



Marauding firearms attack in Vienna

UK international terrorism threat level increase to SEVERE

Terrorist attack against Western diplomats in Jeddah

Neil Basu: Right-wing extremism fastest growing threat in UK

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Monthly Threat Update

November 2020

Threat overview

Critical:
an attack is highly likely in the near future

Severe:
an attack is highly likely

Substantial:
an attack is likely

Moderate:
an attack is possible but not likely

Low:
an attack is highly unlikely

Threat from terrorism to the UK:



Threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism to Northern Ireland:



Threat Overview

There has been a noticeable increase in terrorist activity in Western countries over the last two months. Following a spate of attacks in Europe, including a marauding firearms attack in Vienna, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) raised the UK's national threat level from 'SUBSTANTIAL' to 'SEVERE'. The increase in the threat level was not in response to specific intelligence but reflected concern that recent attacks in Europe could inspire terrorists in Great Britain to act. Islamist extremists' heightened intent to target Western interests was also demonstrated by an attack on diplomats at a Remembrance Day service in Saudi Arabia.

While all major terrorist attacks in Europe over the last two months have been related to Islamist extremism, Deputy Commissioner Neil Basu, Britain's most senior counter-terrorism police officer, said that right wing extremism is the fastest growing terrorist threat in the UK, specifically citing the vulnerability of minors to radicalisation by the far right.



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Marauding firearms attack in Vienna

On Monday, 2 November, a gunman killed four people and injured 23 others in an attack in central Vienna. The attacker was named as 20-year-old Kujtim Fejzullai, an Austrian-Macedonian dual national. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack the following day, but it is unlikely the group had prior knowledge of Fejzullai's intentions.

The attack occurred around 20.00, on the final evening before COVID-19 'lockdown' measures went into effect in Austria. Fejzullai may have anticipated that the city centre would be busier than usual as a result, or that this represented a final opportunity to conduct a mass casualty attack before lockdown measures constrained that possibility.

