## SmartRiskSolutions Risk & Crisis Management Consultancy

Superdry

Handbook Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

# Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

## Why private enterprises and organizations should be well prepared to handle a terror or active shooter incident effectively

Recent years have shown that companies, their employees, suppliers and clients are subject to terrorist threats even outside crisis regions. Nowadays terror events may happen in Europe anytime, regardless if in Brussels, Berlin, Ansbach, Paris, Manchester or Barcelona.

When terrorists struck in Paris on November 15, 2015 against restaurants, crowds and a concert hall, a great number of businesses and other organizations faced the challenge of how to verify quickly if their own employees were affected. After the bomb attack in Jakarta in January 2016 against a café frequented by foreigners, images of a Dutch victim covered in blood spread on social media immediately. Different users reported and commented that the individual shown had died and the victim's wife had allegedly confirmed her husband's death. This victim actually survived the attack although he was severely injured. When the lone shooter attack happened in Munich on July 22, 2016 the shopping mall company was quickly confronted with inquiries by stakeholders and investors. After the suicide attack against a German tourist group in Istanbul the tour operator had to quickly deliver a statement in front of the international media and explain what concrete measures the company had initiated.

A widely held, knee-jerk reaction from companies affected is that it is primarily the role of the authorities to deal with such incidents. The above-mentioned examples demonstrate clearly, however, that those organizations that are affected either directly or indirectly must also respond – quickly and professionally.

### Some facts and figures

According to a survey by the auditor Deloitte with over 2,000 senior managers worldwide, 36.4 percent indicated that their company was least prepared to deal with a terror attack. This was by far the highest score in the survey, well ahead of cyber-risks.

A survey by the Business Continuity Institute showed that business continuity managers from 74 different countries rated terrorist attacks as the fourthbiggest risk facing their respective organizations. In the year before, the same risk had been ranked in tenth place.

As the Global Terrorism Index 2016 shows, the number of terror-related casualties in the OECD countries increased by 650 percent between 2015 and 2016.

An FBI study indicates that 45.6 percent of active shooter attacks take place in business environments (i.e.: office buildings, shopping malls, and restaurants) and 24.3 percent at educational facilities like schools and universities.

From 2015 to 2016 the number of victims from terrorism increased 650% in the OECD countries.

## Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

No organization can mitigate the existence of the risk of terrorism though it can mitigate its own vulnerability. There are three key areas where private enterprises need to take professional action:

- Crisis and emergency management, including business continuity management
- Internal and external crisis communication
- Taking care of their directly affected employees and clients, next of kin (NOK), and the rest of their workforce

One of the key objectives of crisis response is to contain the crisis and thus prevent its impact spreading, most notably with regard to:

- Human life and wellbeing
- Facilities and assets
- Business continuity
- Legal liabilities
- The organization's reputation

Most principles that apply to the crisis management and crisis communication of terror and active shooter attacks can also be applied to other crisis scenarios because organization-wide crisis and emergency management should work properly regardless of the specific scenario.

Potential targets and tactics used by the attackers may vary and are highly unpredictable. Organizations that have established a crisis management plan and conduct regular crisis management drills will respond much quicker and more professionally, even though the concrete scenario was not one foreseen in their planning.

Two features frequently shared by crises of all types are:

1. Nobody thought it could happen to him;

2. Those who were prepared saved lives and livelihoods.

No organization can influence the presence of a terror risk in their city, but they can certainly influence their own vulnerability. When faced with determined perpetrators, protective measures have their limits, particularly in a free society. Consequently, businesses and other organizations also need to focus on dealing with such events. Ultimately, employees, clients and the public at large will only remember one thing: how the affected organization responded to the crisis and whether it remains a trustworthy partner.

This guide provides some basic advice and recommendations. It cannot however replace an organization's own crisis and emergency management plan. Organizations that are well prepared for a potential terrorist attack will handle the incident much more quickly and professionally, and will recover faster.

# Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

## What to expect during and after a terror or active shooter attack

When a lone terrorist took employees and customers hostage at the Lindt Café in Sydney's business district on December 15, 2014, apart from the bloody outcome, it also became an international media event.

Chaos, lack of information and rumors prevail during the first phase of a crisis event, giving rise to an unclear situation. Nonetheless, you must react. While the police can quickly influence reporting by the classic media, they have no control over messages and posts on social media spread by the hostages, onlookers and other individuals. Due to the lack of verified facts and the flood of rumors and incorrect reports, irrational decisions were made by organizations all over the country with a significant impact on business operations. Many people observed how Lindt's management responded to and communicated the situation.

In case of a terror attack expect:

- Chaos and a lack of verified information at the beginning
- Employees who expect you to provide support and advice on how to behave
- Great media interest due to people panicking in fear of their lives, the presence of heavily-armed security forces, and the unknown outcome of the event
- A dynamic situation that may change quickly
- The media conducting interviews with individuals who have been able to flee the scene, are in a state of emotional turmoil, and cannot be supported by their own communications department
- Companies who are not well-known up to that point in time will be named in the media; internet users will subsequently follow-up these companies on the internet where they may discover negative input from employees or clients
- Special TV broadcasts and live online tickers need to hold viewers for hours sometimes having to bridge time with no relevant developments on the event
- Eyewitness and bystander reports on social networks whose trustworthiness is difficult to establish will be quoted or picked up by the classic media
- Owing to the lack of verified information, the media may also fall back on rumors and false reports
- Entire streets and city districts may be sealed off; public transportation and business may come to a halt; the duration of such disruption is unknown
- Use of cellphone networks and the internet may be restricted

In the first instance, dysfunctional crisis management is a threat to your employees' lives and wellbeing. It also puts your reputation, and the trust and confidence of employees, investors, clients and business partners at stake.

# Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

### How companies can be prepared

Based on numerous analyses of terror and amok attacks and because of our own lengthy consultancy experience in real-life cases, we strongly advise companies and organizations to consider this issue as soon as possible.

In the following sections you will find recommendations for the key areas of crisis management, crisis communication, using Crisis Management Team (CMT) structures effectively, and providing sufficient care to those affected and their NOK. These recommendations have produced good results in actual crisis events and are best practice.

### **Crisis management**

One of the key objectives of crisis management – based on specific structures and protocols – is to regain control over the incident that may threaten the organization's business continuity and/or reputation. All measures aim at averting further damage, and recovering the ability to focus on one's core business.

The CMT is the heart and mind of the entire crisis management organization. Apart from a strong team leader the CMT core will generally comprise representatives from the HR, communications, security and legal departments. The CMT requires a robust mandate to handle the crisis effectively and in a coordinated fashion.

On the local level (e.g. local production sites, offices, etc.) there will ideally be incident management teams (IMT) established that are headed by the local site manager and composed of managers e.g. from HR, facility management, security, communications, legal, etc.

In terms of crisis management and crisis communication, the preparatory measures that should be put in place to deal with terror-related incidents are:

- A comprehensive crisis management organization with defined roles, responsibilities and reporting chains
- Local IMT and emergency structures where possible
- Crisis management manuals and emergency plans
- A CMT that has at least basic training in handling terror and amok events
- Crisis communications plans that include prepared packages of measures such as FAQ catalogs, templates for holding statements, text wordings, dark sites, hotlines and social media communication measures
- Interview and camera training for the spokesperson and senior management staff including the C-suite
- An established crisis management infrastructure which should include a CMT room (and alternative premises), technical equipment and logistics
- A comprehensive concept for the care of those affected, their NOK, and employees with a manual setting out clear roles and responsibilities
   Access to experienced crisis management consultants who can respond to

the crisis ad hoc and support the CMT on a 24/7 basis

As the situation may damage your reputation and business continuity, regaining control over the event is crucial. Crisis response presents special challenges to all those involved. Their actions will be judged by the public once things have calmed down.

