Chapter 9: Terror threats and the role of the security operative in the event of a threat

Terrorism

Terrorism is the use of violence, threats and intimidation especially in the pursuit of political aims. It is used to create a climate of fear within a population, with the intent of bringing about a particular change.

Some terrorist groups work on an international basis, whereas others fight for domestic issues. Certain terrorists target just one particular organisation or company for a specific reason, while others may be more indiscriminate in their targeting.

Public, commercial and retail premises, as well as places of entertainment, could become targets of either a bomb threat or an actual terrorist attack. As a security operative, you will need to be aware of:

- what is currently happening around the world and in your particular area
- any recent terrorist attacks or threats
- the location of your own site in relation to other possible targets nearby
- whether the site itself is famous or important in its own right
- whether the site is significant to any terrorist groups or causes
- the vulnerability of the site to attack
- the current level of threat nationally



Counterterrorism measures will help to reduce the chances of a site becoming a target. Managers and security operatives can significantly reduce the threat by:

- being vigilant at all times
- maintaining good housekeeping
- properly using physical security measures
- making regular, obvious patrols of the site
- implementing strict access control procedures
- using effective search procedures
- visibly using CCTV systems
- reporting suspicions to supervisors or managers immediately

Non-urgent information about terrorism should be passed to the **Anti-Terrorism Hotline** on:

0800 789321 or 101

This line is covered at all times by specialist counterterrorism police officers. Terrorism can also be reported online at: **www.gov.uk/report-terrorism**

Urgent information should be passed on using the 999 system.

All reporting methods are equally valid as they will always be redirected to the right place.

Know what information emergency response require and have an awareness of emergency response times.

THREAT LEVELS

Threat levels are designed to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack.

CRITICAL
means an attack is highly likely in the near future

SEVERE
means an attack is highly likely

SUBSTANTIAL
means an attack is likely

MODERATE
means an attack is possible, but not likely

LOW
means an attack is highly unlikely

Threat levels themselves do not require specific responses, however it is important that you, as a security operative, are aware of the different response levels and what moving from one level to another means for the location you are working in and the plan that is in place.

www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels

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In the rare event of a terrorist attack, security operatives should encourage members of the public to:

RUN
to a place of safety

HIDE
if you cannot run, hide

TELL
call 999 (response times may vary according to locations)

See, Check and Notify (SCaN) is a current awareness strategy that aims to help businesses and organisations maximise safety and security using their existing resources.

ACT Awareness e-learning has been developed to support the United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism. This e-learning provides nationally recognised corporate CT guidance to help people better understand and mitigate against current terrorist methodology. This course is free to access via the following link: https://ct.highfieldelearning.com/

Common terror attack methods

Once terrorists have identified a target, the potential attack will be moved into the planning phase, this phase involves the gathering of information to identify vulnerabilities and levels of security, which will inform the preferred method of attack. If required, a period of training and rehearsal will precede the actual attack. The most current terrorist attack methodologies have included:

- marauding terror attack (MTA) including firearms, knives, blunt objects, etc.
- explosive devices, including improvised explosive device, (IED), person-borne improvised explosive device (PBIED), vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED)
- vehicle as a weapon (VAAW), also known as vehicle ramming
- hazardous substances including chemical, biological and radiological (CBR)
- cyberattacks

Actions to take

The role that security operatives are expected to play during a terror attack will be outlined in the policies and procedures for the venue/site.

There could be occasions when a terrorist attack occurs without warning. In the unlikely event of this happening, you should encourage members of the public to keep safe by following the '**Run**', '**Hide**', '**Tell**' principles.

- Consider your route, act quickly and quietly, insist others come with you but don't let their indecision slow you down. Once you've identified a safe route: **RUN**. Consider your route as you leave, will it place you in the line of fire, is it safer to wait for the attacker to move away before you continue?
- If you can't move to safety, **HIDE**. When finding a hiding place, consider your exits and escape routes, avoid dead ends and bottle necks. Try to find places with reinforced walls, try to lock yourself in a room and move away from the door, be as quiet as possible, switch your mobile phone to silent and switch off vibrate. Don't shout for help or do anything that will give away your hiding place. The best hiding place with protection from gunfire will have a substantial physical barrier between you and the attacker.
- If you're able to evacuate, get as far away from the danger area as possible, try to stop others from entering but only if this won't put you in danger. Call the police, dial 999 and **TELL** them clearly the location of you and the attackers, descriptions of the attackers: their clothing and weapons, information about casualties and building access. Include anything else you think is important.

Security operatives may need to evacuate or invacuate the venue/site. Being aware of the organisation's procedures for both will help you to determine the course of action you need to take.

- **Invacuation/lockdown** – staff members and members of the public are moved to the most sheltered area of the venue/site away from windows and other exposed areas. All external doors and windows are locked.
- **Evacuation** – the orderly removal of staff members and members of the public to a safe place away from the immediate vicinity of the building. Evacuation will normally happen in situations such as a fire.

As a security operative, you need to remember that an early assessment of the situation is vital. If a terrorist attack begins outside, a quick lockdown procedure could protect everybody inside the site/venue, however, if the lockdown procedure is slow, incomplete or causes a state of confusion, the threat could move into the site/venue, putting the people inside at great risk.

