Case Study

Security at the Games

**Security at the Games: Anti-Terror Strategies and managing the threat of terrorism**

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London 2012 celebrations will begin with the historic torch relay in May, with the Games opening on 27th July 2012. They will run until their triumphant end with an undoubtedly memorable Closing Ceremony on 9th September.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games will host around 14,700 athletes from 205 countries. Athletes will compete across 26 Olympic sports in 34 venues located both in London and around the UK, with Paralympic counterparts competing in 20 Paralympic sports across 21 venues. The Olympic and Paralympic Games will together play host to 10 million ticket holders. This will be accompanied and facilitated by an army of volunteers (the post-WWII London Games of 1948 heralded the birth of Games-time volunteering, largely as a result of the Blitz, and an accompanying shortage of finances and resources in post-war Britain). 20,000 media representatives from across the world are also expected to attend.

London 2012 heralds an incredibly exciting time for the vibrant capital city of London. Not only will the Games play host to such a historic occasion (the 3rd Olympic Games, in fact, to be hosted in London), but the City will also continue its commitment to other annual events such as Wimbledon and the Notting Hill Carnival. 2012 is also the year of celebrations for Her Majesty the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, an event that alone will attract many visitors to the city.

**Security for the Games**

Whilst exciting, the Games also pose something of a security headache. London is the financial hub of Great Britain, and the source of greatest financial trading revenue in Europe (within the Square Mile and Canary Wharf districts), and also hosts Parliament and other important political and financial landmarks. Combined with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the sheer number of visitors expected, concerns have been raised as to how the Games can be held securely with threats of terrorism successfully countered. How will this be achieved?

LOCOG, the Metropolitan Police and other relevant agencies have committed to providing a high quality of security for the Games. The goal of 2012 security initiatives is to leave a positive legacy of security for GB that will last longer after the Olympic Torch has stopped burning. These legacies include improved community resilience against crime and violent extremism, enhanced relationships between the police and other security agencies, and a template for future events such as the 2012 Commonwealth Games that will be held in Glasgow.

**Olympic Security Partners**

Organisers of the Olympics have already established close links with a range of governmental and security organisations, in order to ensure that the security provision developed for

the Games are as efficient as possible. These organisations include[[1]](#footnote-1):

* The Home Office
* The Association of Chief Police Officers
* The Metropolitan Police Service
* Dorset Police, Essex Police, Hertfordshire Constabulary and Thames Valley Police
* The Government Olympic Executive (GOE)
* London Fire Brigade and London Ambulance Service
* The Department for Transport
* Many other government departments and agencies involved in safety and security

**IOC Insurance**

The IOC do, however, seem to retain concerns around security, most clearly within the context of terrorist threats. The IOC recently secured a £62 million insurance policy against the incidence of terrorism or acts of war at the 2012 Games. This figure represents the maximum amount that insurers are prepared to take on as a financial risk, and the amount has been divided between the 26 sports federations that are competing in the Games. In addition to this figure, the IOC also have financial reserves in excess of £310 million in order to cover losses (caused by any eventuality) that might blight or cancel the Games.

This is not, in fact, thefirst time that the IOC has invested in terrorism-related insurance. The IOC actually took out a policy for the Athens Games in excess of £105million.

**The Role of the Military**

Case Study

Security at the Games

SECURITY AT THE GAMES

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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LOCOG has voiced its intention to use the British military as part of its security detail during the London 2012 Games. This might involve the use of up to 12,000 troops. Initially it had been thought that the security contractor for the Games – G4S – would be able to provide all necessary personnel, without relying on the armed forces, but the plan has changed as Games planning has progressed. This was a viable assumption given that G4S recently voiced plans to become the world’s largest employer, with a takeover of Danish rivals ISS.

The plan of G4S was to provide 2,000 Olympic security guards and to recruit another 8,000 through a British scheme called ‘Bridging the Gap’ (a scheme that employs young FE students). The military have voiced doubts about the efficacy of this approach for a number of reasons (including obtaining security clearance for all personnel in the requisite time). These numbers would include bomb disposal experts, and work at the same time as 12,000 police officers (9,000 of which will be deployed in London).

The British Government has earmarked a total figure of £600 million for Games time security, in addition to the £2 billion contingency fund that can be used for any eventuality, if required.

**Surface to Air Missiles**

The British military have raised the stakes in terms of security, proposing the use of surface-to-air missiles during the Games. Such a strategy is not so unusual – they have been used at, and since, the Atlanta Games. There have been rumours of the intention of the US to send extra security personnel, including representatives of the FBI, although these currently appear to be unfounded. The US Embassy has since expressed confidence in British security surrounding the Games.

The US Embassy Charge d’Affaires, Barbara Stephenson, commented that it is: “*entirely normal and prudent for the US to engage in discussions with UK officials about security arrangements”...The United States Embassy has the utmost confidence in the British Government's arrangements to ensure safety and security for the Olympic Games. The US team is one of the largest participating in the Games, and thousands of American tourists are expected to attend Olympic events. It is, therefore, entirely normal and prudent for the US to engage in discussions with UK officials about security arrangements for the Olympic Games."*

**Rising Security Costs**

## Due to the fluid nature of security planning, concerns have arisen that costs of securing Games locations against eventualities of terrorism might end up rising considerably. The British media have commented on a figure of £250,000 per day to the

## UK taxpayer (for the protection of Olympic venues), mirroring concerns that security costs are rising quickly from the original figure budgeted by LOCOG and the ODA. Some reports cite increases as much as 3 times the original budget.

Such increases may be unsurprising when one considers the speculated involvement of the SAS, the proposed use of ground to air missiles and

Case Study

Security at the Games

ECURITY AT THE GAMES

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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## other initiatives.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

**Home Office statement on Securing the 2012 Games:**

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/securing-2012-olympic-games/

**DISCUSSION**

Case Study

Security at the Games

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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* Use stakeholder theory to identify the relevant stakeholders involved in the organisation of security of the Games.
* Consider the ramifications of a terrorist attack at the Games in terms of the management of a) evacuation of Olympic venues and b) management of the significant pressure on the transport network that would ensue.
* Identify a previous terrorist attack that took place during a sports event, and consider what lessons London 2012 organisers might take from them.
* What other security concerns exist as potential threats during the Games? Consider recent events such as the London riots and the Occupy London protests, in addition to general threats (such as crime rates in the borough of Newham) in your answer.

Case Study

Security at the Games

WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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1. *As identified at: http://www.london2012.com/safety-and-security* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)