PROTECTIVE SERVICES

OSINT
INTELLIGENCE UPDATE
FEBRUARY 2025

triton risk

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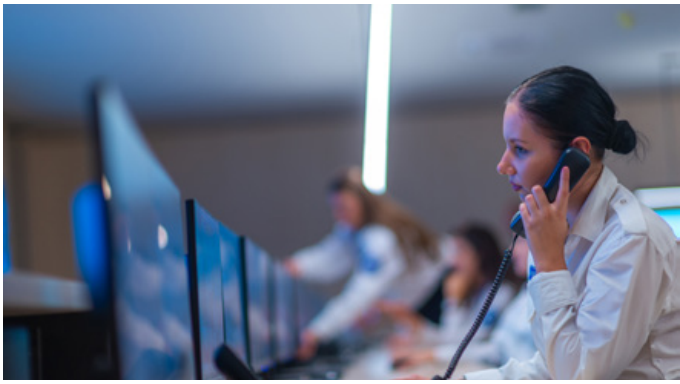
ABOUT US

Triton Risk Management is a specialist risk management company established in September 2019. Our mission statement is to protect people, places and property in high-risk environments. In October 2024, Triton Risk Management formed its Protective Services Division to deliver specialised security, safety and emergency response services to clients within the U.K. and overseas. Our teams deliver on our mission statement for clients across a range of sectors; all of which involve high levels of potential risk that are expertly managed by our team.

Our front-line operations are supported by a 24/7, 365 Security Operations Centre (SOC) which taps into intelligence feeds generated and cultivated by our team of subject matter experts (SMEs). This capability allows us to deliver an intelligent service that is augmented by the latest technology and founded upon a principle of operational excellence. We are an ardent believer in the premise that protective services should take a holistic, integrated approach to identifying and mitigating against potential threat vectors before the fact; this is something that we deliver for our partner organisations as an integral part of our delivery of service.



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THREAT LANDSCAPE AND LEVELS

Threat Landscape

The UK faces a range of national security threats from terrorism, espionage and state threats. Understanding and assessing the threats facing your business or organisation will ensure protective security measures are proportionate, effective and responsive.

Information on the current threat landscape is provided by MI5. See the links below for more information on the current threats to the UK's national security.

To report an imminent threat call **999** or ring the police Anti-Terrorist Hotline on **0800 789 321**.

If you know something about a threat to national security such as terrorism or espionage, contact MI5 online via their website or call:

- **Freephone 0800 111 4645**
- **020 7930 9000 (standard call rates apply)**
- **+44 20 7930 9000 (international calls only)**

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THREAT DEFINITIONS

Counter-Terrorism

Terrorism threats to the UK cover International terrorism, Northern Ireland-related terrorism (NIRT), Right Wing terrorism (RWT) and Left, Anarchist and Single-Issue terrorism (LASIT).

Counter-Espionage

The threat of espionage (spying) did not end with the collapse of Soviet communism in the early 1990s. Espionage against UK interests still continues and is potentiallyvery damaging.

Cyber

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides advice to businesses, other organisations and the public about cyber security. Other useful sources of information for individuals and businesses include the Get Safe Online website.

Counter-Proliferation

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) poses a potential threat to the UK's security. A number of countries continue to develop WMD programmes which give cause for concern.

https://www.npsa.gov.uk/threat-information

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CURRENT NATIONAL THREAT LEVEL

What are terrorism threat levels?

Terrorism threat levels indicate the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the UK. There are two published threat levels.

There are 5 categories at which the threat levels could be set:

LOW – Means an attack is unlikely

MODERATE – Means an attack is possible, but not likely

SUBSTANTIAL – Means an attack is likely

SEVERE – Means an attack is highly likely

CRITICAL – Means an attack is highly likely in the near future

Members of the public should always remain alert to the danger of terrorism and report any suspicious activity to the police on **999** or the anti-terrorist hotline: **0800 789 321**. If your information does not relate to an imminent threat, you can also contact **MI5**.

The threat to the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) from all forms of terrorism is SUBSTANTIAL.*

Current Northern Ireland-related Terrorism in Northern Ireland threat level

The threat to Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland-related terrorism is **SUBSTANTIAL.**

*The national terrorism threat level covers all forms of terrorism aside from Northern Ireland-related terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Threat level change alerts

To receive threat level updates, subscribe to our threat level alert RSS feed.

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How are threat levels decided?

The **Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC)** is responsible for setting the threat level for the UK from terrorism, and the threat level from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Both threat levels are kept under regular review.

In reaching an assessment on the appropriate threat level, several factors are considered.

These include:

- Available intelligence. This will often involve making judgements about the threat based on a range of information, which is often fragmentary, including the level and nature of current terrorist activity, comparison with events in other countries and previous attacks. Intelligence is only ever likely to reveal part of the picture.
- Terrorist capability. An examination of what is known about what a terrorist could do based on previous attacks or from intelligence.
- Terrorist intentions. Using intelligence and publicly available information to examine the overall aims of the terrorists and the ways they may achieve them including what sort of targets they would consider attacking.
- Timescale. The threat level expresses the likelihood of an attack in the near term. We know from past incidents that some attacks take years to plan, while others are put together more quickly. In the absence of specific intelligence, a judgement will need to be made about how close an attack might be to fruition.

Are there threat levels for other countries?

