

**Timothy Compston** takes a closer look at stadium crowd management and security after what happened at the Stade de France in Paris

# STADIUM SECURITY SHAKE UP

**F**rom the various reports that have come out since that fateful November evening, it would appear that the fans at the Stade de France watching a friendly football game between France and Germany had an extremely lucky escape in the way that events unfolded, especially in light of the 130 individuals who perished at the Bataclan theatre and elsewhere. Crucially, at the Stade de France none of the terrorists were able to get beyond security at the ground.

Looking back, the first sign of trouble came just 15 minutes into the match when one of the terrorists was prevented from entering the stadium during a routine security check when his suicide belt aroused suspicion. This, it is suggested, caused him to blow himself up outside the stadium, followed by a second individual detonating a suicide vest close to another entrance, and then – just over 20 minutes later – the final bomber setting off the explosives he was concealing outside a nearby fast food outlet. Although someone was killed walking past the area, things could have been much worse if the bombers had been able to reach the thousands of fans inside. The fact that nuts and bolts were said to have been packed into their suicide vests shows that they were going out with the express intention of maiming and killing as many people as possible.

Not surprisingly in the days that followed, the authorities across Europe were on high alert with the potential for follow-on attacks uppermost in their minds. This resulted in the cancellation of a number of football matches including between Belgium and Spain in Brussels – with some of those involved in the multiple Paris attacks having travelled from France's near neighbour. In the case of Hannover, an evacuation was instituted less than two hours before the kick-off of the Germany versus Netherlands fixture. This was based on a credible threat that plans were afoot to "detonate explosives" according to Germany's Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maiziere.

So what are the ramifications of the Stade de France situation for security providers and venues on the frontline? In a statement soon after the attack, Karen Eyre-White, chief executive, at the UK's Sports Grounds Safety Authority offered her condolences to the people of France and reiterated that the SGSA is committed to ensuring the safety and comfort of spectators at sports grounds. She went on to urge sports grounds, and those involved in spectator safety to remain vigilant and review relevant contingency plans, noting: "The UK Government has issued a statement reminding that the threat from terrorism remains 'Severe'". Eyre-White added that the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSCO)

had re-issued its advice on protecting crowded spaces and said that the SGSA was liaising with the Government, NaCTSCO, the UK Police Football Unit, the football authorities and other parties.

Although it is was too early to go into much detail on any specific arrangements post-Paris, Eric Alexander, managing director of events at G4S was willing to offer some initial feedback. Alexander confirmed that, not surprisingly, there have been numerous conversions in the security industry and with various stadia around the topic, stating: "It is precautionary and wise to review all

**Genetec's Security Center solution is used to monitor security at the 82,500-seat MetLife Stadium**



procedures. We are still very much guided by the police and the Home Office and other Government agencies who are basically saying that the threat level is as it was”.

Discussing the practicalities, Alexander says that managing security at a football game is no easy task at the best of times, even before you throw terrorism into the mix: “Trying to get tens of thousands of people into a football ground is tricky enough, bearing in mind that the traditional way to go and view football is that you go out and arrive at the ground maybe 12-15 minutes before kick-off so there is a surge of people in those last minutes. If you create a queuing situation at security that is going to have operational effects as well”. Ultimately, Alexander says that there is much thinking to be done in the weeks and months ahead regarding how the logistics of all of this might play out for the authorities, emergency services, stadiums and security providers.

Turning attention away from terrorist violence to a much more positive sporting experience, stadium-wise – the 2015 Rugby World Cup – Alexander reveals that G4S was involved in some of the security elements for a

## “It is essential stadiums continually review what technologies are available to help keep operations safe and secure”

number of the venues, especially those where it already had a sporting connection. Asked how the security procedures for an international rugby game compare to those for a football match, for example, Alexander points out that the most noticeable distinction – especially in the case of the Rugby World Cup – is that the event organisers were stipulating a ‘security overlay’ from the start: “Our people were doing bag searches and random searches before (World Cup) spectators got to the turnstiles, which is very different to match-day football”. Having said this, Alexander reveals that bag searches were also instituted at a recent Scotland-Poland football game: “That was derived from the fact that they wanted to make sure there wasn’t anything going into the stadium that shouldn’t have been brought through. For that match we were basically looking for glass bottles and flares. Obviously that sort of focus might change in light of what happened last November (the Paris attack),” says Alexander.

