



FENESTRA TI

GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE. **CONNECTED INSIGHT.**

THREAT BRIEF · TLP: CLEAR

RAF FAIRFORD: EXPLOSIVES ARRESTS DURING A US THREAT ALERT

Armed police arrested five men after reports of three suspicious vehicles heading towards the US bomber base in Gloucestershire. A US alert at the base's highest level began the evening before.

27 SEPTEMBER 2026 · INFORMATION AS OF 14:03 BST

BOTTOM LINE

A PLANNED PLOT IS NOW MORE LIKELY THAN A CHANCE FIND

Gloucestershire Police say that at 00:45 on 27 September they received a call about three suspicious vehicles travelling towards RAF Fairford. Armed officers responded and arrested five men near the village of Whelford on suspicion of offences under the Explosives Act.¹ Police declared a major incident and evacuated homes, and Army bomb-disposal specialists examined a number of vehicles.^{2,3} Counter-terrorism police now lead the inquiry. Police said the incident was contained and that the operation was not intelligence-led.⁴

The US had already raised RAF Fairford to **FPCON Delta**, its highest force-protection level, by the evening of 26 September. It reportedly cited specific, credible intelligence of a threat to the base.^{5,6} Spotters saw alerts, aircraft dispersal and blocked crash gates that day.⁷ RAF Lakenheath reportedly moved to Charlie, the level below.⁴

KEY JUDGEMENTS

1

HIGH CONFIDENCE

The US threat alert came before the arrests and was not a reaction to them. Arabic and Persian channels relayed the US alert at 22:48 on 26 September, about two hours before police received the call about the vehicles at 00:45. Spotters and a specialist outlet also reported Delta that day. The Arabic and Persian posts may share one origin.

2

MODERATE CONFIDENCE

The arrests are probably linked to the threat the US was reacting to. Police say their response began with a call about three suspicious vehicles heading towards the base, and that their operation was not intelligence-led. That describes the police response only. It does not rule out that the call came from, or was prompted by, intelligence held elsewhere, such as whatever triggered the US alert. Who made the call has not been disclosed.

3

LOW CONFIDENCE

Iranian direction or proxy involvement is a realistic possibility. In July the IRGC called British bases used for strikes on Iran "legitimate targets" and named Fairford.^{6,2} There is no public evidence yet linking the suspects to Iran, and no claim of responsibility. Domestic, activist or criminal explanations remain open.

4

HIGH CONFIDENCE

A Russian-language channel is already using the incident to present US basing as a danger to Britain. Iranian state media (Tasnim, Fars) have so far reported it factually, with no boasting or claim.

TIMELINE · UK TIME (BST)

HOW THE ALERT AND THE ARRESTS UNFOLDED

Amber = before the arrests were public.

11 Mar	15 US bombers (12 B-1B, 3 B-52) at Fairford flying missions against Iran. ⁶
26 Apr	Overnight fire in a single-storey building at the base. Reported only by a Russian-language channel; cause not established. ⁶
21 Jul	UK approves continued US use of British bases for what it calls defensive strikes on Iran. ⁶
23 Jul	IRGC warns that British bases used to attack Iran are “legitimate targets”, naming Fairford. UK says its forces are ready to respond. ^{6,2}
23 Aug	Iran-linked hackers blamed for a cyber attack that shut a UK power plant for four days. ⁸
17–18 Sep	Temporary zone where aircraft must carry a transponder set up around Fairford (AIP SUP 103/2026). Extended to 24 hours a day on 18 Sep. ⁹
20–21 Sep	B-1B filmed taking off on full afterburner. NOTAM from 00:16 on 21 Sep: airfield “open for official business only”. ^{9,6}
26 Sep	Spotters report tannoy alerts, aircraft dispersed across the airfield and crash gates blocked. Faytuks reports FPCON Delta. ^{7,5}
26 Sep 22:48	Iraqi (Arabic) and Iranian (Persian) channels relay a US “Department of War” statement: specific, credible intelligence of a threat; FPCON raised to Delta. ⁶
27 Sep 00:31	Channel reports Delta at Fairford and Charlie at Lakenheath (possibly Mildenhall), with police limiting traffic near all three at US request. ⁶
27 Sep 00:45	Police receive a call about three suspicious vehicles travelling towards RAF Fairford. Armed officers respond and arrest five men. ¹
27 Sep a.m.	Major incident declared; Whelford homes evacuated to a leisure centre; Army EOD examines the vehicles. ^{2,3}
08:42	Earliest report of the arrests in Fenestra collection (UK Telegram channel), citing spotters on FPCON Delta. ⁶
08:57–09:24	Iranian and Iraqi outlets, including Tasnim and Fars, report the incident factually. ⁶
09:28 on	Guardian, Al Jazeera, Reuters: armed police at the main gate, about 30 emergency vehicles. USAF will not discuss force-protection measures. ^{3,10,2}
Later	Counter-terrorism police lead. Operation “not intelligence-led”. Hazardous Area Response Team deployed. ⁴
12:04	Russian-language channel frames the base as a danger to local residents. ⁶
12:26 on	UK and Arabic-language channels report five arrests and three vans, later confirmed by police as five men and three vehicles. Still unverified: their claim of a car-bomb plot, and images said to show bomb-disposal robots at the vehicles. ^{6,11}
Midday	Government says the Prime Minister is receiving updates and thanks emergency services for detaining several suspects. ¹²
13:55	Police statement confirms the 00:45 call and the five arrests. ¹

