

# 'New thinking' needed for changing terrorist threat

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A groundbreaking two-year investigation into how crowded public places can best deal with the changing nature of the terrorist threat is announced today.

Led by Dr Jon Coaffee from The University of Manchester, the £1 million project will examine how the public are best protected in shopping areas, transport systems, sports, conference arenas and other easily accessible places.

The experts from The Universities of Manchester, Birmingham, Loughborough and Newcastle will devise a framework to assist planners, designers, architects, construction engineers, private sector businesses and urban managers - as well as the public - to make decisions about the counter-terrorist design process.

The project focuses upon the changing role of physical intervention and managerial measures - the hardware and software of security planning - in combating new forms of terrorism against public places.

The move is a departure from present arrangements where the management of security in public places is largely carried out by the police and security professionals.

The research will evaluate innovative examples of counter-terrorist measures from around the world, and non-conventional terrorist tactics against crowded places.

It will also examine engineering design solutions for light rail systems and the social impact of counter-terror measures in public places.

Dr Coaffee said: "Car bombing and other traditional terrorist methods are still a threat to the public, but over recent times, new methods have evolved such as suicide attacks which are tactically very different and target different locations.

"And whereas the IRA, for example, would target economic and political sites - such as the City of London, the new breed of terrorists are attracted by places where civilians gather.

"This is exemplified by recent improvised attacks outside the Tiger Tiger nightclub in central London and Glasgow Airport.

"These crowded public places cannot be subject to traditional security approaches to countering terrorism such as searches and checkpoints without causing a disproportionate sense of concern and radically changing public experience."

He added: "On one level, this project is about reducing the risk of terrorist attack in public places.

"But a balance needs to be struck between the security effectiveness of a design and its acceptability in the eyes of the public, local businesses and other users of the city.

"For example, crude concrete or steel barriers around iconic public places or sites considered at high risk from terrorist attack - such as the Houses of Parliament or the US embassy in London- will not be suitable for other locations and may indeed heighten the public sense of fear about the likelihood of an attack.

"There also is a need to better integrate 'smart design' solutions into the streetscapes and 'soften' their appearance whilst maintaining their target hardening properties.

"Many locations are now experimenting with using design solutions that are disguised as flower-beds, hedges or ponds, or using trees instead of reinforced steel bollards and barriers.

"The requirements are different again when considering transport such as city centre trams, for which the project will be investigating novel counter terror ideas."

Source: University of Manchester

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