HM Government

CONTEST

The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism 2023

July 2023

The threat from terrorism is enduring and evolving.

The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens and interests overseas, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

CONTEST helps us to balance our duty to protect the UK and its interests from terrorism against the need to respond to other national security threats.

The terrorist threat in the UK today is dominated by individuals or small groups acting outside of organised terrorist networks.

This is a trend seen across terrorist ideologies, including the dominant Islamist threat and the Extreme Right-Wing. It is a trend which makes terrorists less predictable and harder to identify, investigate and disrupt.

The threat from Islamist terrorist groups overseas is persistent and has evolved.

Sustained counter-terrorism pressure from the UK and its allies has suppressed the most serious terrorist threats. But groups such as Daesh and al-Qaida have evolved and adapted their approach and are now active in more countries than ever before. Although their capabilities remain far below earlier peaks there are signs of resurgence. Both continue to inspire, enable and direct radicalised individuals and groups and maintain their intent to attack the UK.

Accelerating availability of new technologies and online platforms provides both opportunity and risk to our counter-terrorism efforts.

Terrorists exploit technology to hide their networks, spread their propaganda and enable their attacks. Technology is a critical enabler of our counter-terrorism efforts, where careful and proportionate use of cutting-edge techniques can make our response more efficient and effective.

CONTEST

Our Response is Agile, Integrated and Aligned.

CONTEST remains a flexible and adaptable framework:

Prevent: stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Pursue: stop terrorist attacks happening in this country or against UK interests overseas.

Protect: strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack.

Prepare: minimise the impact of an attack and reduce the likelihood of further attacks.

Within this framework we will transform our counter-terrorism response to ensure that it is:

Agile in the face of an evolving threat

Integrated so that we can bring the right interventions to bear at the right time to reduce risk

Aligned with our international allies to ensure that we continue to deliver together against a common threat

Learning from incidents, exercises and external scrutiny remains at the heart of our work:

We will learn the lessons from the **Manchester Arena Inquiry**.

We are implementing all the recommendations from the **Independent Review of Prevent**.

Delivery of CONTEST is a cross government effort, including a broad range of central government departments, the intelligence services, police, military, emergency services, local government, devolved administrations, international partners and the private sector.

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What are the risks?

Individuals
A domestic terrorist threat which is less predictable, harder to identify, investigate and disrupt.

Groups
A persistent and evolving threat from Islamist terrorist groups overseas.

Technology
Terrorists exploit technology to hide their networks, spread their propaganda and enable their attacks.

How are we responding?

1 Prevent

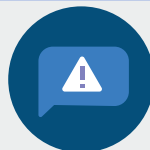Stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

2 Pursue

Stop terrorist attacks happening in this country or against UK interests overseas.

3 Protect

Strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack.

4 Prepare

Minimise the impact of an attack and reduce the likelihood of further attacks.

How do we transform CONTEST?

Realise the full potential of the UK's world-leading Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre.

Ensure that counter-terrorism investigations draw on an increased range of expert advice and interventions.

Transform our counter-terrorism communications effort.

Maintain investment in critical threat assessment capabilities.

Deepen our international counter-terrorism partnerships.

Further strengthen the UK border as a critical line of defence against terrorism.

Continue to invest in the identification of future threats and opportunities that derive from technology.

Build on our engagement with the tech sector, participating in the co-ordinated, international effort to supress terrorist exploitation of the internet.

Maintain crucial and proportionate access to the data we need to investigate and disrupt terrorist activity.