

CORPS RELAY

Prepared by:

Mike Bluestone CSyP, Neil Shanks CSyP,
James Henderson CSyP, Keith Denton MSyL,
Nick Jones, MSyL & Sophie Purdy, MSyL
October 2025

Date:

CORPS
— Est. 1859 —
SECURITY

Converted Blank Firing Weapons

Large numbers of blank firearms have been imported into the UK, converted into live firing weapons, and sold for as little as £50. These firearms are marketed as prop guns for films or plays but they can be converted from blank-firing to live-firing in a short time by a professional. The price range for these firearms is typically between £50 and £400, with additional fees for conversion.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has reported that several of these weapons in the UK have been linked to multiple murders that have taken place over the past two years.

Certain brands are now classified as readily convertible and have been made illegal. The Metropolitan Police have reported that with sufficient expertise, a readily convertible firearm can be converted within minutes. Although these firearms are advertised online for legitimate uses, the NCA and the Metropolitan Police's Proactive Firearms Team maintain that they are being purchased in bulk by organised and criminal groups.

Within the past year, more than 300 firearms have been confiscated by the Proactive Firearms Team in London. Authorities report that these firearms are commonly used by organised crime groups due to their accessibility, ease of conversion, and lower cost. In contrast, on the black market, firearms smuggled in from eastern and central Europe can range from £1,500 to £4,000. Although convertible firearms are considered less reliable than standard models, their lower price makes them frequently chosen by criminal groups.

Since February over 3,000 blank firearms have been surrendered as part of an amnesty targeting Turkish-branded weapons. An additional amnesty for Bruni Italian-made firearms is scheduled to take place in February 2026.

Epping Hotel Asylum Seeker Given Jail Sentence

Hadush Gerberslasie Kebatu, an asylum seeker who had been residing at the Bell Hotel in Epping, was sentenced to 12 months in prison following his conviction for sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl and a woman in Epping. The incident led to several weeks of protest at the site, which then spread nationally. Although Mr. Kebatu denied all charges, he was found guilty in early September. The Home Office also confirmed its intention to pursue deportation proceedings against Kebatu.

Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, characterised the sentence as an example of "two-tier policing." He drew a direct comparison to the case of Lucy Connolly, who received a 31-month prison term for publishing written material that incited racial hatred. Farage also noted that the offence for which he was convicted carries a maximum sentence of up to 14 years in prison.

Although there has not yet been any direct protest in response to the sentencing, there will be those with beliefs like Farage that perceive the sentence as indicative of a two-tier system. This perception is likely to prompt continued demonstrations and protests outside both current and former asylum hotels.

Manchester Arena Plotter Refuses to Appear in Court on Attempted Murder Charges

Hashem Abedi, convicted for his role in the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, has refused to appear in court after being charged with attempting to murder prison officers at HMP Frankland, a maximum-security jail in County Durham.

Abedi, 28, was scheduled to appear via video link at Westminster Magistrates' Court on Thursday but failed to do so, forcing the case to be adjourned. He faces three counts of attempted murder, one count of assault occasioning actual bodily harm, and one count of unauthorised possession of a weapon.

The charges follow an incident on April 12 in which four prison officers were attacked with hot oil and improvised weapons. Three were hospitalised with serious injuries. Chief Magistrate Paul Goldspring confirmed that Abedi will be compelled to attend his next hearing on September 25, either in person or via prison video link.

Abedi is currently serving a life sentence with a minimum term of 55 years for assisting his brother Salman Abedi in the Manchester Arena attack that killed 22 people in 2017.

New Minister for Veterans and People Appointed at the Ministry of Defence

Louise Sandler-Jones, MP for North East Derbyshire, has been appointed as the new Minister for Veterans and People at the Ministry of Defence.

Elected in July 2024, Ms Sandler-Jones brings direct military experience to the role, having served as an Army Intelligence Officer with the Intelligence Corps.

In a LinkedIn statement, she said she was "deeply honoured" by the appointment, adding that her own service had been a major inspiration for entering politics. She also thanked her predecessor, Al Carns, for his leadership on VALOUR — the government's recently launched initiative to build a nationwide support network for veterans.



Three Arrested on Suspicion of Spying for Russia

A 41-year-old man, a 46-year-old man, and a 35-year-old woman were arrested on suspicion of assisting a foreign intelligence service under section 3 of the National Security Act, in relation to Russia. All were released under investigation with conditional bail.

Last year, MI5 director general Sir Ken McCallum stated that Russia regularly uses proxies, including private intelligence agents and criminals, to engage in kinetic actions against the UK. He specifically identified the GRU, Russia's military intelligence branch, as persistently involved in sabotage and intelligence-gathering on UK soil.