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## Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

### **Crisis Response**

Organizations that encounter a crisis event well prepared will have fewer problems. Furthermore it will be much easier for them to document that they made all necessary risk management preparations. In the critical public eye a well organized company may even boost its reputation if the event has been handled professionally.

What is key is to documenting all crisis management work – and also for legal reasons – is a crisis log.

Some of the key steps that the Crisis Management Team (CMT) should take after the initial incident report has been received are:

### A. Get a clear picture of the situation

- What happened exactly and who is affected/involved?
- How severe is the impact?
- Who knows about the incident?
- What actions have been taken to date?
- How could the situation potentially develop or escalate?

In case of a terror attack, in the first instance it is important to know where one's own employees are, whether any of them are affected, and whether the danger is still ongoing.

Fast evaluation of the situation involves, in particular, the establishment of the organization's own information sources – these could be employees on the ground, business partners or other trustworthy individuals – in order to verify and evaluate incoming information whereby facts must be separated from rumors. It is also helpful to make a list of open questions that still need to be answered.

As the situation will constantly change over the course of events, it is helpful to keep track of the situational dynamics. Whiteboards, pin boards and flipcharts arranged in a specific order and diligently updated will make it much easier for the CMT to remain on top of events. Such display props should separately show how the situation is developing, the players, and outstanding questions.

### B. Planning measures and taking decisions

- What options can be generated?
- What are the pros and cons (mid and long term)?
- What internal and external support is needed on the ground?
- What can the organization itself provide? What will be done by the authorities or other players?
- What actions should be taken by HR, corporate communications, security, production, service or legal? What internal and external coordination effort will be required?

The situation and information you have will constantly change in the course of the events. Its development is therefore an ongoing process.

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Once decisions have been made they should be implemented promptly and the CMT must be updated on the status regularly. It always will be helpful if all decisions by the CMT are consensual. Ultimately, however, such a body is not a democratic instance but rather a strategic instrument for making decisions. In a crisis situation there is no time for endless debate.

Details of decisions made, tasks, the allocation of those tasks and their delivery times, and the interim status should all be displayed where everybody can see them.

It is in the nature of a crisis that all CMT members will be under great pressure. Unfortunately pressure and stress reduce the ability to take rational decisions. When in 2014 a terrorist took hostages at Sydney's Lindt Café, some companies in Melbourne – almost 900 kilometers away – panicked, closed their doors, and sent their employees home. This was an irrational and unnecessary decision which unsettled employees and clients and affected business continuity, at least in the short term.

### **C.** Implementing measures

Once decisions have been made measures must be put in place quickly. An immediate response is highly important though actions should not be taken in a hasty fashion. Operational action will often be handled by the local emergency organization or, where this does not exist – by local employees or subordinate business units.

It is not only important that implementation is effected promptly, but also that the CMT is regularly informed about the status of the measures.

In a crisis, think big. It is better to activate and mobilize a great amount of resources at the beginning of a crisis. Later, and after the situation is clearer, redundant resources can be demobilized again. The active shooter attack in July 2016 at the shopping mall in Munich serves as a perfect example for applying this principle. When the first reports of this lone shooter surfaced, the Munich hospitals mobilized a significant number of staff. As soon as it was verified that there were not mass casualties, staff were sent home again.

### D. Supervision of implementation and effectiveness

Terror events, in particular, can be highly dynamic. Frequently, the first information that forms the basis of measures taken will be superseded in a short space of time. Consequently, the CMT should constantly:

- Check if measures have been correctly implemented and are taking effect
- Review the situation
- Critically review the actions taken
- Check if staff and assets mobilized will be sufficient

Your stakeholders will form an opinion of the event. If you communicate in good time, you have a major influence on those opinions.

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# Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

## **Crisis communications**

The role of crisis communications is to represent and "sell" the corporation internally and externally in the event of a crisis. Internal crisis communications addresses one's own employees, external crisis communications the various players outside the company.

