

SECURING PUBLIC

The flurry of terrorist attacks around Europe in recent months is worrying, but perhaps one appalling atrocity in particular should have the authorities more concerned than others. It was not just the terrible loss of life and the targeting of families with children in Nice that makes it stand out, but it is the choice of weapon. Terrorists have used low-tech weapons before including knives and vehicles, but what will have been noted by other would-be terrorists is that if you pick the right target at the right time you can inflict as much if not more casualties, carnage and terror without the use of firearms and explosives.

Already a new video out of ISIS' Al-Khayr province in Syria suggests jihadists emulate the on-hand weaponry of the Nice attack. That makes anyone with a truck, SUV or car a potential mass murderer and any public space or gathering a potential target. Sadly, we now have to assume that copycat attacks are now a likelihood, not just a possibility.

Now more than ever before, we should be looking at public events and spaces with a view to preventing and mitigating the potential damage an individual can do behind the wheel of a vehicle. Clearly if you think about all the potential targets, it would seem an impossible task. How do you secure every street market, carnival, concert, sporting event and festival? Every shopping mall, high street, bus or tram stop?

The obvious starting place is with public events. Why, because at this time they are the most obvious target for a copycat attack and in the short term it is simpler to take immediate action to put measures in place.

The first step as always is to require organisers of public events, whether public or private, to carry out a proper risk assessment and to include the possibility of a terrorist attack as part of that risk assessment. That assessment should address all types of attacks both in terms of prevention and mitigation.

Protocols should be established for the access control, proper protection of perimeters and entrances, communications, crowd control, person and vehicle search procedures, evacuation and so on. Guidelines or best practice documents should be disseminated to all organisers and permission for events should only be subject to the implementation of best practice. Guidelines should include information such as how to establish layered perimeter security, how and where to erect physical barriers and where professional equipment is not yet available how to erect improvised vehicle barriers.

Another important requirement is the establishment for 'rules of engagement' where armed police or security guards are deployed. While controversy continues in France as to whether the security arrangements for the Nice event were adequate, we will have to wait until the official investigation is complete to know the real answers. So for the time being it is not clear exactly

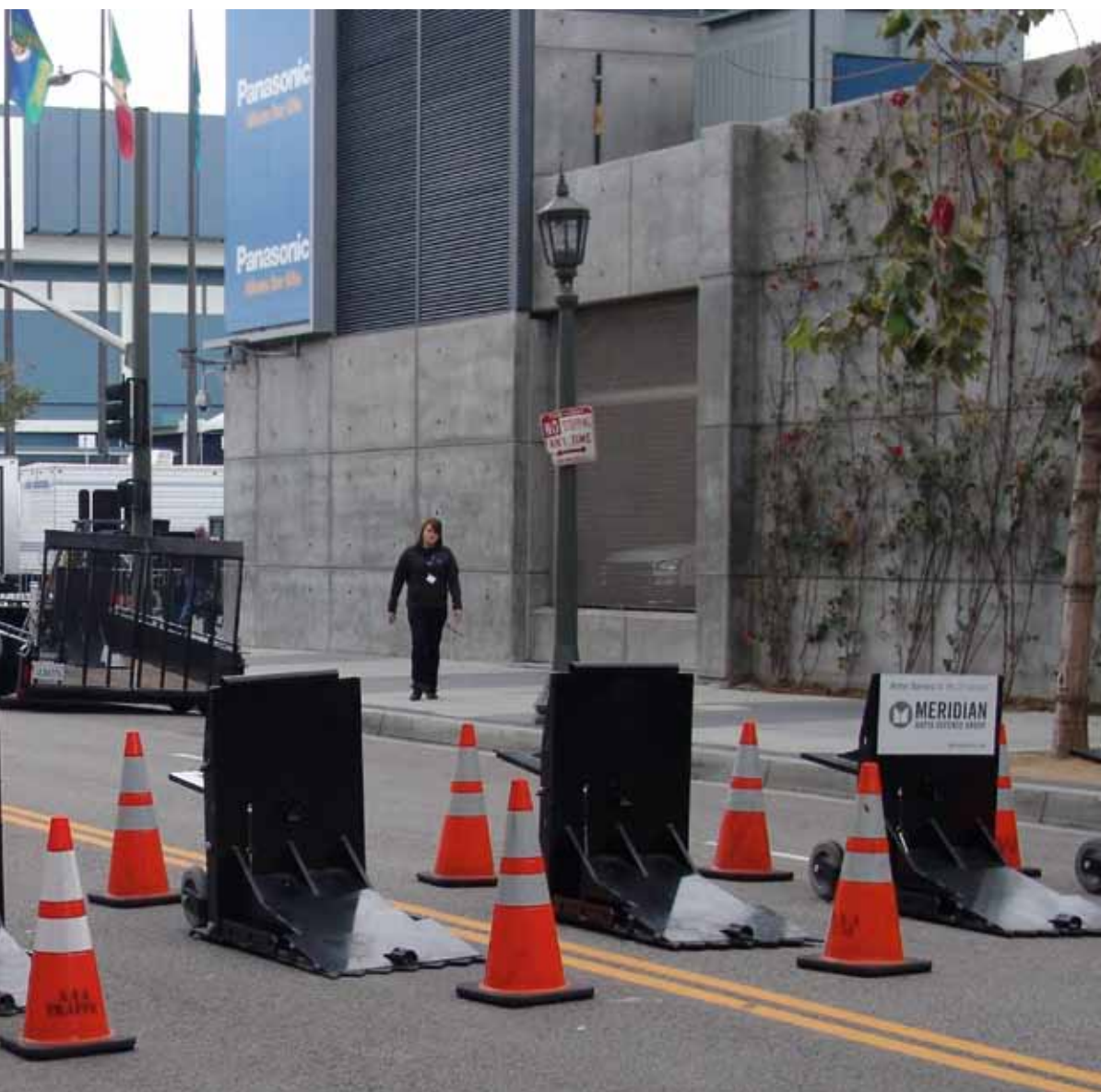


what happened in Nice and how the truck driven by Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was able to get through the perimeter.

