

Key Points

- The authorities have done a good job preparing to keep the Olympics secure; but new counter terrorism problems will persist long after the Games have closed
- Global trends will keep the incidence of international terrorism high and promote new ways for it to take effect
- Arrests and failed plots give clues to how the terrorist threat in the UK is changing
- Despite the deaths of key Al-Qa'ida figures in 2011, the terrorist threat has not diminished and will continue to dominate UK security concerns until and beyond the London 2012 Olympic Games
- The security response to the Olympic Games is unprecedented in scale, interoperability and cost
- As we move closer to the Games, we are likely to see more security activity, especially in arrests and searches
- The Olympic Games are likely to prove a major turning point in the allocation of resources for UK counter-terrorism
- Successes in counter-terrorism where there are no attacks in the UK will paradoxically lead to a streamlining of counter-terrorism capabilities as the public and politicians lose the appetite for high spending

Counter-Terrorism in an Olympic Year It Will Get Better Before It Gets Worse

On 27 July 2012, the UK will witness the biggest security and counter-terrorism operation ever mounted. As the Olympic Torch ignites the flame to start the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, we will see a culmination of policy where security strategy has been geared towards one overriding aim: to ensure a safe and secure international competition. The numbers are staggering: around 10,000 police deployed with an additional 10,000 private security contractors. The drafting of 13,500 military personnel, which includes Special Forces, and the stationing of an amphibious assault ship on the Thames together with fighter jets on standby.

This first UK Terrorism Analysis (UKTA) examines the measures put in place for the Olympics but sets them in the longer-term context of what is likely to happen over the coming years. Though the death of Bin Laden began a succession of counter-terrorist victories in 2011, the threat from Jihadist terrorism has not diminished. If anything, the risk has evolved from plots carried out by organised cells within a leadership structure, to one carried out by 'lone wolves', radicalised by material on the internet. The latter is harder to track down and is potent given the uncertain international situation; where the outcome of the Arab Spring has not been settled, and where there are frequent return of British citizens from warzones such as Somalia and Yemen.

This report outlines how the security of the Olympics will mark a turning point for British counter-terrorism strategy. Many reforms in the UK's security structure have been postponed until

after the Games. This will include the creation of a National Crime Agency and the likely allocation of fewer resources to counter-terrorism.

The appetite for a sustained level of UK counter-terrorist spending and staffing levels may well decline considerably after the Games. The absence of an attack during the Olympics will be a success for the UK's counter-terrorism strategy. Yet, paradoxically it is likely to lower the public's perception of a threat which may have appeared to be waning in 2011.

RUSI's UK Terrorism Analysis therefore aims to set the context for UK security in 2012 and beyond. There will be huge organisational changes to security policy, taking place amidst a volatile international environment. Our subsequent Analysis reports will examine the issues affecting national and global counter-terrorism. With access to a unique network of security policymakers and specialists, the UKTA will provide an exclusive picture of the future security landscape.

In this vein, we will aim to address key issues in security policy. UKTA will examine the political dimensions of the proposed changes to security structures in the UK and compare divergent political approaches to security policy. We will also assess how the changes affect the Government's appetite for risk and whether these judgements are shared by the wider public. UKTA will also measure the operational impacts of funding cuts and structural change on the UK's security mechanisms. In the backdrop to all this, we will explore how the threat picture may evolve over the coming years.

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The Global Origins of New Terrorism

Global trends will keep the incidence of international terrorism high and promote new ways for it to take effect.

Security planners for the Olympics have been pre-occupied with the possibility of terror threats to the Games. They will be grateful that the flow of international events appears to have moved against Jihadist international terror groups in recent years and that the threat to Britain from this source has diminished. There have been twenty odd significant terrorist plots in Britain during the last decade and only the London bombings of 2005 have been successful, though others have come close. The evident effectiveness of Britain's counter-terrorism strategy is comforting. Such an open society as Britain necessarily lives with a degree of existential insecurity from a variety of international sources and the public attitude to the risks we run from terrorism is generally regarded as robust.

Nevertheless, the Government and the security services are not alone in believing the country's counter-terrorism strategy is about to be challenged in some new and probably novel ways. There is convincing evidence that a new wave of international terrorism is building in the global environment, and though the size of the wave that may break against Britain's counter-terrorism defence is uncertain, the fact that it will almost certainly take a series of different forms, is not.

As these reports indicate, there is some good news from the global environment, at least as far as international terrorism is concerned. Al-Qa'ida's core organisation has been effectively emasculated as an operational unit; dismantled as an organisation and isolated from its natural mentors in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, the upheavals across the Arab world have owed nothing to Al-Qa'ida or its ideology of a global caliphate. Parts of the Muslim world are on fire, but it has been kindled by global food price rises, the demands for a better economic growth model, and political pluralism that is anathema to the Al-Qa'ida ideology. The inspiration that Osama bin Laden provided for Al-Qa'ida's broad aims, and which Ayman al-Zawahiri tries to maintain, still appears to inspire only a tiny minority of the disaffected across the Muslim world. Radical Islamic groups may well gain from the upheavals in some important Arab countries, but there is no reason why that might re-invigorate the Al-

Qa'ida Core organisation, or its appeal within Muslim societies.

The Drivers of a New Momentum

The story of Jihadist terror over the last twenty years, however, has been one of continuous evolution and there is every reason to believe that this will continue. Since the late Nineteenth century, the incidence of terrorism has ebbed and flowed with the emerging trends and imitative fashions of the international system at any given time. The broad trends driving the current global order therefore offer important pointers to the likely incidence of future terrorism and to the ways it may evolve.

Firstly, it is quite probable that the alienation of youth across the world, and certainly across the Muslim world, will increase over the coming years. The global economic crisis increases the inequities between rich and poor. It diminishes the moral authority of Western societies whose economic model appears so mismanaged. It creates ready ammunition for extremist forces to pin the blame for human misery on particular societies or leaders. Most of all, it puts even more strain on those societies with young populations and diminishing economic prospects. In North Africa the median age is below twenty-five and across most of the rest of the Arab world is below twenty, as it is in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa. Throughout Asia as a whole, and with the exception of China, the median age of the present population never rises above thirty (as opposed to forty-five in Europe and North America). If the world economy were booming, this would provide some real opportunities for young societies with strong leadership. But in a world that is moving into recession for perhaps five or more years, the isolation and relevant impoverishment of large parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East is far more likely. Youth alienation in itself does not drive the incidence of terrorism; but it provides a large pool of potential recruits for those who can mobilise the urge to retaliate with violence. More importantly, the plight of youth in a troubled region has already been seen to have the reciprocal effect of providing a focus for those alienated by other forces in prosperous Western societies to turn to terror as a response to their frustration.

Equally, in a world distracted by recession, fractured societies will be more subject to unrestrained separatist pressures which frequently involve terrorist acts, particularly in the early stages of a campaign. According to EUROPOL, some 64 per cent of the 250 terrorist attacks across Europe in 2010 were classed as 'separatist', while almost 20 per cent were classed as 'left wing and anarchist', and no fewer than nine different EU member states were targeted by terrorist acts.¹ As the Al-Qa'ida appeal has become more connected to separatist movements in the north Caucasus, Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria and Pakistan, more of this can be expected to blow back into European countries taking different forms as it does so. This may happen both because jihadist groups tend to ally themselves with separatists where there is a Sunni Muslim connection; and because terrorism is imitative and the predominance of separatist terror attacks on Europe will likely encourage jihadist imitation.