Advice about foreign travel, including the threat from terrorism in other countries, is published on the FCDO website.

https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threats-and-advice/terrorism-threat-levels

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SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) in the United Kingdom encompasses individuals or groups planning, coordinating, and committing serious offenses, either independently, collaboratively, or as part of transnational networks. The National Crime Agency (NCA) identifies several primary categories of SOC, including:

- **CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA):** Offenses involving the exploitation and abuse of minors.
- **ILLEGAL DRUGS**: The production, trafficking, and distribution of controlled substances.
- **FIREARMS:** The illegal possession, trafficking, and use of firearms.
- **ORGANISED IMMIGRATION CRIME:** Activities facilitating illegal entry or residence in the UK.
- **MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING:** The exploitation of individuals through coercion, force, or deception for various forms of labor or services.
- **FRAUD AND OTHER ECONOMIC CRIME:** Deceptive practices intended for financial gain, including money laundering and corruption.
- **CYBER CRIME:** Criminal activities carried out using computers or the internet, such as hacking, online fraud, and the distribution of malicious software.

The NCA emphasizes that SOC has a corrosive impact on the UK and its citizens, affecting various aspects of society. The agency leads the UK's operational response to SOC, collaborating with partners across law enforcement, government, industry, and beyond to mitigate these threats.

In recent years, the scale and threat from SOC have almost certainly increased, now constituting a higher proportion of overall crime. This trend is attributed to factors such as increased online activity, global instabilities, and greater interconnectivity among criminal networks.

The NCA's comprehensive approach includes intelligence gathering, proactive investigations, and lifetime management of serious offenders to monitor and prevent reoffending. By employing these strategies, the NCA aims to protect the public and uphold national security against the evolving challenges posed by serious and organised crime.

https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk

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OPEN-SOURCE CRIME AND JUSTICE UPDATES:

Firearms and ammunition seized from SUV at Dover

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has launched an investigation after 13 firearms and 300 rounds of ammunition were seized from a vehicle at Dover.

Border Force officers stopped and searched the SUV on Monday 24 February as it entered the UK from France.

Inside a custom-built hide in the vehicle's footwell they discovered 13 firearms, including Skorpions, a submachine gun and pistols.

They also found 300 rounds of ammunition and five kilos of heroin.

Tests are ongoing to classify the weapons and verify if they are viable.

https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/firearms-and-ammunition-seized-from-suv-at-dover

Operation Stovewood: Men found guilty of raping girls at parties

Three men who organised parties at which they got children drunk and then abused them have been convicted of a series of sexual offences, following a National Crime Agency (NCA) investigation.

Romauld Stefan Houphouet, 37, an Ivoirian national of Sheffield, and Absolom Sigiyo, 42, a Zimbabwean national of Rotherham were found guilty of raping two 15-year-old girls countless times between 2011 and 2012.

Sigiyo was also found guilty of intimidating one of the victims when he pressured her in an attempt to stop her supporting the NCA investigation launched in 2018.Jacek Brzozwski, 35, a Polish national of Rotherham, pleaded guilty to sexual activity with one of the girls.

The victims told investigators they were taken to numerous parties in Rotherham where they were given alcohol and abused by the men, some of whom openly referred to them as "fresh meat".

The abuse began within minutes of the victims' first encounter with Houphouet in 2011. Then aged 24, Houphouet, approached the girls in Rotherham Town Centre and invited them to a party. He asked to speak alone with one of the girls and took her into an alleyway, where he raped her.

After the attack, Houphouet took the girls to a house party at Sigiyo's home wherethere were a number of men, including Sigiyo and Brzozwski. The girls endured a year of sexual abuse in this location and at a second property Sigiyo later lived at.

https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/operation-stovewood-men-found-guilty-of-raping-girls-at-parties

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NCA investigation leads to conviction of gang who forced migrants to work in cannabis farms

Six people have been convicted of being part of a crime group responsible for forcing trafficked migrants to work in cannabis farms.

A National Crime Agency investigation identified that the ringleader of the gang, convicted people smuggler Mai Van Nguyen, 35, of Beetham Tower, Birmingham, was involved in the operation of a number of cannabis farms mainly throughout the Midlands, London and north of England.

The properties would be leased in other people's identities using false identity documents or aliases.

He worked with fellow Vietnamese nationals Doung Dinh, 38, from Birmingham, and Nghia Dinh Tran, 24, from Lewisham, London, to exploit migrants by putting them to work.

A trial at Birmingham Crown Court heard how Shamraiz Akhtar and Tasawar Hussain, both 50 and from Birmingham, were taxi drivers who would move migrants around various properties for the gang, being paid hundreds of pounds a time.

On occasion they would also transport cannabis or equipment for the farms.

A sixth member of the gang, Amjad Nawaz, 43, from Birmingham, acted as a middleman, and was in regular conversations with Nguyen about workers, the buying and selling of cannabis, and arranging for properties to be used in Birmingham.

https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/nca-investigation-leads-to-conviction-of-gang-who-forced-migrants-to-work-in-cannabis-farms

Acid Attack in Plymouth

An investigation is being carried out by Devon and Cornwall Police following the incident at a property on Lipson Road at about 03:55 GMT on 21 February.

The force said it was initially believed the suspects had fled to Wiltshire after the attack.

Police have issued a warning over "misinformation" being spread about a targeted acid attack in Plymouth.

