



PROTECTING THE PUBLIC

Gavin Hepburn explores what's being done to reduce panic and keep people safe in the event of a terror attack

Over the past two years, Western civilisation has been hit by a series of tragic terror attacks. We have seen attacks hit France, Germany, Spain, the US and even at home in the UK. In 2016, terrorists used both vehicles and explosives to cause tragedy and damage in Manchester and London.

While the stiff British upper lip has been encouraging the public to keep calm and carry on, it is evident that the effects of recent attacks are beginning to show. In late November 2017, the worst was assumed when an incident at Oxford Circus Tube station was reported and fears of another terror attack began circling. Armed officers were quickly deployed

to the scene, but after 90 minutes police determined there was no evidence of shots, casualties or suspects and it was brandished as a false alarm.

The general public's reaction to this false alarm shows how terror attacks have had a significant impact on fear levels. With tensions so high, it is crucial that governments and security officials put additional security measures in place to protect the public from possible future attacks. This will also put people's minds at rest that the necessary safety steps are being taken. In fact, recent research has found that over a quarter (29 percent) of the public want to see more visible security measures put in place at busy public areas to make them feel safer. So what security

Attitudes to security are changing and people would prefer to feel safe when out in public

measures are being introduced to make public areas safer from possible attacks?

Governments from across the globe are implementing their own security measures to deal with the global terror threat so future attacks can be prevented and the public kept safe. In the UK, the Government has provided police forces with an additional £50m to fight against terrorism. The extra funds will be put to use to increase their intelligence and surveillance capabilities, while also paying for more armed officers to patrol city centres. The additional funding comes in light of news that the number of UK terror-related arrests has hit a record high. In September 2017 a 54 percent increase was reported, with the number of arrests rising to 400 – 64 of which were partly due to arrests following the attacks in both London and Manchester.

As a result of the London and Manchester incidents, armed officers were a noticeable addition to most UK cities during the festive period, especially at Christmas markets. In Manchester, for instance, armed police officers, both in uniform and in plain clothes, were deployed to mingle with crowds in response to the UK's current severe threat level.

INCREASED POLICE PRESENCE

Armed police officers were deployed to the streets of London, Liverpool and Edinburgh, during the New Year's celebrations along with covert officers and dog units to protect the public from any possible threats. Even the UK's most elite special forces unit, the SAS (Special Air Service), was deployed across the UK ahead of the celebrations to keep the public safe. The elite unit patrolled tourist hotspots and was in possession of armour-piercing ammunition and the world's most powerful sniper rifle, both of which are capable of bringing a vehicle to a standstill from as much as a mile away.

There are concerns that the presence of armed officers at public events and hotspots can potentially create more panic, and deter people from attending due to the visibility of live guns making them feel uneasy. However, research has in fact found that over a third (36 percent) of the UK public welcomes the sight of armed police officers at public events, like Christmas

29 PERCENT OF THE PUBLIC WANT MORE VISIBLE SECURITY MEASURES IN BUSY PUBLIC AREAS

markets or street parades. This shows that attitudes towards security may be changing given the heightened risk of another attack happening, and people would rather feel safe in their surroundings.

Of course, armed personnel are not the only new addition to UK streets to prevent against terror attacks. Concrete blocks and barriers have also been adopted by city councils to stop hostile vehicles from breaching the perimeter of public hotspots. Concrete barriers were installed in Southampton, Birmingham and Manchester around the perimeter of their Christmas markets to prevent vehicles from mounting the pavements and hitting civilians.

Meanwhile, French authorities have opted to install reinforced bollards combined with steel cables to help keep tourists safe in Nice. The move follows on from the tragic Bastille Day attack, in which a truck was used to kill 86 people.

The installation of bollards and barriers around busy, pedestrianised locations is yet another popular move with the public, as nearly half (44 percent) welcome the use of physical security measures to protect them from targeted vehicle attacks.

SAFEGUARDING THE PUBLIC

With this in the mind, the recent announcement from the mayor of New York City that plans are in place to install 1,500 steel barriers across the city is welcome news. The proposal comes as security and Government officials are looking to safeguard the public against future incidents, following the two attacks last year in the city that killed nine people. The steel barriers will also be introduced to replace the temporary concrete blocks, which were put in place following the attacks and will provide a long-term solution to the current terror threat. But what more can be done to keep the public safe during the coming year?

The fight against terror is a persistent battle and a future attack can never be ruled out. Because of this, it is important for security forces to constantly explore and update their current systems to ensure that they have the most up to date anti-terror measures in place.

This needs to always stay ahead of the threat and so consequently has seen the security industry continuously innovating to ensure its products are capable of withstanding future terror attacks. Temporary Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) barriers are just one product type where significant developments and investment are being made. Advancements have meant that such barriers can now withstand the impact of cars and vans, along with larger vehicles such as trucks or lorries. There are products available that can stop vehicles weighing 2,500kg travelling at 48kph, and some are now even capable of withstanding the impact from vehicles weighing 7,200kg travelling at 32kph.

FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS

Importantly, these barriers have been designed to be compact, lightweight and, because of their modular design, they can be transported and deployed quickly and easily. The barriers' ability to be deployed quickly makes them ideal for securing temporary events – such as the UK's upcoming royal wedding and also music festivals – as there will be no need to close down roads or use heavy machinery. The permeable design also makes it possible for wheelchair users, cyclists and parents with prams to easily pass through without disruption.

Advancements in barriers and bollards are not the only security developments we can expect to see in 2018 to help keep the public safe. The use of facial-recognition technology is becoming increasingly popular with security officials and governments because of how it can be easily applied to existing CCTV camera infrastructure. In London in particular, where there is estimated to be around

▶ 500,000 cameras (around 1 camera for every 14 people), the use of facial recognition will be pivotal in the fight against terrorism – the sheer number of cameras means terrorists could be identified and caught before they carry out an attack.

The advantages of facial-recognition technology mean that we can expect to see it being used during

36 PERCENT OF PEOPLE IN THE UK WELCOME THE SIGHT OF ARMED POLICE AT PUBLIC EVENTS

the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia. The Government has announced plans to include it on public transport, such as trains and buses, so that terror suspects can be caught before they reach any of the venues or popular tourist hotspots. This will be achieved using ultra HD cameras that scan the

faces of passengers and then cross-match them with the police databases, allowing for the detection of possible suspects in real-time.

Alongside facial-recognition technology, the Australian Government has unveiled plans to install a terrorist alarm system in Melbourne. The plans detail how loudspeakers will be installed at 90 locations throughout the city and will be used to not only siren a terrorist attack, but to also allow for instructions from the police to be broadcast to the public to help keep panic to a minimum.

The world is becoming an increasingly volatile place given the constant high terror threat level. While the public is encouraged to carry on with their daily lives, the effects of recent attacks have clearly left people feeling nervous. Although governments have been quick to implement measures to ease public fears and protect them from future attacks, it is crucial that they keep on updating and improving upon their existing security measures to deter and protect against future terror attacks ●

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