Separatism in different parts of the world is also both a symptom and a cause of 'ungoverned space'. More areas fall increasingly into this category, where legal governance does not exist and control is exercised by tribes, warlords or merely criminal gangs. The importance of this in current terrorist evolution is that whereas Al-Qa'ida and related groups operated known training sites in Afghanistan and along the border with Pakistan, the insurgencies and wars now on-going in the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, in West Africa, the north Caucasus, and in south Asia, have increasingly become the training grounds for individuals who would become terrorists. The growing number of lone wolves who are radicalised and then indulge in some 'terrorist tourism' are not normally part of a well-organised pipeline of guerrilla fighters going to the jihad. More usually, they are personally connected to family or friends who have already gone to a conflict zone. Britons are thought to make up about 25 per cent of the 200 or so foreign fighters that the Al-Shabaab group in Somalia currently fields, and who are engaging in a deepening war on neighbouring Kenya and its tourist trade.² Most of these individuals appear to be only informally networked, making the most of personal

links through Kenya or South Africa. Young British men, and some women, go to fight in Somalia, Yemen and the border areas of Pakistan. So, too, do an increasing trickle of disaffected American men, some of whom have already served in the US Army.³ Those who survive tend to return in a matter of months or perhaps a year, and it is only a question of time before their commitment to the cause, and their newly-acquired expertise, are likely to be seen on British streets.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram attacks in Kano on 20 January provide a good example of the jihadist evolution. The organisation is undoubtedly part-caliphate and linked both to Al Qa'ida in the Maghreb and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. But it is also an ethnic/religious guerrilla group, originating from Borno in northeast Nigeria. The devastating attack on Kano was a mixture of suicide bombings and urban guerrilla tactics, creating a two hour battle with government forces and clearly designed to provoke elements of a civil war in the north of the country. It would be surprising if both the tactics and the tensions underlying Boko Haram's campaign do not spread some ripples among the Nigerian ethnic communities in the UK.

Lone Wolves Coming Home

So far, the 'lone wolves' and 'self-radicalised' who have emerged as jihadist terrorists in the US, Germany and Sweden and who have predominated in the British scene once the big and better-organised plots were blown after 2006, have been noted for their low levels of expertise and 'poor tradecraft'. The threat they pose, so far, is in the possibility that high numbers of such individuals, operating alone and unsupported, albeit in an amateur way, may nevertheless be lucky in a few

attempts. They are harder to track and their behaviour much harder to predict.

Even this threat is set to evolve in a significant way, however, as more experienced lone wolf terrorists are likely to be returning to Britain in the next couple of years, not from training camps in Pakistan and via airports in Karachi and Dubai; but from wars in Somalia, Yemen or Nigeria; from the renewed violence in Iraq, and from destinations and via routes that will be far more difficult for security services to monitor.

The arrival home of such individuals will coincide with the steady release from prison of those convicted of terrorist offences in Britain over the last decade. For good legal reasons their sentences have not, on average, been very long. Less than 20 per cent of convicted terrorists are serving life or indeterminate sentences and another 20 per cent have been given more than ten years. The largest single proportion – 32 per cent – have been serving sentences of between eight months and four years for their offences.⁴ Meanwhile, the Muslim prison population in the UK, convicted of offences not related in any way to terrorism, has grown by over 540 per cent since 1991. At the end of 2010 it stood at 10,400 – over 12 per cent of the total prison population.⁵ It has long been believed among probation officers that around a tenth of Muslim prison inmates are subject to effective radicalisation while serving their sentences.⁶ Some of these individuals will be vulnerable to the appeal of local leaders who possess all the credibility of having just come back from a war zone in the global jihad.

Such trends are no surprise to the Police or security services. Yet, equally, there is an awareness that all that might be achieved in Britain's Prevent policy to

counter the radicalisation of individuals can be completely undercut by the economic circumstances of a country in recession, and even more by the instabilities created through a global economic recession, over which the British Government has no control and very little influence. This will go far beyond the year of the Olympics and all that is being put in place to handle the security implications of such a major event. These trends will set the scene for the counter-terrorist challenge in Britain well beyond 2012 and for some years to come.

Analysis by Professor Michael Clarke, Director-General, RUSI

NOTES

1. EUROPOL, TE-SAT 2011 *EU terrorism Situation and Trend Report, 2011*, pp. 9, 36-37.
2. *Somalia Report*, 'Al-Shabaab taunts west with social media', 5 January 2012. <<http://www.somaliareport.com/index.php/post/2455>>
3. In December 2011, for example, Craig Baxam, a decorated US soldier, was arrested in Kenya trying, on his own admission, to get to Somalia to join al-Shabaab.
4. Robin Simcox, et. al., *Islamist Terrorism: The British Connection*, London: Centre for Social Cohesion, 2010, p. ix.
5. *The Times*, 10 January 2012, p.17.
6. House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, *Preventing Violent Extremism*, HC 65 (London: The Stationery Office, March 2010), para.75, Ev. 89. Also, Alan Travis, 'Prisons Failing to Tackle Terror Recruitment', *Guardian*, 2 October 2006; Ben Goldby, 'Al Qaeda Recruiting at Midland Prison', *Sunday Mercury*, 10 January 2010; David Leppard, 'Al Qaeda Bid to Recruit inmates', *Sunday Times*, 28 September 2008.

Another Decade of Terrorist Threat to the UK

Arrests and failed plots give clues to how the terrorist threat in the UK is changing

The trends indicating a new kind of terrorism are not yet reflected in the national assessment of the UK threat level. As suggested earlier, this is in part due to the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies. Last July the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) downgraded the UK's terrorist threat level from 'severe' to 'substantial' following the death of Bin Laden. It reflects an attenuation of such a threat when assessed on the basis of intent,

capability and timescale. Statistics released in October by the Home Office also revealed that the number of people arrested for terrorism offences in 2010/2011 had fallen to 121, from 178 the previous year, considerably below the annual average of 206 registered since April 2002. In fact, forty-five suspects were charged, of which only nineteen were for terrorism-related offences.¹ However the figures also belie the adaptive capabilities of the terrorist

threat: from centralised movements to disparate networks, and now to lone wolves: inspired and aided by the internet.

The Current State of the Threat: Weakened, Yet Persistent, Sources of Training

The available data suggests that currently the terrorist threat to the UK's national security has diminished both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

There might be fewer individuals willing to go to a great length – and possibly sacrifice themselves – for their cause. Those who do often do not have the necessary skills, expertise and sophistication to succeed. To some extent, this is a direct consequence of the way the threat itself has morphed and adapted, as a result of recent counter-terrorism successes which have greatly deteriorated Al-Qa’ida’s manpower and capabilities. Squeezed out of its safe havens and decimated by an effective campaign of sustained drone strikes along the Afghan-Pakistan border, the Core organisation has struggled to provide the kind of training which was instrumental in the execution of more sophisticated plots in the past. Furthermore, enhanced surveillance of troubled regions, such as Waziristan, coupled with a more stringent monitoring process aimed at detecting and keeping track of potentially dangerous individuals, all means that nowadays it is considerably harder to reach traditional terrorist hubs in those areas.