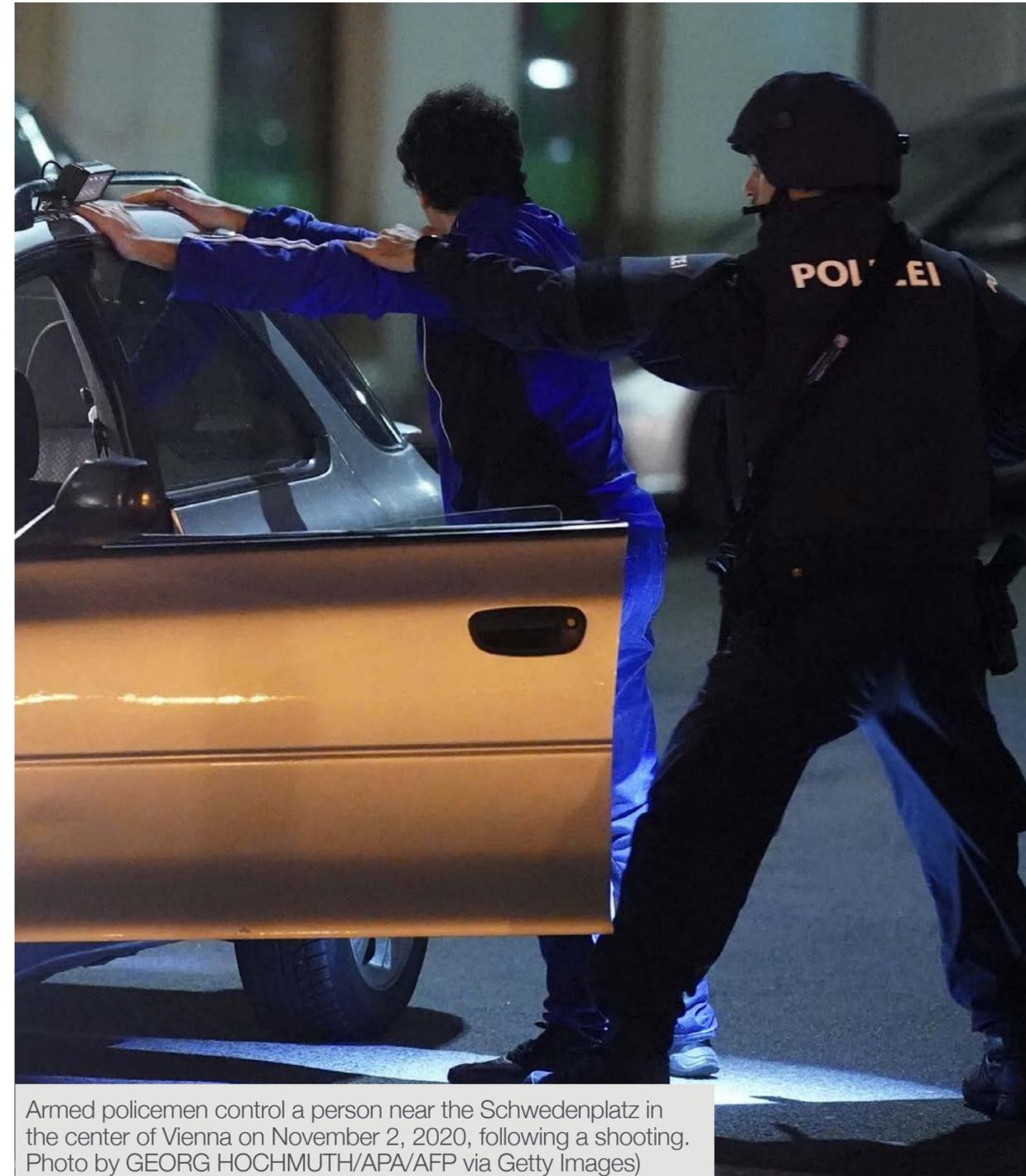
Fejzullai was armed with an assault rifle, handgun, machete, and an imitation explosives vest. He opened fire on busy restaurants and cafes in the vicinity of Vienna's main synagogue for approximately

10 minutes before he was shot and killed by responding police officers.

Marauding firearms attacks are rare in Europe relative to the number of bladed weapon or vehicular impact attacks. This is largely due to the difficulty terrorists face in acquiring firearms without attracting the attention of authorities. Furthermore, attacks employing cruder methodologies require very little preparation or tradecraft. Military-grade firearms are nonetheless coveted by terrorists for their greater ease with which they can cause mass casualties.

It is presently unclear how Fejzullai acquired the firearms. Despite Austria's relatively liberal gun laws, assault weapons and handguns are tightly controlled. It is therefore likely that the guns were sourced from criminal networks.

Fejzullai had earlier attempted to acquire weapons in neighbouring Slovakia but was unsuccessful.



Armed policemen control a person near the Schwedenplatz in the center of Vienna on November 2, 2020, following a shooting. Photo by GEORG HOCHMUTH/APA/AFP via Getty Images)

Slovak intelligence informed their Austrian counterparts of this, but Australian authorities reportedly failed to conduct further investigations, despite Fejzullai having been recently released from prison where he was serving time attempting to travel to the Middle East to join Daesh.

While efforts have been made to improve intelligence sharing between European countries after similar oversights led to the failure to prevent the 2015 Paris attacks, the incident suggests that intelligence cooperation could be improved further. The Austrian Interior Minister promised to hold an inquiry into the intelligence failure.

