

## Thin Red Line Or Red Ink? Deterring Terrorism - By Steven Ferry

2005-11-23

---

The likelihood that any single hotel will be the target of a terrorist act is very small indeed, given the number of hotels in the world.

The risks increase with the size of the hotel, its location, it being a trophy building or the destination of guests whose views are antipathetic to those of any of a variety of terrorist groups. Or perhaps the fact that it is an easy, soft target and offers a way of doing what terrorists do best: destroy buildings and lives, undermine the peace of mind and economies of whole nations. So how safe does that make any hotel?

While the hospitality industry is experiencing lower occupancy rates since that pivotal day in September 2001, it is at the same time being forced into spending money on higher insurance premiums and/or greater security measures. Perhaps not vast sums of money in the overall scheme of things, but certainly insurance rates doubling in three years is at odds with the need to reduce expenses. The JW Marriott in Jakarta didn't hesitate to do the right thing, however, instituting more stringent security procedures and so saving the day. Not the lives of some of its security personnel, but certainly of the majority of its guests and the integrity of the building itself, which was structurally intact after the car bomb exploded on that day in August 2003.

In August 2004, the hotels on the Strip in Las Vegas (including 18 of the 20 largest hotels in the world) were accused of withholding from the general public the fact that Al Qaeda low-lives had been 'casing the joint.' There was concern reportedly that a public warning might hurt tourism or increase legal liabilities. The casino hotels apparently did increase what was already arguably the tightest security in the industry, but their experience and systems were designed for criminals, not terrorists. One thing is certain, their approach resulted in a PR flap that did little to enhance their image. The fact that these hotels also handed over names and other information on quarter of a million guests to the FBI over the New Year's Eve celebrations 2003/2004 may not have endeared them to those and future guests, either. Dealing with the threat of terrorism isn't easy and was certainly not covered in any great depth during any hospitality training for American hoteliers.

For a look at effective anti-terrorist measures in the hospitality industry, Sea Island provides a better example during the G8 summit in June 2004. A tour-de-force in terms of electronic gadgetry and armed security forces, it was the government not the hotel that drove (and paid for) that security event. Nice if you can get it, but hardly within the budget of any hotel, and certainly the siege mentality was not conducive to the ambiance that generally draws guests to hotels.

So where does this leave hotels? Certainly, terrorists do not make it easy, presenting the prospect of any of a number of ways of creating their effects via an unknown individual at an unknown time. As the homeland security advisor to the governor of Nevada is reported to have said, 'We have so little information. We pray a lot.' Not to argue with the power of prayer, but a concrete plan would probably sit better with guests, insurers, owners, and employees alike.

Fear is a third-rate motivator employed by weak individuals, so perhaps a better approach to this whole subject of combating terrorism is to view it as a challenge to our intelligence and resourcefulness. Our purpose as an industry is to provide comfort and pleasure to our fellow man and woman. Maybe our goal in providing adequate security, then, should be the retaining of our freedoms and joys, not the fighting of psychotic individuals or the purveying of fear. This may seem like an extraneous piece of philosophy, but any lesser goal on our part lets the terrorists set the rules, makes us play their miserable game.

### **What's the Problem?**

Perhaps the first point to establish is, what is one protecting against? Ill-intended individuals or groups coming onto the grounds and into the premises in any of a variety of ways: by stealth as overnight guests, day guests, guests of guests, convention attendees, vendors and service personnel, employees, ex-employees, on business (whether as reporters, law enforcement, or any number of guises); or by brute force as a swarm of invaders or behind the wheel of a truck or car-the favored method of the terrorist. And what is one concerned they may do once they have access? The most obvious is use explosives, or weaponry. Then there is the possibility that they may use biological or chemical weapons.

How would these elements be brought into the hotel space? By people on their person, in their luggage or vehicles, or via packages delivered. The next question then is, how does one ascertain that these routes are clear of threat without a) invading privacy and upsetting guests, b) inordinate expense, c) creating a siege mentality and ruining the ambiance, d) delaying guests or tying up employees with added tasks.

The task for security then is to monitor these routes for these harmful elements in a way that is not only effective, but does not interrupt the flow of guests arriving and deliveries being made, and which maintains the ambiance of the hotel. If we were being real smart, we'd find a way to turn the need for security to advantage for guests, possibly even making it fun.