Yet, this is by no means impossible: Ibrahim Adam, Mohammed Azmir² and, more recently, Aslam Awan³ are only the latest in a list of suspected British terrorists targeted and killed by US drone strikes in the remote regions of Pakistan.⁴ British security services believe that a significant proportion of the 2,000 domestic ‘Jihadists’ currently under surveillance have received training in Waziristan in the past.⁵ Although this number is now declining, Jihadists from the UK are still choosing to travel to this and other neighbouring territories to join – or prepare for – jihad. This could be easier for individuals with some previous militant experience or, to some extent, associated with the previous wave of jihadist terrorist activity as witnessed until 2007/2008. The phenomenon of individuals returning from conflict zones, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, and working to recruit others has already begun to appear in recent court cases. Individuals like Munir Farooqi – an ex-Taliban fighter convicted last September of attempting to recruit and send two undercover agents to fight in Afghanistan⁶ – can provide the sort of valuable connections that can allow would-be terrorists to find their way through to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Alternative Hubs and Emerging Trends

It is, however, unquestionable that the highly sustained pace of Western intelligence and military activities in that

part of the world has been acting as a deterrent for a growing proportion of individuals aiming to join Al-Qa’ida. The increasing decentralisation of the jihadist terrorist threat witnessed in the past few years can mainly be ascribed to this aspect. The appeal of Al-Qa’ida affiliates, such as the Yemeni-based Al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al-Shaabab in Somalia, is arguably strengthened by the fact that these groups are located in countries which resemble pre-2001 Afghanistan, with no viable central government capable of exerting authority on its own territory. It is harder for intelligence agencies to keep track of specific individuals and it is therefore impossible to rule out that some of these will eventually come off their radar. UK security services are certainly well aware of this new trend and are therefore keeping a vigilant eye on those British citizens who – they suspect – may have travelled to Yemen and Somalia to join and train with local terrorist groups.⁷ Yet the ‘ungoverned spaces’ problem⁸ creates several territories with non-existent, or very poor, border controls. Arguably, this offers the opportunity for some to reach their desired destination through alternative routes – with ‘clean skins’ (people unknown to the security services) more likely to succeed. Mohamed Abdulrahman Mohamed and Iqbal Shazhad – two eighteen years-olds arrested last October as they tried to cross Kenya’s border with Somalia to join Al-Shabaab⁹ – show that such individuals could easily slip through the net without intelligence agencies necessarily being, or becoming, aware of them.

On the other hand, the fact that none of those convicted in the UK for terrorism-related offences in 2010 had attended a training camp¹⁰ is indicative of another important trend: namely, the increasing reliance of Al-Qa’ida and its affiliates on the Internet, not just as a medium to spread propaganda and radicalise, but also as a tool to actively sustain their militant activity. Thus, physical and actual training is somehow being replaced by more basic bomb-making instructions circulated online. Despite not necessarily guaranteeing *per se* the perfect execution of a terrorist attack, the easy availability of such material significantly increases the chances that some will eventually succeed – if only on a small scale.

This is confirmed throughout 2010 and 2011 by the legal cases and incidents linked to the UK, as analysed by RUSI.

They also reveal another pattern: the diminished relevance of Al-Qa’ida Core as primary operational and training hub, compensated by a much more active profile of AQAP. The latter, indeed, has proven to be not only a powerful source of inspiration and radicalisation but also an entity capable of planning and carrying out attacks outside its traditional regional domain. The October 2010 air cargo plot, for instance, clearly showed that the organisation had the intent to strike overseas. Yet, the lack of a more sophisticated training infrastructure, through which to instruct, connect and co-ordinate would-be terrorists, has so far prevented the group from setting up and directing proper cells to conduct attacks from inside Western countries.

This explains why AQAP is defined more as an instigator than an operator and, in this role, it has apparently managed to replace Al-Qa’ida Core as the most immediate concern among Western counter-terrorism and intelligence circles. The ease with which the group – and more precisely its leading figure, Anwar Al-Awlaki – was able to ‘inspire’ individuals to take part in the ‘crusade against infidels’ has potentially contributed to the increased likelihood of ‘lone wolf’ attacks in recent times. A clear case in point is that of Roshonara Choudhry, a Muslim student who in May 2010 stabbed MP Stephen Timms. She was radicalised very quickly through her exposure to, among others, Al-Awlaki’s propaganda online.¹¹

Moreover, the case of Rajib Karim – the British Airways engineer convicted for thirty years in February 2010 – highlights the group’s tendency to ‘outsource’ attacks to individuals who may have never travelled to Yemen to get terrorist training, yet they are well embedded in Western societies.

The deaths in 2011 of Osama Bin Laden, Al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, editor of AQAP’s propaganda magazine *Inspire*, have all certainly contributed to further reduce Al-Qa’ida’s assets and capabilities, at least in the short term. But the symbolic relevance of such counter-terrorism successes should be kept in perspective and not lead to misplaced complacency. Ultimately, it is their legacy – the appeal of their message now spread online as well as the network of terrorists’ connections they have contributed to establish – which may continue to fuel the jihadist terrorist threat to the UK’s national security.

How Terrorism has Evolved

Significant shifting trends of the terrorist threat to the UK in the last five years

2006/2007 terrorist activity and convictions	2010/2011 trends in terrorist activity
Direct links to Al-Qa'ida operators and commanders in Pakistan (Such as Aabid Khan, Bojinka II Plot, Ranzieb Ahmed/Habib Ahmed, Sohail Anjum Qureshi, Abdul Rahman)	Connections to, and increasing involvement of, Al-Qa'ida affiliates in Yemen and Somalia (Such as Rajim Karim, Abdumutallab, Air Cargo Plot, Mohammed Abdulrahman Mohammed/Iqbal Shazad).
Jihadists connected to wider terrorist networks in Europe, North America, South Asia (Such as Omar Altimimi, Aabid Khan).	Pakistan still a training spot, although its relevance diminishing (Such as 2011 Birmingham Arrests, Ibrahim Adam and Mohammed Azmir). Alternative training hubs emerging.
Structured terror cells plotting more sophisticated attacks (Such as Bojinka II Plot, Ranzieb Ahmed/Habib Ahmed, Kafael Ahmed/Bilal Abdullah, Parvis Khan and Associates)	Self-starter cells, no direct lead from Al-Qa'ida core or affiliates (Such as 2010 Pre-Christmas Arrests, 2011 Birmingham Arrests*)
Terrorist radicalisation, recruitment and training taking place mainly face-to-face (Such as Rangzieb Ahmed, Attila Ahmet/Mohammed Hamid-'Osama Bin London', Aabid Khan, Abdul Rahman, Abu Izzadeen, Munir Farooqi).	Increase in lone wolf attempted attacks (Such as Roshonara Choudry and Omar Faruk Abdumutallab).
Use of the Internet and electronic communications to keep in contact with other extremists in the UK or abroad (Such as Sohail Qureshi, Omar Altimimi, Aabid Khan).	Internet used more prominently for radicalisation, self-radicalisation and recruitment (Such as Roshonara Choudry).

