

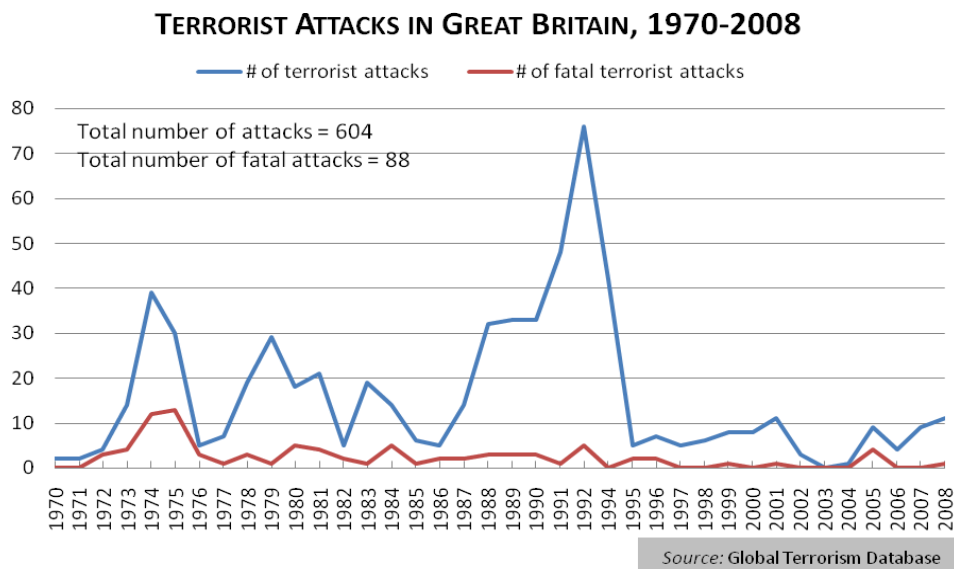
## Background Report: On the Fifth Anniversary of the 7/7 London Transit Attack

July 7, 2010, marks the fifth anniversary of the 2005 terrorist attacks on London’s Metro system. In 2005, terrorists launched a coordinated attack against London’s transportation system, with 3 bombs detonating simultaneously at three different Metro stations and a fourth bomb exploding an hour later on a city bus. In all, there were 52 victims in these bombings with an additional 700 injuries resulting. The four terrorists who executed the attacks were killed in the explosions.

On the fifth anniversary of this deadly attack, START provides this background report to examine the degree to which these attacks reflect changing trends in terrorist activity in Great Britain and globally.

### ➤ Terrorist Attacks in Great Britain

According to START’s Global Terrorism Database (GTD), Great Britain (including England, Wales, and Scotland) has been the target of **604 terrorist attacks** since 1970. Great Britain was the **sixth most frequent target of terrorists in Western Europe** during this period, behind Northern Ireland (3811 attacks), Spain (3182), France (2456), Italy (1494), Germany (1095), and Greece (893).

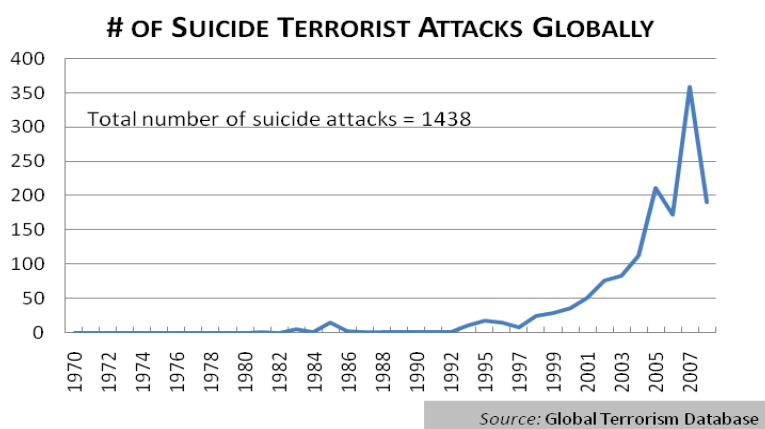


517 of these attacks on Great Britain occurred in the period between 1970 and 1994, while 87 attacks have occurred since 1994—the year of the Good Friday Agreements (or Belfast Agreement) which aimed to bring some resolution to the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland that had generated thousands of terrorist attacks in Northern Ireland, Great Britain, and Ireland since the 1970s. From 1970 to 1994, Great Britain faced an average of **21.5 terrorist attacks per year**. From 1995 onward, Great Britain has been targeted by terrorists an average of **6.2 attacks per year**.

