



SPOTTING ANOMALIES

Paul Mason explains how behaviour detection awareness can be employed as a proactive and pre-emptive approach to security

Why has that door been left open? Who is that person who keeps glancing at the CCTV cameras? What's in that bulging rucksack? Observing anomalies to the usual pattern of life and asking the question: "is that normal behaviour?" are fundamental to detecting suspicious behaviour at the first possible instance.

We are all equipped with the ability to notice something different in our own home environment, such as a different gardener showing up to mow the lawn one day, and our natural instinct tells us to

act and ask where the usual gardener is. However, when removed from the day-to-day of home life, observation skills need to be more finely tuned to detect suspicious behaviour and instinct sharpened to act upon the observation.

In a public setting, such as a shopping mall on a Saturday, crowded with parents and children in tow, groups of friends, noisy teenagers and couples, the high level of activity and movement can be challenging to follow, let alone process and identify anomalies. What constitutes an anomaly is the first yet most important challenge when it comes to successfully

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identifying potential incidents. It is necessary for security personnel and CCTV system operators to be able to notice and question any behaviour that could be suspicious ie: why is a lady running through the mall? Is she looking for a lost child or is she running for another reason?

Behaviour Detection Awareness (BDA) is a type of training that aims to educate personnel working in a public place on how to identify and report suspicious behaviour that could be linked to a security threat. It is a proactive and pre-emptive approach to security that focuses on preparedness and prevention in the first instance and escalates to the appropriate response if required.

Preparedness is unquestionably a key tool in the arsenal of prevention activity, yet it is a fundamental aspect that is often missing in the security sector. Effective preparedness facilitates higher awareness of risk, continuous assessment of evolving risk, training in how to intervene in a potential risk situation and ongoing quality assurance, which all aim to prevent an incident escalating into the lethal space. Behavioural Detection Awareness training equips personnel with the necessary knowledge to ensure the chain of events leading up to a terrorist act are intercepted as early as possible.

Seemingly innocuous behaviours like a person stopping to light a cigarette or taking a phone call at a particular place near an access or control point at an events venue may be coincidences and may not seem suspicious as one-off occurrences. However, when these instances occur repeatedly, they can be cause for concern and could indicate hostile reconnaissance activity to identify a way to gain entry into a venue without raising an alarm. The use of video recording functions on mobile phones allows for an easy cover-up while positioning to obtain video footage of areas that are prohibited from recording. Recognising this type of stealth activity, along with other subtle but nonetheless key behaviours is what BDA trains in employees.

The UK government is due to publish Martyn's Law, a security and counter-terrorism bill that will require venues to take steps to improve public safety. In honour of Martyn Hett and the 22 others who lost their lives in the tragic Manchester Arena attack, the law seeks to create clarity of responsibility for security measures and proposes that new counter-terrorism training and awareness is made available and adopted by security personnel.

The inquiry into the tragic attack emphasised the need for a cultural shift in the security sector to result in sharper awareness to potential threats and enhanced alertness of suspicious behaviour. Furthermore, it highlighted the need for greater collaboration and communication between personnel by equipping them with the confidence to report observations to those who have the authority and are trained to act appropriately.

Behavioural Detection Awareness courses train security personnel to both recognise and report suspicious behaviour and, at a higher level, to act on these suspicions, maximising the potential for criminal activity to be intercepted at the earliest possible stage. Taking into consideration the fact that terrorists often visit sites multiple times to identify vulnerabilities

and test the robustness of security measures, there are numerous opportunities to intervene before the crime itself occurs.

BDA is therefore a key tool in the arsenal of prevention activities, as any response prompted from the recognition of initial suspicious behaviour will entail much lower-risk interception than if intervention is left too late.

Yet the cost of such training is often raised as a barrier to equipping staff with this often life-saving knowledge. According to the respondents of an Events Industry Survey Report by leading event security consultant Peter Ashwin, 42 percent consider increases in safety and security costs as one of their top five concerns when considering their current security infrastructure.