The force said a man in his 30s remained in a serious condition after the attack and searches for two suspects described as black men in their early 20s were ongoing.

An update from police said false information about the victim and suspects had been spread on social media and urged the public to only trust official sources.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c70ezjkn39wo

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Introduction of the Crime and Policing Bill 2025

The Government has introduced the Crime and Policing Bill in the House of Commons.

The Bill introduces various provisions that give effect to recommendations made in a number of Law Commission reports.

Confiscation

The Bill implements most of the recommendations made by the Law Commission for reform of the confiscation regime for England & Wales in Part 2 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (and the Bill also makes equivalent provision for Northern Ireland). The reforms improve the process by which confiscation orders are made, ensure that orders made are realistic and proportionate, and improve the enforceability of orders.

Intimate images

In the Intimate Image Abuse report, the Law Commission recommended a suite of offences relating to the taking a sharing of intimate images without consent. Offences of sharing intimate images without consent were introduced in the Online Safety Act 2023. The new offences in the Bill give effect to the Commission's recommendations in relation to taking intimate images.

Encouraging or assisting serious self-harm

In the Modernising Communications Offences report, the Law Commission recommended that encouraging or assisting serious self-harm should be a criminal offence. This offence was partially implemented in the Online Safety Act 2023 by introducing a new offence of encouraging or assisting serious self-harms by means of communications. The Bill introduces a broader offence that covers encouraging or assisting serious self-harm both by communication and by any other means, thus giving full effect to the Law Commission's recommendation.

Criminal liability of bodies corporate and partnerships where senior manager commits offence

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 reformed the identification doctrine in line with one of the options for reform recommended in the Corporate Criminal Liability options paper, though only with respect to certain economic offences. This provided a new statutory route to corporate liability where a senior manager committed a specified economic offence while acting in the scope of their authority. The Bill extends that identification doctrine to all criminal offences in England & Wales (rather than limiting the doctrine to economic offences).

Child abduction

In the Simplification of the Criminal Law: Kidnapping and Related Offences report, the Law Commission recommended extending the offence in section 1 of the Child Abduction Act 1984. That section makes it an offence for a parent or other person with similar responsibility for a child to take or send a child out of the UK without the consent either of the other persons with responsibility for the child or of the court. The Law Commission recommended that the offence should also cover situations where the child is taken or sent out of the UK with consent but then kept or detained outside of the without consent. The Bill gives effect to that recommendation.

Exposure

The Bill also extends the offence of exposure in section 66 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in line with the cyberflashing offence that was recommended in our Modernising Communications Offences report, and that was introduced in the Online Safety Act 2023.

https://lawcom.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-bill-introduced/

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UK Crime Costing £250bn a Year

Soaring levels of crime are costing Britain's economy as much as £250bn a year, according to a report that blames austerity for a breakdown in policing and criminal justice.

The report by the centre-right thinktank Policy Exchange, backed by the former Conservative chancellor and home secretary Sajid Javid, said that years of cuts to funding for the police, prisons and courts had contributed to a dramatic rise in crime which was holding back the economy.

The report said an "epidemic" of shoplifting, alongside other crimes, was hitting businesses, the public sector and individuals hard, with a direct cost to the economy of about £170bn a year, or about 6.5% of gross domestic product (GDP).

In addition, it estimated there were intangible effects on behaviour derived from a fear of crime.

Although this is difficult to quantify, it warned that actions being taken by businesses and individuals to avoid being a victim of crime – such as not visiting the high street, or deferring investment – could take the total cost to as much as £250bn, or 10% of GDP.

With the government under pressure to find money for public services and defence spending, Policy Exchange said Labour needed to invest an additional £5bn a year into tackling a crisis in prison capacity, the size of the policing workforce and clearing backlogs in the courts.

https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/mar/03/soaring-uk-crime-cost-up-policy-exchange-policing-prisons

Sheffield School Stabbing

On 3 February 2025, 15-year-old Harvey Willgoose was fatally stabbed at All Saints Catholic High School in Sheffield. Another 15-year-old boy was arrested on suspicion of murder and subsequently charged.

A boy, aged 15, has been charged with his murder, possession of a bladed article and affray.

The incident has sparked discussions on school safety and youth violence.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpdx5d5j8zzo#:~:text=All%20Saints%20Catholic%20High%20School%20had%20been%20closed%20since%20Monday,a%20bladed%20article%20and%20affray.

Arrest under Abortion Services Act

Scottish police arrested a 74-year-old grandmother for offering conversation to women contemplating abortions because she was in a so-called buffer zone, which criminalizes pro-life speech.

Rose Docherty was arrested in Glasgow, Scotland near the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital for holding a sign that said: "Coercion is a crime, here to talk if you want."

Docherty was the first person to be arrested and charged under The Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act, which went into effect in September 2024, the BBC reported.

The law prohibits any protests or vigils from taking place within 200m or 656ft of 30 clinics offering abortion services in Scotland, but the law specifies that the Safe Access Zone could be extended if considered appropriate.

https://nypost.com/2025/02/27/world-news/grandmother-arrested-for-holding-sign-outside-scottish-hospital-performing-abortions/

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NATIONAL SECURITY UPDATES

Protestors attack BBC Headquarters

Protesters from Palestine Action smashed windows and splattered red paint across the BBC's headquarters on Portland Place on Monday.