*At the time of writing, it had not been established whether the cell had in fact stronger links to, or was directed by, individuals in Pakistan.
Source: RUSI Terrorism Database

Future Patterns: a Threat Here to Stay or a Fading Risk?

Against such a backdrop, it becomes apparent that the UK's terrorism landscape is more complex than statistics might reveal. Successful counter-terrorism work in recent years has led to the removal of more experienced, skilful and influential jihadis. Yet, largely ineffective de-radicalisation policies means that, for the time being, the latter may simply be radicalising and recruiting vulnerable individuals in a different environment, especially among the prison population, whose potential impact has already been noted.¹² This was also pointed out in the new Prevent strategy which observed the slow progress achieved so far with de-radicalisation programmes of convicted terrorists, resulting in many offenders remaining committed to their cause,¹³ thus continuing to exert a powerful radicalising influence once released.

In contrast to the past – when radicalisation and terrorist recruitment occurred mainly around (but not in) mosques – the current trend is for this to take place 'underground',¹⁴ with the Internet acting as a 'force multiplier'. This is why it remains hard to correctly assess the real extent of the problem

which, for security officials, remains essentially a generational one.

Ultimately, there is very little which could justify complacency in the way we perceive the future threat from Jihadist terrorism to the UK. Although actual capabilities may have deteriorated, the intention to conduct large scale attacks on British soil remains. A potential new wave might confirm the recently witnessed pattern of single, alienated, mostly unconnected individuals who could be triggered to act swiftly, without necessarily paying too much attention to operational planning and execution. But it could also manifest itself in more carefully planned plots, possibly rivalling some of those successfully disrupted in the past. Arrests conducted just before Christmas in 2010 in London, Stoke-on-Trent and Cardiff managed to dismantle a cell that was allegedly planning attacks against symbolic landmarks, such as the London Stock Exchange and the US Embassy in London.¹⁵

As far as methods are concerned, although the threat of cyber-terrorism is a plausible one, in fact it is unlikely that cyber attacks will become the prevalent method, at least in the short-medium term. In light of the level of fear that they are able to raise, security officials

acknowledge that suicide attacks will remain the weapon of choice.¹⁶ Even though they can be considerably more disruptive on a larger scale, cyber attacks can hardly produce the same kind of psychological impact that a suicide bomber can generate. Intelligence sources estimate that at least two hundred would-be suicide bombers are actively planning attacks in the UK;¹⁷ these might have also included some of the men arrested in September 2011 in Birmingham, as part of operation 'Pitsford', aimed at preventing a major 'suicide bombing campaign or event' on UK soil.¹⁸

As proven by the string of successful counter-terrorism operations conducted since 2006 and by most recent arrests, effective preventive police and intelligence work will remain the most valuable tool in reducing and mitigating the terrorist threat to the UK. But it is vital that this is not taken for granted. Certainly this will be the case in the coming months as the London 2012 Olympic Games will prove to be the most attractive target. The complexity of such a threat crucially requires the public to adapt its perception and contribute, through active involvement and engagement, to the overall and long term success of UK's counter-terrorism effort.

Analysis by Valentina Soria, Research Analyst, RUSI

NOTES

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4. David Leppard, 'UK Militants Defy Drone Attacks in Pakistan to Train for Jihad', *The Sunday Times*, 20 November 2011.
5. Francis Elliot, Ben Macintyre, *op.cit.*
6. 'Two Convicted of Terror Planning in Manchester', *BBC Online*, 8 September 2011.
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8. See Michael Clarke's article in this report.
9. Ibid.
10. David Anderson Q.C., *Report on the Operation in 2010 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and of Part 1 of Terrorism Act 2006*, The Stationery Office, London, July 2011
11. Nick Collins, 'YouTube Radicalisation: Video Site Directed MP's Attacker to Extremist Videos', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 November 2010
12. See Michael Clarke's article in this report.
13. *The Prevent Strategy*, Home Office, June 2011, p.88
14. Patrick Sawyer, Patrick Hennessy, 'Report Warns of "New Generation" of Islamic Militants Radicalised in Back Streets', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 2011
15. Simon Israel, 'Christmas "Terror Plot" Targeted London Landmarks', *Channel 4*, 27 December 2010
16. Sean Rayment, '200 'Suicide Bombers' Planning Attacks in the UK', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 2011
17. Ibid.
18. Duncan Gardham, "'Suicide Bomb Plotter" Told Wife it Was Best They Split Up', *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 2011.

The Real Olympic Challenge: Security

With a global audience of 4 billion and thousands of journalists in London to report the atmosphere rather than the competition itself, the greatest challenge will be to keep the focus on the fun of the Games, not the massive security operation behind it.

For UK security chiefs, the evolving terrorist threat will be seen through the prism of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games. Almost every security incident, every demonstration, every terrorist arrest is being measured against the challenge posed by the Games. Given the unprecedented scale of the Games, each incident is being used by those planning or earmarked to manage security at the Games to test the strength of their plans. In reality they have until May, when the Olympic Torch Relay begins in the UK, to deal with potential weaknesses.

Increase in Threat Level

As we observed previously, the UK threat level was reduced in July 2011 from severe to substantial.¹ In the run-up to the Games, the official terrorist threat level to the UK could increase even if there is minimal specific intelligence to justify a rise under normal circumstances, given the aspirations of groups wishing to undermine the Olympics, and given the magnified publicity any incident, however small and undeserved, would receive. The impact of an incident would be manifestly greater than in normal times because of the scale of the Games and the fact they are an iconic event which will draw athletes, spectators (including many VIPs) and media from across the world.

The working assumption amongst security practitioners is that for the duration of the Games the threat level could be higher, and planning has taken place to ensure security is up to the higher level so that no last minute adjustments are needed if it does increase. The next level, 'Severe', would indicate an attack is highly likely, and would have the effect of putting private and public sector organisations on a

higher state of alert which would encourage them to boost their own security.

Increase in Risk Reporting

There is little doubt we will hear more about the potential threat to the Games, even if the threat itself does not increase, because there is likely to be more reporting of the potential risks. Those who assess the threats to UK security will not be inclined to take any risk, given the high profile nature of the Games and the aspirations of some to disrupt them. Where normally they might put aside a piece of intelligence because the source is not reliable, in the run-up to the Olympics they are more likely to pass that decision higher up the chain of command for consideration. The number of people discussing potential risks will increase as concentration on mitigating the terrorist risk to the Olympics intensifies in the coming months.

The Terrorist Threat

The Olympic Risk Register cites terrorism as the biggest threat to the Games,² unlike the UK National Risk Register which puts Pandemic Flu at the top.³ The terrorist threat to the Games can be divided into four categories.

