



Strategic Policing and Crime Board

19th November 2019

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Responding to National Threats

Title: Update report – Counter-Terrorism (CT)

Presented by: Detective Chief Superintendent Matthew Ward

Purpose of paper

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board with information and an overview of progress against the Police and Crime Plan priorities in the section '*Playing our part in responding to national threats: Counter Terrorism*'. This report is for discussion.

West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit (WMCTU)

2. West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit (WMCTU) continues to work tirelessly and at pace with West Midlands Police (WMP), the other regional police forces, the National Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) network and the UK security and intelligence services to confront the threat of terrorism, and keep the communities of the West Midlands safe.

The Terrorist Threat

3. The UK terrorist threat level remains at SEVERE, which means that a terrorist attack is highly likely. Nationally, there are a record number of just under 800 live counter-terrorism investigations focusing on a range of activities including fundraising, radicalising, and preparing acts of terrorism.
4. Demand on CT Policing has increased by around a third, compared to the period prior to the 2017 terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. Since these attacks, NCTP and the UK security and intelligence services have stopped 16 Islamist related and 8 Right Wing Terrorism (RWT) terrorist attacks.

Islamist Related Terrorism

5. The majority of WMCTU activity continues to focus on international terrorism emanating from Syria, North Africa and Afghanistan-Pakistan.
6. The threat posed by former residents of the West Midlands seeking to return from Syria or Iraq is something WMCTU, as part of NCTP, has been planning for and managing. Together with the UK security and intelligence services, a wide range of measures and powers are available to mitigate the threat.
7. WMCTU continues to manage the threat posed from residents of the West Midlands seeking to travel overseas for the purposes of terrorism. This ongoing threat was highlighted in April 2019 with the WMCTU convictions of two individuals from Leicester who attempted to travel to Syria to commit terrorist acts in support ISIL (Da'esh). Those individuals received 14 year sentences which reflected the seriousness of their offending.
8. Vulnerable people within the West Midlands residents remain at risk of being inspired or radicalised by proscribed organisations based within the region. WMCTU continues to work with local partners and local policing to prevent illegal organisations such as al-Muhajiroun (ALM) gaining a foothold within the West Midlands following the release in 2018/19 of a number of high profile convicted terrorists.

Right Wing Terrorism

9. Whilst small compared to Islamist related terrorism, right wing terrorism (RWT) is the fastest-growing terrorist threat in the UK. A quarter of all terrorism arrests in the UK in the past year were linked to far-right violence.
10. Right wing extremist ideologies fall into three broad strands:
 - Cultural nationalism (previously known as the far-right) is a belief that 'Western culture' is under threat from mass migration into Europe and from a lack of integration by certain ethnic and cultural groups.
 - White Nationalism is a belief that mass migration from the "non-White" world poses an existential threat to the "White Race" and "Western Culture".
 - White Supremacist (previously known as the Extreme Right Wing) is a belief that the "White Race" has certain inalienable physical and mental characteristics that makes it superior to other races.
11. Right wing extremists may share many of the same aspects of ideology with a right wing terrorist. However, right wing terrorists differ in that they believe in the use of terrorist violence to further their ideology.
12. Right wing terrorist investigations are pursued by WMCTU with exactly the same level of resource and vigour as other forms of violent extremist ideology. The successful convictions of 11 members of the proscribed terror organisation National

Action over recent years, reflect the impact counter-terrorism policing and partners are having.

Left Wing, Anarchist & Single-Issue Terrorism (LASIT)

13. Left Wing, Anarchist & Single-Issue Terrorism (LASIT) is a new overarching category of terrorism which focuses on a broad range of ideologies including militant animal rights, environmental activism, anti-fascism and anarchism. There is a distinction between violent protest, extremism and terrorism. When an individual, group or movement engages in violence which is intended to influence the government or intimidate the public in support of that ideology the terrorism threshold is likely to be met.

Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) & Indian Related Terrorism (IRT)

14. WMCTU continue to monitor the impact of Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) within the region. This includes the ongoing investigation into the 1974 Birmingham Pub Bombings.

15. Throughout 2018/19 WMCTU has undertaken investigations into suspected terrorism fundraising linked to Sikh extremism ideologies.

16. In response to these diverse threats over the past 12 months, WMCTU has continued to develop new ways of working with partners and communities.

Multi-Agency Centre

17. In 2017/18, the West Midlands region was one of three regions to pilot an ambitious new concept known as a Multi-Agency Centre (MAC). The MAC pilots were designed to find new ways to improve information sharing between counter-terrorism policing, the UK security and intelligence services and statutory partners such as local authorities, health and education. The purpose was to identify and manage individuals at risk of re-engaging in violent extremism.

18. The pilots, funded through a Cabinet Office administered Accelerator Fund, have undergone a process of iterative change as new and innovative ways of working are explored. The result is now a blueprint for a new, national operating model which provides a single 'front door' for UK counter-terrorism to work with other government departments and local partners.

19. During the course of 2020/21, the new operating model will be rolled out across the region.

CT Borders

20. In 2018/19 WMCTU successfully implemented the Counter Terrorism Borders Transformation Programme (CTBTP). This national transformation programme sought to create a centrally directed, regionally coordinated and locally delivered function which facilitated greater collaboration with partners such as Border Force (BF), National Crime Agency (NCA) and Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE). The purpose was to better identify CT threats at borders and respond with flexibility and agility.
21. The West Midlands region has one 'designated' international airport (Birmingham International) and over 200 smaller, privately owned airfields known as 'General Aviation' sites.
22. Under the CTBTP a 'flexible port hub' operating model has been implemented tailored to the West Midlands region. A newly created Regional Control Desk (RCD) at Birmingham Airport now provides the tasking and co-ordination function for the region, acting as the single point of entry (SPOE). The RCD disseminates all alerts, tasks and intelligence requests related to all the general aviation sites and co-ordinates the deployment of CT Borders Policing staff to the sites when appropriate.

