

Timothy Compston takes to the road to find out more about the terrorist-related ramifications of trucks ending up in the wrong hands

PUTTING THE BLAME ON THE MISUSE OF IT

The past year has brought the security implications of trucks falling into the wrong hands to the fore. A case in point was the tragedy that unfolded in Berlin on 19 December when Polish driver Lukasz Urban was attacked in his parked-up lorry. The suspected culprit, jihadist Tunisian-Born Anis Amri, then, allegedly, took control of the vehicle and proceeded to drive it at speed into a crowded Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz, resulting in the deaths of 12 people (including Mr Urban). Ultimately Anis Amri was killed in a confrontation with Italian police while on the run. An earlier attack on Bastille Day in Nice, France, also brought into sharp relief the clear and present danger that terrorists pose to large crowds of people at major events, especially in our towns and cities. Given this stark reality, this is an opportune moment to look at how the *modus operandi* of the terrorists is changing – with trucks becoming potential weapons – and what physical security measures can be employed to stop attacks in the first place or at least mitigate their impact.

In many ways, the carnage wrought on Nice, which resulted in the deaths of 83 people – and three more subsequently – was simply a physical manifestation of the way that radicalised individuals are now being encouraged, through the groups like ISIS, to engage in ‘lone wolf’ or small cell attacks using whatever is close to hand.

Where vehicles, and crowds are concerned, more attention is likely to be given to the deployment of temporary blockers, barriers and other hostile vehicle mitigation (HVM) measures to curtail rampages in areas temporarily closed off to traffic. In this context, Paul Jeffrey, Managing Director at Avon Barrier, believes that it is important to think outside the box in terms of the lessons to draw from attacks like Nice. “If you take Nice as an example, I don’t think it is practical to start putting in permanent or temporary solutions to control the access of vehicles because there are so many routes on to that piece of road. Looking at the way it unfolded, what they should be doing is providing refuges at the edge of the road with bollards, for example, so if people want to get off the road someone simply can’t drive a truck into that area.”

Asking Keith Bobrosky, vice president, sales – high security systems – at Delta Scientific Corporation, about his thoughts on Nice and the value of mobile barriers like those which appeared on the streets of Philadelphia for the Democratic Convention over the summer, he says: “It has been very unfortunate about Nice, but maybe it will open some people’s eyes to the vulnerabilities

of these type of targets”. Bobrosky reckons that the practicalities of the latest portable vehicle barriers make them a relevant option in the context of the heightened terrorist threat: “What we call the MP5000 is basically a trailered unit that is a wedge barrier. You can pull it around with a truck and then deploy it in a roadway in matter of minutes and it is hydraulically operable so

Migrants climb into the back of a lorry on the highway leading to the Eurotunnel



TRUCKS ON CORRIDORS

hydraulic jacks lift it off the wheels”.

Moving away from the spectre of terrorism, with the number of journeys taken by HGVs (Heavy Goods Vehicles) on the rise, worryingly, haulage operators are finding that their trucks, and the goods they carry, are now a favourite target for criminal gangs, especially when they are parked-up at service areas overnight.



Even more concerning are the dangers they are driving into on the other side of the English Channel, with people smuggling gangs and migrants, blocking their path, physically threatening those behind the wheel, and breaking into trailers. As well as the inevitable disruption to their journeys of such actions – and fines for drivers who may unwittingly be carrying stowaways – food-related cargo is also at risk due to the potential for load contamination, resulting in an added hit to a haulier's bottom line.

When I sought out a driver's perspective at the height of the problems in early October, especially around Calais before the so-called 'Jungle camp' was dismantled, Euan Fleming, from Blair International, felt that the situation had deteriorated, significantly, over the preceding 12 months in terms of the level of activity and driver safety.

Giving an example of the sheer numbers of people involved, Fleming recalled how one of his colleagues opened his trailer only to find a 'bus load' of stowaways inside: "There would have been 50 or so in the back. You are supposed to clear the trailer out before you get to customs and immigration, or the UK sector in Calais, or be faced with a fine". Fleming continued that the driver in question was on the outskirts of Calais when he realised what was happening as those involved had not fixed the security seal back particularly well. At the time, Fleming said that the consensus among the drivers was that they wanted the 'Jungle camp' removed from Calais.