First is the Al-Qa'ida-sponsored plot. Although the Al-Qa'ida leadership is weakened, the aspiration to attack remains. Evidence from past convictions and thwarted plots suggests that while Al-Qa'ida cells are a constant pressure the security forces are improving their ability to track them down.⁴ 246 people have been convicted of terrorist offences in the UK since 9/11.⁵ What is more, Al-Qa'ida does not have a tradition of attacking highly secured targets, as the Olympics will be; so while this is a

potential danger, it is not necessarily the most likely.

As detailed in this report, there is also the threat posed by released prisoners, arrested on terrorist offences in the post-9/11 climate. A number are due out in the next twelve months who had links to major plots.

The 'lone wolf' typology described earlier is perhaps the bigger threat and could extend to non-Jihadist terrorism, as we saw in the case of the Norwegian bomber Anders Behring Breivik. However this type of action is more prevalent amongst Jihadists. Terrorists in this category could be a single individual or a group which has not been co-ordinated by Al-Qa'ida Core. Some may espouse the aspirations of Al-Qa'ida, but they will not have links to the leadership or training camps. The terrorist threats to the UK are becoming increasingly diverse.⁶ The plots could be less elaborate and well planned than those involving Al-Qa'ida Core, and thus less predictable and more volatile.

Thirdly, there is a risk of Irish Republican dissidents attempting to disrupt the Olympics. Since their last successful bombings in England in 2001, police sources in Northern Ireland believe they have aspired to attack again but either have not managed to do so or have chosen not to. They are regarded as a lesser threat – and if they did disrupt or attack, history suggests they would target police and the military or iconic buildings rather than civilians at a sporting event. Nevertheless they cannot be ruled out and remain a danger.

Finally there is the threat of assassination. Some 120 heads of state will attend the Games and many have enemies who

may have links or even live in the UK but are not followed up here because they are no threat to UK security. In effect, the Olympics may attract someone else's terrorist problem to the UK because of the opportunities and publicity the Games afford. This was the case in 1972 when eleven members of the Israeli team and a German Police Officer were killed by Palestinian terrorists in Munich. Again, this is a real but potentially lesser risk since such assassination attempts normally take place in country of origin.

Many countries will bring their own bodyguards. Protocols are still being negotiated bi-laterally with countries planning to arm some of the protection they bring in. The arrangements will include an assurance that, should a firearm be drawn by a foreigner, due process is followed and the UK authorities are able to take the lead in any investigation.

Extra staff are being moved from non-essential work to bolster mainstream investigative work in some of the security services, as every effort is made to track emerging threats. Since the 7 July London bombings – for which MI5 was criticised – the Security Service says it has increased its tripwire service, doing more double-checking, cross-referencing and reviewing of old evidence. In 2011, an MI5 officer told the 7/7 Inquests⁷ that as a result of the increase the Service is better able to spot potential suspects compared to five years ago. They also have more staff – at 3,800 – double the number of a decade ago. Their budget, which is not published, has tripled and is ring fenced until after the Games. Most police and intelligence service leave will be cancelled during the Games.

Increase in Security Activity

As the Games draw closer, we are likely to see more security activity. At the present time, if police or the intelligence agencies receive a lead, they can allocate resources and capability into checking its veracity. If it proves a credible threat it can be disrupted, overtly for example with arrests, or covertly by letting those involved know they are under scrutiny.

Nearer the Games this luxury will be denied as the timeframe collapses. A lead just before or during the event suggesting a risk – whether credible or not – would need to be disrupted rapidly. We are likely to see an increase in searches and arrests, giving an

Threats	Security Response	Risks
Al-Qa'ida Terrorist Attack	Little history of Al-Qa'ida attacking highly secure targets. Access to airspace and infrastructure will be severely restricted. Surface-to-air missiles ready for air threat.	The threat cannot be disregarded, the aspiration to attack remains and Al-Qa'ida cells maintain constant pressure.
The Lone Wolf Scenario	Increase of stop-and-searches and arrests. More visible and prolific use of control measures such as taser guns.	Plots less elaborate and well planned than Al-Qa'ida Core, making them unpredictable and more volatile. A diversification of the UK terrorist threat.
Irish Republican Dissidents	Increase resources and manpower for gathering intelligence. Overall security for Olympics likely to have deterrence effect.	Police, military and iconic buildings more likely to be targets than civilians. Dissidents still have an aspiration to attack outside Northern Ireland.
Assassinations	Some VIPs will bring own security, which are likely to be armed. Protocols for live-fire scenarios are still being negotiated.	VIPs could be targeted by potential 'enemies'. Individuals could use assassination as publicity for a cause. (i.e., 1972 Munich Games)
Released Terrorist Prisoners	Security services will be involved in 'intelligence aftercare'. Released prisoners monitored closely until after the Games.	Some prisoners serving time for terrorist offences are about to be released. A number having links to major plots.
Social Unrest and Riots	Tough tactics combined with a large and visible police presence. Riot tactics become routine with clear lines of leadership and greater public awareness.	A repeat of last year's break down in law and order. Some sites could drain police resources including 'live sites'.
Cyber	Close monitoring of global crime syndicates, especially those peddling in fake tickets. A tougher stance and increase in arrests is likely.	Attacks on the official website, electronic infrastructure, e-crime and ticketing fraud.

impression which may not be accurate, of a succession of plots against the Games. There will also be an increased visibility and more prolific use of control measures such as taser guns, as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe has suggested.⁸

Mitigating potential panic caused by extra security activity will be a challenge for the security services keen to ensure specific communities do not feel an injustice has been done, which could trigger further trouble in the form of public disorder or even violence.

Military Activity

In the coming months, as Olympic security moves from the planning to the operational stage, private security firms and the Military will become increasingly involved. Huge recruitment and training drives are now underway to ensure private companies – responsible for searching the public as they enter venues – will be up to the job. At its peak there will be a combined force of 23,700 armed forces and private guards securing Olympic venues. The Army and Police are being trained for their role: the former to protect venues behind the scenes, the latter to carry out crowd control outside and to a lesser extent inside venues. Specialists in police and Armed Services will be keeping a low profile, after all the Police are taking the security lead, but Service specialists are

now at the rehearsal stage, checking their plans against any potential threat.

By the opening ceremony, HMS *Ocean* will be in position in the Thames at Greenwich, and HMS *Bulwark* will be at Weymouth, providing maritime command and control, accommodation, helicopters and small boats and logistics supply. There will be increased exercises in the air – during the Games airspace will be protected by a combination of helicopters on HMS *Ocean*, ground-based air defence systems (which will not be visible to the public) and Typhoon aircraft based at RAF Northolt, west of London. Special Forces soldiers from the SAS and SBS, bomb disposal squadrons and other specialist units will be on stand-by along with a further 1,000 strong military contingency force able to respond to any Olympic-related civil emergencies – ranging from a terrorist attack to natural disasters. 13,500 military personnel are involved in the entire Olympic operation although most will not be patrolling the streets or even be visible to the public.

Crowd Control, Live Sites

Over the next few months there will be renewed focus on the policing of demonstrations and riots. New tougher tactics, combined with a large and visible police presence, which were used at a recent student protest in London, appeared to work – but ahead of the Games the police will want these tactics

to become routine, with clear lines of leadership for those policing protests and better public understanding of those tactics.

