

Iconic Security
Dr. Peter Tarlow
College Station, Texas, USA
ptarlow@tourismandmore.com

Introduction

The September 11th terrorist attacks not only killed and injured a great many people, they also created the need to examine many of the assumptions upon which security is based. National icons have for years been considered off limits to acts of violence. While looting has long been a part of warfare, the idea of attacking, harming or destroying national icons was seen as off-limits. For example, Hitler stole many of France's finest pieces of art, but never blew up the Eiffel Tower.

Modern terrorism is based on the desire to destroy a people's national will. Its goal is to hurt, injure or destroy the innocent. As such security professionals now have to worry about iconic security in ways that have never been considered before. This need to protect national and

international heritage sites is now often called "iconic security." As in all forms of security there is a need to do basic due diligence and good risk management. Iconic security goes further. Not only must the specialist in iconic security consider all of the classical forms of security but he/she must also take into account all of the aspects of tourism security, cultural property protection, along with both sociological, political and religious needs.

In many of the world's nations iconic cultural treasures are not only places to see but also to visit as tourism sites. Iconic sites may appear in different guises. For example, they may be of a religious nature such as the Vatican or Mecca's Black Rock. Iconic sites may also hold political significance such as the US Capitol Building, or they may have historic significance such as Israel's Massada. Icon sites, however, do not have to be of a political cultural or religious nature. For example, Rio de Janeiro's Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf) or San Francisco's trolley cars are also icons must be protected. The chart below provides a sample iconic taxonomy provides the reader with how these icons may be of an overlapping nature.

No matter where icons fall they share a number of commonalities. These include:

- Icons tend to generate large crowds
- Icons attract media
- Icons are seen as part of a nation's (the world's) patrimony
- Icons impact local and national economies
- Icons touch the very soul of a people, nation, or the world
- Iconic damage spreads fear throughout a population
- Icons often have a substantial impact on an area's economy.

The fact that iconic locations generate a great deal of revenue, provide recreational, spiritual or historical opportunities, and create a large number of jobs means that the security professional who must deal with iconic security may have to balance security concerns with political , economic, or religious needs. Iconic security then requires

creative security procedures, methods that allow the sites to be preserved and passed on to future generations while at the same time protecting the economic base which depends on the icon.

Tourism security.

As mentioned before iconic security is part of tourism security. In reality tourism professionals no longer use the term tourism security. Instead the word that is used is tourism surety. Tourism surety is defined as the point where security issues, safety issues and socio-political economic issues meet. In reality, there is no such thing as travel (tourism) security or safety. No one can guarantee one hundred percent security. Instead a better term is travel (tourism) surety. Surety (a term borrowed from the insurance industry) refers to a lowering of the probability that a negative event will occur. Surety does not promise perfection, but rather improvement and takes into account that to live is to risk. Thus, tourism surety refers to the point where security, safety and risk management converge.

Classically, tourism surety refers to six different areas of tourism protection. These are:

Visitor Protection. Tourism professionals need to work with security professionals to protect the visitor from locals who might seek to do the visitor harm, from other visitors who may be in transit for the purpose of committing crime, and less than honest staff members. Finally, tourism surety seeks to protect the visitor from tourism professionals who may be willing to commit fraud or sell a product that is defective.

Protection of Staff. A tourism industry that does not care about its staff (workers) cannot long survive. The second aspect of a tourism surety program is to find ways to assure that honest staff members can work in an environment that is crime free and not hostile. Tourism is a high-pressured industry and it is all too easily for staff members to be abused or for tempers to flare leading to a hostile work situation.

Site Protection. It is the responsibility of tourism surety specialists to protect tourism sites. The term site can mean anything from a place of lodging to an attraction site. While in an age of terrorism there are people whose purpose it is to destroy or harm a specific site, site protection must also take into account the careless traveler. Often, vacationers simply forget to care for furniture, appliances or equipment. Tourism surety then also takes into account the needs of cleaning staffs and hotel engineers and seeks to assure that site environment is both attractive and as secure/safe as possible.

Ecological Management. Closely related to and yet distinct from site security is the protection of the area's ecology. No tourism entity lives in a vacuum. The care of a locale's streets, lawns, and internal environment has a major impact on tourism surety. Ecology, however, should not only be restricted to the physical; it also involves the cultural ecology. It behooves specialists in tourism surety to protect the cultural ecology of an area. Strong cultures tend to produce safe places. On the other hand, when cultures tend to die, crime levels may tend to rise. Protecting the cultural ecology

along with the physical ecology of a locale is a major preventative step that tourism surety professionals can do to lower crime rates and to assure a safer and more secure environment.

Economic Protection. Tourism is a major generator of income on both national and local levels. As such it is open to attack from various sources. For example, terrorists may see a tourism site as an ideal opportunity to create economic havoc. Criminals do not wish to destroy a tourism locale, but rather view that locale as an ideal "fishing" ground from which to harvest an abundance of riches. Tourists and visitors do not distinguish between the treatment they are afforded by the local travel and tourism industry and by people living and working in the community. As such, law enforcement agents and tourism security professionals have a special role in protecting the economic viability of a locale. How security professionals act and the methods that they use can reinforce the marketing department's message or undercut it.

Reputation Protection. You only need to read the newspaper to note that crimes and acts of terrorism against tourism entities receive a great deal of media attention. The classical method of simply denying that there is a problem is no longer valid and is counter-productive to a tourism locale's best promotional efforts. When there is a lapse in tourism security, the effect is long term. Some of the consequences to a local's reputation include the locale's moving from upper to lower class clientele, the need to drop prices, the general deterioration of the site, and the need for a major marketing effort to counteract the negative reputation.

A good tourism security program then is much more than simply hiring a few extra guards. Tourism surety is a highly professionalized plan that permits the protection of everything from the site to the visitor, from the locale's ecology to its very reputation. While tourism surety programs do not promise that nothing can or will happen, they do lessen the risk of negative events and prepare a locale to minimize negative effects should an incident occur.