14.6% percent of all terrorist attacks during this era (1970-2008)<sup>1</sup> were fatal terrorist attacks, resulting in the death of one or more person. The number of annual fatal attacks peaked in 1974 (with 12 fatal attacks) and 1975 (13 fatal attacks). In all, **88 fatal attacks** in Great Britain have resulted in the **deaths of 553 people**—an average of more than 6 deaths per fatal attack—with the deadliest terrorist attack being the hijacking and destruction of Pan Am Flight 103, as it exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people (see GTD ID# 198812210003).

### ➤ *Suicide Terrorism*

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the 7/7 attacks on the London Underground and transportation system was that it was conducted by suicide bombers. This willingness of terrorists in Great Britain to sacrifice their lives in an attack represented a new development. The GTD tracks the usage of suicide techniques by terrorists, and the coordinated bombing in London in 2005 marked the **first recorded occurrence of suicide terrorism in Great Britain**. Events in subsequent years, however, have demonstrated that suicide terrorism is not the norm in Great Britain: Since the 7/7 attacks, there has been only one other attempted suicide attack in Britain—a 2007 attack on Glasgow Airport in which one of the attackers died after the failed attack from burns suffered during the attempt (see GTD ID# 200706300003).



The infrequency of suicide attacks in Great Britain does not mean that suicide terrorism rates are holding steady globally. Rather, around the world, suicide terrorism has been on the rise in recent years, with a relatively steady increase in recent years, starting from 1997 through 2007. A modest decrease in suicide terrorism is reported for 2008, when 191 such incidents were reported.

This frequency of suicide attacks, though, is still well above the average number of suicide attacks

<sup>1</sup> The Global Terrorism Database has reviewed and validated information on incidents through 2008, with work currently underway on incidents reported in 2009 and 2010. These data from 2009 and 2010 will be released at a later date.

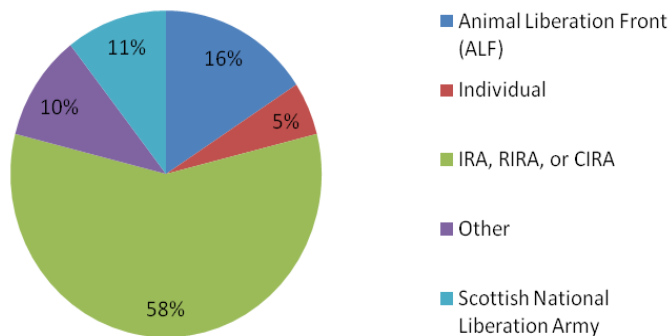
per year (1997-2008) of 113 attacks globally. In all, **1438 suicide terrorist attacks** occurred worldwide during this period.

➤ **Terrorist Perpetrators in Great Britain**

Between 1970 and 1999, almost two-thirds of all terrorist attacks in Great Britain with a known perpetrator were the responsibility of the Irish Republican Army or a related Irish nationalist splinter group, responsible for 293 attacks or 64% of terrorist activity in Great Britain during this period. While terrorist activity did decline in the late 1990s and 2000s, following the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, IRA-related groups were still the main source of British terrorist

activity, responsible for 58% of incidents with known perpetrators during this period.