It comes in protest against the BBC's coverage of the Israel-Hamas conflict, with activists accusing the broadcaster of having an "entrenched pro-Israel bias".

It marks the second time the building has been targeted over its coverage of the conflict.

Activists claim the protest is driven by "years of outrage" over the BBC's refusal to cover the Palestinian struggle "with the same urgency and accuracy it affords Israeli military action".

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/palestine-activists-bbc-hq-protest-london-b1211663.html

Thousands gather for Tommy Robison protest with arrests made

Thousands of protesters have gathered in central London with a march in support of Tommy Robinson and a separate counter-demonstration.

A protest organised under the name "Stop the Isolation" or "Unite the Kingdom", in support of Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, met outside Waterloo station before marching towards Westminster and assembling at the Parliament Square end of Whitehall.

Chants of "We want our country back" and "We want Tommy out" were sung as the demonstration set off, with protesters carrying flags bearing slogans including "Free Tommy Robinson" and "Stop the Boats".

Some demonstrators were wearing "MEGA – Make England Great Again" hats and "I am Tommy" stickers with many attendees livestreaming the event on their phones.

A counter-protest organised by Stand Up To Racism has set off from St James's Street, south of Piccadilly Circus, on their march to Whitehall via Piccadilly Circus and Haymarket before a rally at the Trafalgar Square end of Whitehall.

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/tommy-robinson-london-parliament-square-westminster-waterloo-station-b1208544.html

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UK to increase defence spending

Sir Keir Starmer has set out plans to increase defence spending to 2.5% of national income by 2027.

The prime minister said he would cut the foreign aid budget to fund the military boost - a move welcomed by the US administration but labelled a "betrayal" by development charities.

The spending announcement came as leaders across Europe looked to overhaul defence policies over fears the US could make a deal with Russia to end the Ukraine war which leaves the continent vulnerable.

Trump - who has long called for European members of the Nato military alliance to spend more on defence - is attempting to cut a rapid deal to bring the Ukraine war to an end after speaking to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He has been a staunch critic of the previous US administration's military support for Kyiv and wants Europe to play a bigger role in any future security guarantees for Ukraine.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clyrkkv4gd7o

Royal Navy warships and aircraft shadowed a Russian task group in the English Channel in a concentrated operation this week

HMS Iron Duke, HMS Tyne, a Wildcat helicopter from 815 Naval Air Squadron and RFA Tideforce reported on every move of landing ships, RFS Aleksandr Otrakovskiy and RFS Ivan Gren, and merchant vessels Sparta, Sparta II and General Skobelev and oiler Yelnya.

The group of six Russian vessels departed the Mediterranean recently, sailing through the busy international shipping lane in the English Channel as they sailed towards a Russian Baltic port.

Commander David Armstrong, HMS Iron Duke's Commanding Officer, said: "Whilst this particular Russian task group was not assessed to pose a specific threat to the UK, this closely coordinated operation demonstrates our steadfast determination to protect our nation's territorial seas and Critical National Infrastructure; on which our economic prosperity depends.

"It is not enough to hope passing non-allied warships will not threaten our maritime security – we will be there to make sure they can't."

"This has been a particularly intense period for HMS Tyne," added Lieutenant Matt Cavill, Tyne's Executive Officer.

"It is credit to the team on board that they have been able to switch from the demands of delivering Navigation Training at Sea for the Royal Navy, to shadowing Russian Warships as they transit through UK Waters."

https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news/2025/february/15/250214-royal-navy-monitors-russian-task-group-returning-from-syria

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Former soldier sentenced on account of spying for Iran

Daniel Khalife, 23, has been sentenced to 14 years and three months for espionage and terrorism offences.

Daniel Khalife, 23 was today, 3 February, sentenced at Woolwich Crown Court to a total of 14 years and three months' imprisonment for espionage and terrorism offences. He was previously convicted of these offences in November 2024, following a trial at the same court.

An investigation into Khalife began in November 2021 after he anonymously contacted MI5 twice that month to say that he had established contact with Iranian agents and wanted to become a 'double agent'.

The details, however, were passed to police and they identified that Khalife was the person behind the calls and that he was a soldier in the Army based at Staffordshire Barracks.

Khalife was arrested in January 2022, and police seized various devices and documents from his room. The ensuing investigation found Khalife was in possession of various sensitive documents and information – including details of soldiers who were attached to highly sensitive military units. They also found evidence that Khalife had made contact with Iranian agents and had passed sensitive military information to them over the preceding two-and-a-half years.

Khalife was due to be charged with offences in January 2023, however he was reported as missing by his Army unit in early January 2023.

When his room was searched, what appeared to be a potential improvised explosive device was found, along with a note, indicating that Khalife had left as he feared he was going to be charged when he returned on bail. On 26 January 2023, Khalife was spotted at a Leisure Centre in Staffordshire and was subsequently arrested and charged.

In September 2023, while awaiting trial, Khalife escaped from HMP Wandsworth. Police were informed and following a three-day manhunt – which involved hundreds of officers from across the Metropolitan Police, as well as support from police forces across the country and colleagues from various other agencies including those at ports and borders – Khalife was found and arrested in Northolt.

https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/former-soldier-jailed-over-spying-offences/

Concerns about new Chinese Embassy

UK and US critics have raised concerns about letting Beijing build an embassy so close to the City of London because of the location of critical communications infrastructure that could facilitate espionage.

