

**NATIONAL SECURITY -
THE ISRAELI WAY**

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David Rubens Associates is a specialist corporate security consultancy offering strategic security services to individuals and organisations across the world.

DRA has worked with government agencies, NGO's, international conglomerates and major global events, and brings a mixture of strategic vision, operational experience and academic research to all of its projects, however large or small.

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National Security – The Israeli Way

Many people will have read with interest the announcement by the UK Home Secretary that 60,000 civilians are to be trained to be the front line in detecting and preventing terrorist activities. Whilst it has long been acknowledged that the secret to any sustained counter-terrorist programme has been grass-level support, this is the first time that such a programme has been officially recognised within the UK security environment.

It is interesting (and I think a positive step), that the people who are to be trained are working at hotels, shopping centres, leisure complexes and other similar community-based environments. Whilst the British government have made some disastrous decisions in the past about where and from whom they gain their counter-terrorist expertise (and I am thinking specifically about using Israeli-style programmes such as 'Operation Kratos' in order to police the streets of London, leading to the shooting of the innocent Brazilian student Charles de Menezes on 22nd July 2005), this is one area where the British authorities could learn a lot of positive things from the Israeli experience.

The first things that most people say on arriving in Israel, is how normal it is. Despite a constant threat of suicide bombings, rocket attacks and other forms of low-level warfare, for the vast majority of people life in Israel goes on as it does in any other western country, and there is little if any obvious security presence besides the large amount of young soldiers walking around with semi-automatic rifles slung across their backs – and it is always surprising how quickly that also becomes a normal part of the background street life. People go shopping, drop their kids at school, go to the cinema, hang around in coffee shops, and yet despite the fact that Israel is the target of most of the world's terrorist attacks, there is little if any feeling of panic or even unsafety.

As everyone will be aware, one of the fundamental laws of risk management is that there is a direct linkage between security and freedom, and that therefore the more freedom that you have the less secure you are, and if you wish to raise the level of your security then the price of that is that there will be less freedom. Although the Israeli situation seems to break this principle, in fact it adheres to it although in a slightly different way than is normally the case. Firstly, as is natural in such an environment, everyone is security aware. If you doubt this, sit in a coffee shop, walk away without taking your briefcase with you and see how long before someone draws attention to your lapse! So in fact, security is almost all pervasive, but very low-key. It is integrated into normal daily life in such a way that it is like the background hum of your fridge, completely unnoticed unless it stops.

The second fundamental principle of Israeli security is that potential attacks need to be disrupted at the earliest stage, so that whether on a strategic planning level or an operational attack basis the likelihood is that someone will become aware of the potential danger before the final approach is actually made. In this way, Israel has made itself almost bomb-proof, despite the fact that 20% of its population is made up of Arab citizens.

There have in fact been a number of programmes in the UK to develop this sort of public awareness, particularly with Project Griffin, run by the City of London police, which has worked widely with security personnel involved in all aspects of private security, including retail guards, static guards, doormen and door supervisors, sporting event stewards, etc. Given that these people have already developed a strong security awareness, it is natural that they can be considered as the people who are most likely to become aware of a potential problem, even if it is the 'non-normal' behaviour of someone on the bus or train as they go to work.

It is well accepted that the time to disrupt terrorism is well before they terrorists move into their final approach. By that time it is almost always too late, and whatever security forces you have at your disposal it will not be enough to stop major damage and disruption – as has been seen in the recent Mumbai hotel attacks and the attacks on the cricketers in Pakistan. The drafting in of 60,00 local people into the battle against terrorism will mean that the likelihood of someone becoming aware of potentially suspicious behaviour will be radically increased, which is in itself enough to either prevent or deter potential terrorists from making their first preparatory moves. As always, we never know how successful we have been when nothing in fact happens, but there is no question that this programme, if managed correctly, could have a significant impact on developing a long-term sustainable security culture that is both embedded in and is a natural part of the wider British society.





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