These days it is common for people to take initial pictures and videos at the scene and post them on social networks before reporting the incident.

A great number of incidents only turn into a crisis because of media attention. A terrorist or active shooter incident will always result in media coverage which is why a fast communications response by the affected organization is very important.

At the end of the day, it will not necessarily be how you responded during the crisis that will matter but rather how the public perceives your actions.

If you as an organization do not communicate or only communicate slowly, others will fill the gap. In that case it will be much harder for you to regain authority over the communications and narrative. During the In Amenas hostage crisis in Algeria in January 2013, the Norwegian oil company Statoil scored with its impressive and highly professional crisis management. However one minor setback was that Statoil's external communications began quite late. At that point in time, many of Statoil's important external stakeholders had already formed an opinion based on other sources. Where multiple organizations are involved, all of them will struggle to make theirs the main narrative.

Your organization's objective should therefore be to continuously place information on your website and your social media accounts. Your website and social media accounts should thus be the focal "go-to-places" where media, the public, clients and your own employees will get information at first hand.

On principle, in the event of a terror attack, "internal communication always goes before external communication". Firstly the employees and their NOK should be informed, then external stakeholders and the media. Given the time constraints, sticking to this principle can be highly challenging as the great number of media outlets, interest groups and individuals who will cover the event can put significant pressure on the organization involved. You should, however, only release verified information.

Companies that are engaged not only in the B2B but also the B2C market will require far more human resources due to increased social media activity. Brussels Airlines provides a successful example. The airline's social media team generally consisted of one single individual. In the course of the attack on Brussels Airport in 2016, the airline mobilized employees from other areas – including marketing staff, the digital team and even pilots – increasing its social media team to an impressive 45 employees in just a few hours. Subsequently Brussels Airlines was able to deal with a 15-fold increase in in-

lf you do not communicate, others will. Get your message out promptly.

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quiries. As a great number of inquiries were duplicated, the airline used multilingual templates which took significant pressure off the airline's hotline.

The core messages of a successful initial communications strategy in a crisis event should be:

- What we know
- What we are doing
- We have and show empathy
- We will provide further information on an ongoing basis

Important crisis communications actions to be taken in a terror event:

- Continuously monitor classic and social media
  - Prepare or modify a holding statement in order to gain time
    Conduct a stakeholder analysis with regard to the necessary communications
  - Provide internal communications and information for employees/NOK
  - Analyze media coverage in terms of tone
  - Wherever possible, coordinate communications with the authorities and other stakeholders
  - Identify the key issues in which the public is currently interested and compare these with your own communications
  - Prepare a list of questions you can expect from the media/the public
  - Issue updates on a regular basis (Twitter, Facebook, website, press releases, etc.)
  - Handle inquiries, incl. via hotlines and the social media team
  - Mobilize external crisis response and communications consultants in good time

Depending on the nature of the incident, internal communications will provide clear instructions to the employees on how to deal with the media or any other third parties. Employees should generally be instructed not to disclose information to outsiders, and be told the name(s) of those in the company who are dealing with press inquiries.

Even if, as a rule, a communications representative is part of the CMT, it must be ensured that all relevant information from the CMT is passed on to the communications department and vice versa. The same principle will apply for all other CMT roles specifically for the teams that support one's own employees and NOK.

Where the victims of an attack include the organization's own employees or other individuals on the organization's premises, one might consider "toning down" the corporate identity on the organization's website and on social media accounts. Furthermore all current and pending marketing and business development campaigns should be reviewed.

The communications strategy should be engineered around transparency, integrity and honesty. It is always helpful to show empathy. Where people have been harmed, the organization's senior management should make a public appearance. In such cases, communication is a matter for the most

Ensure that all relevant information from the CMT is shared with the communications department - and vice versa.

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senior executives and should not be delegated to the press spokesperson or other staff.

Try to communicate in close coordination with the authorities in order to avoid conflicting messages. Key contacts with the relevant authorities including the police should already have been identified. Ensure that you do not disclose any information that may be useful for the perpetrators.

