



**Simon Alderson**, CEO  
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goal is to create an environment that deters disruptive behaviour and fosters a sense of safety for all. Effective communication is also a cornerstone of successful security. Security firms can facilitate open lines of communication between event organisers, police and protest organisers when they are known to be present. Establishing a dialogue helps to understand the expectations and concerns of all parties involved for a more cooperative atmosphere. Clear communication channels can also be instrumental in disseminating information about safety and potential changes in the protest dynamics. Security companies can also utilise communication technology to ensure seamless coordination during the event. Timely and accurate information exchange is crucial for responding promptly to emerging situations.

**PRESENT-DAY EVENT SECURITY PROFESSIONALS MUST ALSO OPERATE AS STRATEGIC THINKERS**

It is also vital that security personnel undergo training to handle protests in a professional and respectful manner. Training programmes should cover conflict resolution, de-escalation techniques, and an understanding of legal boundaries. The ability to defuse tense situations through effective communication and understanding can prevent confrontations from escalating into violence. Training should focus on cultural sensitivity and the psychology of crowds, enabling security personnel to make informed decisions under pressure.

Advanced surveillance technologies can assist security firms in monitoring the crowd and identifying potential threats. CCTV cameras, drones and other monitoring devices can be strategically deployed to provide real-time insights into the crowd's behaviour. This allows security teams to detect and respond to unusual or suspicious activities promptly. The use of technology also contributes to the documentation of events, aiding in post-event analysis and the identification of lessons learned for future security planning.

Respecting the right to freedom of expression is a fundamental aspect of protest management. Security guards must be trained to distinguish between peaceful assembly and acts that jeopardise safety. Proportional responses to threats, avoiding the use of excessive force and protecting the rights of protesters contribute to a more positive and cooperative environment. Security firms must operate within the framework of the law and respect individuals' rights to peaceful assembly and free expression. Understanding the legal parameters of managing protests is crucial to avoid unnecessary confrontations and legal consequences.

The goal is to strike a delicate balance between maintaining public safety and upholding the principles of free expression, fostering an atmosphere where diverse voices can be heard within the bounds of civil discourse creating an environment where citizens can express their views without compromising public order. A thoughtful and respectful approach to protest management not only safeguards democratic principles, but also fosters trust between security officers and the communities they serve ●

physical safeguarding of individuals and assets from explicit threats of terrorism and violence, as well as safeguarding the brand and reputation. There are ways we can mitigate if not prevent protests.

This includes meticulous planning, as mishandling a protest can not only overshadow the intended event, but also be the sole memorable aspect, indeed, the desired purpose of the protesters.

Contingency planning for both planned and spontaneous protests is often lacking in event security strategies. Even when protest planning is included, key elements may be overlooked or inadequately addressed. Before delving into the strategies for effective management, it is essential for security officers to comprehend the context and motivations behind the demonstration. A comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand can aid in developing a nuanced approach that respects the rights of protesters while maintaining public safety. A well-coordinated strategy is vital for successful management. Security guards should collaborate with local police, emergency services and relevant stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses potential risks and challenges. Coordination ensures a unified response and facilitates the efficient deployment of resources to maintain public safety.

Moreover, a proactive approach to security is essential in managing protests. Security firms can work closely with organisers and local authorities to conduct thorough risk assessments, identifying potential flashpoints and vulnerabilities. By understanding the dynamics of the crowd and anticipating issues, security teams can implement preventive measures such as crowd control barriers, access control and security checkpoints. The

# MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO

**Simon Alderson** examines the role of security firms in managing activist protests

**T**he 'friendly threat' that activists pose to event disruption is often incredibly difficult for security firms to spot. Although security measures can be in place such as body searches and checkpoints, activists often can get around these by concealing banners and often small items such as glitter or glue that they use to cause disruption. A balance always needs to be struck between how intrusive searches are as it is almost impossible to ensure that all protesters are stopped before getting in. Furthermore, activists often employ diverse tactics, making it difficult for security teams to predict and counter their strategies effectively. From mounting stages, to running on sports fields to throwing glitter or paint, the nature of the protest and form it may take cannot always be certain, however effective

security can mitigate such actions when they do occur with good planning.

The widespread use of social media in organising protests also amplifies the speed and reach of activist movements, making it challenging for security firms to stay ahead of developments and adapt their strategies in real-time. Part of the solution is to monitor social media conversations to spot when a protest might be planned and put mitigation techniques and protocols in place.

In my experience, event security has undergone significant transformation, surpassing the conventional roles of uniformed officers, access control and incident response. Present-day event security professionals operate as strategic thinkers, employing intelligence-driven risk-based models to proactively address threats by identifying and rectifying gaps and vulnerabilities. Successful event security planning adopts a comprehensive approach, encompassing the

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