This comes off the back of several individuals who currently await sentencing from an arson attack that occurred within a Ukrainian linked warehouse in London. This attack was connected to an organisation known as the

Wagner Group, a paramilitary organisation with alleged close ties to the Kremlin. The Wagner Group has been described as a "military tool of Vladimir Putin's Russia" and has been designated a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2023, and so the incident was effectively categorised as state sponsored terrorism. For this arson attack, British males were contacted via encrypted based messaging apps, and then financially incentivised to carry out the actions against the warehouse.

Although the use of proxies is not a recent development, it underscores the ongoing efforts of the Russian state to assert its influence, with the deployment of proxy groups by Russia highly likely to persist.

Current National Threat Level

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

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



NOTE:

Threat levels are designed to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack

LOW means an attack is highly unlikely

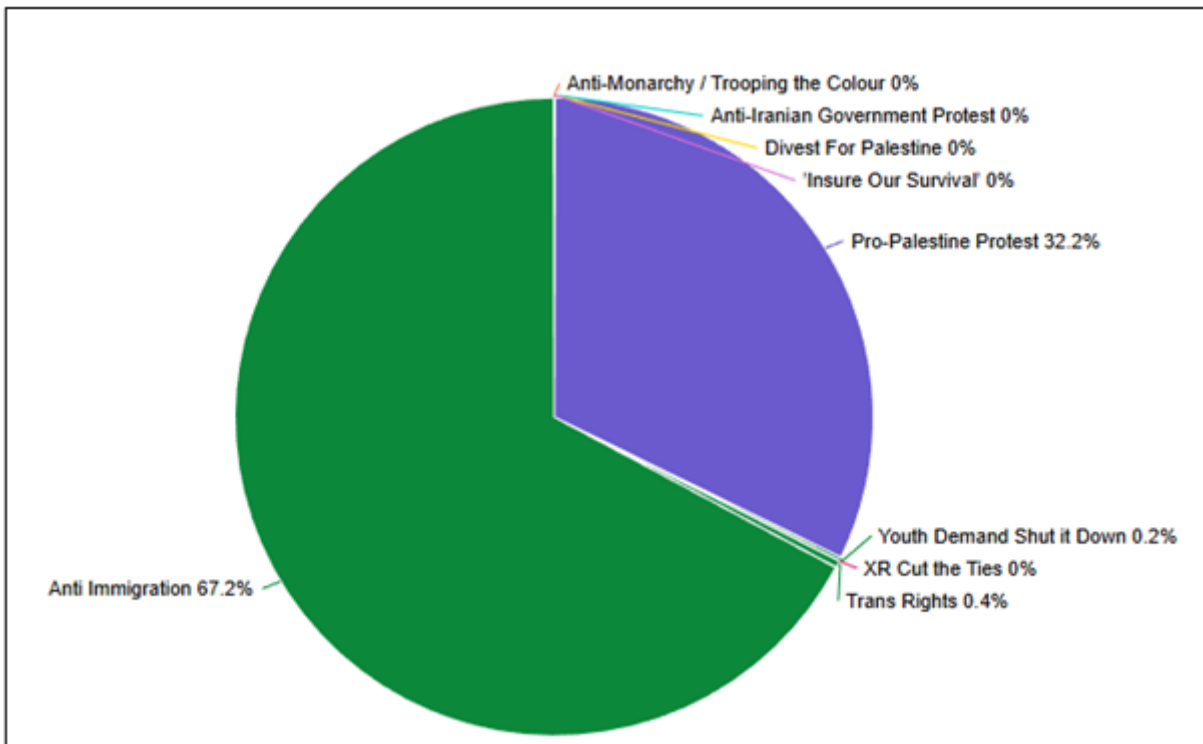
MODERATE means an attack is possible, but not likely

SUBSTANTIAL means an attack is likely

SEVERE means an attack is highly likely

CRITICAL means an attack is highly likely in the near future

Events and Movements - Most conversations related to activist events and movements remained with pro-Palestine protests and anti-immigration activities. This trend aligns with recent events such as the Unite the Kingdom demonstration and the mass arrest of Palestine Action supporters. The anti-immigration discourse predominantly references the Unite the Kingdom rally held on 13th September, with online discussions largely driven by supporters of the movement, with voices of common support more vocal than voices of opposition. Additionally, there appears to be notable frustration and anger directed at critics of the demonstration. Many are critical of the media coverage, believing the march was unfairly covered in comparison to Palestine Action demonstrations and overall sentiment suggests that backing for the anti-immigration movement is growing, rather than waning. In relation to pro-Palestinian activism, ongoing conversation reflects anger towards central government for proscribing Palestine Action, which is now increasingly being directed towards the police for enforcing the ban, as well as central government.



