Securing People, Places, and Things: The Human Geography of Security[1]

Disclaimer: This is a conceptual cultural product prepared by the US Army War College and the Army Culture and Foreign Language Directorate (ACFLD). Please refer inquiries to Adam L. Silverman, PhD; Cultural Advisor, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013. Contact information: adam.l.silverman@us.army.mil or 516-712-5384.

[1] Adapted from Adam L. Silverman, "Thinking Security: The Development of a Loss Prevention for Controlling Terrorism", *Security Journal*, 2006, 19.

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commandant US Army War College

SUBJECT: US Army War College Cultural Operations Report: *Securing People, Places, and Things: The Human Geography of Security*

1. This analysis was conducted in response to recent active shooter events. It is adapted from Adam L. Silverman, "Thinking Security: The Development of a Loss Prevention for Controlling Terrorism", *Security Journal*, 2006, 19. Enclosed you will find an in depth strategic level analysis of the socio-cultural dynamics on securing locations and the people within them.

2. US Army War College's Cultural Operations has prepared this report by adapting Adam L. Silverman, "Thinking Security: The Development of a Loss Prevention for Controlling Terrorism", *Security Journal*, 2006, 19, which was based on open source materials from a variety of sources. Citations will be found as footnotes throughout the text.

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Introduction

The recent active shooter incident at Los Angeles International Airport, the series of attacks at schools, workplaces, malls, and offices in the US, as well as the recent al Shabab attack on a shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya has refocused attention on how one should go about conducting security – physical, situational, and human. While the military has a long history of dealing with questions of force protection, from securing bases to coordinating with host country personnel to secure personnel conducting humanitarian assistance and medical operations, there is an applied research approach from criminology and criminal justice that also needs to considered. This approach is most commonly found within the sub-field known as Loss prevention (LP) and focuses on how the private sector can physically secure retail environments to prevent theft and promote security.

Loss prevention is rooted within the criminological theory known as Routine activity theory and attempts to take a proactive approach to securing people, places, and things within the retail environment. The focus on people, the places they occupy, and the things they interact with brings this nexus of criminology, security, Force protection, and theory together within the broad understanding of human geography. Human geography is, at its core, concerned with where people are in relation to their environments and how they interact with these environments as groups or as individuals. The purpose of this US Army War College Cultural Operations Note is to delineate how the proactive loss prevention models of securing people, the retail spaces they frequent as customer or employee, and the items within those spaces can be adapted for getting ahead of the problem of securing public and private locations within the US, as well as the people within them, to retard and/or mitigate potential future attacks.

Routine Activity Theory & the Human Geography of Security

The key concept at the heart of loss prevention is routine activity theory.[2] Routine activity theory, an offshoot of criminological applications of rational choice theory[3], deals with the interaction of three focal components: 1) motivated

[2] Reed Hayes (1997), "Retain Crime Control: A New Operational Strategy", *Security Journal*, VOL 8, No. 3.

[3] Ron L. Akers and Christine S. Sellers (2004), *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

(potential) offenders, 2) valued/high value targets – including targets of opportunity, and 3) adequacy of security.[4] Hard targets are those that have effective security measures: human, technological, or both. Routine activity theory essentially provides a human geography explanation for crime and crime control. When motivated offenders (people) encounter valued items at accessible locations (places and things) that have ineffective or less effective security measures, then the likelihood of crime will go up. As a result in order to reduce and retard crime the key is to be proactive in securing the physical environment (places) in order to protect valued targets (things and places and sometimes personnel) in order to demotivate offenders (people) so as to protect others (people).

The Human Geography of Security: Adapting Loss Prevention Concepts for Proactive Security Applications

Loss prevention techniques, grounded in routine activity theory and human geography, are proactive and focus on preventing criminal activity by making it (more) difficult for motivated offenders to access the valued targets. The human geographic heart of this is the concept of the secure zone. A secure zone is everything beyond the point where the security interaction takes place. In traditional loss prevention this would be a secured shelf display that allows for items to be accessed only one at a time, which makes stealing large amounts difficult, or a store that is under visual surveillance. In the world of Force protection or securing an airport it is anything inside of the security perimeter. These spaces can be considered clean, just like the sterilized areas in an operating suite. Areas, objects, and people outside of the security perimeter are insecure or dirty. To continue the surgical analogy this would be everything behind the sterilized portions of the surgeons and nurses – hands, gowns, caps, facemasks, and sterilized implements are clean; used implements, dirty gloves, gowns, etc are dirty.

