

SECURING THE UN-SECURABLE

Many of those involved in the delivery of counter terrorism measures are aware of the different forms that a security threat to the public can take. Much work has been carried out on hostile vehicle mitigation and although the threat has not diminished, the rising number of improvised explosive devices and active shooter attacks has shown just how vulnerable our leisure time pursuits are. Stadia, festivals, theme parks, street activities such as markets, community events, theatres and art installations have all come under the spotlight.

The 20 December attack on the Berlin Christmas market follows similar attacks on the crowded space environment. With the attack in Nice in July fresh in our minds and the spectre of the failed extremist plot in 2000 at the Strasbourg Christmas Market a warning of things to come, we still seem unprepared for this change in approach and attack methodology. While it may be possible to obtain intelligence on larger, coordinated attacks, the single cell methodology is harder to infiltrate, creating a reactive rather than proactive approach.

The planning of countermeasures to mitigate such attacks is difficult, owing to the *modus operandi* of the terrorist, but it is clear that pre, during and post planning activities are paramount to give those involved in crowded space undertakings the best possible chance of survival if an attack were to occur. It is necessary for those organising events in crowded space environments to work on joint approaches to develop responses to existing and future threats. This article will focus on such perspectives.

With a change in the methods of the terrorist and a focus on the crowded space, it is clear the vast impact that can be caused by a single device in a crowd can be devastating. The development of deterrent measures in advance of an event can help security forces to make terrorists abort attacks before they start as they feel that the environment and context are too risky. These can be as simple as extra security checks, police vehicles causing chicanes that slow vehicles down, mixing up timings for patrols or checks to throw the aggressor out in their timing and delivery of what already will have contained a well worked reconnaissance effort.

Extra security checks on internal employees to obviate the chances of an insider attack are also key, as often these activities can throw up elements related to new employees. Technology deterrents such as CCTV, fingerprint ID and iris intelligence can be simple applications, which can be a step in the right direction

to those aggressors removing themselves from a queue owing to what is perceived as tight security measures. In many cases, just the simple increase in the queuing time can make them suspicious of what is happening. Deterrents can be either overt or covert, and these have a huge impact on whether or not an aggressor will try to breach an event.

Although there is no perfect recipe for dealing with a crisis, pre-planning, tabletops and live play exercises can

Something as simple as increasing the queuing time can make would-be attackers suspicious of what is happening



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make those participating aware of the options, the way others are planning to support any action taken and who are the experts to contact when a near miss or a pattern of unusual activities take place. Interoperability is a primary focus in any planned or unplanned event or crowded space activity as the link between the stakeholders and services taking part can create an integrated planning and response activity, which can lead to a reduced chance of attack or in the case of an attack a mitigation of the outcome. Deterrent measures can reduce the risk of an attack. The planning of countermeasures to mitigate such attacks is difficult, owing to the approach of the terrorist, but it is clear that the pre, during and post planning activities are paramount in giving those involved in crowded space management the best possible chance of survival if an attack were to occur.

The professionalism and vigilance of staff and the public are some of the key components in the

prevention of any attack. As was recently highlighted in the review of the European terrorist attacks, quality intelligence is essential to effectively target the potential perpetrators and intervene before they are able to carry out their plan.

Security and event staff being properly trained, briefed and equipped significantly helps in the smooth running of any crowded space event as their professionalism allows the public to be assured that everything is under control. Regular checking of the site and environment not only allows staff to maintain the integrity of the venue, but also gives them the opportunity to deter, detect and resolve minor infringements of site security. This also links quickly to an effective reporting protocol that allows these issues to be flagged to the Team. Strong leadership not only allows the strategic direction and objectives to be set to focus on a safe and secure environment for those who attend, but it is also the collaboration with the emergency services that prepares for any eventuality in a co-ordinated manner. This collaborative relationship can facilitate the effective sharing of information and intelligence that helps the little pieces of the jigsaw come together from a preventative perspective.