But looking at the video it appears that he was somehow able to force or trick his way through the perimeter without being fired upon. Only a lone brave civilian on a scooter seems to be chasing Lahouaiej-Bouhlel. Once it dawned on the police already inside the perimeter that Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was a threat, two police officers fired two rounds at the driver before he accelerated away along the promenade to wreak havoc.

So why did they only fire two shots? The truth is most police officers in Europe will go their whole careers without firing a shot in anger. Therefore, it is important to give officers clear 'rules of engagement' as to when to open fire and in what circumstances, such as when a vehicle, having been challenged, continues to enter a

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restricted zone.

At this time, we can only surmise what was going through the minds of the two officers as they tried to intercept the vehicle, were they responding to an alarm, if so, was this some sort of misunderstanding or did the driver have criminal intent? But at a certain point they decided or were told that he was a threat to the public and opened fire. The problem was that in their uncertainty and with their understandable reluctance to fire in a public place full of people, they did too little, too late. If instead they had emptied their magazines into the cab of the vehicle at that point, it might have been a different story. We will never know. What we do know is that once Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was through the outer perimeter, there was nothing and no one to stop him for the whole length of the promenade.

Perimeter security must be in-depth or layered, with a minimum of two but better still three layers of security

with a minimum of 30 meters between each, if you are to have a realistic chance of stopping something as big as a truck before it reaches the crowds.

The outer perimeter creates a buffer zone to deter or filter vehicles from entering the restricted area, but equally it acts an alarm to those on the inner perimeter. The outer perimeter should be pushed out as far as practical given the local topography and street layout but this perimeter does not have to be much more than a crowd control barrier. But it does need to be a physical barrier, which an attacker needs to physically breach showing intent before reaching the inner perimeter. It is the inner perimeter where you need your stopping power. A physical barrier capable of stopping an accelerating truck, SUV or car and where you need your firepower if it is available.

When it comes to open public spaces such as shopping malls and high streets, the situation is more complicated,

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The Nice attack highlighted just how vulnerable public spaces can be

more expensive and requires a long-term approach. Pedestrianising plaza's, shopping streets and malls is one obvious answer, which has the additional benefit of making those places more pleasant places to be and reducing pollution. Vehicle access is usually still necessary for deliveries etc. but by controlling that access and vetting personnel you immediately reduce the risk.

Clearly it is not possible to make every street a pedestrian zone so it doesn't take a lot of imagination to picture the damage that could be done by an SUV driven by a jihadist along the broad pavements of Champs-Élysées, Oxford Street or Times Square during the tourist season or Christmas shopping period. Built-in security is one answer. That is for planners and architects to make the ordinary day-to-day objects that populate our urban environment into security features. So what can be done?

Jeremy Milton, Sales Director at J&S Franklin explains: "We have been serving customers in the defence and national security sectors for decades supplying protection equipment (both personnel and property) to organisations like the UN, numerous armed forces, governments, law enforcement agencies and critical infrastructure operators worldwide. We have made it our business to understand the protective needs of our customers.

"Based on that experience we started manufacturing our own specialist barrier system Defencell in 2007, but where we have identified a need that was not met by Defencell we have also selected specialist products by other manufacturers to help our customers".

The ideal scenario in any public space is, of course, to deny access of all vehicles to any area where the public gathers in numbers, so permanent or semi-permanent barriers are required. For this J&S Franklin developed the Defencell range of products, which is a geotextile, cellular, containment system which, when filled with locally sourced or selected

fill materials, can be used to create a wide variety of unobtrusive barrier structures that can be grassed or planted, enabling it to blend quickly into the surroundings, offering inconspicuous protection.

Another option is specially manufactured planters, street furniture and bollards. For this J&S Franklin offer the Securiscape range of products. These are engineered with a steel interior which will stop a truck but can be covered with decorative and practical finishes in steel, timber, stone or even bronze. Installation is quick and easy being surface mounted with only 150mm ground fixings. They can then be planted with flowers to trees so that the general public is none the wiser.

Of course, complete denial of access to vehicles is rare because businesses and homes need deliveries, so channeling access through a combination of the methods described into choke points where access can be controlled through the use of pop-up bollards or gate systems is the most practical option.

For purely temporary deployment J&S Franklin supplies the Archer Portable Vehicle Barriers from Meridian Rapid Defense (MRDG) Group in the United States. Archer Portable Vehicle Barriers offer a complete range of 'Drop and Stop' Modular Barrier Systems that are engineered for speed of deployment, retrieval and relocation making them ideal for temporary physical security requirements. They are simple to deploy by only two people with no need for electrics or hydraulics, making Archer ideal for large public events. Manufactured from dual-wall, high-strength, bullet-resistant, ballistic-rated steel, the Archer also provides ballistic and HVM protection.

Nice has shown any would-be terrorists that you don't need explosives or weapons to commit horrendous atrocities, so we must redouble our efforts to make our public events and spaces safer.

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