UNIVERSITY OF EXETER | STRATEGY AND SECURITY INSTITUTE

Ministerial Submission

From: Chloe Sheppard-Lancaster

To: Chief Inspector Richard Harding MSc

Title: Introducing more counter-terrorism architecture in the major cities of the UK.

Issue

I am proposing that the current counter-terrorism architecture in major cities in the UK be re-evaluated with a view to increasing it, due to the increased use of vehicle ramming in terrorist attacks of the last few years. The current measures include heavier protection of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI). In light of the recent terrorist attacks in Westminster, London Bridge, Borough Market and, in a wider European context, the attacks in Nice and Berlin last year, certain measures should be put in place to protect heavily populated areas in major cities in the UK.

Recommendation

My first recommendation is that security measures such as bollards should be introduced along public roads and areas in major cities, particularly in those areas likely to attract a high number of people, for example tourist attractions (e.g. Borough Market).

My second recommendation is that there be further engagement with groups such as RIBA, particularly focusing on the protection of populated areas.

My third recommendation is that the owners of privately owned land in heavily populated areas be met with to discuss and recommend further counter-terrorism measures.

Timing

Routine.

Discussion

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER | STRATEGY AND SECURITY INSTITUTE

In the last few years, European countries have seen an increase in vehicle ramming as a method of terrorist attack. The notable instances include the very recent events in Westminster, London Bridge and Borough Market, but also the attacks in Nice (14/06/2016) and Berlin (19/12/16).

In all of these attacks, the use of a vehicle was relied upon to cause the most damage - while the perpetrators were carrying a weapon themselves, the majority of fatalities and casualties in each case were caused by the vehicle used rather than by the knife or gun of the perpetrator.

An increase in infrastructure and architecture that could prevent such attacks would further protect the British public. There are many architectural methods of doing so, largely making use of a barrier of some kind. The most obvious being the use of bollards - already employed throughout most major cities. Other examples of barriers include reinforced fences, sculptures or even trees.

The current measures taken to prevent these kinds of attacks are primarily designed to protect CNI, due to the terrorist threats faced by the UK in the past. However the current threat is from groups like Daesh, whose primary goal in terror attacks is loss of life rather than attack of a public infrastructure. The measures taken by the government should be tailored to the specific aims of the current threat.

The ways in which this could be accomplished include the erection of barriers throughout heavily populated areas in major UK cities, particularly those areas likely to attract crowds. An example of this being done already would be the bollards in Covent Garden, a major tourist attraction.

It would be imperative that the aesthetic quality of these cities be maintained in heavily populated areas, and that these measures be as unobtrusive to the public eye as possible. Otherwise, the British people could begin to feel unsafe, due to what the architectural critic Martin Pawley refers to as an 'architecture of terror'.

This would involve relying upon architectural professionals. It is my opinion that the government should continue to liaise with groups like the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and should additionally seek the expertise of a wider range of professionals, particularly those with expertise in crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).

Those with expertise in sustainability could also be consulted although it would be nonessential: investigations by academics have found that certain aspects of security and sustainability are compatible, e.g. the use of natural landscape also creates a boundary. This would have the added benefit of an aesthetic appeal.

The strengths and weaknesses of the approach outlined here are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1:

SWOT Analysis of increased counter terrorist architecture.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Higher likelihood of preventing a terrorist attack using vehicle ramming, lessening loss of life and casualties. Does not need to create an 'architecture of terror'. If done with enough consideration of aesthetic, it could lead to a 'feeling of safety' among the British public. Tackles many of the immediate security concerns following the terrorist attacks in the UK this year.	A wider architectural move would be expensive to fund, especially considering the level of expertise and time needed. Can only be applied to public land, privately-owned buildings and areas would not be definitively affected.
Opportunities	**Threats**
Possible rise in public opinion of government due to it specifically tackling recent concerns. Will continue the dialogue with architects, which will be valuable given the likelihood of as-of-yet unpredicted terrorist attack methods.	Possibility of opposition from public if the historical integrity of certain cities is seen to be impacted. The success of this would rely on taking into account aesthetic considerations, in order to not create an atmosphere of fear.

Certain measures can be taken to lessen the impact of the weaknesses. For example, the private owners of areas that are likely to be heavily populated often already have some security measure in place, could be approached to increase their security measures. The most famous example of counter-terrorist architecture employed in the private sector, with a particular consideration of vehicle-ramming as a terrorist method, is most likely the 'ARSENAL' letters that appear outside the Emirates stadium in North London, shown in figure 2.

It would be prudent to assess those privately owned areas in major cities and give recommendations to the owners should it be necessary, although this would take time and some additional funding.

Figure 2: These letters are reportedly capable of withstanding the impact of a 7-tonne lorry driven at 50mph.