Lessons are being drawn from the 2011 summer riots. According to a report released in November 2011 by the independent 'Riots, Communities and Victims Panel', a lack of police authority at the start of the trouble led to riots elsewhere as people decided to test the police response which they viewed as initially weak.⁹

There will be a particular focus on Olympic Live Sites, which could otherwise become the soft targets of the Games. There are over twenty of these officially, where crowds in some cases as large as those in the main stadium, will watch the Games on big screens in parks and town centres.¹⁰ These will be a necessary drain on the numbers of police and private security guards. Extra guards are being trained to help, amongst other things, to police live sites and to carry out extra searches, as well as to reduce queuing by speeding spectators into all venues including the Main Park.

Cyber Challenges

In November 2010 an unclassified summary of the full 'Audit and Review of Olympic and Paralympic Safety and Security' was published. It called for 'a strengthened approach' to mitigate the risks of cyber threat.¹¹ This should be a major priority across UK security as cyber and internet technologies are rapidly growing and the UK may not be keeping up with the threat.¹² The second version of the Olympic Risk Register¹³ identified this particular risk thus:

The Games will rely on internet technology to an unprecedented extent and such reliance will present opportunities from a variety of quarters. This could include direct attacks against the Olympic website, the electronic infrastructure supporting the Games and sites linked to sponsors, as well as cyber-enabled ticketing fraud and e-crime carried out by organised crime groups. Cyber attacks could also occur on IT, communication and transport systems causing them to fail or enabling data to be exported, modified or deleted.

Testing of cyber resources and back up are well underway with private contractors but greater investment may not reap results in time for the Olympics.

Cyber weaknesses could impact on border security which will become

increasingly important with millions of extra visitors coming into the UK for the Games on special visas. Specialist police are already monitoring global crime syndicates keen to exploit prostitution rings and fake ticketing. We can expect a tougher stance and possibly increased arrests in this area too.

Beyond the Olympics, the Changes Ahead

As further detailed elsewhere in this report, all this is happening against a backdrop of wider, long term challenges on the security front. New risks are emerging from the ongoing economic crisis worldwide, and from changing relationships with Pakistan and Iran. The Games and operational developments in places like Afghanistan and Libya should not distract the National Security Council¹⁴ from strategic thinking on these future threats.

As we show later, new structures are being established like the National Crime Agency.¹⁵ The controversial introduction of Police Commissioners – which could have a long term effect on budgets and security strategy – will not be embedded by the Olympics. Nor will the Government's plans to introduce new laws on the use of intelligence in court. But there will be increasing debate on secrecy and intelligence and ahead of the Olympics, the Coalition Government would be wise to settle its differences over the balance between security and civil liberties. In this way, they can concentrate on future security priorities and give clear leadership in better explaining to the public why intelligence work is not precise and why much of it is secret. This will be vital if there were a terrorist incident.

As for the Games, it may eventually be the case that a heat wave or traffic jams prove the biggest nightmare. But as Olympic security moves up the political and media agenda, it should be remembered that unlike China, which hosted the 2008 Games, the UK has the added threat of being targeted by international terrorist groups like Al-Qa'ida. The challenge to keep the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games safe, cannot be undermined.

Yet with all eyes on the Games, and unprecedented resources allocated to keeping them secure, it is vital those at the top in Government, Police and the Military do not narrow the focus too far. They need to be sure they can cope if

other unforeseen threats to UK security emerge unexpectedly. It is not a far-fetched idea, given the unpredictability of events in parts of Southern Europe and the Middle East, particularly in Iran.

Analysis by Margaret Gilmore, Senior Research Fellow, RUSI

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PRACTITIONER'S VIEW

General Sir Nick Parker, Commander of Land Forces

The 2005 London bomb attacks came just the day after the UK had won its Olympic bid; a bid that was made in light of a different assessment of the terrorist threat to the UK at that time. As planning for the Olympic and Paralympic Games has progressed, the security requirements have expanded and now include not only different manifestations of terrorism, but also the prospects of other forms of disruptions from malicious rioting to illegal encampments. The military will be involved in more extensive roles, and at greater numbers, than was ever envisaged even a year ago. General Sir Nick Parker, Commander of Land Forces, outlines the commitments all three Armed Services have taken on for the Games.

In the United Kingdom there is a well practised procedure for the Armed Forces to provide military aid to the civil authorities. The Police, and other emergency responders, have impressive capability, but there are some specialist resources which only exist in Defence, and which are sometimes needed to meet particular requirements. We also have the ability to generate groups of disciplined personnel who can be used to support exceptional requirements. The Olympic and Paralympic Games is obviously an unusual event and there is a requirement for us to provide some extra capacity in support of the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police and the London Organising Committee for the Games. We are developing our plans now in a way that is consistent with the normal business of what we call UK operations. We have a standing headquarters in Andover which is responsible for this work, and is connected to an extensive network around the country linking us with the police and local authorities on a routine basis.

I know that members of the Armed Forces are pleased to be able to make an appropriate contribution to this once in a lifetime event. We feel that it is entirely proper, as National institutions that serve our country, to be seen to be helping to make the London Olympics a resounding success. We, along with everyone else, want the Games to be fun and in keeping with the spirit of the Olympics, and our role will be entirely appropriate to the 'business as usual' approach that has been directed. We are looking forward to making a contribution, and are proud to be able to do so.

Following the Prime Minister's Olympic Stocktake on 14 December, the Defence Secretary confirmed the military contribution to Parliament. The MoD is expecting to provide up to 13,500 service personnel in London, in Weymouth and across the UK, delivering a range of support to the police and other Civil and

Olympic Authorities. I am entirely comfortable with the warning time, short notice, rapid reaction, flexibility is what we do. From my perspective twelve hours notice to grab your kit and go is short notice – this is not.

Capabilities for Safety and Security

Around 5,000 Service personnel will be deployed to this task. We have been planning alongside other Government Departments for some time now. The plans are on track and are still developing, particularly as our training continues.

In the maritime environment, we have been working very closely with the Metropolitan and Dorset Police forces to provide specialist support both in Weymouth Bay, where the Olympic sailing events will take place, and here in London, along the River Thames. We are currently planning for HMS *Ocean* to be based on the Thames at Greenwich with HMS *Bulwark* and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship, *Mounts Bay* to be in Weymouth, providing maritime command and control, accommodation, helicopter and small boat basing, and logistics supply. Both sailors and marines, and a range of small craft and helicopters, will augment existing police capabilities, in both locations.

Land elements will also build upon their existing arrangements under the Homeland Security Plan. We routinely provide specialist support to the Civil Authorities in areas such as explosive ordnance [bomb] disposal, military working dogs and specialist capability to search vehicles and buildings, and we will be increasing this capacity for the duration of the Games. We are also preparing a dedicated 1,000 strong, unarmed Military Contingency Force that will be available to respond flexibly to Olympics-related civil tasks, in support of the National Olympics Security Coordinator, and potentially other agencies as required.

