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SECURITY

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

A brief guide to Counter Terrorism
and Implementing Unpredictability

Since August 2014 the threat level in the UK has never dropped below Severe. This stretch of five years at such a high threat level is unprecedented and the likelihood is it will not go down any time soon. In fact, since reaching Severe there have been occasions where the threat has increased to the highest possible level; Critical.

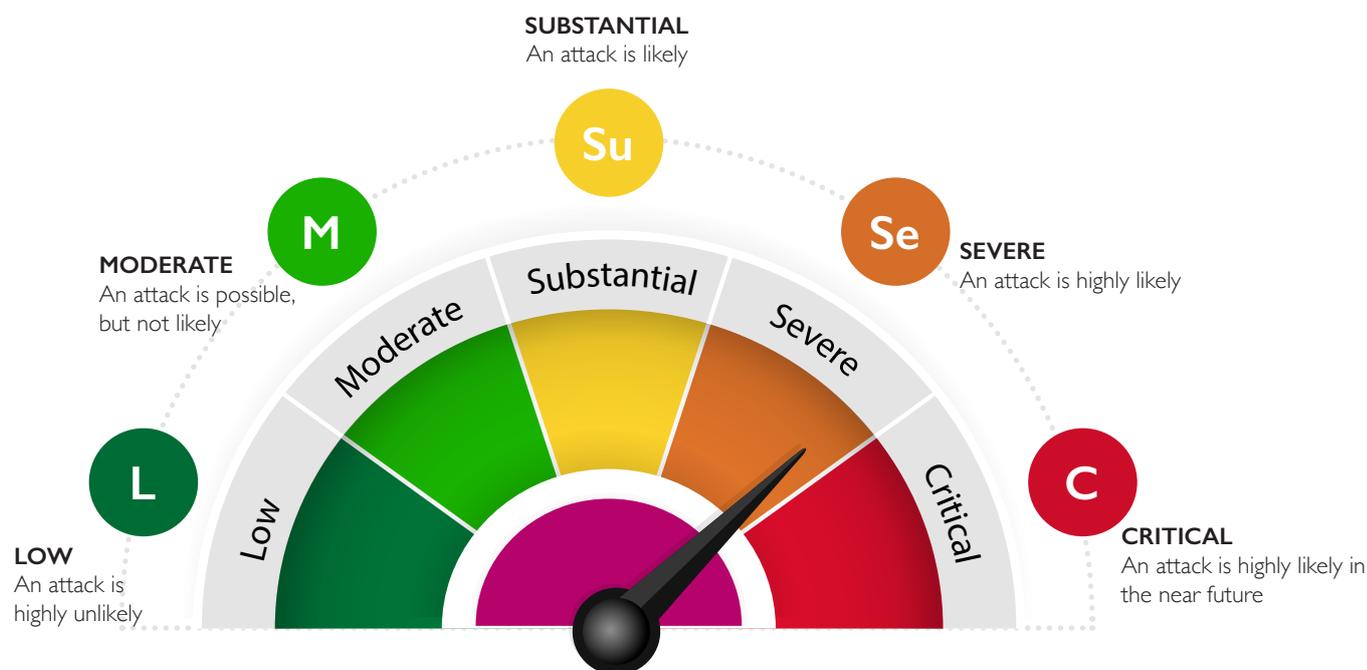
**DON'T BE A
PREDICTABLE TARGET**

A History of Terror

Since August 2014 the threat level in the UK has never dropped below Severe. This stretch of five years at such a high threat level is unprecedented and the likelihood is it will not go down any time soon. In fact, since reaching Severe there have been occasions where the threat has increased to the highest possible level; Critical.

The rationale behind the rise to a Severe threat level was mainly due to the rise and development of the Islamic State and the threat posed to western countries. During this time, it was well known that they were concentrating on training and planning, with the idea that foreign fighters could return to their home countries with the intent to carry out terrorist acts.

Since the threat level rose in 2014, it has proven to be the right choice, with a number of high-profile incidents occurring in the UK and across other western nations. However, it is not just the ever-present threat of terrorism that has been cause for concern, the last five years have seen a noticeable increase in knife crime and violence, which when considering the security of people, assets and environments, is vital to protect against.





14 DAYS TO RADICALISATION

The Changing Nature of Terrorism

Traditionally when we consider terrorism, we instantly think of large groups planning high casualty incidents. However, recent years have seen a dramatic shift in the operations of terror groups such as Islamic State and Al-Qaeda.