Adopting an 'airport style' security approach to unattended bags and regular checking of litter bins helps to reduce the possibility of a would-be attacker leaving a device unattended for any period of time. Proper protocols and practiced drills combined with the controlled evacuation from an area of the venue to make it safe, help staff to effectively deal with such eventualities. By not following a precise regimented routine to a timed basis, it is more difficult for would be perpetrators to conduct surveillance on the site and might just deter them from an attack.

While it is difficult to predict the exact behaviour of potential perpetrators, it is common that most will conduct surveillance of their intended venue in advance of any attack. Being vigilant to someone going round your site taking photographs and notes of procedures are clear signs of someone conducting such pre-emptive activity. Politely challenging such activities can glean essential intelligence, but can also deter any potential attack. Heightened resilience of staff resources on large events allows the leadership to build capacity to respond should an incident occur. Investment in realistic training builds capability in your staffing resource and gives confidence to any collaborative relationship with the emergency services. Joint training allows all involved to understand the capacity and capability of each resource, enhances greater understanding and importantly prevents silo working and thinking.

When an incident does occur, effective communication helps to give some degree of control in the evacuation of the public to safe areas. Public messages need to be clear, concise and directive to ensure understanding. Consistency in these messages across an array of communication formats – tannoy, staff communications, social media, press, etc. avoids



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misunderstanding and confusion.

We must be aware that people process and interpret information at varying rates. This, combined with their reaction under stress – the five ‘Fs’ – Flee, Fight, Freeze, Flop and Friend (befriend perpetrator) – makes achieving a coordinated and controlled evacuation extremely challenging. People respond very differently to a crisis and it is important for staff to be aware of this and to know how to guide them effectively to safe areas and away from danger.

Consistent messages, professional, calm staff and efficient routes that help people evacuate the affected area all help to effectively marshal people to safety. Keeping them informed during the incident with regular short updates combined with the simple use of please and thank you help them understand what you are trying to achieve. Having a ‘talking head’ for the media also helps to avoid speculation and keeps the messages consistent.

Complacency is our biggest enemy. Having a defined strategy that covers pre-event, actual event and post event, strong leadership combined with properly trained staff can add significantly to the safety of an event. Collaborative relationships and training with the emergency services only further enhances your capability to run and manage large events safely. Critical debriefing allows leadership to identify areas for improvement that can be added to future exercises and informs the continuous improvement training cycle.

The five R’s are important in the resilience of an organisation in the face of an attack. Firstly, Recognising patterns: being aware of things that you have seen before which have led to some kind of incident is key. Secondly, Reporting: everything must be logged, near misses, suspicious incidents and other activities. Often a good logger will spot patterns that occur to alert others to an evolving issue. Thirdly, Reiteration: through briefings, which must be clear to the point and contain all of the relevant information at all levels. Fourthly,

Reflection: in a crisis, often running about in circles trying to make decisions on the move is not best policy, but working with the experts who reflect on previous issues, identify a way forward and can reappoint the plan accordingly can often be trusted to make the right decisions. Lastly, Response: make sure this is measured, if you send all of your resources to a minor incident, you will not have full resources to deal with another incident that might be more important. These elements always come to the fore in all planning and development and are a good yardstick when working under pressure.

Crowded space activities seem to be perceived as soft targets by terrorists. They have five major aspects that lend themselves to reduced resilience. These comprise large groups of static attendees in one place, a transport hub in situ or close by, strong internal wayfinding and communication networks, an isolated fenced or barriered area (real or imagined) and an unsuspecting wide audience demographic. Each one of these has individual resilience needs and the way in which these are met is at best patchy and at worst non-existent. Bringing all five aspects into play and their complex inter-relationships and integration is difficult to manage and maintain at all times as this is costly and uses a high level of resource. The focus has to be three-fold, focusing on vehicle-borne attacks, person-borne IEDs and the active shooter – all of which have been recently used by terrorist organisations.

Training in protective security awareness and hostile reconnaissance identification/deterrence must be integral to any event plan being prepared by the organisers and there must be a commitment to the principle of security from the start. The incorporation of deterrents, the provisions of focused briefings and cascades, tabletops and live exercises give those involved the confidence in their abilities and communication channels and shows just how to implement the crisis management plans.

Strong leadership combined with properly trained staff can add significantly to the safety of an event

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