**KNOWN PERPETRATORS, 2000-2004**



Source: Global Terrorism Database

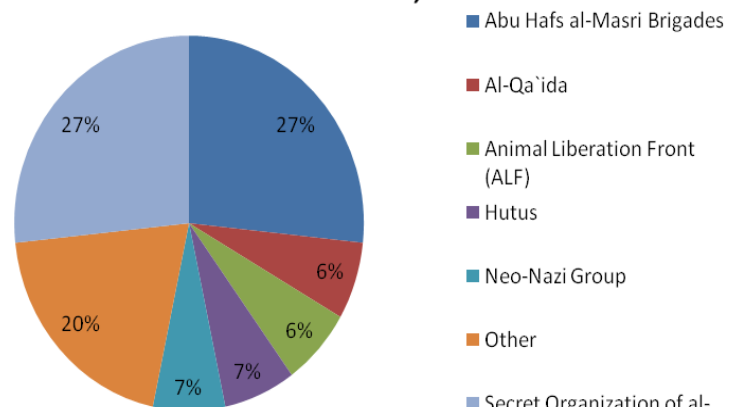
n=19 incidents

The 7/7 attacks in 2005 represented a departure in terms of the types of perpetrators targeting Great Britain. A previously unknown group called the **Secret Organization of al-Qa'ida in Europe** claimed responsibility for the four coordinated bombings in London on July 7, 2005. On a posting on an

Islamic militant website following the attacks, this group indicated that the deadly attacks were launched in retaliation for British involvement in armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since 2005, Great Britain has experienced attacks from a diverse group of terrorist organizations: In addition to the 7/7 attacks by the Secret Organization of al-Qa'ida in Europe<sup>2</sup>, another Jihadist group—Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades—launched an attack on the London transit system just two weeks after the 7/7 attacks (see GTD ID#

**KNOWN PERPETRATORS IN GREAT BRITAIN, 2005+**



Source: Global Terrorism Database

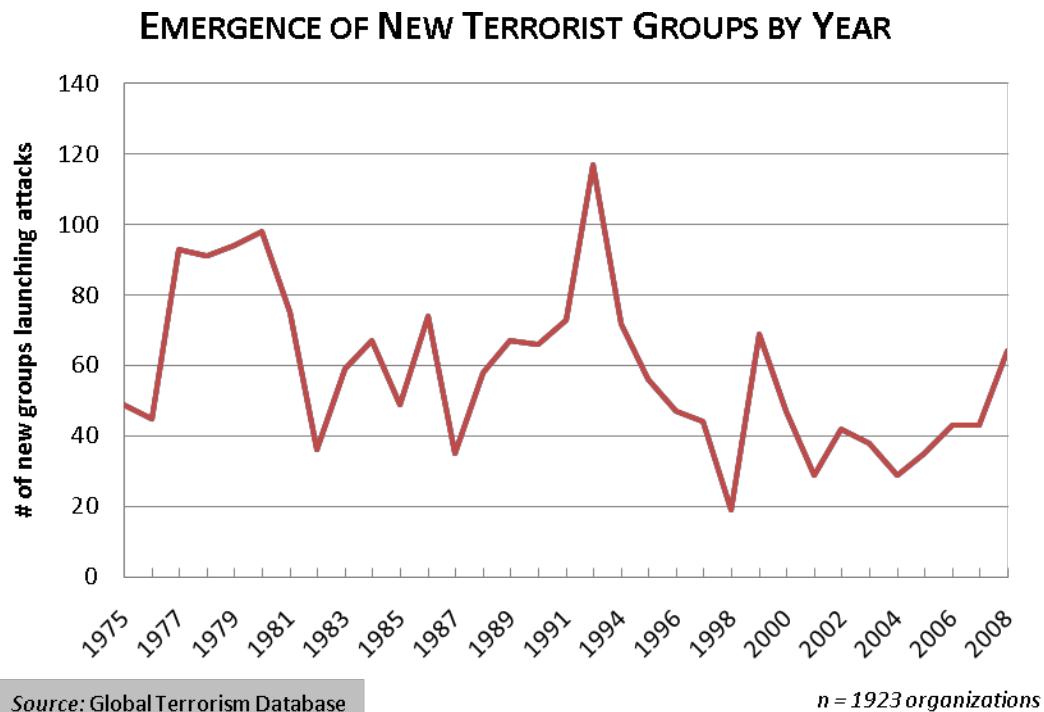
n=15 incidents

200507210008). While this second coordinated attack did not inflict the destruction that the 7/7 attack did, it did create and sustain concerns about Jihadist threats to Great Britain, which has

