

THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BLOWING

Stephen Cooper OBE, Apstec Systems calls for the increased implementation of high footfall screening technology

The case for moving from traditional security screening to free flow and high throughput security screening has been made before. It is widely recognised that traditional security, for which read walk through metal detector and baggage x-ray or search, is not a good fit when used in the crowded public places context; it is too slow, too expensive and a poor experience. To make matters worse, traditional security checkpoints were found to pose some of the very highest health risks during the pandemic and are proving an obstacle to returning back to business safely. The case for change is pretty open and shut.

However, for those doubters amongst you, perhaps some of the most recent developments, including the publication of the Protect Duty Consultation paper and the release of the Manchester Arena Report Volume 1, are the most significant in this debate. These make interesting reading when considering the contribution to security that high footfall screening can make.

The Protect Duty Consultation paper

When referring to measures that may be implemented in response to the terrorist attacks in publicly accessible places, the Protect Duty Consultation paper recognises that: "An important tenet of protective security is that it should, wherever possible, utilise simple, affordable interventions that protect and reassure the public and deter would be attackers, with no (or minimal) adverse impact on the site's operation

or people's experience." This is a helpful context for this discussion and the paper broadly breaks this statement down further into proportionality, practicality and the need for mitigation measures to be aligned with day-to-day life.

Proportionality is a well understood and established principle of security. However, it takes on a special meaning when it comes to mandating a duty to protect people in publicly accessible places. Whilst risk assessments will be the framework upon which mitigation measures are recommended, there are many different ways of mitigating risks and not all of them are proportionate. Proportionality

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requires a good understanding of not only what's available and at what cost, but also other factors such as 'look and feel', the operational burden of implementing security measures and their practicality in all other respects. High footfall screening scores well when benchmarked against these criteria. Specifically, its free flow and low contact nature, simple operational



concept and low operational costs ensure that high footfall screening is a uniquely well suited and proportionate response to terrorist threats to crowded places.

However, it's not all about proportionality and protect plans must also be practical to deliver. Whilst traditional security has been widely employed for years, it has never been a good solution for large scale security screening operations. The spatial requirements are a challenge to meet and the operation expensive and difficult to assure on such a scale. Training a large number of security staff alone, many of whom may be inexperienced and with limited motivation, is going to be very challenging. In contrast, high throughput technology is readily

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deployed, simple to operate and easy to physically accommodate; it's just more practical because it has been designed specifically for these scenarios.

So far so good but high throughput security screening approaches still need to pass the ultimate test of being acceptable to the public. Whilst traditional security has been begrudgingly accepted, it's clear that high throughput security offers a much better experience to the public. With no requirement to divest, remove outer garments or bags and with the vast majority of the people being screened being able to pass directly into the venue, this is a reassuring approach for the public, whilst being a strong deterrent to the terrorist. People generally welcome security when the risk demands it but not at any price and certainly not at the cost of their personal freedom and enjoyment of life.

Manchester Arena Inquiry Report Volume 1

Likewise, the Manchester Arena Inquiry Report Volume 1 makes a number of references and recommendations that unequivocally point towards the use of a high footfall screening approach. Unsurprisingly, the Manchester Arena Inquiry Report Volume 1 and Protect Duty consultation are closely aligned. Consequently, many of the principles discussed under Protect Duty above are reflected as strongly in the Inquiry report. However, there are some specific recommendations that are very relevant.

In particular, high footfall screening lends itself to being installed well in advance of the venue, thereby ensuring that those with access to the immediate area around the venue, whether during ingress or egress, are secure. The challenge with traditional screening is that when it is deployed in advance of the venue, the secondary queue of people waiting to go through the screening process, which is a vulnerable target in its own right,

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is simply displaced from close to the venue to the new perimeter; in essence, you have the same problem in a different place. Of course, the throughput can be increased and queues reduced by having a very large number of screening lanes and associated staff. The problem is that there is rarely the space for this and



staffing search lanes on this scale can be very expensive; it hardly meets the proportionality test.

The Report also recognises the difficulty of keeping security staff aware, alert and motivated. One of the greatest challenges facing traditional security is the need to assure the performance of the security staff and the immensity of this task. Introducing high footfall screening technology into the process minimises the number of staff required, removes the decision making from the individual and allows him or her to focus on looking for suspicious behaviour and responding to and resolving alerts. Likewise, the burden of training is eased by using technology that is automatic and real time, allowing training to focus on behavioural detection and alert resolution. Whilst anecdotal, it seems that security staff enjoy working with high footfall technology and are therefore more motivated and alert as a result.

Recognising and reporting suspicious behaviour was considered to be one of the biggest shortcomings of the security operation on 22 May 2017. Whilst on the face of it, detecting suspicious behaviour is beyond the influence of high footfall screening, as people flow through the inspection zone, there is a unique opportunity to compare the behaviour of one person to another and to identify someone acting suspiciously. This is particularly useful as screening technology is likely to be a good trigger for unusual behaviour in someone about to execute an attack.



Closing

The transition from a traditional security approach to mature and cutting-edge high footfall screening technology is well underway and gathering pace. The appetite for change is evident and the Protect Duty Consultation paper and the Manchester Arena Report just make the case even stronger. It was interesting to note that deep in Annex 2 of the Protect Duty Consultation document, the 'Best practice examples of security considerations and mitigations for large venues' included 'using a modern proportionate high footfall screening solution'. Someone's taking note!

Apstec Systems will be exhibiting at International Security Expo 2021 from 28 - 29 September. The event's conference programmes including the Counter Terror & Serious Organised Crime Summit and the International Security Conference will discuss Protect Duty and more. To register for your FREE pass, visit: www.internationalsecurityexpo.com/register