Now, the threat comes in the form of lone actors, or small cell groups. These individuals carry out attacks not as part of a wider group, instead using the knowledge and training they have acquired to plan and carry out attacks on their own, but with the same intention; to cause as much harm in a short space of time as possible. This method is much more difficult to trace and ultimately prevent due to the lack of organisation required between different parties.

This change in terrorist nature also comes with another negative side effect. In order for this method to prove successful, the radicalisation process is now significantly faster than ever before. By radicalising individuals quicker, terrorist groups can direct and inspire attacks with greater speed, making it difficult for government and law enforcement agencies to identify and prevent.

An example from 2016 highlights the speed at which the process now moves, where one individual, from the first hint of being radicalised online to being arrested for preparing an attack, was just 14 days. That is an exceptionally fast turnaround and is cause for major concern when attempting to implement preventative measures to stop incidents from occurring.

In order to tackle the threat we must also understand why the terrorists have changed tactic, and quite simply, it is down to the improved ability of intelligence agencies to trace and monitor behaviours. Knowing that large casualty incidents come with much greater risk of detection than ever before, the behaviour has switched focus to smaller but still shocking incidents. This retains the high levels of fear desired by terrorist groups, without posing as much risk to the individuals of being caught before they can carry out the attack. We must be prepared for the terrorist approach to continually evolve as intelligence improves.

SINCE 2017
22 MAJOR PLOTS
HAVE BEEN
DISRUPTED



75%

OF THOSE IN
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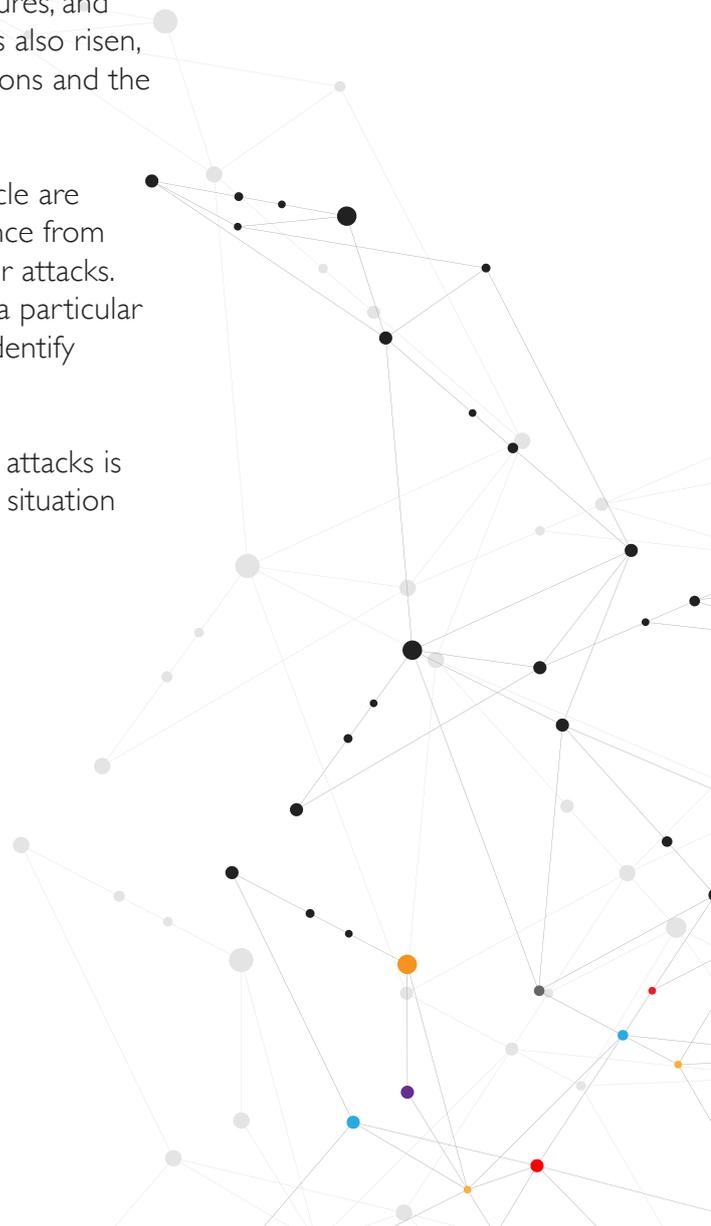
Where is the Threat Coming From

We've already referenced Islamic State and the continued presence of Al-Qaeda and whilst these remain the predominant terror threats in the UK, more sources of threat are growing rapidly. Extreme right-wing groups have grown in popularity over recent years, with political instability and population disillusionment aiding their cause. Many do not realise the threat posed by extreme right-wing groups due to the public focus on Islamic State terror. However over 10% of ongoing terrorist investigations in the UK are related to individuals associated with the extreme right-wing. These investigations range from acts of preparation to raising funds and foreign travel.