The secure zone is everything in the clean area. The question at the heart of the human geography of security is how far out does one wish to or can one push the clean area? Loss prevention at its core is about situational crime prevention through reducing the abilities and opportunities to commit crime, which is a proactive approach. It is more anti-crime than counter-crime. Adapting these concepts to better security personnel, military or civilian, and the facilities they

[4] Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979), "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach, *American Sociological Review*, VOL 44.

inhabit against threats of terrorism or active shooters involves taking a similar proactive anti-terrorism/anti-active shooter approach. This can be done by creating concentric zones of influence in order to expand the secure zone outward. By doing so one pushes the initial contact/s with security as far away as possible from what needs to be secured. As a result a winnowing effect is achieved that significantly reduces the potential for an attack – terrorist or active shooter from occurring.

A good example of this strategy is the admission of additional countries into the European Union (EU). Under the Schengen Accords all of the EU, minus Britain and Ireland, share a common border and entry policy. Once one clears customs and immigration in one EU country, they have entered all EU countries. In practical terms this has allowed the original EU members to push the zone of security all the way out to the East into Poland, Slovakia, Hungary. Moreover, for the geographic core of the EU – Germany, France, Belgium the Southern border is at Greece, Spain, Italy, and Portugal. By pushing the initial security contacts as far south and east as possible, Germany, France, Belgium and other Northern and Western EU members have made security the problem of a handful of states as far away as possible. Similarly, the US has attempted to extend its customs out as far as possible by having US agents checking and securing cargo in as many foreign ports as possible. Doing so is an attempt to better secure the US by pushing that initial security point of contact as far away as possible so as to reduce the possibility of a lethal cargo arriving in a port on the US mainland, Hawaii, or Alaska.

Adapting these concepts for other locations and locales, however, are more difficult. For instance, Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) was designed and built before the events of 9-11. As a result any security improvements for anti-terrorism purposes, specifically to push the secure zone out as far as possible was subject to the tyranny of the actual physical structures and footprint of the airport. Additionally, a question of the most efficient, in terms of flow of people through security, way to establish that initial contact with security had to be considered. This is the human geography component: how do people and the environment interact and how to utilize those interactions to enhance security without overly damaging the passenger/customer experience. The challenges faced at LAX, which were contributing factors to last week's active shooter attack, are faced by a number of other airports, as well as shopping malls, entertainment venues, schools, and governmental and military facilities.

Figure 1: Terminal Map of Los Angeles International Airport

When one examines the physical layout and geography of LAX it is very clear that each of the terminals are distributed hubs separate from the parking areas and the central structures of the facility. As a result each of the eight terminals had its own screening and checkpoint areas. And these screening and checkpoints are behind, in space and time, the ticket areas, baggage pickup, and passenger pickup and drop off. Everyone and everything at LAX is in various stages of being dirty until they finally clear one of these checkpoints. By varying stages of being dirty, I mean they are under closed circuit surveillance - there are armed law enforcement patrols to include K9 teams, interaction with airline ticketing and baggage agents who may be checking names on a watch list, but the actual physical screening of people, specifically passengers, and items, specifically baggage and carry on items, does not occur until one encounters the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints. It is only once one has cleared one of these checkpoints, then one and one's effects can be considered clean.