ASSESSMENT

WHAT WE KNOW, WHAT WE DON'T, WHAT TO WATCH

CONFIRMED

- Five men arrested by armed officers under the Explosives Act near Whelford, after a 00:45 call about three suspicious vehicles travelling towards RAF Fairford. Major incident declared, homes evacuated, Army EOD examined the vehicles.
- Counter-terrorism police lead. Police describe the incident as contained and the operation as not intelligence-led.
- Fairford was at a heightened US security posture before the arrests. Several independent sources agree on this.

NOT YET ESTABLISHED

- Identity of the suspects. The Telegram claim of a car-bomb plot is unconfirmed.
- Whether explosives or devices were found. The vehicles were heading towards the base, but police have not said it was the target.
- What triggered the US alert. No official US statement has been published. The “Department of War” wording comes from Arabic and Persian relays and a specialist outlet.
- Any state direction. No claim of responsibility has appeared in Fenestra collection, including IRGC-aligned channels.

INDICATORS TO WATCH

- Charges or names from Counter Terrorism Policing, the CPS or Westminster Magistrates' Court.
- Further arrests or addresses searched, particularly outside Gloucestershire.
- Praise, claims or threat follow-ups on IRGC-aligned and “Axis of Resistance” channels.
- Alert changes, NOTAMs or traffic restrictions at Lakenheath, Mildenhall and Brize Norton.
- Bomber activity pausing, dispersing or relocating from Fairford.
- Russian amplification turning into calls for protest or action near UK bases.

IMPLICATIONS

- **Sites near UK bases hosting US aircraft** (Fairford, Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Brize Norton): expect cordons, traffic restrictions and heightened checks at short notice. Review access routes and staff travel.
- **Defence, aviation and critical-infrastructure organisations:** Iran has threatened UK bases and has been linked to a disruptive cyber attack on a UK power plant. Treat physical and cyber threats as connected, and review reporting routes to police.
- **Communications teams:** expect unverified claims and state-aligned framing to spread faster than official statements. Wait for police confirmation before repeating details such as suspect numbers or devices.

SOURCES

Numbered references for this brief. Telegram and NOTAM items are from Fenestra TI's own collection; details are available on request. Times are UK time (BST). Unverified claims are labelled as such.

- 1.** Gloucestershire Police — Statement on the Whelford major incident: 00:45 call about three suspicious vehicles travelling towards RAF Fairford; armed officers arrested five men (27 Sep 2026).
Public statement issued 27 Sep 2026
- 2.** Dawn / Reuters — Police declare major incident at UK's Fairford airbase, used by US air forces (27 Sep 2026).
<https://www.dawn.com/news/2033037/police-declare-major-incident-at-uks-fairford-airbase-used-by-us-air-forces>
- 3.** The Guardian — Major incident declared near RAF Fairford as men held on suspicion of explosives offences (27 Sep 2026).
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/sep/27/major-incident-declared-near-raf-fairford-as-men-arrested-on-suspicion-of-explosives-of-fences>
- 4.** Gazette & Herald — Counter-terrorism police lead inquiry after arrests near RAF Fairford (27 Sep 2026).
<https://www.gazetteherald.co.uk/news/26585163.counter-terrorism-police-lead-inquiry-arrests-near-raf-fairford/>
- 5.** Faytuks Network — U.S. Department of War enhances force protection condition after unspecified threat to military base hosting strategic bombers (26 Sep 2026).
<https://faytuksnetwork.com/world/europe/raf-fairford-enhances-security/>
- 6.** Fenestra Telegram collection — Telegram posts collected by Fenestra TI (OSINT, military, Iranian, Iraqi and Russian-language channels) (Mar-Sep 2026).
Available on request
- 7.** The Aviationist — 'Major Incident' near RAF Fairford after arrests made under Explosives Act (27 Sep 2026).
<https://theaviationist.com/2026/09/27/major-incident-raf-fairford/>
- 8.** The Guardian — Iran-linked hackers blamed for cyber-attack that shut down UK power plant (23 Aug 2026).
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/aug/23/iran-linked-hackers-blamed-cyber-attack-british-power-plant>
- 9.** Fenestra NOTAM collection — Active NOTAMs for EGVA (RAF Fairford), incl. AIP SUP 103/2026 (27 Sep 2026).
Available on request
- 10.** Al Jazeera — UK police evacuate homes near RAF Fairford airbase used by US (27 Sep 2026).
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/27/uk-police-evacuate-homes-near-air-base-used-by-us>
- 11.** Swindon24 — Bomb squad called as homes evacuated and men arrested near RAF Fairford (27 Sep 2026).
<https://www.swindon24.co.uk/news/bomb-squad-called-as-homes-evacuated-and-men-arrested-near-raf-fairford/>
- 12.** CNN — UK counter-terror police investigate after several arrested near base used by US forces (27 Sep 2026).
<https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/27/uk/fairford-arrests-uk-raf-us-intl>

