Security solutions for the hotel industry

The terrorist attacks in Mumbai has reinorced the need for adequate security measures in hotels. **Rakesh Sachdev,** Managing Director, Acetech Technologies Pvt Ltd and member of the Asian Professional Security Association feels that hotels should have a comprehensive security system in place and advocates a five tier security system for them

THE terrorist attacks in Mumbai have revealed the delicate balance that large international hotels have to achieve in order to act as a public gathering place for a sophisticated business clientele without sacrificing security. Hospitality is a service industry. Good service includes security. A hotel with the best service but poor security would expose guests to crime risks and compromise reputation and goodwill. Hoteliers are responsible for the protection of property and well-being of their guests. We should not lower our guard against crime or be lulled into complacency.

A crime can occur in any place at anytime to anyone when opportunity is provided to the offender. Hotels have to assess the risks and place a comprehensive security system in place. Security is an essential invest-ment and not an optional expenditure. A five tier security is generally what I propose for upscale hotels. Security design has to be customised for each property following the broad guide-lines presented here.

Tier 1

Tier 1 security is guarding the perimeter of the hotel. Perimeter

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intrusion devices, surveillance cameras, adequate lighting and patrolling guards can protect your hotel from unwanted intruders. Intelligent video analytics with trip wire feature makes it possible for the security to be alarmed in case someone jumps over the wall. Another precaution to be undertaken is to make sure there are no cars parked adjacent to the hotel walls.

Tier 2

Tier 2 security protects the hotel property from the main entrance up to the building. This has to be

designed specifically after assessing the risk and design of the property. Hotels with very large properties and multiple entry/exit points present a bigger challenge. This level of security should have Boom Barriers to stop the cars for inspection. Under vehicle surveillance systems, mirrors, sniffer dogs and bomb detection devices are to be used for optimum security at this level. These are supported by surveillance cameras that are continuously being recorded on Digital Video Recorders (DVR) that have at least 15 to 30 days of recording. Most hotels will stop here. But what if a vehicle laden with explosives just drives through at high speed and rams into the building? Automatic Bollards or road blockers should be deployed that will stop a 80 tonne vehicle travelling at 60 kmph dead in its tracks.

Unauthorised vehicles should not be allowed in the premises. Delivery vans should preferably have sepa-rate entrances and should also be checked thoroughly. Suppliers and service providers should be screened and granted access from separate entrances using visitor management systems.

Tier 3

Tier 3 security begins at the entrance of the hotel and extends to all the common areas of the hotel. The use of Baggage X Ray machines, metal detectors, surveillance cameras, access control systems, and public address systems is recommended for this level. Separate lifts should be earmarked for hotel guests and they should be equipped with access control systems which ensure that only a hotel guest can use that lift. Fire alarm systems and fire fighting are mandatory by law and are installed in all hotels. Anti-shatter film should be installed on glass on the ground and first floor.
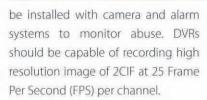
Tier 4

Tier 4 security covers non-public areas like guest rooms and corridors. Crimes can and do occur in both public and non-public areas. As crime risks against person and property in non-public areas like guests rooms and corridors are higher, security measures need to be enhanced to commensurate with the risks. Staircase exits should be installed with panic-bar bolt doors for one way exit only. The doors should also

Emergency procedures:

- Regularly tested smoke detectors/sprinkler systems
- Regularly tested emergency response procedures such as redundant communications procedures in case phones or computers do not work
- Adequate evacuation routes from the hotel
- Fire exits and extinguishers clearly marked
- Alarm systems at all points of entry
- Emergency power generators, in good working condition, with adequate access to a fuel supply
- Emergency procedures should be printed in all hotel rooms

be installed with camera and alarm systems to monitor abuse. DVRs should be capable of recording high resolution image of 2CIF at 25 Frame Per Second (FPS) per channel.

Lift doors exiting into non-public areas and corridors leading to guest rooms should be installed with closed-circuit cameras to monitor any unauthorised/suspicious visitors. Detection of unauthorised/suspicious visitors in non-public areas should be communicated forthwith to patrolling security staff who should respond immediately to confront and challenge the intruder.

There should be separate lifts to serve guests to public areas and guest rooms respectively. Lifts to public areas should be rendered inaccessible to non-public areas, and vice versa. Every hotel room should be equipped with a video door phone that allows the guest to see the visitor and talk to him before opening the door. When the Taj Mahal Hotel was attacked many guests kept their rooms locked and did not answer the door because they did not know whether it was the commandos or the terrorists who were outside.

Tier 5

Tier 5 is all about training security guards, hotel staff and guests and having security policies and emergency management procedures in place.

Without trained security and staff all the Tiers get compromised. Technology can help us in detection of crime but the response to detection comes from human beings. This makes risk assessment analysis, training, security policies and disaster management procedures indispensible to the security of the hotel.

Newly-arrived guests are unfamiliar with the surroundings, the staff and hotel routines. A short briefing on security tips should be given to them when they check-in. The briefing should include tips like : how to escape in case of emergency from emergency exits; how to identify hotel staff in uniform; not to leave room doors unlocked; not to open room doors to callers who are not in hotel staff uniform and to keep valuables in room safe or hotel safe deposit boxes. A full time Security Manager should be on board. All security systems must be reviewed regularly by professionals and upgraded as well. This is to counter the challenge of changing crime trends and risks and to be a step ahead of potential criminals. Once an effective security system is established, the staff can work with confidence and the guests can enjoy their stay in the hotel, reassured that the risk of crime occurring is minimised. The staff should be adequately trained in vehicle searches, luggage inspection, surveillance detection, suicide bomber characteristics and crisis management. ■

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