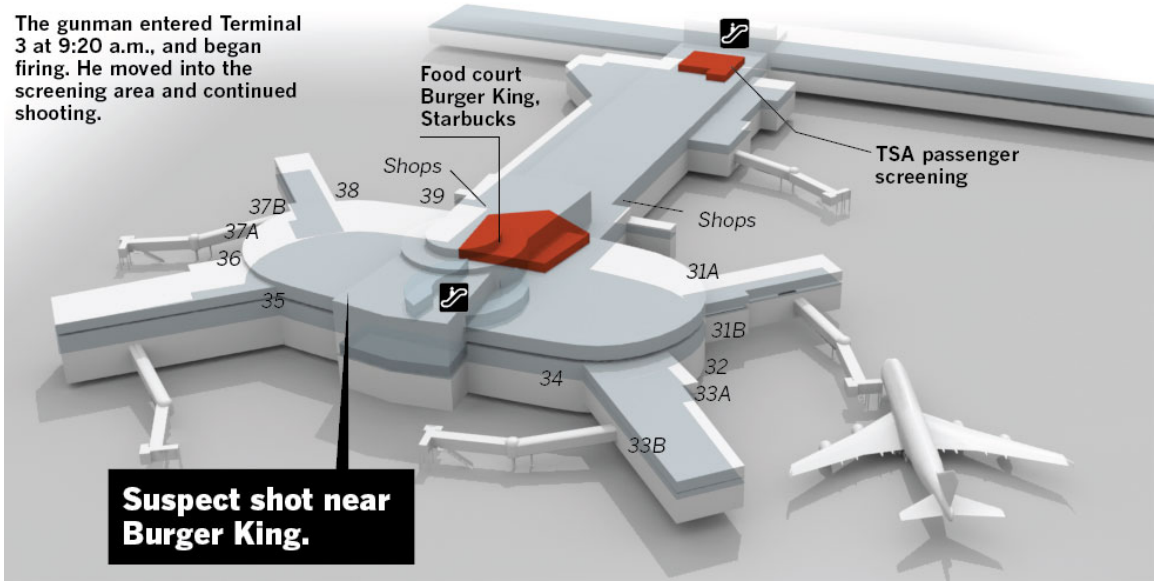

Figure 2: Diagram of LAX Terminal 3[5]

As can be seen when comparing Figures 1 and 2, the actual clean areas of Los Angeles International Airport are all past the TSA screening locations within the terminal. Everything else at LAX is in varying stages of dirty. As such there are significant amounts of places at LAX that can be targeted and those places are regularly occupied by significant numbers of people. From a physical security standpoint, the failure at LAX was having too small of a zone of security. This is why it was reported that TSA personnel advised passengers to retreat into the terminal and followed suit themselves. Given that TSA officers are not armed and rely on civilian, local law enforcement to provide actual policing functions, the only places they could direct passengers and shelter themselves was deeper into the clean zone at LAX.

This failure to push initial points of contact with security as far out as possible leaves airports and other similar facilities vulnerable. The policy dialogue over what to do about mental health issues, domestic violent extremists that are an inverted, fringe mirror of American ideological, political, social, economic, and/or religious beliefs and movements, and access to weaponry, specifically firearms in an ongoing and oft changing dispute over the proper interpretation of the Second Amendment, has succumbed to the current dysfunctional domestic American politics. As a result the only thing that Americans can do is focus on securing the human geography.

[5] http://graphics.latimes.com/storyboard-shooting-LAX-airport/.

As this dysfunctional and highly contentious American political dynamic has artificially narrowed the potential policy and strategy discussions in regards to anti-terrorism and anti-active shooter responses to better securing places so that the people and things in them are safer.

To do so, it is necessary to begin with the core theoretical assumptions behind a human geography approach to security through an application of the proactive concepts at the heart of loss prevention. It is very clear that we have highly motivated potential offenders. The increased number of active shooter incidents is clear from the media coverage, what is not always made so clear is the exponential increase in domestic extremist and terrorist attacks in the US since 2009.[6] These include over thirty events since 2008 that are rarely covered in the news media.[7] It is also clear that we have high value targets – airports, schools, shopping malls, governmental and military facilities and the people that frequent them. The only real specific concern that needs to be addressed is where routine activity theory and situational prevention come together in a security of human geography: the question of suitable and effective human, animal, technological, or combination security measures and safeguards. The primary loss prevention adaptation in order to be proactive is what security measures need to be implemented in regard to potential threats at specific locations.

9-11 is an excellent example of how this should have worked, but did not. Prior to 9-11 there were some very specific examples of attempts to use airplanes as what we would now call vehicular borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). The best of these examples was the Armed Islamic Group's (GIA) hijacking of four planes on Christmas Day of 1994. The GIA flew them over Paris and threatened to crash them into important Parisian landmarks. Fortunately, French security forces were able to talk the GIA out of their plan, the planes were landed, and no significant damage was done other than to the travel plans of hundreds of people. Because the incident was not successful, it did not get significant nor lasting media coverage and as a result important lessons for aviation and airport security were neither learned nor implemented.