Your organization's Facebook page is an important hub for information.

## How the Lindt Café in Sydney communicated during and after the hostage crisis

Initial Facebook message after the hostage-taking became known

Key messages:

*Quote: "We would like to thank everyone for their thoughts and kind support over the current situation at the Lindt Café at Martin Place.* 

We are deeply concerned over this serious incident and our thoughts and prayers are with the staff and the customers involved and all their friends and families.

The matter is being dealt with by the authorities and we are waiting for any updates from them." End quote.

(more than 36,000 Likes)

After the end of the hostage event and the official confirmation of two fatalities, Lindt published the following message on Facebook:

Key messages:

Quote: "As the hostage-taking in our Café in Sydney came to an end, Lindt & Sprüngli is profoundly saddened and deeply affected about the death of innocent people.

We are devastated by the loss of their lives and that several others were wounded and had to experience such trauma.

Our thoughts and feelings are with the victims and their families who have been through an incredible ordeal, and we want to pay tribute to their courage and bravery." End quote.

(more than 22,000 Likes)

After the death of the branch manager, Tori, had been confirmed, Lindt published the message below on Facebook:

Key messages:

Quote: "Tori had been with us at Lindt for just over two years and he was a great ambassador for our company and the store that he managed, which he cared about passionately." End quote.

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Lindt's message goes on to describe how the store manager dealt with clients, saying that he was highly appreciated by his team and that his tragic death is a great loss.

*Lindt expressed their deep sentiments to the family and offered full support to Tori's family.* 

The message was signed by the Lindt CEO Australia

(more than 28,000 Likes)

A crisis response will not always take place without errors. However, it is better to frankly admit mistakes and do so before others find out. If the media inform the public about what you did wrong, your reputation will be hit severely. When talking about your mistakes this is always a good time to elaborate on what you will be doing differently in future. Taking care of employees, NOK and individuals involved is one of the cornerstones of crisis management – particularly in a terrorist or active shooter attack.

# Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

Care of employees, NOK and individuals involved

For victims, their NOK (next of kin) and employees, crisis events will always be extreme situations emotionally and psychologically. If this is ignored by the affected organization, the crisis event will worsen or a second crisis event will be triggered.

The way companies and organizations take care of their employees and their NOK reveals a great deal about how much they appreciate their workforce. If the organization sets a good example this will have a positive effect on employee motivation and productivity. Furthermore the organization will be seen in a favorable light by the public.

Ideally a number of questions should be answered and measures prepared in advance as follows:

- Who in the organization will be responsible for taking care of the individuals affected and the NOK?
- Are these staff members trained and/or what preparation is required?
- Does a guideline or a code of conduct exist?
- How far does support go and when does it come to an end?
- How will care staff be supplied by the organization with relevant information?
- Who will provide the necessary funding?
- Will special support, e.g. a hotline for NOK be necessary?
- In which cases will there be direct contact between senior management and affected families?
- Is there an up-to-date list with contact details for NOK and external support (e.g. psychologists, etc.)?
- What interfaces need to be created with external organizations?
- What support do the family care team members need themselves?

### **Case study: Statoil**

When 17 staff employed by the Norwegian oil company Statoil were taken hostage for a number of days at a gas plant in Algeria, the company immediately launched its family care plan. A hotel was reserved and served as family care center. At the hotel Statoil took care of about 100 family members from four generations.

Five employees died in the course of events and Statoil held a funeral and memorial service. For one year after the event Statoil allocated two HR contacts who were available at all times to each of the five families affected.

The Statoil family care protocols and procedures set a best practice example that would not have been possible without proper preparation.

The way organizations take care of their employees and NOK after a terrorist incident says a lot about how much they appreciate their workforce.

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The care of victims and NOK includes not only psychological support but also support in families' daily lives. The support of victims and NOK is not limited to psychological support but also includes giving a helping hand with the families' daily lives, providing financial support, and assistance in dealing with the authorities.