Speaking three months on to Claire Britcher, the media officer at the Freight Transport Association (FTA), there appears to have been a dramatic improvement in the situation on the ground for drivers with the disappearance of 'the Jungle camp' adjacent to the main road to the port of Calais: "We have had contact from some of the drivers who were regularly getting in touch to say it is so much better. I have seen some media reports of smaller camps popping up in the Calais area, but we haven't had any reports from our members of migrants trying to get on board their trucks".

This is not to say that the problem has disappeared completely, particularly, in other parts of France and Belgium: "I think that the professional smuggling will continue." Britcher flags-up a recent example where the FTA's EU affairs manager witnessed migrants being taken out of the back of a truck by the police at a motorway services area near Dunkirk on Boxing Day.

Britcher confirms that the message from the FTA is for drivers to remain vigilant: "We are saying to our members to continue to do all of the checks they would normally do and to sign up to the Border Force Accreditation Scheme because that offers them some protection if they show that they have taken all of the recommended measures to check and secure their truck".

Drilling down into some of the technology that can be employed to detect if there is a human presence in vehicles, Rob Wallander, the Managing Director at Scan-X Security – the UK partner for ENSCO's MicroSearch – reckons that the ability to sense the subtle vibrations caused by a human heartbeat is a good route to take compared with other approaches: "There

PUTTING THE BRAKES ON THE MISUSE OF LORRIES

is no way of stopping your heart from beating, whereas there are CO2 readers that people put in the back but they [stowaways] basically get around that by breathing through a pipe, through a hole in the truck, or breathing into a bag”.

In terms of how a solution like MicroSearch is applied in practice, Wallander says that inside a search area a vehicle simply pulls up and the magnetic seismic sensors are deployed on cables: “It takes 10 – 15 seconds from the time you put the sensors on to get a reading if someone is in the truck or not and roughly where they are sitting”. The sensors, explains Wallander, work in a similar way to those used to measure earthquakes but instead the focus – by placing them on a vehicle’s frame – is to detect the vibrations caused by a human heartbeat.

Security seals also have a key role to play in establishing if access has been gained illegally to a vehicle, according to Simon Robinson, national sales manager at Talisman Security Products: “The seals are usually laser printed with a sequential serial number so the number can be checked at each stop to see if it has been replaced with another”. For an added level of security, Robinson reveals that seals can be customised with company logos: “It is harder to fake as you need to know the serial number and the custom print on the seal”.

When it comes to vehicles being targeted by criminals’ intent on stealing their cargo or people trying to stowaway, Aidan Robb, the managing director at Donegal-based Cargo Defenders Ltd, believes that there is a pressing need for new thinking to protect this weak link in the supply chain. For Robb, it is all about making sure that a vehicle is not the easiest target in the first place, which he stresses, starts from something as basic as having a good lock on the back door: “That is just your visual deterrent and then, after that, is where our system comes in to monitor the back door for unauthorised access”.

Essentially with, what Robb refers to as Cargo Defender – Door Secure, once a box trailer’s doors are opened, outside of a set location or when the system is armed, the system sets off an audible alarm: “This acts as a deterrent to any intruder by, basically, scaring them. If they try to hide inside the trailer when the alarm is still sounding it is going to be very uncomfortable, and nearly impossible for them, because of the high decibels”. According to Robb whenever authorised access happens and the alarm goes off, it is possible to set up the system so that an alert automatically goes back to a control centre and the appropriate contacts are informed: “This can even be sent to the driver if he is away from the truck, at a truck stop, to alert them that somebody is tampering with the trailer”.

Moving on to the gearing up of defences on the curtain sider front, this in Robb’s estimation is an even more testing scenario security-wise, because of what they are made of compared with a box trailer: “You just have a lot more points to monitor. They [criminals or stowaways] can get in through the canvas roof of a euroliner, they can get in by opening the curtain poles or by slashing the curtain

or by opening the back door. What our system does is that we have smart trailer curtain sensors. They detect somebody attempting to cut the curtain, so once the knife goes into the curtain it sets off an audible alarm and sends an alert back to the control centre. It basically scares the intruders so they turn and run”.

So, to conclude, for the year ahead we are likely to see an acceleration in efforts on the hostile vehicle mitigation front for crowded places – in the aftermath of Nice and Berlin – and, where commercial vehicle operators and the authorities across Europe are concerned, a continued focus on how to detect and prevent people gaining entry to trucks as they make their way back to this side of the English Channel.



Timothy Compston is a journalist and security professional that 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 Committee and CCTV PR Committee of the British Security Industry Association.

Talisman tags can be used to establish if access has been illegally gained to a vehicle

MicroSearch can be used to detect stowaways in the back of lorries