[6] http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/hearing.cfm?id=3fd304c9f884bebd65a28be7fc18fdc.

[7] Dave Neiwert a NBC/MSNBC terrorism subject matter experts, who blogs at Crooks and Liars, maintains a list and interactive map of these incidents, it can be found with updates through 2012, here: http://crooksandliars.com/david-neiwert/violence-directed-liberal-and-govern.

As a result positive baggage reconciliation[8] was not considered, nor was hardening of cockpit doors and the air marshals program in the US was allowed to further deteriorate to an unfortunate pre 9-11 low.

Another major security flaw that has still not been addressed is the security at commercial chemical sites and nuclear facilities. In the case of the latter, not only are the concerns about the security that is provided by the private sector[9], but the aging of our facilities places them at greater risk as they reach the end of their functional life cycles[10]. In the case of the former, American chemical facilities, *60 Minutes* focused two stories on the ease with which their reporters could enter and move around within them and both the New York and New Jersey Congressional delegations repeated attempts to achieve better legislative and regulatory oversight outcomes in order to harden these types of sites. The concern was, and still is, that large chemical plants in northern New Jersey still do not have consistent and adequate security and that an attack that released a toxic chemical plume would be carried by prevailing winds across the river and catastrophically affect New York City. This type of attack would, in fact, be more cost effective and easier to carry out through the use of airplane or truck as the VBIED platform than trying to smuggle a chemical device into the US or build one within the US and then deploy it. A great deal of the pushback about reforming chemical and nuclear site security is, of course, the cost, which was also the central pre 9-11 concern towards aviation and airport security.

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[8] Positive baggage reconciliation refers to the practice of matching every checked and loaded bag in an airplane's hold with each passenger on the plane before it takes off. Passengers that cannot be matched with baggage on the flight manifest or vice versa prevent a plane from taking off until the discrepancy is resolved. Moreover, individuals traveling without baggage; especially over considerable distances, draw additional scrutiny until it can be determined why they have no baggage to check.

[9] Brian Wingfield (2013), "Nuclear Reactors in US Seen at Risk of Terrorist Attacks", *Bloomberg Businessweek*: http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-08-15/nuclear-reactors-across-u-dot-s-dot-seen-vulnerable-to-terrorist-attack.

[10] Edwin Lyman (2003), "Nuclear Plant Protection and Homeland Security", Union of Concerned Scientists: http://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear_power/nuclear_power_risk/sabotage_and_attacks_on_reactors/nuclear-plant-protection-and.html.

Towards a Human Geography of Security: Suggested Solutions to Security Problems

One of the first priorities in developing a proactive human geography of security is to adjust one's understanding of the costs. Proper and appropriate investments in security are controllable and can be budgeted for, as opposed to after the fact responses that cannot be accounted for in normal budgeting and often have catastrophic costs in dollars, material, personnel, and time. This was the key lesson that should have been learned from 9-11: the belief that dollars spent on security hurt the bottom line. This is not to say that security should be made so vast or expansive that no one will want to live, work, or recreate in a given set of locations. The concern that people will choose not to spend time or money in locales that make security invasive and unpleasant is a legitimate one. As a result it is necessary to rethink how we secure places and the people and things within them so as not to shore up a weak area without creating both new vulnerabilities and undue burdens on the people that frequent public and private facilities.

To some extent this requires rethinking our spaces. Where we place the initial points of contact with security – how far we can push out the clean zone – creates opportunities, such as LAX, even as it retards others. Regardless of the screening protocols used, or where they are located, a better approach rooted in places and how people interact with and within them, is to establish the first contact with security and conduct the first checks as far from the main portion of the facility as possible. Doing it at the entrance or an existing architectural chokepoint simply creates the problems seen at LAX that contributed to the security vulnerability exploited by Mr. Ciancia. An additional concern is to establish this initial security check in as welcoming and pleasant a manner as possible. Security that makes everyone feel as if they would rather not hassle or that they are a potential suspect is itself counterproductive and ineffective. For instance, Little Rock International Airport, borrowing a practice from what the Israelis do at Ben Gurion Airport, do a very quick, preliminary mirror and K9 sweep of all vehicles coming into the parking areas. While this does not make everything from parking into the terminals clean, it does push the initial security zone outside the first physical structures at the airport and begins the winnowing process until one clears the TSA checkpoints and enters the fully clean area of the airport.