The Air Component has been building on

existing arrangements, with the Department for Transport, the Civil Aviation Authority and the National Air Traffic Services to ensure a comprehensive, safe and scalable air security plan. A multi-layered plan has been developed and will include Typhoon aircraft forward-based at RAF Northolt, helicopters operating from within London, and planning is taking place for appropriate ground based air defence systems to protect the Olympic venues in London.

A further 1,000 or so service personnel will provide command and control, and logistics support for the range of military capabilities involved.

We participated in Command Post Exercises last year – these were cross-departmental and involved many agencies, and sought to test our evolving procedures and links. Training carried out already also includes the Royal Navy and Royal Marines exercise on the Thames in January with the Metropolitan Police Service's Marine Policing Unit. This was very useful, and we are building the lessons into our forward plans. It was important that the Port of London Authority and the UK Border Agency were also involved.

In the air we have recently had Typhoon pilots operating in London airspace refining their procedures with the National Air Traffic Services. Typhoon jets are now training with helicopters over Yorkshire.

This will culminate in a military Live Exercise (LIVEX) in May. This will be a Mission Rehearsal in London and Weymouth which will exercise our key capabilities, allow us to test our plans, and confirm that, collectively, we are ready. This is standard practice for the military – for us it normal to test ourselves to the limit so that we are confident that our systems are ready. It is possible that some of the training will be more in the public eye than usual,

PRACTITIONER'S VIEW (Cont.)

but this should be reassuring. Our scenarios have not been developed in response to a direct threat, but will test our ability to operate within the joint operating procedures and authorisations that will be in use during the Games. Our already well-trained Armed Forces are going the extra mile to ensure that military support to the Olympics security effort is as well-prepared as it can possibly be.

There is of course some deterrence value too.

Venue Security

The second of the three areas of military support is to the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG). The military will provide 3,500 personnel to support the venue security operation for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, rising to 7,500 for the 17-day period of the Olympic Games themselves. This is a component of the total venue guard-force of up to 23,700, and while we will retain a military chain of command within our contribution, LOCOG will retain responsibility for

venue security through its network of Venue Security Managers. This is a straightforward task which we will be properly prepared for and, importantly well integrated into the existing structure. I am also clear that the presence of the military, in the Venue Security teams, will not impact on the sporting nature of this event – we are proud to be able to contribute, and I have a hunch that the public we represent will be delighted to see us doing a good job in the way that they have come to expect from British sailors, soldiers and airmen. There will also be a ceremonial contribution during the Games.

UK Contingency

The third military requirement is to retain a reserve capability outside the contribution to the Olympics to react to any other unexpected or unplanned requirements in the UK. The military is busy generating forces to deploy to Afghanistan and other standing commitments, but we will ensure that we maintain an appropriate level of uncommitted forces over this period. I

do not expect this to impact on anyone's entitlement to leave, but we will have to manage this prudently over the Games period to ensure we meet all that is required of us.

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be an event of huge significance to the UK and it is unsurprising that the Armed Forces are playing their part. Defence is properly integrated to deliver precise and appropriate support, as required, building upon existing arrangements. As always we must remain balanced and prepared to react to the unexpected. The Defence commitment is to support safety and security, Games operations and wider UK contingency. There is still plenty to do by way of preparation, but there is time and as far as I am concerned our plans are right on track.

General Parker briefed RUSI's 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Security Conference in January. For more information: www.rusi.org/olympics

The Post Olympic Challenge

Stand by for big changes in public attitudes, organisation and funding for counter-terrorism after the Games.

The Games are both a help and a hindrance to UK counter-terrorism; a help because they have stimulated intense co-operation between the security agencies, but a hindrance because the shadow of the Olympics disguises the landscape for the years beyond. It is now more than ten years since the attacks on New York by Al-Qa'ida, prompting a decade dominated by responses to the international terrorist threat. Since 11 September 2001, we have seen rapid escalations in the size and reach of security agencies tasked with responding to the terrorist problem, and alongside that, the equally swift ballooning of budgets appropriated to these organisations. Now in 2012, the UK Government will have to make difficult decisions, curtailing resources devoted to these organisations. As budgetary restrictions are increasingly applied across the public sector, it is almost certain that the security agencies will also have to tighten their belts. However, the precise details of these budget changes – and exactly what they will mean – are as yet unclear as London

prepares for the Olympic Games. There is a sense in Whitehall that major decisions are being postponed until the event has ended in August, with an overriding priority to complete the Games without major incident. After this, the changes for the various security organisations involved will be inevitable.

Allowing the Counter-Terrorism Expansion - A Question of Economics

Over the last decade, we have witnessed the rapid and substantial expansion in the UK's security mechanism in order to deal with the threat from emergent jihadist terrorism, requiring considerable financial investment. In comparison to the US, the amounts spent in the UK are relatively small. In the last ten years (2001-2011) the cumulative US federal expenditure on domestic homeland security has been \$360 billion, increasing on a yearly basis from \$24.72 billion in 2001, to \$72.51 billion in 2011.¹ Over the same period, there has been a 250 per cent increase in UK counter-terrorism spending, from £1 billion in 2001 to approximately £3.5 billion in 2010.²

Increases were most significant in the wake of the 2005 London bombings, with the police alone receiving a 30 per cent increase in their counter-terrorism budgets during the three years following the attacks. A 2010 House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report recorded thus:

This increase in police counter-terrorism funding has led to there now being 7,700 police officers engaged in 'counter-terrorism and protective security' across the country; with 3,000 of these engaged 'directly with what people think would be counter-terrorism'...this increase in police funding has also gone towards establishing the regional counter-terrorism units and counter-terrorism intelligence units.³

Analysts such as John Mueller and Mark Stewart⁴ have questioned the appropriateness of such high degrees of spending on a low probability threat such as terrorism, yet this is to underplay the potency and damage – physical, psychological and political – that one

successful terrorist attack alone can inflict upon a nation.

Moreover, until 2008, the Western world was predominantly experiencing a period of high economic growth, whereby extravagant spending by Government was the norm based on high levels of borrowing, multiplying the national debt. Therefore, spending rapidly increasing amounts on a terrorist threat that was growing in size and potency within the UK was a wise response. However, the present economic climate is entirely different.

