



## Cooperation the Basis for Good Event Security

Advance planning, a team approach and careful coordination were identified as key elements in the development and implementation of a solid event security program by a blue-ribbon panel convened at IMEX under the auspices of AIPPC (the International Association of Congress Centres) and IAPCO (the International Association of professional Conference Organizers). The panelists, who presented their findings in a seminar entitled "Cooperative Solutions to Event Security", were exploring ways in which congress centres and PCO's could collaborate in the development of security measures.

Panelist **Steve Piper, Head of Venues for Brighton City Council** in the UK, stressed the importance of taking the broadest possible view of those who should be included in the security planning process. At the same time, he acknowledged that this in turn created a need for careful coordination in order to ensure all security measures were clearly understood and followed. "Security doesn't stop at the event venue", said Piper. "Other components of the event such as hotels may represent a "softer target" than the primary venue, and both security planners and delegates need to remember that security isn't just an issue during sessions".

Piper also said there is a need to identify risks early in the process so that they can be tracked as planning proceeds. "Conferences should be evaluated for both subject matter and participants who may attract attention, and those events with high profile attendees need to start planning at least a year out", he said. "National and local police can contribute to this process through their intelligence resources as well as their ability to access equipment and other kinds of support that may be required to deal with high risk situations".

Piper points out that all this participation creates new cost and logistical requirements that must also be built into event planning. "Feeding, accommodating and arranging for facilities such as rest areas and parking for additional security staff can add an extra dimension to the plan", he said. "At the same time, consideration needs to be given to the impacts such measures have on the local community."

**Philippe Mahuas, Director of Operations at the Hilton Prague**, agreed with the need for a team approach and stressed the importance of good, honest communications amongst all members, including those who may represent a variety of different responsibilities. This kind of communications was the only way to clearly define the role of each security component and avoid confusion, he said.

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On the premise that “Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance”, Mahuas stated that security planning has to be based on a recognition of the different needs of different event types. “Governmental meetings are potentially the most demanding, as various levels of government and participating countries may each have very different approaches that need to be integrated into a single plan”, he said. “Each participant must understand and respect the needs of others, or there is the potential for chaos”.

Corporate and Association events each represented their own challenges, said Mahuas. “The needs of corporate events depends on their content, with new product or strategic discussions requiring higher security. Association events can be highly variable depending on the profile of participants and speakers, and each must be evaluated on its own merits”.

While acknowledging that Singapore had distinct security advantages based on legislative tools to take pre-emptive action in the event of security threats and a long standing reputation as a secure destination, **Jim Papineau of Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre** stated that new coordinated measures have enhanced security even further. “Singapore’s Internal Security Department is very pleased to provide a security threat assessment on an event-by-event basis, and that gives us a good starting point for event security planning. This approach has helped us confirm a number of high-profile events such as SIBOS and IMF/World Bank”.

Papineau also stressed the importance of a broad approach to implementing security measures, including not only the event venue and associated hotels but even points of entry. Singapore now has 100% screening of all checked luggage along with X-ray screening and physical checks and increased vehicle controls at Changi Airport, while even coastal security patrols and searching of cargo has been stepped up, he said.

Once a plan is in place, it’s important to test it on a regular basis, says Papineau. “We have constant security patrols and camera surveillance in our facility, but still maintain a detailed and well rehearsed emergency procedure plan which takes into account all possible types of emergencies. Regular exercises are carried out, including for emergency evacuation.”

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As **Co-owner of AIMS international**, a hospitality management company with offices in Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Brussels and Portugal, **Rainer Kostka** has seen distinct changes in security concerns and expectations over the past few years. "Until recently, governmental organizations were the ones with the greatest needs, along with corporations whose issues were more related to competition concerns," said Kostka. "Security was a much less important issue amongst trade and professional associations, which means that most such groups don't even know exactly what their needs are, and are concerned that security measures not be disruptive to delegates".

The solution, says Kostka, is for a two-level approach of Risk Assessment followed by Risk Management. The Risk Assessment component requires a good analysis of a number of risk factors, including venue, event content, history of violence or disruption and the identification of groups who may want to protest. There are many sources of information to assist in this assessment, says Kostka, including media, police and even the Internet.

Other issues to be considered are the availability of security professionals, the impacts of heightened security measures on event organizers and the potential for related damage to equipment and facilities. "Insurance can also become a major consideration, either because of specific exclusions such as for terrorist related activity or because insurers may refuse to cover certain types of events."

The complexity of security coordination becomes a key issue once a venue moves into the implementation phase, says Kostka. "Security committees must communicate regularly, and all procedures and equipment tested. There must be back-up for both equipment and systems in the event of failures. Finally, there must be a crisis management plan in the event that preventative measures fail."

The panel concluded by agreeing that planning and coordination were the greatest need in developing security measures and that venues and PCO's should take a central role in the process. They also agreed that good risk assessment was fundamental to the planning process, and that such assessment benefits from the broadest possible input from all those involved with an event.