<sup>2</sup> Note that GTD considers the events in London on March 7, 2005, as one coordinated attack comprised of 4 terrorist incidents. Thus, the Secret Organization of al-Qa'ida in Europe is responsible for 4 of the 15 incidents with known perpetrators in Britain since 2005.

also experienced attacks by animal rights groups and far-right extremists since 2005. In contrast, there were no attacks during this period conducted by Irish nationalists (Irish Republican Army or IRA splinter groups), marking a profound shift from Britain's recent past. This long-time threat has been replaced by a broad array of new threats, including several new groups, willing to take violent action against the British people and government.

The 7/7 Metro attacks are the only known terrorist attack by the Secret Organization of al-Qa'ida in Europe, although the group also made unsubstantiated claims of responsibility for terrorist attacks on Madrid commuter trains in March 2004. This emergence of new groups, with no past history of terrorist attacks, is a discernable global trend in this decade. Since 1975, **1923 organizations** have been identified as terrorist perpetrators, each responsible for at least 1 terrorist attack around the world. From 1975 to 2008, an average of almost 58 new groups emerged per year—groups with no past history of engaging in terrorist attacks—peaking in 1992 with 117 new organizations.



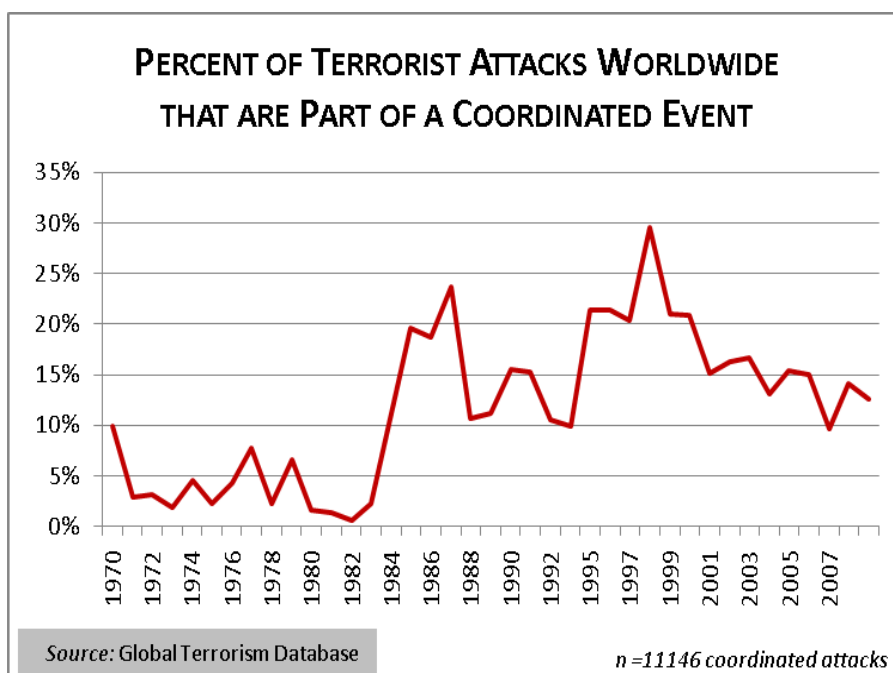
While the mid- to late-1990s saw a decrease in the number of new groups emerging annually (with a low of 19 new groups emerging in 1998), during the last decade, the average number of emergent organizations has been on the increase again worldwide, with **41 new organizations emerging annually on average** since 2000, with an increasing amount emerging each year since 2004. This trend is similar to peaks evident in the late-1980s—an era of high levels of terrorist activity.

As evidenced by the British example, emergent organizations today do not reflect one ideology but, rather, there are new groups representing a wide array of ideological beliefs and particular goals, complicating counterterrorism and anti-terrorism efforts in countries around the world.