Back on the rugby field, a number of other security providers and manufacturers secured business in the run-up to, and during, the Rugby World Cup. For its part, Traka – the key and asset management specialist – reveals that its key management system was installed by the RFU (Rugby Football Union) at Twickenham Stadium prior to hosting the tournament. The programme included investment in the latest access control technology to unlock the ability to automatically track who has taken a specific key and, crucially, when it is returned. According to Traka the associated software even enables the on-site security team to grant access rights to users or individual key sets as required.

Continuing on with the Twickenham theme, last summer, Vindex Systems announced that it had been awarded the CCTV and access control upgrade for the venue. Interestingly, as part of this, Vindex Systems said that the contract involved upgrading CCTV and access control systems to a unified Genetec platform (Security Center) plus full system and match-day maintenance support. Talking about why Genetec’s Security Center solution made sense for Twickenham, Phil Parker, head of security at the RFU, says he was looking for a security platform that would be feature-rich yet operator-friendly: “We wanted to make the lives of my operators easier by having all of our systems using one platform.”

Of the other venues where Genetec’s Security Center solution has scored highly, perhaps the most notable is the 82,500-seat MetLife Stadium, which is home to the





# STADIUM SECURITY SHAKE UP



New York Giants and New York Jets NFL teams. A pivotal factor in sealing the deal was the stadium's requirement for uninterrupted video coverage throughout the venue.

Chris Ritter, director of sales for Northeast United States for Genetec, who was involved in the MetLife project takes up the story: "The first priority was the safety of the fans. What we have done is to put a lot of features in our product [Security Center] to take care of them when they are coming in or getting out of there". He adds that what is referred to as a 'Federation' functionality within Security Center means local law enforcement can 'work that system' for instant viewing and access: "If something happens, immediately they can be involved and you can also escalate that to other emergency assistance," says Ritter.

In addition, Ritter explains that Genetec has built-in the functionality to deal with different threat levels: "I like to refer to it more as situational levels so there is the ability to change the status of the system 'on the fly', firstly from a regular day to a game day". There is also the potential, explains Ritter, should something happen on game day to go into a specific alert status: "This might be for an active shooter situation where by the touch of a button, or mobile app, your operators can have the system go into a lockdown of different features on your door access control, change the status of your cameras and then after that create a workflow for your operators".

Of course with the heightened threat of terrorist attack, high security solutions like bollards are becoming a vital

ingredient to mitigate the risks posed by hostile vehicles targeted at major stadiums. One provider, Safetyflex Barriers – which was involved in protecting multiple venues at the London Olympics – recently reported its first order in Brazil on the back of its successful deployment during 2012: "We're delighted to have been chosen to secure key sites ahead of the Rio 2016 Olympics and Paralympics," says Marcus Gerrard, director at Safetyflex Barriers.

At this stage the full ramifications of what happened at the Stade de France are still to emerge. Certainly in future more attention is likely to be given to the threat terrorism now poses and whether aspects like searches, evacuation plans, and ways of picking up suspicious activity need re-working, alongside the more usual crowd safety concerns.

Major events will continue to be a target for terrorists in the future and it is essential stadiums and other large venues continually review what technologies and training are available to help keep operations safe and secure. The 'Major Events Conference' taking place at UK Security Expo 2016 in London this December will focus on protective strategies aimed at sporting events, major games, stadia, concerts & festivals and political summits. Headline topics explored will include: case studies on the safe delivery of Olympics and Commonwealth games; lessons learned from Paris; policing & CT challenges around major events; incident response and interagency collaboration; the insider threat; accreditation and profile building on those working at events and immigration issues for temporary workers.

***NaCTSCO has been liaising the SGSA, the Government, the UK Police Football Unit and the football authorities to ensure the safety of crowds in and around stadiums***

**Timothy Compston** is a journalist and PR professional who specialises in security issues. He studied International Relations and Strategic Studies at Lancaster University, is PR director at Compston PR and a previous chairman of both the National PR Committee and CCTV PR Committee of the British Security Industry Association (BSIA).