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RISK MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE PROTECTION

## **Safeguarding the 2024 Olympics in Paris: A Comprehensive Security Approach**

**By Harry Arruda | 1 June 2024 | Security Technology, June 2024**

As the anticipation builds for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in France, so does the meticulous planning and coordination of security measures by the public safety community and many executive protection teams across the globe.

With the eyes of the world turning to this iconic event, ensuring the safety and security of all participants, spectators, and infrastructure is paramount. This requires a



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multifaceted approach to address the various challenges and threats facing the Olympics.

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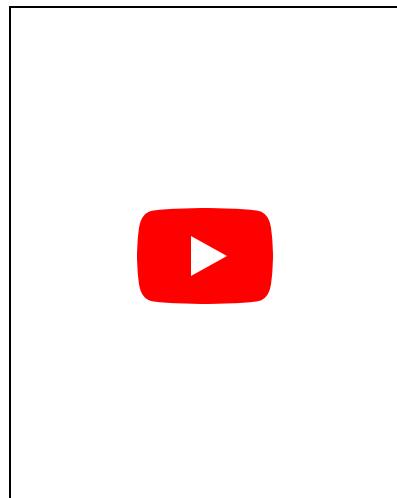
*Terrorism remains a significant concern for any event—especially largescale events like the Olympics.*

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## Understanding the Threat Landscape

Today more than ever, terrorism remains a significant concern for any event—especially largescale ones like the Olympics. The historical events of the **1972 Munich** and **1996 Atlanta Olympics** serve as stark reminders of the vulnerabilities venues have with terrorist attacks.

More recent events, such as the heightened security measures during

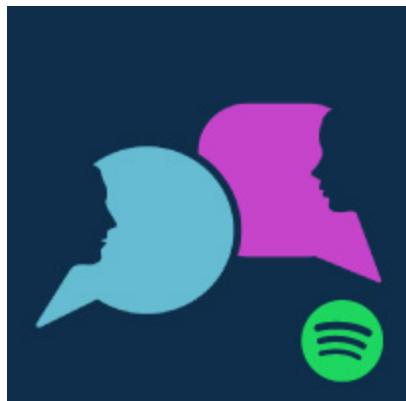


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the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics due to **threats from Islamist militants**, and this year's **threats by the Islamic State (IS)** to the Champions League quarter-final football matches in Paris, Madrid, and London, underscore the ongoing threat landscape.

Cybersecurity has also emerged as another critical area of concern, as several French government institutions fell victim to **unprecedented cyberattacks** in March of this year. With the potential for additional cyberattacks, data breaches, and disruption of digital services, these pose a greater risk to major events than we've ever seen before.



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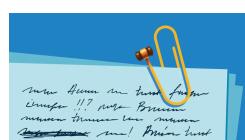
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This year's Olympics also offer a prime stage for protesters, potentially galvanizing various social and political concerns on a global scale. High profile events have increasingly become platforms for activists to broadcast messages on issues ranging from global conflicts to economic disparities.

Today's protester is significantly more advanced than in years past. Today they utilized advanced planning and surveillance techniques, private communication platforms to orchestrate significantly more impactful demonstrations with minimal notice and are savvy to gaps in the legal system.

Demonstrations during the games could spark varied responses, as seen in recent months where authorities' reactions have ranged from more tolerance in places like the United States to more forceful and violent crackdowns in less tolerant countries like Russia and China.

As with all modern-day sporting events, ensuring a robust security plan is imperative to thwart acts of violence, unauthorized entry, and vandalism. Moreover, today's comprehensive security strategy must go beyond the basic guards, guns, and badges to encompass meticulous preparation for such areas as public health emergencies, political instability,



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## Information Sharing and Building Key Relationships

One of the primary challenges in security planning is the lack of information sharing. Although significantly better in the last 10 years, the sharing of intelligence among public officials and private security stakeholders still has a ways to go.

Effective information sharing can be facilitated through a variety of methods including a centralized source like a GSOC operator or intelligence analysts or through group messaging platforms with known, vetted security members. It's important to share verified information that does not compromise operational security. Examples of information to share include newly found intelligence on last minute protests, accidents or traffic congestion, venue maps, and persons of interest.



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Another key to quality information sharing is to have a variety of sources to pull information from. Building relationships beyond the basic venue manager and security director is a must in today's times. Successful security practitioners build relationships with a diverse range of individuals from local law enforcement to hotel staff.

Even frontline staff, such as groundkeepers and food services personnel who are often overlooked, will possess valuable insights into the intricacies of venues and areas that can complement the traditional sources of information. For example, those working in facility roles oftentimes can provide access to lesser-known entrances and exits of a venue.

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## The Concentric Rings of Paris: Establishing Security Perimeters

French officials have proposed plans to hold the opening ceremony on the River Seine and host sporting events at historical sites throughout the city, including the Eiffel Tower, Place de la Concorde, and the Grand Palais. They will use the time-tested strategy of **concentric security rings** around each of the venues.

This approach effectively manages risks by delineating access levels and screening protocols in zones surrounding the venues. The **four-zone design** will divert vehicles away from venues, while allowing greater foot traffic to events, and aims to balance security imperatives with the needs of residents and local businesses.

While these security zones are essential for ensuring the safety of the Olympics, they will inevitably lead to significant delays and disruptions. Stringent screening procedures within the zones and restricted access levels will undoubtably result in prolonged wait times for attendees and increased

logistical challenges for event organizers.

Protection teams attending events must anticipate these delays and factor them into their planning to ensure smooth operations and minimal disruptions. With security checkpoints at each zone, executive protection teams should expect long delays and plan for extra time for arrivals and departures.

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#### Actionable Steps

Protective teams responsible for ensuring any form of security for an event of this magnitude must not only



be proactive—but detailed—in their advance planning.

Teams should start their process by conducting a comprehensive risk assessment that includes a meticulous analysis of intelligence, assessment of the geopolitical landscape, an examination of past incidents at similar gatherings, and threats facing their principals. With this groundwork, teams can identify potential threats and vulnerabilities, laying the foundation for a more strategic security plan.

Once risks have been assessed, a comprehensive security plan should be developed which encompasses not only physical security measures but also plans for vehicle and aviation transportation, emergency and medical response, requirements of security checkpoints, and ingress and egress of venues. As part of planning, teams should consider getting involved with meetings typically held by local officials and security organizations responsible for event security, intelligence gathering, and coordinated response efforts.

Safeguarding this year's Olympics will undoubtably require a multifaceted and collaborative approach that addresses a wide array of threats and challenges. By prioritizing information sharing, building key relationships, and implementing rigorous security measures, we can ensure a safe and

successful Olympic Games that celebrate the spirit of sport and unity on the global stage.

*Harry Arruda is the CEO of Cooke & Associates, a firm specializing in executive protection. He previously held senior global security positions with a life sciences company and a financial institution. He is a member of ASIS International.*

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