"This is a particular location where wires and pipes run underneath," said Tom Tugendhat, a Conservative MP and former UK minister of state for security.

Tugendhat, who is also a fellow at the Hudson Institute think-tank in Washington, said allowing Beijing to build a mega embassy at that location sent an inappropriate message given the way China was acting around the world. "Embassies tell a story, and the story that this embassy is telling is that it will be the largest outpost of the Chinese Communist party in Europe," Tugendhat said.

Smith and Moolenaar asked Mandelson to relay their concerns about the embassy to Starmer during his visit. It remains unclear whether the Trump administration has expressed a view to the British government on the planned embassy.

https://www.ft.com/content/88129701-0695-406b-b449-131d7fc8de14

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SECURITY INDUSTRY UPDATES

Security Industry Authority (SIA) Updates

In February 2025, the Security Industry Authority (SIA) introduced several key updates impacting the UK security industry:

Licence Dispensation Notices (LDNs) Policy Changes:

Effective from 24 February 2025, the SIA revised the rules for issuing Licence Dispensation Notices. Approved contractors can now deploy security operatives undergoing the licence application process, with updated guidance available to ensure compliance.

gov.uk+2gov.uk+2gov.uk+2

Approved Contractor Scheme (ACS) Self-Assessment Workbook Update:

The SIA released an update to the ACS Self-Assessment Workbook, specifically modifying criterion 6 related to personnel. This revision aims to enhance standards within the Approved Contractor Scheme.

gov.uk+2gov.uk+2gov.uk+2

SIA Grant for Good Causes:

The SIA announced the 2024 to 2025 funding round for registered charities and community interest companies in the UK. This initiative supports projects that align with the SIA's objectives to promote public safety and reduce crime.

gov.uk

Security and Policing Conference 2025

Security & Policing, the official UK Government global security event, returns to the Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre between 11-13 March 2025.

Hosted by the Home Office's Joint Security & Resilience Centre (JSaRC), Security & Policing offers a world-class opportunity to meet and discuss the latest advances in delivering national security and resilience with leading UK suppliers, UK and overseas Government officials and senior decision makers across the law enforcement and security sectors.

There is no general admittance to Security & Policing and all visitors and exhibitors are subject to Home Office approval.

https://www.securityandpolicing.co.uk/

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATES

Tear gas fired at Hezbollah supporters in Lebanon

The Lebanese army fired tear gas on Saturday at Hezbollah supporters protesting around Beirut airport against Lebanon blocking an Iranian flight to Beirut this week after the Israeli military accused Tehran of using civilian aircraft to smuggle cash to Beirut to arm the Lebanese group.

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah called on the army to hold those who fired at the protesters to account.

The Lebanese army and government "should have held immediate meetings to prevent the Israeli enemy from imposing its dictates on the airport and from continuing its occupation of Lebanese territory ... instead of using force against a peaceful sit-in on the airport road," Fadlallah added in a statement.

Iran barred Lebanese planes from repatriating dozens of Lebanese nationals stranded in Iran on Friday, in a standoff between the two countries following what Tehran described as an Israeli threat to attack it.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi spoke to his Lebanese counterpart by phone on the matter and both "declared their readiness for constructive talks," state media said, without elaborating.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei on Friday had said that Israel had threatened a passenger plane carrying Lebanese citizens from Tehran, disrupting flights to Beirut airport. He condemned the alleged Israeli threat as a violation of international law.

https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/tear-gas-fired-hezbollah-supporters-protesting-lebanon-blocking-iranian-flight-2025-02-15/

Sudan parallel government offers route to diplomatic leverage and arms for RSF

A parallel government being set up by Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) aims to grab diplomatic legitimacy from its army-led rival and ease access to advanced weaponry, politicians who back it and paramilitary sources told Reuters.

The move could prolong a devastating war in which the paramilitary RSF has recently been losing ground, and effectively splinter Africa's third largest country by area.

Since conflict between the army and the RSF erupted in April 2023, the army-led government has retained wide international recognition, despite being forced by the fighting to move to Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

But in a bid to challenge that status, the RSF on Saturday signed a political charter in Kenya with political parties and armed groups. The signatories said a "Government of Peace and Unity" would be formed within weeks from inside Sudan.

Politicians and RSF officials participating in talks in Nairobi last week said their government would seize legitimacy from an army they said had pursued "divisive" tactics including air strikes and aid blockages while rejecting peace talks.

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudan-parallel-government-offers-route-diplomatic-leverage-arms-rsf-2025-02-28/

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Deadly blasts hit M23 rebel rally in captured DRC city of Bukavu

Several people have been killed and dozens more injured after blasts at a mass rally held by the M23 group in Bukavu, the city in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo captured by the rebels earlier this month.

Footage posted on social media showed people fleeing the scene. In another video, bloodied bodies lay on the ground and injured people were being carried away.

Thousands of people were present for the rally, which took place at Independence Square in the centre of Bukavu, which is the capital of South Kivu province and the second largest city in eastern DRC.

Among the rebel leaders present was Corneille Nangaa, the head of the Congo River Alliance (AFC), a coalition of militias that includes M23. They were leaving the podium when two blasts occurred, a journalist told the Associated Press.

