CONTEST 2023 Factsheet

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What is **CONTEST**?

- The Government's counter-terrorism strategy, **CONTEST**, was first established in 2003. On Tuesday 18 July, the government published **CONTEST 2023** (the fourth iteration).
- The strategy's objective continues to be 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.
- The core **CONTEST** framework – **Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare** – helps to organise and articulate the variety of work required, through **CONTEST**, to keep the public safe from terrorism.
  - **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.

What is **CONTEST 2023**?

- The terrorist threat is enduring and evolving, so we must regularly review and adapt our response. **CONTEST 2023** places a renewed importance on ensuring the whole of government, police and intelligence agencies, local authorities, the private sector, communities and individual citizen's work in partnership to counter the threat from terrorism, using all the tools we have available.
- **CONTEST 2023** will ensure that our counter-terrorism response remains 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 and aligned with our international allies to ensure that we continue to deliver together against a common threat.

What is the terrorism threat picture in the UK today?

- Since 2018, when **CONTEST** was last updated, to the publication of this version in July 2023, nine terrorist attacks have been declared in the UK; these incidents killed six people and injured. Twenty-four UK nationals have been killed in eleven attacks overseas.
- Since March 2017, MI5 and the police have disrupted 39 late-stage attacks. Work across the CT system has prevented many more from manifesting.
- Since 2010, all attacks in the UK, and the majority of disrupted ones, have been carried out by individuals or small groups acting without command, control or material support from organised terrorist groups or networks.
- The primary domestic threat comes from Islamist terrorism, which accounts for approximately 67% of attacks since 2018, about three quarters of MI5 caseload and 64% of those in custody for terrorism-connected offences.
- The remainder of the UK domestic threat is driven almost exclusively by Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism, which amounts to approximately 22% of attacks since 2018, about a quarter of MI5 caseload and 28% of those in custody for terrorism-connected offences.
- Radicalisers across the ideological spectrum use extremist ideas and narratives to encourage people into participating in or supporting terrorism. They create and take advantage of permissive environments to promote or condone violence and to spread poisonous ideologies that undermine our values and society. This includes in instances where the exact ideology is unclear.

What is the current threat picture posed by Islamist Terrorist Groups based abroad?

- The threat from Islamist terrorist groups based abroad is persistent and has evolved.
- Sustained CT pressure from the UK and its allies has suppressed the most serious terrorist threats. But groups such as Daesh and al-Qa'ida 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.

How will **CONTEST 2023** ensure our counter-terrorism response is more agile?

We will:

- Continue to invest in our world-leading counter-terrorism assessment capability through the [Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC)](#), to enable early detection of emerging threats to the UK and our interests overseas.
- Enable crucial access to the data we need to investigate and disrupt terrorist activity (where necessary and proportionate) through setting international data standards and cooperating with companies whose services are exploited by terrorists and serious criminals.
- Improve our ability to stop people from becoming terrorists in response to William Shawcross' Independent Review of **Prevent**. Substantial improvement to our ability to detect and counter radicalising influences is underway, including refocusing **Prevent** on tackling the ideological causes of terrorism and ensuring a consistent and proportionate threshold across all extremist ideologies and work streams.
- Continue investing in the identification of future threats and opportunities that derive from technology.
- Ensure that counter-terrorism investigations draw on an increased range of expert advice and non-law enforcement interventions to mitigate the evolving terrorist threat.
- Further strengthen the UK Border as a critical line of defence against terrorism, taking advantage of new immigration tools, detection, targeting and biometric capabilities, to identify and block threats from entering the UK.
- Improve security at public venues through Martyn's Law.
- Support the public and private sector to be effective partners in preventing attacks and reducing loss of life in the event of an attack by improving public communications.

How will **CONTEST 2023** better integrate partners to deliver our counter terrorism response?