Activism and Protest Monthly Review and Look Forward

September experienced considerable protest activity in London, which was reflected across the nation and included industrial action, resulting in significant disruption within the capital. The most substantial turnout was observed at the Unite the Kingdom demonstration on 13th September. While attendance estimates varied, consensus places participation at approximately 110,000 individuals, marking it as the largest nationalist event in several decades. Although arrests were made during the march, including for assaults on police officers, the overall assessment is that the event, despite its scale and right-leaning affiliation, occurred with relatively few incidents. A smaller group of counter-protesters, estimated at around 5,000, was also present. Tensions did arise between the two groups; however, police were largely successful in maintaining separation and order.

The following week, around 10,000 demonstrators gathered in London for the Make Them Pay rally, which addressed issues related to economic inequality and climate change. Additionally, a march was held in connection with the state visit by Donald Trump. Approximately 4,000 people attended the demonstration against Trump in London. Although this number is lower than previous protests, where estimates reached up to 250,000 participants.

Smaller, more localised demonstrations have continued across the country. These demonstrations, typically focused on immigration issues, are often accompanied by counter-demonstrations. Many of these events have taken place outside hotels that are currently or were previously used to accommodate asylum seekers.

Look Ahead - Pro-Palestine protests and demonstrations, including those supporting Palestine Action, are highly likely to continue in October. The UK government's recent decision to recognise Palestine as a state is likely to encourage further pro-Palestine activism, resulting in additional demonstrations directed at the government, which pro-Palestinian groups have accused of supplying arms and assistance to Israel. Additional protests are already planned in London and Liverpool, including during the Labour party conference, with participants supporting Palestine Action. Separately, the US administration has recently designated the Antifa movement—a decentralised far-left movement—as a terrorist organisation. Commentators have drawn comparisons between this action and the UK's proscription of Palestine Action. There is a realistic possibility that this could further increase pro-Palestine participation, particularly among individuals who identify as left leaning.

Further smaller anti-immigration demonstrations, as well as counter-demonstrations, are planned across the country. Additionally, the sentencing of the individual involved in the initial Epping protests is likely to contribute to ongoing tensions within local communities. Many involved in any anti-immigration movements will have a realistic possibility of their views aligning with Reform UK. Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, described the sentence as an example of two-tier policing and stated that he agreed that people had demonstrated outside the Bell Hotel, Epping. Certainly, in the short term, it is likely that similar small-scale demonstrations will continue to take place nationwide, as has occurred over the past month.

Online Safety – The COM Network

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has reported concerns regarding an online network referred to as COM (Community), which it has identified as a significant threat to the safety of children, ranking second after the small boat crisis. COM consists of group chats that recruit participants (mainly children) and encourage activities described as crime or disorder for recognition or notoriety. The network's focus is on gaining attention rather than financial benefit.

The United Kingdom is presently conducting more than 100 active investigations, representing a fivefold increase since 2023. In response to this escalating threat, the NCA has established a collaborative partnership with the FBI. Affiliation with the COM typically begins with recruitment efforts conducted on widely used social media and gaming platforms, such as Roblox or Discord, which are frequented by children. Once connected, users will then masquerade as peers to their victims, eventually moving them to encrypted apps in order to send extreme content to desensitise the victim. "Tasks" are then sent to members of the group, with participants victims effectively ranked within the group, dependent on their compliance and how extreme the tasks are that have been completed. The more extreme acts receive more clout, therefore actions and consequences can escalate quickly.

The threat is considered severe because those involved are motivated by a desire for notoriety, aiming to join elite groups rather than seeking financial or sexual gain. Authorities are facing challenges due to this new motivation and the cross-border nature of the offences, as is often the case with cyber related offences. This emerging area presents the potential for radicalisation, or for individuals to carry out extreme actions on behalf of others. This raises the realistic concern that further incidents like the case involving Axel Rudakubana in Southport could occur, representing a new and concerning avenue for potential grooming or radicalisation.

In January, a 19-year-old from West Sussex was sentenced to nine years in custody for multiple online offences related to terrorism, online extremism, and child exploitation. The individual was heavily involved with a group known as "764," which advocated violence and societal disruption and was linked to both child exploitation and radicalisation efforts. Among the various charges, it is particularly notable that the individual planned a so-called "terror week," during which he expressed intent to harm a homeless person, framing the act as a tribute to the 764 group.

These types of groups represent an emerging digital threat, demonstrating how online extremism can have severe real-world consequences.





Market House
85 Cowcross St
London
EC1M 6PF



07890 590352
Neil Shanks



intel@corpssecurity.co.uk
www.corpssecurity.co.uk