Nangaa said at a press conference that 11 people had been killed and 65 injured. A similar toll was given by a hospital source to Agence France-Presse.

In a statement, the rebels accused the Congolese authorities of orchestrating the attack, adding: "This cowardly and barbaric act will not be without consequences."

The DRC president, Felix Tshisekedi, called the attack "a heinous terrorist act that was perpetrated by a foreign army illegally present on Congolese soil".

Jean Samy, the deputy president of the civil society Forces Vives of South Kivu, told the Associated Press that the attack was "a sabotage" carried out by unknown perpetrators.

Nangaa had earlier told the rally that M23 was bringing "change and development" to Bukavu, one of two key cities in the mineral-rich eastern DRC that it has captured this year. Last month it seized Goma, the largest city in the region.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/27/blasts-at-m23-rally-in-bukavu-eastern-drc

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German citizen, 40, identified as Mannheim suspect after two killed as car driven into crowd

Two people have died after a car was driven into a crowd in Mannheim, south-west Germany. The interior minister of the Baden-Württemberg state, Thomas Strobl, said "several others are also injured." Strobl also disclosed that the suspect in custody was a 40-year-old German citizen.

According to the dpa news agency, citing security sources, between five and ten people were injured.

The man drove his car at about 12.15pm through Mannheim's pedestrian zone from Friedrichsring into the several hundred metre Planken, Mannheim's main shopping street, and hit or drove around several passersby at the parade square, witnesses said. According to reports, the suspect was arrested half an hour later at 12.45pm.

The presumed next chancellor of Germany, Friedrich Merz, described the attack in Mannheim as a "shock" in a statement released on X.

"The crime in Mannheim shocks us. My thoughts are with the victims and their families.

"The incident – as well as the terrible crimes of the past few months – is a stark reminder to us: we must do everything we can to prevent such crimes. I would like to thank all the emergency services who helped quickly. "Germany must become a safe country again. We will work with all our determination to achieve this."

https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2025/mar/03/europe-live-blog-updates-trump-putin-zelenskyy-starmer

Ukraine's Zelenskyy says end of war with Russia is 'very, very far away'

A deal to end the war between Ukraine and Russia "is still very, very far away," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, adding that he believed Ukraine's long-term partnership with the U.S. was strong enough that American support would continue despite recent fraught relations with U.S. President Donald Trump.

"I think our relationship (with the U.S.) will continue, because it's more than an occasional relationship," Zelenskyy said late Sunday, referring to Washington's support for the past three years of war.

"I believe that Ukraine has a strong enough partnership with the United States of America" to keep aid flowing, he said at a briefing in Ukrainian before leaving London.

Zelenskyy publicly was upbeat despite the recent heated Oval Office blow up with Trump and Vice President JD Vance during which they accused him of being "disrespectful" and said he should show more gratitude for America's help. The turn of events is unwelcome for Ukraine, whose understrength army is having a hard time keep bigger Russian forces at bay.

The White House wants Zelenskyy to show more openness to potential concessions in order to bring the fighting to an end, but Zelenskyy resisted that idea while pressing for security guarantees from Washington during last Friday's meeting.

https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-zelenskyy-starmer-trump-b025877c40ffe0ddf2a92adad1715231

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Ireland insists it will 'not be found wanting' on Ukraine peacekeeping

Ireland's foreign minister said the militarily neutral nation "will not be found wanting" over any future European peacekeeping mission in Ukraine, as he presented a bill to relax the decades-old rule on how Irish troops can be deployed.

Simon Harris, who is also defence and trade minister, said Ireland was "open" to joining a force to uphold any peace deal in Ukraine, amid growing pressure on Kyiv from the US to rapidly settle the conflict with Russia.

"Ireland has not been found wanting when it comes to opening our doors to Ukrainians fleeing conflict and also non-lethal military support," Harris told the Financial Times.

"If the circumstances arise, we will not be found wanting in terms of peacekeeping either."

The suspension of US military aid to Kyiv, President Donald Trump's bilateral negotiations with Moscow over the conflict and his bad-tempered meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the White House have all added urgency to European efforts to devise their own peace plan for Ukraine.

While European countries led by France and the UK are drawing up plans for a deal, only the UK has so far committed to "boots on the ground and planes in the air" for any peacekeeping mission that would follow an end to hostilities.

Ireland's military neutrality is a long-standing tradition that predates the second world war, and its defence spending is well below the levels of its fellow EU nations. Although Ireland has won international respect for its peacekeeping missions in countries such as Lebanon, it has faced criticism that it freeloads on its partners on defence.

https://www.ft.com/content/324bf36c-b898-4e3e-b2f6-c7835f68a0ae

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CYBER SECURITY NEWS

Apple's Withdrawal of Advanced Data Protection (ADP) Service

Apple discontinued its ADP service in the UK after receiving a "technical capability notice" under the Investigatory Powers Act, which required the company to provide access to encrypted user data.

This move has sparked debates over privacy and security implications.

Now the tech giant has decided it will no longer be possible to activate ADP in the UK.

It means eventually not all UK customer data stored on iCloud - Apple's cloud storage service - will be fully encrypted, external.

Data with standard encryption is accessible by Apple and shareable with law enforcement, if they have a warrant.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgj54eq4vejo

Launch of Cyber Attack Severity Rating System

A new monitoring centre is to begin rating the severity of cyber events – including cyber attacks – in the UK as they happen, as part of efforts to help firms tackle and learn from such incidents.