- We have recently established a world-leading Counter Terrorism Operations Centre (CTOC) to transform the way counter terrorism operates, enhance our ability to discover and prevent attacks and improve the speed of response. CTOC co-locates the intelligences agencies, Counter Terrorism Policing and other partners.
- We are strengthening partnerships with external experts to ensure the **Prevent** system develops expertise and instils better levels of understanding of ideology and radicalisation by frontline practitioners.
- We are ensuring multi-agency partnerships, which support counter-terrorism investigations, are able to draw on the widest possible range of expert advice and interventions to mitigate the threat.
- We are building on our engagement with tech companies to suppress the terrorist exploitation of the internet, including through the introduction of the Online Safety Bill.
- We are further strengthening our Border as a critical line of defence against terrorism, taking advantage of new tools and capabilities.
- We are enabling closer collaboration between law enforcement and intelligence services when processing data.

Why is it important that we are more aligned to international allies on **CONTEST 2023**, and how will we do that?

- The threat from terrorism is a global challenge and international cooperation is essential. Working with our international partners is a critical element of **CONTEST** across all activity.
- We are deepening our international counter-terrorism partnerships and developing new ones, aligning our strategic approaches so that we can use our shared capabilities to deliver greater impact against common threats.
- This maximises efficiency and effectiveness, allowing us to target our efforts appropriately and understand how emerging threats can best be tackled alongside partners.

What legislation changes are being made to support our counter-terrorism response?

The UK's has a robust counter terrorism legislation framework, which we are bolstering with new and forthcoming legislation:

- The Online Safety Bill will establish Ofcom as the independent online safety regulator with robust enforcement powers on illegal content, which includes illegal terrorist content.

- The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also known as Martyn's Law, was submitted to the Home Affairs Select Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny in May 2023. Martyn's Law will keep people safe by introducing proportionate new security requirements for certain public venues to ensure preparedness for, and protection from, terrorist attacks.
- The powers of the National Security Act 2023 will help to keep the UK safe by making it even harder for those states who seek to conduct hostile acts against the UK.
- The Data Protection and Digital Information (No.2) Bill will allow for law enforcement and the intelligence services to form joint processing under a single data protection regime where joint processing of data is required for specified national security purposes.

The landmark UK/US Data Access Agreement is also enabling crucial access to the data we need to investigate and disrupt terrorist activity.

What else has informed delivery of a renewed counter terrorism response?

- We continue to learn from past attacks, inquests and inquiries, including the Manchester Arena Inquiry, continuously improving our capabilities and closing vulnerabilities in our response to terrorist attacks.
- We have publicly consulted on the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also known as Martyn's Law, and carried out extensive engagement with industry, charities, and local authorities. Pre-legislative scrutiny by the Home Affairs Select Committee will further ensure a proportionate approach.
- The Independent Review of **Prevent**, published in February 2023, has refocused the programme on tackling the ideological causes of terrorism. Full implementation of the recommendations is delivering a step-change in our work to stop people becoming or supporting terrorists, including:
  - amending **Prevent**'s first objective to 'tackling the ideological causes of terrorism
  - reasserting **Prevent**'s overall objective of stopping people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism ensuring **Prevent** has a consistent and proportionate threshold across all extremist ideologies and workstreams
  - improving training and providing clearer guidance and information to frontline practitioners
  - transforming the **Prevent** delivery model by heavily investing in our regional footprint
  - encouraging public trust by improving transparency and establishing better oversight of how Prevent is implemented.
- Terrorism is one of the threats covered by the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (IR). The IR was updated in March 2023 and sets out the UK's overarching national security and international strategy. It sets out that we are in an increasingly challenging national security environment. **CONTEST** provides our response to it in detail.

Who is responsible for delivering **CONTEST 2023**?

- The Home Secretary leads the UK's counter-terrorism response and the implementation of **CONTEST**.
- The **CONTEST** Unit, based in the Home Office, produced **CONTEST 2023**, with input and challenge from government departments, devolved administrations, the police, the security and intelligence agencies, frontline practitioners, victims of terrorism and their families, the private sector, academics, community leaders, international partners and the public. All these partners play a part in delivering **CONTEST**.
- **CONTEST** Unit will monitor and co-ordinate cross-government counter-terrorism performance, including where other Secretaries of State have responsibility for elements of the strategy.

If you see something that doesn't feel right, please report it at [gov.uk/ACT](gov.uk/ACT) or call 0800 789 321.

If you are worried about someone you know being radicalised, visit the actearly.uk or call the dedicated support line on 0800 011 3764.