Crowded Places

23. WMCTU Counter-Terrorism Security Advisors (CTSAs) continue to regularly visit Crowded Places, Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) Sites and Hazardous Substances Sites (HSS) across the region offering security advice. The team also conduct security reviews for locations and people deemed vulnerable to terrorist targeting. The team continues to deliver awareness and security training to numerous businesses across the region and maintain detailed planning for the Commonwealth Games 2022, Coventry City of Culture 2021 and HS2.
24. The CTSAs are currently supporting a national Crowded Places review which may increase the number of designated crowded places. This is an opportunity to strategically protect more vulnerable locations.

Special Branch Review

25. Within the West Midlands region, Staffordshire, West Mercia and Warwickshire police forces currently retain their own Special Branch (SB) departments. The SBs operate independently but in close partnership with WMCTU. The West Midlands Police Special Branch has already been fully amalgamated into WMCTU.
26. In June 2019 a new project was launched to develop an operating model for WMCTU to deliver counter-terrorism policing / SB functions on behalf of Warwickshire Police, Staffordshire and West Mercia Police.

27. Designed for implementation in 2020/21, the project would, for the first time, produce fully integrated counter-terrorism policing / SB functions across the region, in order to improve intelligence sharing, join-up tasking and coordination and ensure greater consistency and quality of delivery.

ACT For Policing Campaign

28. The ACT for Policing campaign was a national, internal media campaign which ran for 12 weeks in the West Midlands from 7 May 2019 to 26 July 2019.

29. The purpose of the campaign was to raise awareness and confidence amongst frontline police officers and staff about how to recognise the signs of terrorism in order to increase the numbers of intelligence reports and Prevent referrals submitted.

30. The campaign promoted a new 15 minute film highlighting the signs of attack planning and radicalisation. It was shown to over 4,000 officers and staff through briefings and viewed nearly 7,000 times across the force.

31. During the campaign, WMCTU received 15 more counter-terrorism intelligence reports per week than before the campaign started, and an extra three Prevent referrals per month from front line WMP staff.

32. In a survey conducted after the campaign, 71% of respondents from WMP said they felt informed enough to spot the signs of attack planning and 69% of respondents felt informed enough to spot the signs of radicalisation. Overall, 94% of respondents said the film made them think their report counts.

33. WMCTU is working with NCTP to develop a version of the campaign for partner agencies.

Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles

34. Counter-terrorism Local Profiles (CTLP) are key documents used to share vital counter-terrorism information with trusted partners. Following a review commissioned by the West Midlands PCC in 2019 and updated best practice guidance from NCTP, WMCTU and the regional SBs undertook a series of design workshops involving key stakeholders from across the region. The purpose of the workshops was to provide a more consistent approach to the CTLP process including its content, readership and delivery.

35. The recommendations from the workshops have now been accepted and in February 2020, CTLPs will be rolled out across the force via new CTLP 'briefing days' involving a wider audience of partners and facilitating workshops to develop action plans.

HMICFRS Inspections

36. In 2015, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) commissioned the counter-terrorism insight programme that considered the changing threat posed by terrorism and international terror groups in particular. This programme sought to establish the areas of highest risk with counter-terrorism policing identified by both the public and law enforcement agencies in order for assurance inspections to be conducted.
37. Since 2016, HMICFRS have conducted a series of inspections, across national CT Policing. The inspections have examined:
- The effectiveness of the role and training of police counter-terrorism commanders
 - The effectiveness of the police response to a terrorist incident such as a marauding terrorist firearms attack or siege
 - The effectiveness of the counter-terrorism policing network in forming a bridge between national security and local policing
 - The effectiveness of the police contribution to the Prevent strategy
 - The suitability of counter-terrorism custody facilities
 - The effectiveness of the police firearms response to terrorism
38. Due to the nature of their content the HMICFRS findings have not been publicly published. However, the findings have been shared with the local Chief Constables and Police Crime Commissioners, and within the West Midlands are reviewed at both quarterly Regional and Force Contest meetings.

Other Issues - BREXIT

39. National CT Policing has been engaged for some time in contingency planning for a 'No Deal' exit from the EU. Locally, WMCTU continues to engage with the West Midlands Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to monitor contingency planning risks and any consequences for counter-terrorism operations.
40. WMCTU are supporting a national CT Borders operation in response to any increase in counter-terrorism or organised crime threat during the EU exit period. The operation will focus primarily on preventing any exploitation of the air and sea routes including the Common Travel Area. The operation is being run in partnership with the NCA, BF, Immigration Enforcement and the UK intelligence and security services.

Summary

41. The counter-terrorism threat within the West Midlands has continued to evolve over the past twelve months and will continue to evolve in the future. This changing threat brings new challenges:

- The terrorist threat now emanates from a much broader range of ideologies and is becoming increasingly problematic to detect, with lone actors being inspired online and moving through planning to attack phases quicker than ever before.
- Terrorist methodologies continue to change and technological challenges remain in discovering, identifying and disrupting the threat.
- Geo-political factors could result in unforeseen and significant changes to threat and demand. The Commonwealth Games 2022, BREXIT and changes in the demographics of the West Midlands will all impact on the work of WMCTU over the next four years and beyond.

42. WMCTU, working with policing, intelligence and community partners at a local, national and global level, remains well-placed to counter the threat posed by terrorism and extremism across the region.

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