UK international terrorism threat level increase to SEVERE

On 3 November, the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre (JTAC) raised the UK international terrorism threat level from 'SUBSTANTIAL' to 'SEVERE', meaning an attack is 'highly likely'. However, Home Secretary Priti Patel said that there was no intelligence of an imminent attack and that the public should be "alert but not alarmed". JTAC last reduced the threat level in November 2019 when they reduced it to 'SUBSTANTIAL' from 'SEVERE'

The increase of the threat level was almost certainly a precautionary measure following the succession of attacks in Europe. Daesh and other Islamist extremist groups have called for attacks against France and the West in the wake of the murder of Samuel Paty last month, and President Macron's defence of the right to publish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. However, in an indication of an increased threat, on 12 November, shortly after JTAC increased the threat level, police in London foiled a terrorist attack in Westminster.



Saudi police close a street leading to a non-Muslim cemetery in the Saudi city of Jeddah where a bomb struck a World War I commemoration attended by European diplomats on November 11, 2020 (Photo by - / AFP) (Photo by -/AFP via Getty Images)

Terrorist attack against Western diplomats in Jeddah

On 11 November, a small explosive device exploded at a Remembrance Day ceremony at a Western military ceremony in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Several western embassies had hosted the event and diplomats from the UK, France, Greece, the US and Italy were in attendance. The bombing injured three people. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack.

Attacks of this nature are unusual in Saudi Arabia. Most terrorist attacks that take place in the country occur in the Eastern Province or along the southern border with Yemen. Successful attacks on diplomats are also a rare occurrence, with the last confirmed injury of a Western diplomat by a terrorist taking place in 2012, when Islamist extremists killed the US ambassador to Libya in Benghazi.

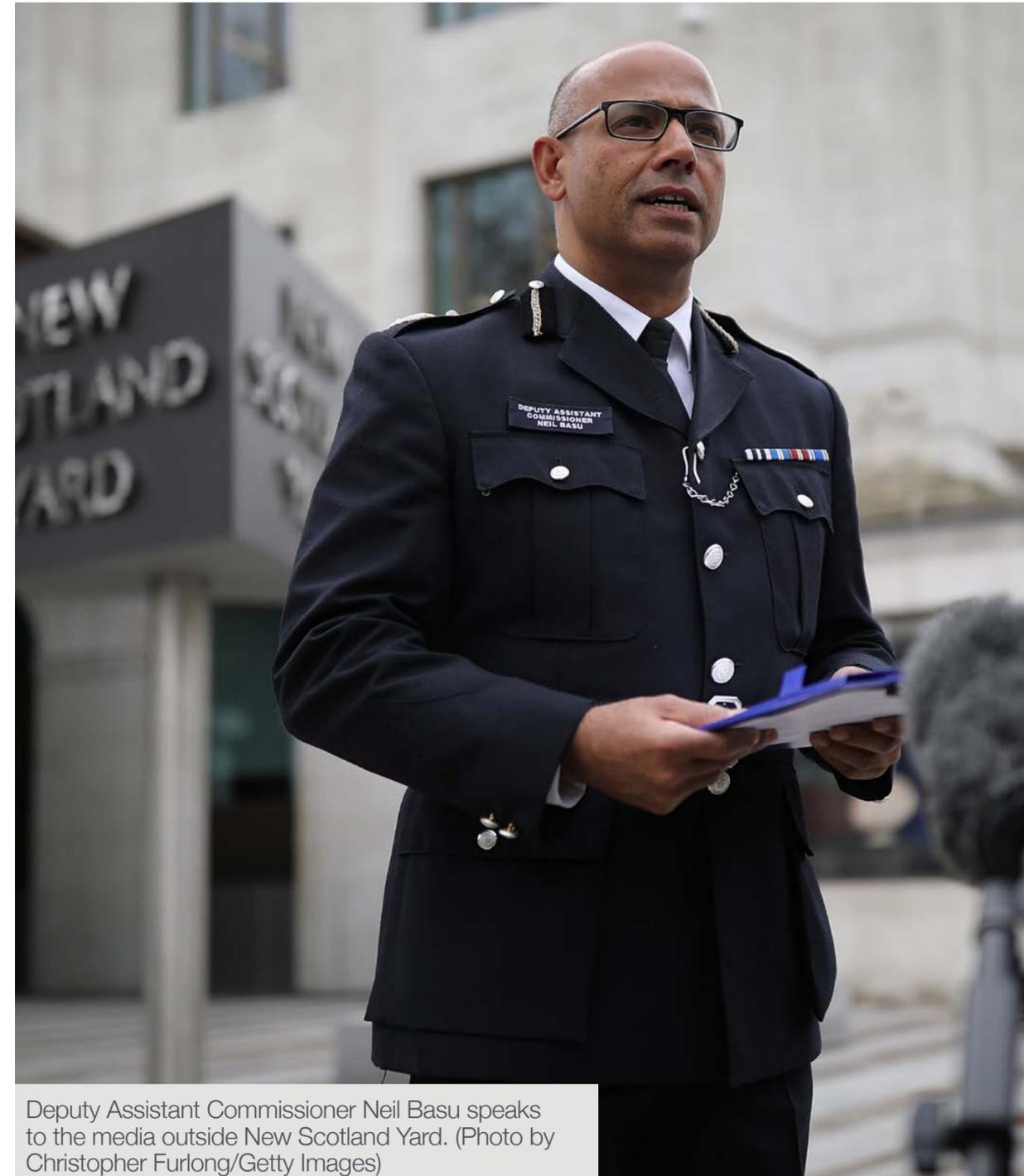
In claiming responsibility for the attack, Daesh said it was primarily targeting the French Consul General in response to the re-publication of the controversial Prophet Mohammed cartoons. Daesh had encouraged its supporters to target through its official media channels. Western interests abroad will likely remain a priority target for Daesh and other Islamist groups in the coming months.