There are over 3,000 subjects of interest currently in the UK which brings a lot of pressure to security services. This pressure is compounded when considering there are 20,000 peripheral figures that may also have links to terror activity. Whilst the number of arrests has declined on previous years, it is still considerably higher than pre-2017 figures, and the number of referrals to anti-radicalisation programmes has also risen, a large number of which coming through educational institutions and the prison system.

Currently, approximately 75% of those in the investigation cycle are considered 'home-grown'. These individuals often have influence from abroad to aid in the radicalisation process and preparation for attacks. Unfortunately, these home-grown individuals do not fall into a particular demographic, with many varying in age, making it harder to identify potential threats, or those at risk of radicalisation.

The key for any business or those potentially at risk of terror attacks is to have adequate plans and procedures in place to manage a situation should it arise.



The Threat Methodology

With the threat of terror remaining at Severe, it is crucial to understand the nature of the threat and the types of attacks that are becoming more common in order to mitigate the risks and implement preventative measures.

The focus of terrorism in recent years has shifted from large scale, mass casualty incidents to smaller, harder to predict and prevent methods. The current instruments of terror tend to be any item that is easy to get hold of and cause damage to individuals, commonly this is knives. Knives that can cause significant harm are easy to obtain for any individual and by utilising techniques often learnt in the prison system, are attached to the body to make the individual more difficult to disarm. Knives are a popular small casualty weapon due to the ease of obtaining them and the ease of hiding or disguising the weapon.

As mentioned however, terrorists are increasingly turning to anything easy to obtain, unfortunately this has meant they have turned to vehicles to use as weapons. A legitimately hired vehicle is unlikely to be stopped by police, enabling an offender to travel wherever they wish uninterrupted. Again, due to relatively easy access to vehicles, there have been numerous attacks in the UK and abroad in recent years, resulting in death and injury to hundreds of innocent people. Vehicles mean that terrorists can inflict damage on a large number of people relatively easily, particularly when compared to other easy to obtain items such as knives.

Strong security procedures need to be in place to reduce the risks posed by vehicle-based attacks. This includes having robust site security, as well as implementing strong security measures on any vehicles you may own, as these are also an option for a potential attacker.

**EASY TO OBTAIN
ITEMS MAKE THE MOST
POPULAR WEAPONS**

In addition to these two methods, we are again starting to see an increase in improvised explosives. The popularity of this method had declined, however it is beginning to be used again as a relatively easy and cheap method of causing damage. Whilst the chemicals and materials required to make these devices have been more difficult to obtain, there are numerous ingredients that can still be found with little effort.

A fourth and final method that deserves focus is firearms. Often in the UK, we consider our gun control to be strict, with the vast majority of firearms that could cause major issues within small groups of serious organised criminals. These groups were unlikely to share these weapons and were considered low risk, however with more and more crossover in the prison system between organised criminality and terrorists, the risk is growing that these firearms could fall into the hands of those that wish to commit acts of terror.

Whilst these four areas appear to be the main methods currently in use or being considered by terrorists, we must not lose focus on the fact that anything easy to obtain could be used to cause harm. Crowded places will continue to be those most at risk, anywhere large groups conduct their everyday lives are targets, as terrorists can inflict significant damage within a relatively short space of time. Furthermore, with advancements in technology happening so rapidly, we must consider how these developments could be used in a dangerous way, for example, could drones be used in future to aid in acts of terror?

**CROWDED PLACES
AND LARGE GROUPS
CONTINUE TO BE AT
RISK TARGETS**

With the threat coming from multiple areas and various groups, it is imperative that we develop strong strategies to deal with and prevent terror related crime.



How to Counter the Threat

PREDICTABILITY
IS OUR ENEMY



With the risks and methods outlined, the key question is what can we do to prevent these situations, or how can we manage them effectively should they happen?

