient

<sup>4</sup> Islamism should not be confused with Islam. Most serious Islamic scholars reject any suggestion that their religion can be used to justify acts of terrorism. Islamism is a distorting ideology which seeks to use Islam to legitimise violence.



PARRY; ALEXANDER CHADWICK; JONAS BORG

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# “THE TRANSITION FROM SUPPORT ACTIVITIES TO ACTIVE TERRORISM CAN BE SUDDEN, HARD TO SEE AND IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT.”

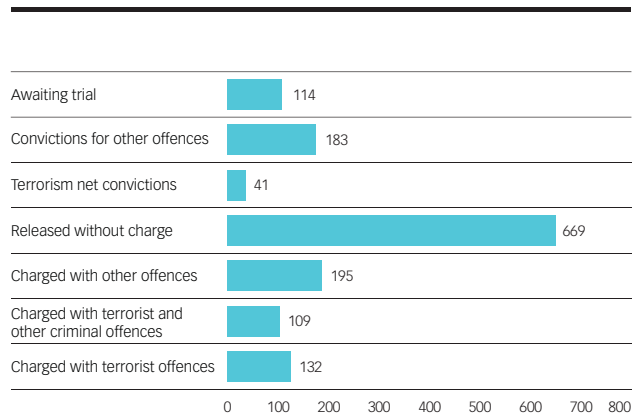
The locations of the Islamist groups listed broadly tracks with the geographical distribution of the UK’s Islamic population, the highest concentrations being in the Midlands and the North of England.

Not all the groups and individuals referred to in the Security Service assessment are engaged directly in terrorist attack planning at any given time. Many are involved in such activities as fundraising, often involving criminality, proselytising and assisting volunteers to travel to locations such as Iraq and Afghanistan. But the transition from support activities to active terrorism can be sudden, hard to see and impossible to predict. And a small group can generate disproportionate damage at little cost. The 7 July 2005 bomb attacks on the London transport system were undertaken by four individuals using bombs made from commonly available ingredients at a cost of a few hundred pounds.

The diagram opposite shows the number of arrests in the UK for terrorist and related offences since 11 September 2001. At first glance, the ratio of convictions to arrests may seem low, but it is not dissimilar to the same ratio for other forms of serious crime. Furthermore, the following factors also influence the statistics:

- Some terrorist plots have to be disrupted at a relatively early stage because of resource constraints or other considerations. This generally results in lesser charges being brought against terrorist suspects or in their being released without charge because of insufficient evidence.
- Where prosecutions do result, the large volumes of evidence which have to be worked through, and the shortage of high-security courts and detention facilities, create bottlenecks in the system. These are only now being addressed and have led to long delays between arrests and convictions.

**Number of UK arrests for terrorist and related offences since 11 September 2001**



Source: These statistics are compiled from police records by the offices of the National Coordinator for Terrorist Investigations. They are subject to change as cases go through the system, and can be found at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/security/terrorism-and-the-law/?version=3](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/security/terrorism-and-the-law/?version=3).

## AL-QAEDA'S EVOLUTION

The origins of Islamist terrorism in its current incarnation date back to the 1970s when a series of revivalist Islamist movements emerged in response to the failed Arab socialist state that had emerged in the wake of colonianism and the defeat of the massed armies of their surrounding Arab states. These groups pursued local agendas aimed at overthrowing corrupt secular administrations. But it was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1978 to prop up an unpopular communist government that created the circumstances in which these locally focused organisations were able to become part of a global jihadist movement aimed at restoring the former glories of a world-wide Islamic Caliphate. At its most expansive (in the 7th century), the Caliphate reached from the Iberian peninsula in Europe, through North Africa, Turkey and the Gulf, and all the way over to Tajikistan and the edge of India (the later Ottoman Caliphate reached the fringes of Vienna in the 1500s). The process of reforming the Caliphate involved driving “unbelievers” from the Muslim lands and overthrowing “apostate regimes” in the Islamic world which relied on the support of Western nations. Osama bin Laden, a Saudi national who had participated in the anti-Soviet jihad, took these concepts as the underpinning of a globalised movement which became known as Al-Qaeda. Bin Laden initially based himself in Sudan before moving to post-Soviet Afghanistan, where he began to create a network of terrorist training camps which over time came close to becoming a state within a state.

Al-Qaeda emerged as a fully fledged terrorist movement in 1998 with the bombings of the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. These were followed in 2000 by the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen and then, on 11 September 2001 (9/11), by the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon. 9/11 resulted in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and the expulsion of Al-Qaeda, many of whose leaders took refuge in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran, but it also sowed the seeds of what has now become a truly global movement with many hundreds of groups and individuals allying themselves with Al-Qaeda’s ideology.

The invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent US-led invasion of Iraq fuelled the Al-Qaeda “single narrative” - the Jihadi Salafi (please see Appendix 1 for a glossary of terms) proposition that the Islamic world was under attack from the West and that it was the duty of all Muslims to take up arms to defend their co-religionists. This message had particular resonance with young second-generation Muslims living in the West who sometimes report a crisis of identity.

### AL-QAEDA CONSISTS OF THREE COMPONENTS:

**Core** Al-Qaeda, based in the area along the Pakistan/Afghanistan border.

**Affiliates** such as Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb, organisations with a local focus but which have sworn formal allegiance to Al-Qaeda and work to their agenda.

**Autonomous groups** with varying degrees of connectivity with Al-Qaeda but committed to its agenda. These groups constitute the principal threat in the UK and elsewhere in the West as their members’ status as citizens or legal residents gives an organisation like Al-Qaeda a degree of penetration it would otherwise struggle to achieve. While they may often prove to have connections to “core” Al-Qaeda, they tend to first assemble and radicalise in their Western homes, and then seek out contacts with the “core”.

No-one can state with any certainty how many people are in Al-Qaeda and associated groups, but intelligence and security services across the world believe that the Al-Qaeda ideology exercises a growing appeal and that radicalisation within the Islamic world is on the increase.

**“RADICALISATION WITHIN THE ISLAMIC WORLD IS ON THE INCREASE.”**

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