A good way to resolve this problem by adapting the loss prevention concepts for anti-terrorism and anti-active shooter control, is to implement a simple checklist:

1) Which groups or individuals present a threat to operations and facilities and what kind of threat do the present?

The first question begins with people, both groups and individuals, at the heart of a human geography of security. It is rooted in both intelligence and information. The primary issue is to determine what the threat is or could be by having reliable intelligence about which groups are likely to have grievances against one's operations. Furthermore, effective and functional intelligence will indicate the preferred tactics and targets, providing key information for deciding what areas need better or different forms of security. This, however, is not a panacea. There will always be aggrieved individuals that are not objective members of groups and that cannot be tracked through using intelligence and information. Mr. Ciancia was one. Timothy McVeigh who never formally joined any militia, white separatist, or anti-government group was another. As such, additional questions need to be asked that deal with places and things.

2) Does the location/item need to be secured?

3) What is the extent of the location's vulnerability?

These items quickly allow the security specialist to focus attention on those areas that are vulnerable. As security resources are often limited, it is not possible, nor is it probably absolutely necessary to secure every location or item. Being able to decide which areas and items need protecting, and how vulnerable they are, allows for a more effective deployment of resources. For instance, McDonald's would have a difficult time trying to secure each of its restaurants. The whole notion of fast food is predicated on the ease of access, so taking similar steps to those in place at airports, theme parks, or governmental facilities would be self defeating. But the physical security of each store, its employees, and the customers at them is not really McDonald's real safety concern. The real concern is the food supply chain and the ability to extend their security zone of influence all the way back to farms and feedlots. McDonalds' brand cannot absorb a blow of confidence if significant numbers of its patrons became ill as a result of receiving tainted food product, so ensuring the safety of its food supply is really McDonald's primary security concern.

4) Does the security need to be human, animal, technological/physical structural, or some combination?

5) How can the zone of security influence be extended away from the area to be secured?

Items 4 and 5 are both related and must be implemented to secure and protect a wide variety of facilities – some already in existence, some not yet built. In all facilities though, it is important to incorporate security through environmental

design – making use of the architecture or geography of the site to enhance and enable security. This must be augmented with human, animal, and/or technological responses. The best security response is to offset the weaknesses in one system with the strengths of the others. The failure at LAX was that by using the existing structure as the basis for locating the TSA checkpoints, the secure zone was too small and the checkpoints themselves and the personnel manning them, became high value and easily accessible targets.

6) What effect will the security response have on the people accessing the site?

The final item on the checklist, which is especially important for the commercial sector, or where, as in an airport, the public and private sector interact, is the effect that proactive security measures will have on people. It is possible to completely secure or harden all of our commercial, retail, private sector, and public facilities so that no one would want to attack them. However, no one would want to frequent any place that was completely hardened and secure as the human experience would be unpleasant and intolerable. So the real question of risk that has to inform any strategy of security is how to enhance the security of places and the things and people that inhabit them in such a way that there is both a sense of safety for and welcoming of people in and to those sites.

Citizens will not want to interact with government if entering every governmental facility is like trying to enter a maximum security prison. Similarly no one will want to frequent offices, stores, and/or entertainment venues that have overly intrusive security measures. And these concerns go to costs: both short and long term. While applying these six checklist concepts to create a human geography of security will increase short term costs, these are controllable as they can be planned and budgeted for, whereas after the fact responses tend to be catastrophically expensive in both the lives affected and dollars. In the long term they should, however, decrease costs through the prevention of catastrophic payouts in health care and insurance, increased spending to improve security and the security experience after the fact, and for the private sector by increasing customer and client responses and presence through engendering a sense of secure welcome in an office, store, mall, or airport.

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