

Advice in response to the increase of the UK threat level for international terrorism to *CRITICAL*

Background

Following the terrorist incident at the Manchester Arena on Monday 22nd of May, the threat level for international terrorism in the UK has been increased from **SEVERE** to **CRITICAL**. This means that the probability of a terrorist attack is “imminent” rather than “highly likely”.

The decision to raise the threat level could indicate that the suspected Manchester attacker may have been part of a terrorist network who could be preparing further attacks.

The UK threat level system

The UK threat levels (from international terrorism) were created in August 2006 and is set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC). JTAC is a self-standing organisation comprised of representatives from 16 government departments and agencies. The head of JTAC is accountable to the Director General of the MI5, who in turn reports to the government's Joint Intelligence Committee on JTAC's activities.

The UK threat levels are as follows:

- **LOW** – an attack is unlikely.
- **MODERATE** – an attack is possible, but not likely
- **SUBSTANTIAL** – an attack is a strong possibility
- **SEVERE** – an attack is highly likely
- **CRITICAL** – an attack is expected imminently

The threat levels are determined on the basis of several factors (i.e. available intelligence, terrorist capability, terrorist intentions and timescales) and indicate the likelihood of a terrorist attack happening in the UK. Since the threat levels were defined in August 2006, this is the third time they have been raised to the highest level. The table below provide information on the previous two increases:

| Date of increase | Background to Increase |
|--|--|
| 13 August 2006 (from SEVERE to CRITICAL) | Increased after the security services discovered a plot to bring down transatlantic airliners with liquid improvised explosive devises |
| 30 June 2007 (from SEVERE to CRITICAL) | Following an attack on Glasgow Airport and on discovering and disabling two vehicle-borne improvised explosive devises (car bombs) |

On both of the above occasions, the threat level only remained **CRITICAL** for three to five days, indicating the imminent nature of this level.

What does the threat level increase mean?

JTAC indicates that the threat levels “are a tool for security practitioners working across different sectors of the Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) and the police to use in determining what protective security response may be required”. In practice, this means that we are likely to witness increased security measures at both hard and soft targets.

Concurrent to (and perhaps more visible than) the threat level increase, the Prime Minister has announced that Operation Temperer is now in force and will involve armed military personnel deployments to key UK sites, allowing the police to conduct other duties (presumably related to the Manchester attack's investigation).

This security measure means that soldiers, operating under the command of police officers, are likely to be present at potentially soft targets, including major events, the public transportation network and key landmarks.

How should organisations respond?

Whilst the likelihood of an organisation's employees being present at an attack remain low, it is prudent for organisations to:

- Review crisis management and business continuity plans for relevance and to increase awareness among the organisation's response teams
- Ensure that crisis management and business continuity teams are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are ready and available to respond
- Encourage employees to be vigilant and explain the threat to them. Emphasise that the target of attacks is most likely to be 'soft' rather than 'hard' protected targets
- Communicate the organisation's emergency contact details to employees and inform employees that should report in, following any attack, so that the organisation can account for them
- Communicate the immediate actions that employees should take when faced with an active shooter or attack situation. Citizen Aid has very comprehensive and easy to use resources, including videos and a downloadable App (see <http://citizenaid.org/>)
- Remind employees that in the event of an attack, they should leave the area immediately to reduce the likelihood of being subject to any secondary attack

Where can we get more information on threat levels and responses?

- <http://citizenaid.org/>
- <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>
- <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/joint-terrorism-analysis-centre>
- <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/news/director-general-statement-on-manchester-attack>



Advice | Training | Equipment

Can we contact ILS for further support?

Yes. Should you wish to discuss anything further, please contact your ILS Senior Security Advisor or email us at info@locationsafety.com. Alternatively, you can call our Risk Advisory team on +44 (0) 1273 833 070.