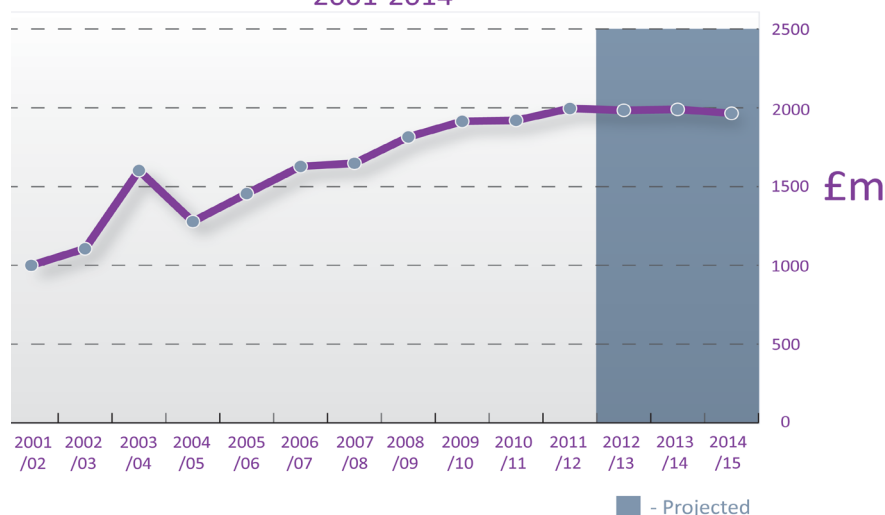
The current Government has been determined to reduce the amount of UK national debt through stringent cuts across most Government services, and policing has been no exception. According to the Coalition's Spending Review in 2011, central Government funding to police in England and Wales will be cut by 20 per cent over the next five years, which the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has estimated will lead to some 28,000 police jobs being slashed over the next four years – 12,000 front-line officers and 16,000 civilian staff.⁵ There is no question that the UK's counter-terrorist policing effort will be affected by the economic position that is being taken. Indeed there is evidence that in parts of the country such cuts are already having an impact on counter-terrorist efforts: this was personified by the news that a senior counter-terrorist officer, Detective Chief Superintendent Matt Sawers, was being released from his position as head of the West Midlands counter-terrorist unit in the summer of 2011.⁶

However, until the London Olympics has passed it is not yet clear exactly what shape these cuts will take across the rest of the country, especially within London. At present cuts to the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorist Command are being put on hold until the force has completed one of the most complex security operations ever undertaken in the UK.

2012 – The Year of the London Olympics and the raising of the 'Guillotine of Change'

Within twenty-four hours of London achieving its bid to host the Olympic Games in 2005, bombers attacked the city's transport system killing 52 people. Resources were promised to enhance UK counter-terrorist and assure added security for the Games. Both events

Intelligence and Security Agencies Funding 2001-2014



Source: Intelligence and Security Committee Annual Report 2010-2011, Stationary Office Limited, July 2011

highlighted the nature and depth of the UK's security challenge, which, in some respects, still exist as the Olympic year begins. As this report illustrates, though the centralised leadership of Al-Qa'ida were eliminated or marginalised especially in 2011, 'Al-Qa'ida Core' has given way to a looser decentralised phenomenon of terrorists acting alone. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the public, the threat seems to be diminished and though security is an uppermost priority for the government and organisers, the Games are being held amidst straitened circumstances, as outlined by Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport:

Overall, the budget for the Games is £9.3bn. What we didn't know when we won the bid in 2005 was that we would be right in the middle of the worst financial and economic crisis since the 1930s.⁷

Billed as the 'Austerity Games', the Olympics will not only showcase the nation, there will also be a close inspection of the total cost of the event, including the cost of security operations. Public scrutiny of any major Government spending is far greater now than when the Games were awarded in 2005. There is no doubting that the Olympics present any terrorist group planning an attack with an extremely high-value target. The threats and security responses are outlined in detail within this report. Moreover, as Coaffee *et al* point out, London had a head start in comparison to many other Olympic cities in preparing for a safe and secure Games:

London...has a mature security infrastructure which, since the early 1990s, has sought to reduce the real and perceived threat from international terrorism through the adoption of physical, technological and managerial approaches to security at a variety of expanding spatial scales.⁸

However, in many respects, the Olympic Games are likely to prove a major turning point in the allocation of resources for UK counter-terrorist. If the Olympics end with no major incident, this will mean that no terrorist attack⁹ has taken place since the 2007 attack on Glasgow International Airport. Therefore it is difficult to see the appetite for counter-terrorist spending and staffing levels to continue at the rates sustained throughout the 2000s. Clearly the lack of a successful attack in five years is in no small part due to the large investments and changes that have been made in the security mechanisms for countering such threat. Yet, there is a sense of inevitability that change is on its way.

This means that post-Games, there will be a number of difficult decisions that will be made in an attempt to cut costs in the UK's counter-terrorist machine. One of the biggest questions that will have to be answered is around ownership of the counter-terrorist command, which currently resides within the Metropolitan Police Service. A significant discussion has already begun on the potential for counter-terrorist responsibility and command to be absorbed into the new National Crime Agency (NCA) which will be officially established in late 2013. Within the

Government plans released in 2011 outlining their concept for the NCA, it was stated that – ‘Counter-terrorism policing already has effective national structures’ – on the surface implying that the current arrangements with Counter-Terrorism Command (CTC) residing at the Metropolitan Police were sufficient. Yet the door was clearly left wide open for the NCA to subsume the CTC as it was also stated that the Government would be considering how to enhance counter-terrorism arrangements alongside the ‘new approach’ to fighting crime, but that this would not take place until after the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.¹⁰

In addition, a recent report by the Home Affairs Select Committee aimed at scrutinising the Government’s proposed policing reforms, concluded that:

We agree with the Government that responsibility for counter-terrorism should remain with the Metropolitan Police until after the Olympics, not least because the National Crime Agency will not be fully functional until the end of December 2013. However, we recommend that, after the Olympics, the Home Office consider making counter-terrorism a separate command of the National Crime Agency: there should be full co-operation and interaction between the different commands. Such a change would also allow for greater clarity in the leadership and accountability of the Metropolitan Police through the Mayor of London, since there would be less justification for involvement by the Home Secretary: for example, in appointing the Metropolitan Police Commissioner.¹¹

There is still much uncertainty about exactly how this change would take place, how the staff changes would be handled and, in reality, if this shift would actually save any money, or increase the efficiency of UK counter-terrorist operations. Unfortunately, for those involved in countering terrorism, their measure of success is in having no successful attacks taking place, something which paradoxically can lead to a public expectation that the same degree of success can be achieved with a depleted counter-terrorist budget as they see no evidence of terrorist attacks.

As we go further into the Olympic year, the potential lack of an attack against such a high-profile target will mean that the threat from international terrorism, undoubtedly, will be downgraded, the

public’s appetite for high levels of counter-terrorism spending will lower, and streamlining of our capabilities will occur.

We currently have in the UK a generation of police officers who almost exclusively have experienced growth in their budgets, so this situation is new to them, and so are the changes that budget cuts will bring around. Yet moments like these can provide an opportunity for restructuring, reshaping and focusing assets so that they are still operationally effective and potentially enhanced. As Milton Freedman, the world famous economist, feels these moments offer:

...only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.¹²

It is incumbent upon those with a professional interest in the UK security to assist in developing thinking around the changes that can be made to police and other security mechanisms in the UK, to ensure that the service they provide does not diminish despite budgetary change by developing creative thinking around future policy decisions. Whilst the Olympics will dominate the 2012 security landscape and we see security operations stepped up in preparation for the Games, there are great changes afoot, and thinking about how these changes will occur is now imperative. The discussion needs to progress beyond those in political and Government circles, to include security professionals, the private sector and academia so that creative, positive changes can be made which enhance the resilience of the UK.

Analysis by Dr Tobias Feakin, Senior Research Fellow, RUSI

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UK TERRORISM ANALYSIS

2012 is likely to set the scene for security policy as the terrorism threat evolves and the international environment changes. RUSI’s UK Terrorism Analysis is a series of online briefings aimed at offering assessments of the threat we face and the policy options before us.

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