In Germany the official crisis support teams (Kriseninterventionsteams (KIT)) limit their support to the actual crisis phase only. The official family liaison officers and KITs are highly important elements for immediate psychological support although they cannot provide mid- and long term support to deal with all the big and small challenges a victim's family will have to face.

Bereaved families often want to turn the death of a loved one into something "good", in order to make sense of their loss. Companies should support families with such justified intentions. Tori Johnson, the manager of the Sydney Lindt Café who was killed in the hostage event, was always supportive and helpful to people in need. Subsequently Lindt Australia and the Johnson family jointly set up a memorial page where visitors could make donations to an organization that supports people who suffer from depression. Furthermore, in memory of Tori Johnson, asked for donations to this particular organization on its Facebook page.

Many companies and organizations underestimate how many human and material resources are required to professionally support those affected directly and indirectly by a terror or active shooter attack.

# Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

## After the crisis

Although the CMT will be demobilized, the next crisis will always be just around the corner. Prepare your crisis response using a structured process, and learn lessons as to how you can further improve your response to crisis situations. The care of employees and their NOK will continue even after the crisis has ended. This will sometimes apply for the crisis communication and business continuity aspects as well.

Organizations that follow up events with an internal or external investigation should make the results available to at least their employees and the bereaved. One reason why a Norwegian NGO was sentenced to pay high compensation after one of its employees was kidnapped in Africa was said to be its failure to adequately analyze the incident.

Getting back on track may take time:

Reason for closure	Time until reopening
Attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi (Kenya) by Islamist terrorists.	Nearly 100 weeks
Hostage event with multiple fatalities at a Lindt Café in Sydney (Australia) carried out by one terrorist.	More than 13 weeks
Terror attack against the restaurant "Le Petit Cambodge" in Paris (France).	More than 16 weeks
Hostage-taking with 90 fatalities at the "Bataclan" concert hall in Paris (France) by several terrorists during a concert.	52 weeks
Attack against the "Imperial Marhaba" hotel in Sousse (Tunesia) by a single terrorist who killed 38 people.	Nearly 100 weeks (furthermore the hotel was sold to a new oner and renamed)
Active shooter attack by a lone gunman at a McDonald's restaurant at the OEZ shopping mall in Munich (Germany) where five people were killed.	More than 11 weeks
Three terrorists ran over a number of people with a vehicle and subsequently attacked others with knives in the Borough Market area in London (UK).	11 days

Review your crisis response using a structured process, and learn lessons from it.

# Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

The complexity of a crisis response will always be a tightrope walk, and calls for experience and sensitivity. If your organization suffers a terror attack, public opinion will initially be on your side. Lindt, for example, despite being hit severely in terms of human loss, emerged stronger than before from the crisis – thanks also to the professional and attentive behavior of employees who had been taken hostage along with customers at the café. Ensure that you keep your victim "bonus" by responding professionally to a crisis event.

## Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

### How we can support you

SmartRiskSolutions is a consultancy specialized in security management and crisis management. Former members of a Government security agency and special forces units with many years of experience as consultants form our team.

Among our clients are multinational corporations as well as midsize companies and NGOs.

### Our services

### **Travel Risk Management**

- Development of a company-wide travel risk management and creation of travel risk policies
- Travel security awareness training for business travelers and expats
- Hostile environment security awareness training
- eLearning travel security for business travellers
- Country and city risk database, including travel tracking
- Due diligence and background checks
- Audits and site security surveys
- Secure transportation of business travelers at their destination

### **Crisis Management**

- Development and design of company-wide structures for crisis and emergency management
- Auditing of your existing crisis and emergency management
- Provision of a corporate emergency hotline
- Crisis response in crisis and emergency situations

### **Executive Protection**

- Low profile and discrete executive protection of top executives
- Risk assessments and development of security concepts for top executives and their families
- Planning of security measures for executive events

### Contact

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## Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident

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