U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Protective Security Coordination Division
Office of Infrastructure Protection

Infrastructure Protection Report Series

Performance Venues: Theaters, Concert Halls, Auditoriums, and Amphitheaters

Performance venues include theaters, concert halls, auditoriums, and amphitheaters, ranging in size and function from small neighborhood movie theaters or community playhouses to high-capacity venues in major metropolitan areas. Performance venues are relatively open-access, limited egress facilities and have been successfully targeted by terrorists in the past.

Potential Indicators of Terrorist Activity

Terrorists have a wide variety of weapons and tactics available to achieve their objectives. Specific threats of most concern to performance venues include:

- Improvised explosive devices (IEDs)
- Vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs)
- Arson/incendiary attack
- Small arms attack
- Assassination/hostage-taking

Terrorist activity indicators are observable anomalies or incidents that may precede a terrorist attack. Indicators of an imminent attack requiring immediate action may include the following:

- Persons in crowded areas (e.g., theater or auditorium lobby) wearing unusually bulky clothing that might conceal suicide explosives or weapons
- Suspicious or illegally parked vehicles near a performance venue or where crowds gather prior to or following performances and events
- Persons or teams of people attempting to gain unauthorized entry to the performance venue or restricted areas of the facility
- Persons appearing to prepare to launch stand-off weapons (e.g., rocket-propelled grenades) at the facility
- Unattended packages (e.g., backpacks, briefcases, boxes) that might contain explosives. Packages may be left in open areas or hidden in trash receptacles, lockers, or similar containers

Indicators of potential surveillance by terrorists include:

- Persons using or carrying video/camera/observation equipment in or near the facility over an extended period
- Persons discovered with facility maps, photos, or diagrams with critical assets highlighted or notes regarding infrastructure or listing of personnel
- Persons parking, standing, or loitering in the same area over a multiple-day period with no reasonable explanation
- An increase in threats from unidentified sources by telephone, postal mail, or e-mail and/or an increase in reports of threats from outside known, reliable sources
- Evidence of unauthorized access to the HVAC system or suspicious substances near HVAC intakes

Common Vulnerabilities

The following are key common vulnerabilities of performance venues:

- Open access to theaters, concert halls, auditoriums, and amphitheaters by patrons and service personnel
- Large crowds in confined, limited egress spaces
- Limited security personnel
- Limited vehicle standoff perimeters
- Unrestricted access to peripheral areas, such as parking lots, front lobbies, and food courts
- Scheduled and well-publicized performances
- Low lighting during performances, inhibiting observation capabilities

Protective Measures

Protective measures include equipment, personnel, and procedures designed to protect a facility against threats and to mitigate the effects of an attack. Protective measures for performance venues include:

- **Planning and Preparedness**
  - Designate an employee as security director to develop, implement, and coordinate all security-related activities.
  - Conduct threat analyses, vulnerability assessments, consequence analyses, risk assessments, and security audits on a regular and continuing basis.
  - Review the themes of shows and/or the background and notoriety of performers from the standpoint of drawing attention of potential adversaries.
  - Establish liaison and regular communications with local law enforcement and emergency responders, state and federal law enforcement and terrorism agencies, public health organizations, and industry organizations to enhance information exchange, clarify emergency responses, track threat conditions, and support investigations.
  - Institute layers of security measures on the basis of the expected crowd level or performance type.
  - Conduct regular evacuation drills with facility employees, clearly outlining the evacuation routes and outdoor assembly points.
- **Personnel**
  - Conduct background checks on all employees.
  - Maintain up-to-date security training with regular refresher courses. Keep records of employee training that has been completed.
  - Maintain an adequately sized, equipped, and trained security force.
  - Provide security information and evacuation procedures to patrons before each performance. Advise patrons to be alert to suspicious activity or items and on how to report such incidents.
- **Access Control**
  - Define the facility perimeter and areas within the facility that require access control for pedestrians and vehicles.
  - Identify a buffer zone extending out from the facility boundary that can be used to further restrict access to the facility when necessary.
  - Perform background checks of all performers and their aides beforehand and limit access to only those that have been preapproved for the performance.
  - Provide additional security to ticket counters and cash registers at the facility entrance or in the lobby, which are more vulnerable to attacks.
- **Barriers**
  - Evaluate and install appropriate perimeter barriers (e.g., fences, berms, concrete walls) and gates around the facility.
  - Install alarms and intrusion detection equipment at perimeter barriers.
  - Install barriers at HVAC systems (e.g., screens on intakes, filters) to prevent the introduction of chemical, biological, or radiological agents into the building.
- **Communication and Notification**
  - Develop a communication and notification plan that covers voice, data, and video transfer of information related to security.
  - Provide the ability to record incoming communications (e.g., telephone calls) to identify potential threats.
  - Develop a notification protocol that outlines who should be contacted in emergencies.
- **Monitoring, Surveillance, Inspection**
  - Evaluate needs and design a monitoring, surveillance, and inspection program that is consistent with facility operations and security requirements.
  - Install video surveillance equipment, night-vision cameras, and intrusion detectors.
  - Perform security sweeps of the entire facility before each show or performance.
- **Infrastructure Interdependencies**
  - Ensure that the facility has adequate utility service capacity to meet normal and emergency needs.
- **Cyber Security**
  - Develop and implement a security plan for computer and information systems hardware and software.
- **Incident Response**
  - Review unified incident command procedures for responding to an event with local law enforcement, emergency responders, and government agencies.
  - Establish procedures for facility evacuation; ensure the evacuation routes are clear of obstruction.

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