Neil Basu: Right-wing extremism fastest growing threat in UK

Deputy Commissioner Neil Basu, the head of British counter-terrorism policing, has said that growing numbers of young people are becoming susceptible to far-right radicalisation. According to Basu, 17 children between the ages of 14 and 18 have been arrested on terrorism charges in the last 18 months and 1500 were referred to Prevent, the government counter-radicalisation programme.

Whilst far-right extremism is growing, Islamist extremism continues to account for the majority of the police and security services case work. However, 10 out of 12 of the under 18s arrested in 2019 for terrorism charges were linked to far-right ideologies. It is important to note, that whilst the Prevent figures are concerning, they do not necessarily reflect the actual level of threat.

Basu's comments coincided with the launch of the new ACT Early campaign, encouraging friends and family to report loved ones they suspect of being vulnerable to radicalisation. More information on ACT early is available [here](#).



Deputy Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu speaks to the media outside New Scotland Yard. (Photo by Christopher Furlong/Getty Images)

Interesting reads:

Extremists are exploiting the pandemic, according to UN report

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1077932>

The Global Terrorism Index 2020

<https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>

Manchester Arena inquiry finds security firm had 'wholly unsatisfactory' approach to training staff

<https://news.sky.com/story/manchester-arena-inquiry-security-firm-had-wholly-unsatisfactory-approach-to-training-staff-12128627>

Britain at risk of terrorism surge after Brexit and Covid

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-terrorism-terror-brexit-b1720512.html>

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Risk Awareness



Risk Modelling



Risk Management

Understanding risk, enabling resilience

Whilst the human cost of terrorism is devastating, the financial impact an incident can have on communities, businesses and economies is generally greater than most realise.

At Pool Re we understand that terrorism is a significant multi-faceted peril that can expose businesses in a complex way. Like many other catastrophic perils, terrorism is a challenge which requires a collaborative approach.

We have been the UK's leading terrorism reinsurer for over a quarter of a century. During this time our SOLUTIONS division have developed a specialist team of

experts who can work with you to help you and your Policyholders understand and manage the terrorism threat.

We believe all organisations and businesses can benefit from a better understanding of the terrorism risk solutions available.

To find out more about Pool Re SOLUTIONS and how your organisation can take advantage of this service please contact us at: solutions@poolre.co.uk

Government advice

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