From Thursday, the Cyber Monitoring Centre (CMC) will start to categorise cyber events that have a potential financial impact greater that £100 million, affect multiple organisations and where there is data or information available to allow for proper assessment.

It will rate incidents on a scale of one (least severe) to five (most severe), with the technical committee leading the monitoring chaired by former chief executive of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Ciaran Martin.

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/tech/national-cyber-security-centre-nhs-gchq-university-of-oxford-b1209495.html

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Sanctions Against Russian Cybercrime Network

The U.S., U.K. and Australia sanctioned a Russian web-hosting services provider and two Russian men who administer the service in support of Russian ransomware syndicate LockBit.

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control and its U.K. and Australian counterparts sanctioned Zservers, a Russia-based bulletproof hosting services provider — which is a web-hosting service that ignores or evades law enforcement requests — and two Russian nationals serving as Zservers operators.

Treasury alleges that Zservers provided LockBit access to specialized servers designed to resist law enforcement actions.

LockBit ransomware attacks have extracted more than $120 million from thousands of victims around the world. LockBit has operated since 2019, and is the most deployed ransomware variant across the world and continues to be prolific, according to the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

https://apnews.com/article/treasury-sanctions-uk-australia-russia-361e788f5482bfd787af01002af2ff4c

Russian-Linked Telegram Channels Inciting Violence

A network of Telegram channels with Russian links is encouraging UK residents to commit violent attacks on mosques and Muslims and offering cryptocurrency in return, campaigners have warned.

The channels have already been linked to real world events in the form of Islamophobic graffiti sprayed on mosques and schools in east and south London earlier this month, sometimes with the names of the groups mentioned. Those incidents are under investigation by the police.

The same groups have also been sharing PDFs containing bomb-making recipes and designs for 3D-printed weapons. Posters with QR codes for the groups and associated TikTok accounts have also appeared on British streets.

However, there has been alarm in recent weeks after a switch in the group's language from encouraging graffiti to explicitly calling on people to carry out knife attacks.

https://www.theguardian.com/news/2025/feb/28/russia-linked-telegram-channels-offering-to-pay-for-attacks-on-mosques

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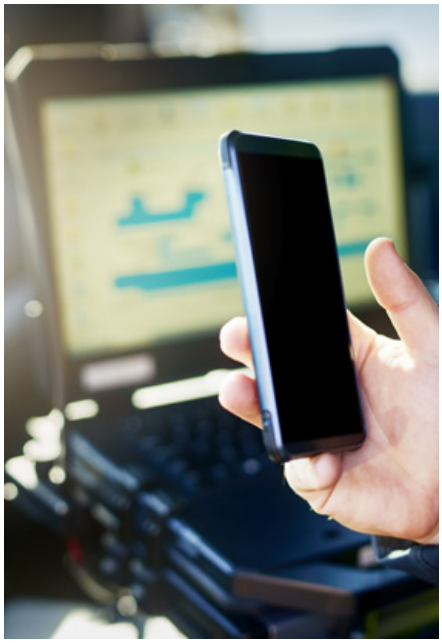

US Criticism of UK's Data Access Demands

Tulsi Gabbard, the director of US National Intelligence, says she was not informed in advance about the UK government's demand to be able to access Apple customers' encrypted data from anywhere in the world.

Earlier this year, the UK government asked for the right to see the data, which currently not even Apple can access.

The tech giant last week took the unprecedented step of removing its highest level data security tool from customers in the UK.

In a letter, Ms Gabbard said she was seeking further information from the FBI and other US agencies and said, if the reports were true, the UK government's actions amounted to an "egregious violation" of US citizens' privacy.

The Home Office notice, which cannot legally be made public, was issued to Apple under the UK's Investigatory Powers Act in January.

Ms Gabbard added that she was also seeking legal advice over whether the UK had breached an agreement between it and the US not to demand data belonging to each other's citizens.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1kjmddx2nzo

Advocacy for Enhanced Security Measures

The UK's cyber security agency encouraged the public use of Apple's top security feature months before the Home Office ordered the US technology giant to build a back door into the software.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) advocated the use of the Advanced Data Protection (ADP) system in a blog post addressing risks to the legal sector in October.

The NCSC, an arm of GCHQ, said it was among the ways people could protect themselves from cyber attacks.

ADP fully encrypts iCloud backups, meaning only the user would be able to access them and Apple would not be able to comply with law enforcement requests.

The company, which has always said it would rather withdraw services than build a back door, said it was "gravely disappointed" it was no longer offering the feature in Britain.

In the NCSC post, the agency wrote: "Turn on the free encryption products included with your Windows or Apple devices, so cyber attackers can't access your sensitive data if your device is lost or stolen. Make sure encryption is enabled on your mobile device." It included ADP among the options that could be turned on.

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2025/02/25/public-told-use-apple-security-tool-home-office-tried-crack/

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DEFENCE AND SECURITY TECH UPDATES

Innovation Hub Launch

The Government has said it would launch an innovation hub that will work with defence firms to speed up the delivery of military technologies, in an effort to reform the sector and boost growth.

The move comes days after Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced an increase in defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, and a target of 3% for the next parliament due to start in 2029.