### **What's the solution?**

Let's consider a possible ideal scenario based on existing resources in the market and industry. When guests arrive, their vehicle drives over a simple wireless camera system with infrared capability that beams the license plate and picture of the driver to the security office, while also surveying the undercarriage for bombs attached. The guests disembark at a slight remove from the hotel structure, where bollards have been placed to prevent vehicular access, and are given their favorite beverage served on a tray. They walk through a metal detector at the front entrance (or even part of it) without even noticing

it, and through a detector that can sense explosives carried in the plume of hot air that wafts upward naturally from their warm bodies. Their bags are removed from their trunk and the seats of the vehicle and carried up to their room via a scanning machine such as is seen in airports, as well as one that detects the possible presence of biological or chemical weapons or explosives. The valet then inspects the trunk and under the hood before parking the vehicle. Those dealing with the guests are trained to look unobtrusively for tell-tale signs of explosive belts, shifty guests, etc.

Impact on guests? Improved service. Impact on hotels? Slightly larger payroll with more personnel hired to cover valet parking and bellhop, and a better rating for security and service. A bite out of the budget initially for the detection equipment.

What about the employees and ex-employees? Set up parking away from the hotel and institute an ID card that has to be scanned, together with the employee's face, before entry to the grounds/hotel is authorized. These scans are recorded and transmitted in real time wirelessly to the security office.

And tradespeople? Set up a similar procedure that requires their vehicle undercarriage be scanned as covered above at a distance from the hotel, and then a security employee inspects the cargo container (again, this can be done using a camera system with infra red and wireless capability, so unlit areas can be viewed at a command center removed from the truck being inspected). And only then have the driver bring the vehicle to the hotel building, where he or she can be asked to scan his driving license into a machine that snaps a photo of his face and sends both images to a command center. Invaluable for determining that any unexpected or unusual driver is legitimately at the location on behalf of the company he claims to represent.

### **Looking for Eyes and Ears**

When the terrorist alert was raised in Las Vegas, taxi cab drivers were given photographs of wanted terrorists. That was a good idea and capitalizes on the basic truth about all law enforcement: the police cannot possibly maintain the law without the cooperation of the populace. Which means they rely on the general public's eyes and ears to be law enforcement's eyes and ears.

So why not take this one step further? Let guests and employees be kept up to speed on law enforcement needs, as well as public service announcements? Similar to the reality TV shows that highlight America's Most Wanted and Unsolved Mysteries. Imagine then a TV screen embedded in a piece of equipment positioned strategically in a hotel lobby or staff entrance, that shows terrorists and felons, provides Amber Alerts, the latest updates from Homeland Security, and when those are not being broadcast, which shows PSAs (such as hurricane alerts) or ads. Ads, incidentally, which can pay for the equipment. How about if that piece of equipment also provides two-way intelligence? If it took images of people coming and going and relayed these wirelessly to a security office. They could check these against data bases, especially where an individual behaved suspiciously (such as hiding his face and walking away rapidly) when he noticed the images on the screen.

How about a similar machine that was also a cellphone charger, and which a guest could also stand in front of, call a family member who would log onto a Web site and then be able to see the person calling on his cell phone from the hotel lobby (or convention space)?

This kind of wireless, 2-way intelligence equipment is coming onto the market now, driven by the need to use technology to respond to the threat of terrorism at home. This equipment goes beyond the old security cliché of stringing wires to multiple cameras and hoping to catch someone in the act.

The common denominator of these solutions is an intelligent use of technology to ferret out not just terrorists but also criminals. The smarter rationale, however, is one that preempts or discourages anything destructive from occurring by being more overt or obvious. What self-respecting criminal or terrorist would walk into an environment in which his physiognomy was likely to be flashed in a hotel lobby or staff canteen, or snapped in real time and compared within seconds to a data base which he has the misfortune to be featured in? In other words, the real desired product is incident-free days, more than thwarted terrorists. The intelligent approach also solicits the cooperation of guests and employees alike, not because they are frightened, but because they are informed and even pampered a bit.

It takes surprisingly little green in the long term to build a thin red line around a hotel when one goes beyond the idea of snooping cameras, bollards and personnel as the weapons available. It is certainly better than drowning in red ink because guests are sufficiently unimpressed with antiquated or invisible security systems to look for safer ports of call-or because terrorists perceive a soft target in their sights.

*This article was originally published by [hotelexecutive.com](http://hotelexecutive.com).*

### **About the Author**



Professor Steven Ferry trains butlers in hotels, resorts, and private estates, and spa butlers in spas. He is Chairman of the International Institute of Modern Butlers ([www.modernbutlers.com](http://www.modernbutlers.com)) and author of the best-selling industry texts, *Hotel Butlers*, *The Great Service Differentiators* and *Butlers and Household Managers*, 21st Century Professionals. He can be contacted at [stevenferry@modernbutlers.com](mailto:stevenferry@modernbutlers.com).

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com>

The URL for this story is:

<http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article19721.html>

© 1998 - 2007 Nevistas and the author.

Brought to you by Hotel News Resource

*Distribute your news on our Network*

See what all the buzz is about at:

[http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news\\_account\\_info.html](http://www.hotelnewsresource.com/Info-news_account_info.html)