To start, we must get into the mindset of a hostile. Whilst this may be a difficult task, it is imperative for planning an effective solution. We must view our assets, people and environments as an attacker would view them, with the aim of the exercise to identify how to disrupt their activity. Whilst the threats and aims may vary, hostiles share commonality. They are united in their desire to succeed and they plan carefully, as often they don't get a second chance.

HOSTILES ARE UNITED
IN THEIR DESIRE TO
SUCCEED

To counter the threat posed by hostiles, we can implement the 'Deny, Detect, Deter' framework devised by the CPNI.

Firstly, we must deny the hostile any essential or reliable information by ensuring it is not easily available in public places it does not need to be. Secondly, we need effective detection capabilities in the right places, these will make it much harder for a hostile to access the areas required to gather essential information or carry out an attack. 'Deter' is the product of effective deny and detect methods, as effective solutions in these areas will act as deterrents to a potential hostile.

Finally, we must consider the role unpredictability plays in security. Where possible, deny and detect methods should be carried out in an unpredictable manner. In addition, look to utilise other disruptive measures and review the menu of tactical options devised by NaCTSO. These are further means of preventing a hostile from gathering essential information, or being confident in the information they manage to obtain.

Whatever measures are implemented the aim is the same; the attacker should be unable to obtain or have sufficient confidence in the information that is essential for attack planning, without unacceptable risk of detection.

Live Exercising

In the event of an incident you need to know your teams are ready and can handle the situation. The only way to accomplish this is to conduct regular live exercising. This puts all the training they have into practice by testing how they respond in a real-life scenario.

To get the best out of an exercise it is important to get the whole security team involved, so everyone can share the experience. Also, where possible, local police should be included in order to enhance the realism and provide a true scenario. The type of exercise can vary, from an everyday scenario to something more sinister such as a firearms attack; the choice is dependent on your level of risk and anything you deem to be suitable.

Live exercises test the frontline staff to see how they respond in pressure situations and how quickly they act, for example, how quickly they can lock down a building. These exercises also see how the security teams interact with one another and how they interact with other security teams who may be present in the same building. In the event of a terrorist incident, it is vital that all security teams can interact and work together seamlessly to ensure the best possible action for the assets, people and environments they protect.

COMMUNICATION IS VITAL IN AN ATTACK, LIVE EXERCISING TESTS YOUR TEAMS ABILITIES

One vital part of the exercise is testing responders in the control room. When a serious incident occurs they are critical for delivering information to those on the ground and managing the situation. In a live test it is important to see how they manage an incident and when they choose to escalate.

The control room environment can often be chaotic in times of serious incidents, which is why it is vital to test these teams to see how they cope with the situation. However, it is not down to just the teams and individuals, it is important they are

armed with the right tools to handle these incidents. For example, they need to be able to deal with unscripted incidents, which often requires training. It is also important to empower staff on the ground to take decisive action as they see fit, for example locking down a building. If staff feel it necessary to do a full or partial lockdown they need to feel confident in the process, which is why live exercising is important to the overall security of a premises.