"In the world we face, national security and economic growth are going to go hand in hand," finance minister Rachel Reeves said. "High-skilled, well-paid jobs across the UK will both make our country safer and put pounds in people's pockets."

reuters.com

Government Announces Industrial Strategy for Defence

The year 2025 for UK Defence, infrastructure and national security, may end up being defined by the word "operationalise."

The industry is experiencing continued transformation, propelled by advancements in digital technologies, strategic investments, and a renewed focus on workforce development. Alongside this is supply chain visibility, which in turn, is being driven by the largely unforeseen pace of geopolitical change and the increasingly volatile world.

The government commissioned a strategic defence review ("SDR") in July 2024 and have said the review will "consider the threats Britain faces, the capabilities needed to meet them, the state of UK armed forces and the resources available." The Defence Secretary, John Healey, went on to described this SDR as the "first of its kind in the UK", on account of the fact that it will be the first externally-led review, with all previous reviews having been conducted by government.

The UK government will publish its Industrial Strategy for Defence in late spring 2025, aimed at strengthening the country's national security, properly equipping its forces and ensuring defence companies help drive economic growth, with small and medium enterprises ("SMEs") having a key part to play in the growth of the country's Defence industry.

SMEs are hugely important within the UK's defence and security supply chain, providing essential research, technology, and services. As we consider the part SMEs continue to play in the growth of the sector, the Ministry of Defence ("MoD") has announced a goal of increasing the amount of defence spending with SMEs and improving their access to opportunities in 2025.

Much talk surrounds the increased use of SMEs across the UK defence supply chain, and the importance of a strong ecosystem within the sector for very good reason, as there are many advantages to employing the skills, knowledge and culture that SMEs can bring to Defence procurement.

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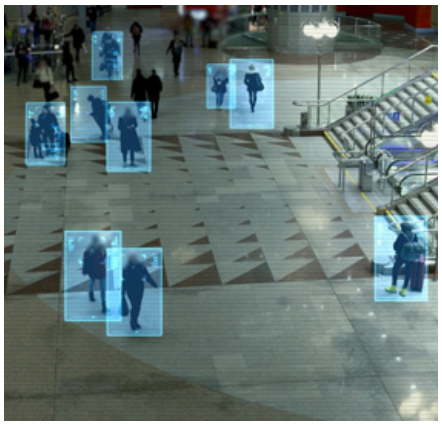
Hybrid Security Solutions

The security industry is witnessing a rise in hybrid architectures that combine edge computing, cloud services, and on-premise technologies. This approach offers flexibility and efficiency in managing security operations, reflecting a broader trend towards digital transformation in the sector.

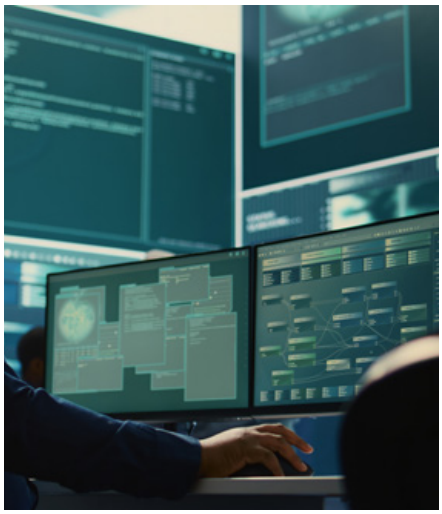
theprofessionalsecurityofficer.com



Integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The defence sector is increasingly focusing on ntegrating AI to enhance military capabilities. The Defence Artificial Intelligence Strategy outlines the Ministry of Defence's approach to adopting AI technologies, emphasizing the need for responsible and ethical deployment.

publications.parliament.uk



Addressing Cyber Threats in Supply Chains

The defence sector has increasingly prioritised supply chain security, sustainability, and visibility.

The emphasis on ESG factors in supply chain operations continues to grow and reflects a broader commitment across sectors to responsible sourcing and operational resilience, driven by increased understanding and awareness of the need for climate resilience and ethical practices.

In recent years, constraints associated with supply chain disruptions and labour challenges have acted as a limiting factor on the revenues generated by defence companies. As such, it is expected that supply chain security and visibility will be a priority for industry participants in the upcoming year. A focus on supply chains has also been seen in the EU's new defence industrial strategy; the EU has set a target to procure at least 50% of its defence procurement budget from EU-based defence suppliers by 2030, increasing to 60% by 2035.

Finally, there has also been an increased focus on cybersecurity and cyberwarfare, reflected in a global transformation in the cybersecurity regulatory environment. Much of a country's critical infrastructure is now reliant on technology, meaning the risk posed by cybersecurity threats has never been more significant.

In the EU, the deadline has now passed for member states to adopt and publish the measures necessary to comply with the Network and Information Security Directive 2 (NIS2), which aims to bolster cybersecurity frameworks and harmonise regulations across member states. Further, the EU Cyber Resilience Act was adopted by the European Council in October 2024, imposing mandatory cybersecurity requirements on manufacturers, distributors and importers of in-scope products and software. Similarly in the US, the US National Cybersecurity Strategy aims to shift the burden of cybersecurity onto organisations better positioned to mitigate risks. These regulatory changes reflect a global recognition of the need to fortify cyber defences against increasingly sophisticated threats.

https://www.twobirds.com/en/insights/2025/global/further-trends-in-the-defence-sector-supply-chains-cybersecurity-and-space

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