Invacuation and evacuation both have their pros and cons including:

	Pros	Cons
Invacuation	Locks staff and members of the public away from the perpetrator, providing a physical barrier.	Potential lack of exits limits the ability to run should the perpetrator gain access or the attack zone spreads.
Evacuation	Allows staff and members of the public to get as far away as possible from the scene of the incident.	Some evacuation routes may put staff and members of the public at risk of being in the line of fire, or the perpetrator may attempt to pursue along the evacuation route.

As a security operative, you must have knowledge of the location you are working in, and make dynamic decisions based on available information to keep yourself and the public safe.

It is vital to identify what the threat level is and where it is before any **invacuation** or **evacuation** decisions are made.

Public sector counterterrorism experts:

Centre for the protection of National Infrastructure **(CPNI)**

www.cpni.gov.uk/cpni-context

National Counter Terrorism Security Office **(NaCTSO)**

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office

Suspicious packages

As a security operative, you need to be aware of suspicious packages and the procedures to follow should one be identified. You need to know what looks out of place at the venue you are working at. Using the **H.O.T** protocol will help you to determine if the items are suspicious or not.

H **HIDDEN** - has someone deliberately tried to conceal it from view?

O **OBVIOSULY SUSPICIOUS** - does its appearance seem odd or out of the ordinary? Maybe it's even showing wires, batteries, or liquids?

T **TYPICAL** - is it typical for the location? For example, a large rucksack would be expected at an outdoor festival, but would be out of place at an indoor concert venue.

If you come across a suspicious package, you will need to double check your concerns by asking people/customers or other members of staff in the area if they know who it belongs to. If you're still not happy then there are simple immediate actions that you must follow.

- First, don't touch the item. If you've gone through the **H.O.T** protocol and think it's suspicious, any contact with the item could be very dangerous.
- Take charge, be polite but firm, and start to move people and yourself to a safe distance away from the item, even for a small package, like a briefcase, you need to clear 100m around the object, starting from the centre and moving out. Large items or small vehicles need a clear area of around 200m and large vehicles 400m or the length of a football pitch.
- Try to keep yourself and other people out of line of sight of the item, it's a broad rule but, generally, if you can't see the item, then you're better protected from it should it prove to be dangerous. Also, think about what you can hide behind, pick something substantial, and keep away from glass, such as windows and skylights.
- Communicate - who do you need to tell about the current situation? Include the police within those that need to be informed, however, some explosives can be triggered by the signal from a phone or radio. So, don't use mobile phones or walkie-talkies within 15m of the item (that's about the length of a bus).

- If you have to leave to get help, first, cordon off the area to make sure people don't get too close to the item. You'll need to do this anyway to control access to the area. Members of the public should not be able to approach the item until it is deemed safe.
- Finally, try and keep eyewitnesses on hand, if the item was reported to you by a customer/visitor or a staff member ask them to stay close so they can tell the police what they saw.

The 4 steps to remember are:

- confirm if the package is suspicious
- clear the area as best you can
- communicate to your team and the police
- control others getting into that area

Suspicious activity

Suspicious activity is any observed behaviour that could indicate terrorism or terrorism related crime. As a security operative you will need to familiar with the different methods of observing suspicious activity.

Hostile reconnaissance is the term used to describe how terrorists gain information on potential targets. They will often visit potential targets a number of times prior to an attack to try to find out as much as they can about the location itself, and to discover the best time and method of attack. You need to be vigilant at all times when working as a security operative, as you must try to recognise suspicious behaviour that may indicate a terrorist interest in your site.

You should use your customer service skills to disrupt potential hostile reconnaissance, having a professional, visible presence is a tool that all security operatives can use to deter hostile reconnaissance.

Suspicious behaviour may include:

- a particular interest in the outside of the site
- an interest in the CCTV systems and other security measures that are in place
- parked vehicles with people inside
- empty parked vehicles left unattended for long periods
- making unusual requests for information
- individuals avoiding security staff
- taking pictures of the site (overtly/covertly)
- making notes or drawing diagrams of the site
- taking an interest in the timings of activities
- false alarm activations (testing response times)
- damage to perimeter security
- breaching restricted areas
- attempts to disguise identity/ inappropriately dressed for the season/ location
- trespassing or loitering with no good reason
- tampering with utilities
- individuals carrying out activities inconsistent with the nature of the building or area
- asking unusual or very specific questions about the site or security arrangements
- nervousness
- reluctance to be noticed or seen
- multiple sightings of the same suspicious person, vehicle or activity
- use of forged/altered or stolen identity documents/carrying large amounts of cash

There are actions that can be taken to deter or disrupt hostile reconnaissance, including:

- ensuring a visible presence of vigilant security staff
- regular patrols by security operatives
- maintaining organised search procedures
- ensuring emergency exits are secured when not in use to prevent unauthorised entry

Responding to suspicious behaviour

Don't be afraid of taking action, have the confidence to ACT. Your actions could help avert an attack and save lives. If you see suspicious behaviour in work, then ACT immediately - report it to your line manager, supervisor or the venue manger and the police.

- If you feel it is a life-threatening emergency, you can report it by calling 999 and providing the operator with the following information:
  - your place of work and the specific building
  - location of the suspicious package inside the building
  - whether all customers and employees have been evacuated from the building
- You can also contact the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on:

0800 789321

- Or use ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) online reporting: **https://act.campaign.gov.uk/**
- If you feel it is a non-emergency, then dial **101**

See it. Say it. Sorted.

The British Transport Police's nationwide campaign, designed to encourage train passengers and people visiting train stations to report any unusual items or activity. Passengers and visitors can report any issues by texting **61016** or by calling **0800 405040**.

