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Behavioural detection awareness skills play a significant role in achieving preparedness

EVOLVING THREAT

PREPAREDNESS IN AN EVOLVING THREAT

Paul Mason *considers how the security community can work together to deliver Protect Duty legislation.*

As identified in the Manchester Arena Inquiry (the recommendations from which inform Martyn’s Law), a lack of preparedness and inadequate response to suspicious behaviour, enabling the terrorist to carry out his attack with tragic consequences, were amongst the key shortcomings and missed opportunities in the provision of security at the arena on 22 May 2017.

The threat of terrorism has evolved with an increase in the occurrence of attacks on crowded spaces. With more than 650,000 spaces in the UK being defined as ‘crowded’ it is imperative for approaches to security and risk management planning to evolve, too. While it will never be possible to eradicate terrorism altogether, with better preparedness comes more powerful deterrence and greater protection.

Preparedness is unquestionably a key tool in the arsenal of prevention activity, yet it is a fundamental missing piece in the jigsaw of security provision. Furthermore, according to a report carried out by Blerter and Event Risk Management Solutions, most event organisers rely on annual or one-off risk management planning, with only 18 percent having a risk management plan that is less than 12 months old, with 21 percent who don’t have a plan at all.

Recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry call for higher levels of preparedness, including calls for greater alertness to the threat level of a terrorist attack, robust procedures to counter the threat of a terrorist attack, and prompt action in response to reports or observations of suspicious behaviour that are out of sync with the expected pattern of life at such events. Furthermore, continuous assessment of evolving risk, ongoing

training in how to intervene in a potential risk situation and continuous quality assurance all have a role in taking preparedness to a higher level to mitigate risk.

Behavioural detection awareness skills play a significant role in achieving preparedness across the security sector. A workforce that is trained in detecting unusual behaviour, such as individuals working later or starting earlier than normal, a person loitering outside a venue over the course of a few weeks, someone carrying a bulging rucksack or someone who looks nervous, jumpy, overly concentrated or unusually focused in a public space, acts as a powerful force against the threat of terrorism. Behavioural detection awareness training enables security personnel, venue stewards, information desk staff and cleaners to recognise early indicators that something could be awry and suspicious through careful observation of the behaviour of people as they go about their day-to-day activities.

VITAL SKILLS

Essentially, all personnel who encounter people, who are located close to vehicles outside a venue, or who sit behind a CCTV camera, should undergo behavioural detection awareness training (as a minimum) to, firstly, equip them with the observation skills to identify potential hostile reconnaissance, preparatory assessments or dry runs and, secondly, to sharpen their instincts to share suspicions with their superiors. For example, a cleaner may come across a dubious package hidden somewhere in a venue, potentially revealing a test set by a potential terrorist designed to assess the robustness of the venue’s security eco-system. Without the proper training to know instinctively to act and clarify

on the channels of communication to escalate suspicions, the test will fail and potentially be the green light for a fatal attack.

Many aspects of suspicious behaviour are common sense to recognise, but until they are brought together in a professional discipline across the entire workforce at a venue and the wider events industry behaviours will continue to go unnoticed or not be acted upon. It is therefore critical to embed a more proactive and pre-emptive approach to security that positions security as everybody’s business to increase the likelihood of criminal activity being intercepted.

IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR APPROACHES TO RISK MANAGEMENT PLANNING TO EVOLVE

Behavioural Detection Awareness training provides a low cost, high impact solution to making venues more secure. The minimal level of training can be implemented for all personnel in roles related to an arena, with 20 or 30 specific security personnel being more highly trained as behavioural detection officers. Meanwhile, ongoing quality assurance as the threat landscape evolves means that all personnel undergo rehearsals and observation during live events to embed skills that are crucial to preparedness and better risk management planning in an expanded holistic security system. A more positive security culture will result in greater resilience against future threats while addressing key weaknesses in the security sector ●