➤ **Coordinated Terrorist Attacks**

Coordinated events involving multiple targets being attacked at the same time and place, like the 7/7 attacks, account for approximately 13% of all attacks worldwide since 1970. These attacks are **most often bombings (60%)** and are unusual in terms of the degree of organizational sophistication and planning required to carry them out. Coordinated attacks can also pose a unique challenge to responders, creating a strain on resources and a particularly chaotic environment.

Although coordinated attacks were fairly rare in the 1970s and early 1980s, making up only 2% to 10% of all attacks. In the mid-1980s this figure doubled, **peaking at 30% in 1998**. The past ten years have seen a steady decline in the prevalence of coordinated attacks, averaging around 15% of all attacks.



There have been a number of high-profile coordinated attacks in recent years, including the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States, the Bali nightclub bombings in 2002, the commuter train bombings in Madrid in 2004, and the series of armed assaults in Mumbai in November 2008. As suggested by the highly lethal nature of these cases, on average fatal attacks that are part of a coordinated event **result in 44% more deaths** than fatal attacks that are not part of a coordinated event (averaging 7.8 deaths compared to 5.4 deaths).

➤ **Terrorists and Transportation Targets**

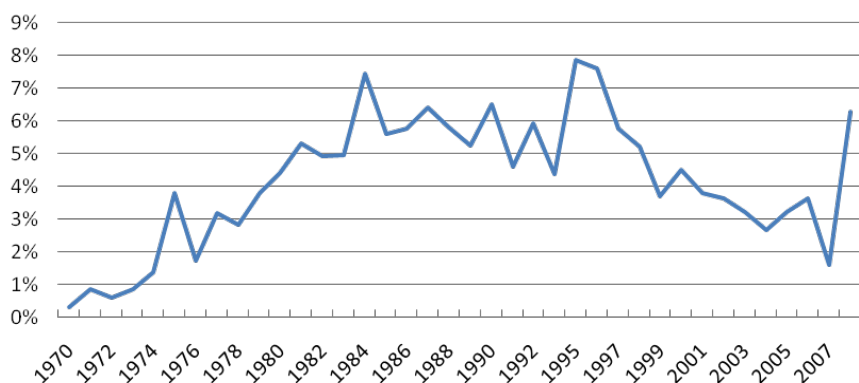
The 7/7 attacks directly targeted London’s transit system, as did the subsequent attack 2 weeks later in London claimed by Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades. In addition to these British attacks on transportation targets, recent years have borne witness to terrorist attacks on trains and metro targets in Tokyo, Paris, Sri Lanka, Manila, Angola, Moscow, Madrid, and Mumbai. These high-profile, deadly attacks have raised questions about whether transportation infrastructure is especially prone to terrorist activity.

**RECENT HIGH-CASUALTY ATTACKS ON TRAINS AND SUBWAY TARGETS**

Date	Location	Casualties
March 1995	Tokyo Subway	12 killed; 5500 injured
July 1995	Paris Metro	7 killed; 80 injured
July 1996	Sri Lanka Commuter Train	61 killed; 390 injured
August 2000	Moscow Subway	12 killed; 90 injured
December 2000	Manila Train	12 killed; 20 injured
August 2001	Angola Passenger Train	259 killed; 160 injured
February 2004	Moscow Subway	40 killed; 120 injured
March 2004	Madrid Commuter Trains	191 killed; 1800 injured
August 2004	Moscow Subway	10 killed; 50 injured
July 2005	London Transit	56 killed; 700 injured
July 2006	Mumbai Trains	187 killed; 800 injured
March 2010	Moscow Subway	39 killed; 70 injured

In Great Britain, businesses—not transportation infrastructure—have traditionally been the favored targets of terrorists, with 38% of British attacks from 1970 through 2008 directed against private businesses. In contrast, only 7% of terrorist incidents have attacked British transportation targets during this period—a total of 44 such attacks. This rate of attacks against British transportation targets is consistent with the global average:

**PERCENT OF TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST TRANSPORTATION TARGETS GLOBALLY**

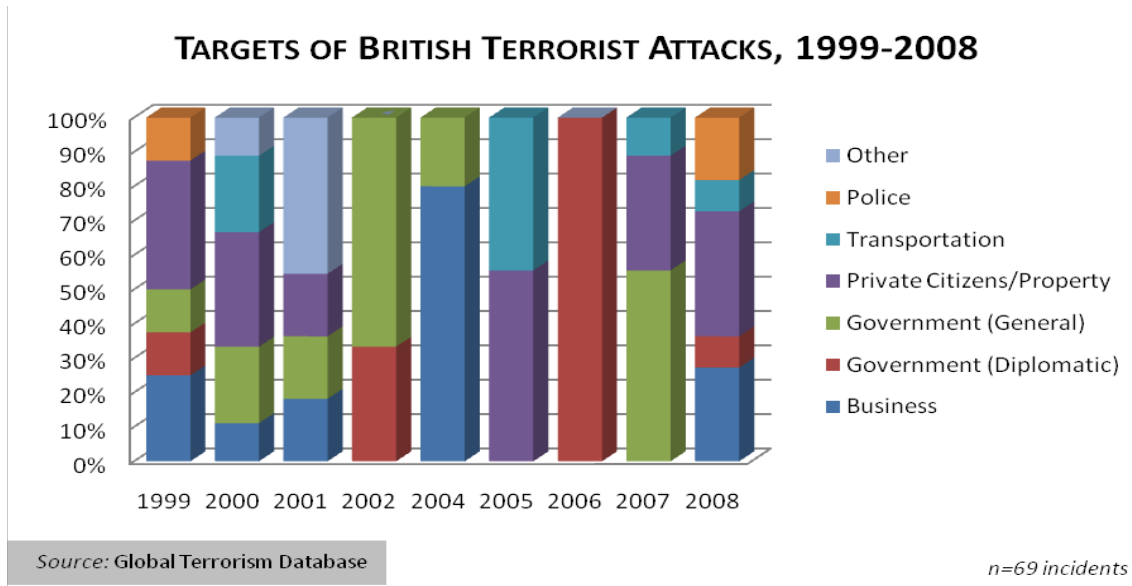


Source: Global Terrorism Database

n = 4382 attacks on transportation targets

While the rate of such terrorist activity varies from year to year, it peaked in 1995 and 1996 with attacks on transportation targets representing 8% of the total terrorist activity globally. Worldwide, there was an increase in attacks on transportation targets in 2008, with a jump from 48 such attacks in 2007 to 293 transportation-focused attacks in 2008. However, this still represents only 8% of all terrorist activity in 2008.

Rather than a concentrated focus of terrorist organizations on transportation targets, or any one kind of target, these violent actors continue to attack a wide range of targets. In 2005—the year of the 7/7 attacks—almost half of all terrorist activity in Great Britain targeted transportation. However, in the previous year (2004), no terrorist attacks in Britain focused on such targets. Rather, almost 80% of attacks targeted businesses. And, in 2006, one year after the 7/7 attacks, diplomatic government facilities were the sole target of terrorists in Britain.



This variation in terrorist targeting is no doubt in part a function of terrorists’ perception of successful counterterrorism tactics applied to specific target types but, to the degree to which shifting targets is a strategy of terrorist organizations, it serves to complicate effective and efficient counterterrorism measures in Britain and around the world.

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**Notes on this Report:**

The **Global Terrorism Database (GTD)**, [www.start.umd.edu/gtd](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd) contains information on more than 87,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. An updated version of this open-source database, with information on incidents through 2008, was released in June 2010.

GTD is a project of the **National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terror (START)**, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence. START, based at the University of Maryland, College Park,

aims to provide timely guidance on how to disrupt terrorist networks, reduce the incidence of terrorism, and enhance the resilience of U.S. society in the face of the terrorist threat.

The material presented here is the product of START and does not express the opinions of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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