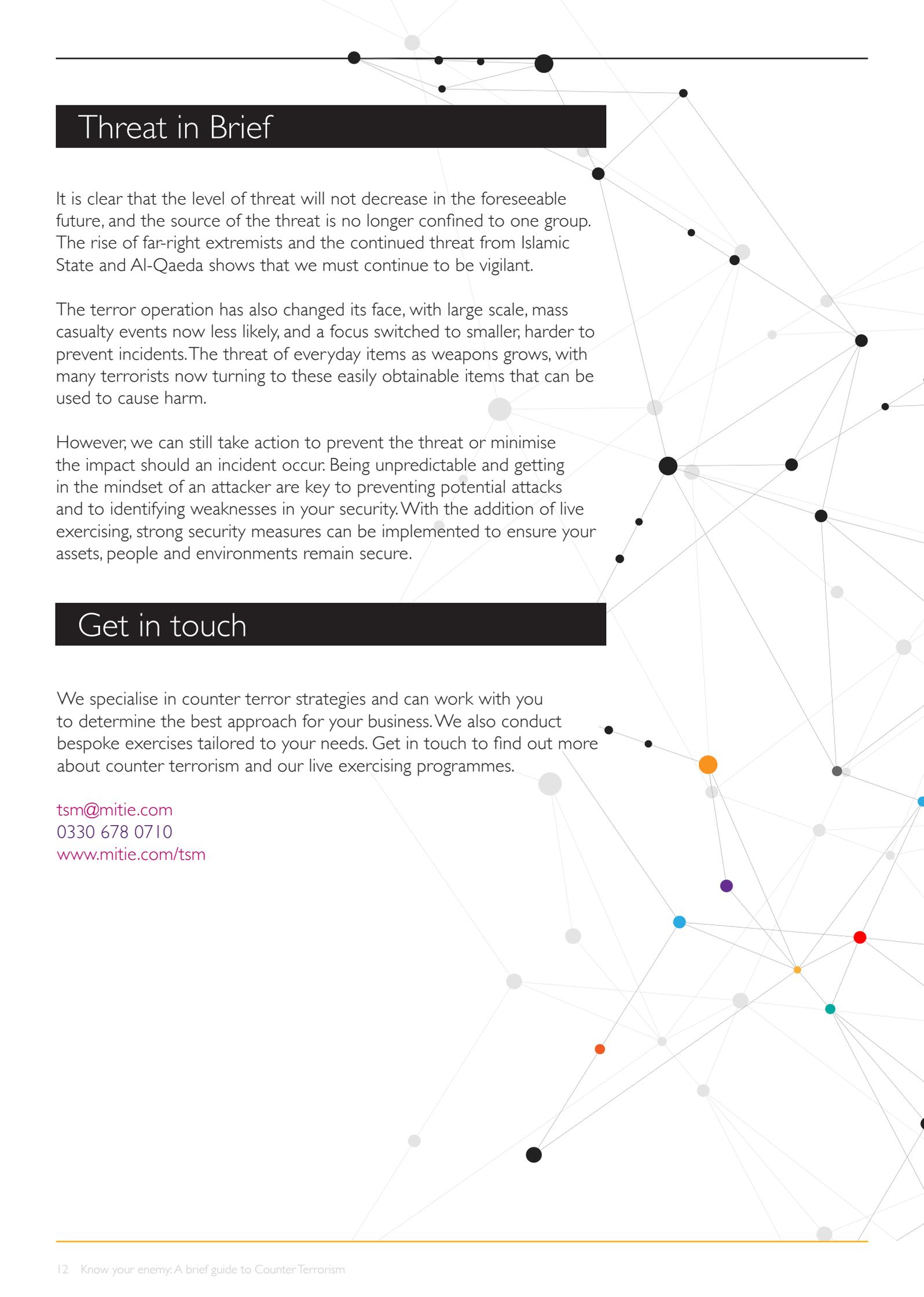
THE CONTROL ROOM IS KEY; MAKE SURE TO TEST THEM IN LIVE EXERCISES TOO

Managing these incidents effectively requires quick time decision making. This is a skill that requires practice, and without this, it can be a skill easily lost. By conducting regular live tests, your teams skill at quick time decision making will continue to improve, providing you the peace of mind that should an incident occur, your team are well equipped to handle it effectively.

Not only is live exercising a useful tool for individuals to improve skills and confidence, it can also be highly beneficial to you. Often when conducting live exercises, individuals may cope better than expected, and some worse than expected. These situations can often help assess the level of each individual in the team, providing you with valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses that may have previously gone unidentified.

The aim of live exercising is simple; creating confident staff throughout your security teams. Empowering staff with the belief that should an incident occur they are well versed in how to deal with it and can do so without any panic setting in.

LIVE EXERCISING BREEDS CONFIDENCE IN THE TEAM, AND EMPOWERS THEM TO TAKE ACTION



Threat in Brief

It is clear that the level of threat will not decrease in the foreseeable future, and the source of the threat is no longer confined to one group. The rise of far-right extremists and the continued threat from Islamic State and Al-Qaeda shows that we must continue to be vigilant.

The terror operation has also changed its face, with large scale, mass casualty events now less likely, and a focus switched to smaller, harder to prevent incidents. The threat of everyday items as weapons grows, with many terrorists now turning to these easily obtainable items that can be used to cause harm.

However, we can still take action to prevent the threat or minimise the impact should an incident occur. Being unpredictable and getting in the mindset of an attacker are key to preventing potential attacks and to identifying weaknesses in your security. With the addition of live exercising, strong security measures can be implemented to ensure your assets, people and environments remain secure.

Get in touch

We specialise in counter terror strategies and can work with you to determine the best approach for your business. We also conduct bespoke exercises tailored to your needs. Get in touch to find out more about counter terrorism and our live exercising programmes.

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