BDA IS A LOW-COST, HIGH-IMPACT SOLUTION TO BOLSTERING SECURITY IN VENUES

The cost of BDA training does not pose a barrier to strengthening the security industry's first line of defence against potential threats. Courses are cost-effective and efficiently run in person or online.

BDA is the key to creating a preventative, rather than responsive, security system that can identify potential threats before they can be carried out. By training security personnel to recognise behaviours that may indicate a threat, such as nervousness, agitation or deception, a preventative security system identifies and intervenes before a security breach occurs.

If venue operators are willing to invest huge sums into expensive security equipment to monitor behaviour, it is imperative to have trained staff in place who can recognise and act upon any unusual behaviour that is being monitored.

Multiple layers of expensive security, including CCTV, can still leave venues open to attack if they all have the same vulnerabilities that potential terrorists can exploit. Without well-trained security personnel who are trained to identify and respond quickly to suspicious behaviour, such equipment is rendered ineffective since it alone cannot prevent an incident.

BDA-trained staff are able to deliver the full service for which they are commissioned, making them a valuable asset to any venue. They are able to effectively utilise the security equipment in tandem with the skill invested in them to recognise suspicious behaviour at the first and earliest instance.

Falklands veteran and director of a facilities management company, Simon Weston CBE has opted to train all his employees in BDA in order to ensure his security personnel are able to perform their duties to the best of their abilities. "Providing security is a significant responsibility both for an organisation as well as those directly undertaking security duties," he comments. "To that end, providing security officers with appropriate training to not only operate the security systems, such as CCTV, access control systems or biometric devices,

is crucial in using such systems to best effect in order to protect those aspects that security has been deployed to do so.

“Where protection of people or infrastructure is concerned, equipment and systems provide the basis from which security officers can observe, close in with CCTV for example, intervene and report, or record activities for evidence, but the crucial element when providing preventative security is unquestionably the ability to recognise individuals, groups or gangs that have criminal or terrorist intent.

BDA TRAINS EMPLOYEES TO RECOGNISE STEALTH ACTIVITY AND OTHER SUBTLE KEY BEHAVIOURS

“Behavioural Detection Awareness training provides Weston FM security staff with the ‘edge’ above the normal instinct of observation and recognition of suspicious behaviour; knowing how and where to observe, when to take greater interest, how to recognise unusual aspects of clothing, gait, behaviour against the norms is essential to preventative intervention or timely reaction. As a result of undertaking Behavioural Detection Awareness training, we have seen a notable increase in the awareness and focus of security staff who are now armed with the ‘know how’ of behavioural detection and their role in prevention and intervention”.

Given BDA is a low-cost, high-impact solution to bolstering security in venues, there is little reason

as to why venues shouldn’t be equipping their staff with such training to provide a critical layer of security. The importance of the training will become even more relevant when Martyn’s Law comes into effect, requiring venues to implement security measures that focus on preparedness to better protect the public. Intelligence cannot predict every terrorist incident in advance, but it is possible to have measures in place to enable trained recognition of the warning signs of an imminent attack or preparation thereof.

Protect Duty will require the provision of training in counter terrorism for all people working in venues to varying degrees depending on role and responsibility. Behaviour Detection Awareness training can and should be provided to more than just security personnel. Ushers, stewards, front of house staff and cleaners are all able to notice and flag suspicious behaviour, and often have visibility that security personnel may not have. A cleaner, for example, may notice a previously locked door left unlocked at the end of each night shift when a particular guard is on duty, indicating a possible insider threat. If these staff members, however, are not properly trained in reporting such suspicious behaviour, key opportunities to intercept a threat may be missed.

Without the need for costly infrastructure, Behavioural Detection Awareness training can be implemented for all personnel to play their part in breaking the chain of events that lead up to terrorist activity, while ongoing quality assurance as the threat landscape evolves means that all personnel undergo rehearsals and observation during live events to embed these skills that are crucial to preparedness and the reduction of risk. In an ideal world, security is everyone’s business, and we should all be asking and acting upon the question: “Is that behaviour normal?” ●

Paul Mason is

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When seemingly innocuous behaviour occurs repeatedly, it can indicate cause for concern

