

# OpenVoiceNews U.K.

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

## UK Police Warn of Escalating Foreign Plots Backed by Russia, Iran, and China

July 16, 2025

— Categories: General News



A surge in life-threatening plots linked to Russia, Iran, and China is putting lives at risk on U.K. soil, senior counter-terror officers have warned, revealing a significant rise in covert and hostile activities aimed at allegedly destabilising Britain.

According to top British policing figures, these foreign regimes are increasingly using criminal networks and even children to carry out violent acts, including kidnappings, sabotage, and arson. The alarming assessment follows a fivefold spike in hostile state activity since the 2018 Salisbury poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal, which British authorities attribute to Russian military intelligence.

Dominic Murphy, head of London's Counter Terrorism Command, stated that the scale and complexity of foreign operations had accelerated beyond anything intelligence agencies had anticipated. "We are increasingly seeing these three states... undertaking threat-to-life operations in the United Kingdom," Murphy said, describing the volume of hostile activity as unprecedented.

Vicki Evans, Senior National Coordinator for Counter Terrorism Policing in the U.K., added that the growing use of "proxies," often low-level criminals or vulnerable individuals, was particularly concerning. "In many cases, those recruited to carry out these tasks are not ideologically driven but simply motivated by small sums of money," she said. She noted that some suspects currently under investigation are in their mid-teens.

## Rising Threats

Evans warned of the dangers of young people being manipulated in online environments, lured into taking part in foreign-sponsored acts of violence without full comprehension of their involvement. "They're being egged on, sometimes without understanding who they're working for or the consequences," she added.

One recent case underscores the concern. Earlier this month, three men were convicted of an arson attack targeting Ukraine-linked businesses in London. Police believe the plot was ordered by Russia's Wagner mercenary group, with the gang's leader previously admitting plans to abduct a known critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The pattern is not limited to Moscow's operations. Iran has also been linked to a growing number of assassination and abduction plots targeting U.K.-based individuals. In 2023, the director-general of the U.K.'s domestic security service, MI5 (Military Intelligence Section 5), revealed there had been at least 20 Iran-backed attempts to kidnap or kill individuals living in Britain since the beginning of 2022.

Murphy said Iran was continuing its efforts to cause unrest within Britain's borders. "They too are to some extent relying on criminal proxies," he noted, warning that Iran's campaign of intimidation was very much ongoing.

China, likewise, has faced accusations of attempting to influence or pressure dissidents and critics abroad. Although less publicly documented than its Russian and Iranian

counterparts, its operations are viewed with increasing concern within British law enforcement circles.

This latest warning from counter-terrorism police reinforces a growing sense within security circles that hostile state activity has evolved. No longer restricted to traditional espionage or cyber attacks, these threats now manifest in real-world violence on British streets.

While the government has publicly condemned such foreign interference, questions remain over whether current laws and resources are sufficient to tackle the threat. The rising reliance on civilian proxies, especially minors, adds another layer of difficulty for police and security services.

British authorities continue to urge the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity. With foreign regimes becoming more emboldened in their campaigns against the U.K., the need for robust national security measures has never been more urgent.