

Global threats: putting risk management systems in place

Increased threat to personnel abroad and laws regarding governance demands that SMEs and Primes now actively consider safety procedures a priority for all personnel actively engaged in the international procurement and supply process. Here, National Security and Resilience Consortium Executive Counsellors Frank Smyth and Simon France of Trango Ltd comment on the nature of the global threats and management systems required to mitigate the risk.



Trango's 24/7/365 Operations Centre, where responses and support to clients anywhere in the world is coordinated

The UK is currently the seventh largest global supplier of defence capability and is widely acknowledged as a world leader in diverse technologies and systems. This draws our staff across the globe in the pursuit of business.

The visible threats which have emerged during the last ten years have placed increasing emphasis on the development of highly efficient real-time management systems which support the defence suppliers and manufacturers, civilian and government personnel, and aid agencies as they move through areas of both potential risk and actual conflict.

These concerns now extend to the organisations responsible for supporting both government initiatives and the trade associations operating internationally across the sector on behalf of its members.

Directors and officers of UK businesses are sitting up and taking note of a new piece of legislation that came into force on 6 April 2008. The ominous sounding offence of Corporate Manslaughter made it into the statute books with the passing of the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007.

Brought in following various high-profile cases of management failings such as the Zeebrugge disaster and various rail crashes, the new law requires the courts to look at the way a company manages and organises its activities in cases where a death has occurred. The legislation specifically concentrates on instances where there have been failures by senior management to provide a proper duty of care. Any business involved in a serious incident will come under particular scrutiny in terms of company processes relating to health & safety, training or supervision as well as the standard of maintenance on equipment and buildings.

As a result of these factors, the matter of addressing business risk in even the smallest company is one that is set to become ever more important.

As well as following good practice and minimising risks, there is another part of the solution that the company itself can provide to protect individual employees. This can be divided into three distinct areas which address the various stages of planning and execution that staff travelling internally or internationally should follow. The Corporate Manslaughter legislation also puts a responsibility of duty of care on the individual to ensure they are prepared while the company ensures the processes and procedures from a wider context are in place.

John Ellis, CEO of Middle East Aerospace Consortium, has worked in North Africa and the Middle East for much of the last 30 years, and currently supports activities of the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA),

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and the National Security and Resilience Consortium (NS&RC). Mr Ellis said: *"In my opinion, the potential threat level to businessmen and women visiting my spheres of operation has probably increased ten fold in the last decade. My primary concerns for both my own safety and that of those I am working abroad with is the 'short notice changes to itineraries' – journeys where you don't accurately know where you are going and the regular need to suddenly use local taxi drivers as opposed to known individuals. Of course, we know of some of the threats which lie around the corner but we cannot predict all of them or when or where they may affect our programme."*

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In 2008-09 the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) dealt with nearly 2.1 million consular enquiries across the world. In addition to over 3000 hospitalisations, 7000 detentions and 5500 deaths, they responded to a further 34,443 requests for assistance.

The FCO provides intelligence-based advice on a real-time basis and makes recommendations regarding travel. This advice can change hourly and as such should be monitored – www.fco.gov.uk/travel

The four most serious threats to travellers abroad are:

- Medical crisis
- Natural and man-made disasters
- Inability to communicate effectively with UK base through loss of communication
- Caught in a terrorist incident, eg bombing, kidnap, attack or hijack

Serious though these threats may be, there can be a misguided assumption that help is immediately at hand or that they could not have been avoided.

Prior to any journey being undertaken a documented process should be in place which guides the traveller through a checklist which would ensure the traveller is aware of the planning they should complete. Included within the checklist would be items such as good travel insurance, medical

evacuation, a detailed country brief covering medical requirements, cultural issues and any specific 'meet and greet' arrangements at the destination.

Many trips require the use of international, internal and chartered airlines to reach remote locations or production sites. While international airlines can quickly be checked out for their safety record, as can many internal airlines, the lesser known charter companies should also be scrutinised to see what risk rating they have been given by the Civil Aviation Authority of the particular country.

The final pre-journey check is the authorisation for the journey to take place; this involves the line manager who should ensure all checks have been completed. If the planning stage is approached with meticulous thought, many potential 'what if' problems can be alleviated; however, when things do go wrong they usually go wrong very quickly which is when a 24/7/365 support centre proves to be invaluable.

Problems for the traveller can manifest themselves in many ways; ie road traffic accidents, loss of passports or credit cards, security issues during the journey. Good intelligence/country briefs can help to prepare the traveller but things can go wrong that have not been predicted, for example a coup d'état or a natural disaster. It is at this stage that the planning and support available becomes critical. Who do I tell? How do I tell them? What must I do to try and minimise the impact on personal safety?

When the unexpected strikes a member of staff, employers, the families of those individuals and most importantly of all those affected on the ground need to know exactly what is available to them and most importantly what may not be. As such business men and women within the defence and national security and resilience sectors should be wary about making assumptions regarding sufficient capacity to cope with a crisis or to plug gaps in their resource.

All companies currently seeking to exploit business opportunities in countries defined by the FCO as representing any degree of risk to the employee should perhaps ask the following questions:

- Do they have an emergency response plan in place?
- Do they have an immediate, strategic and logistically relevant crisis management and contingency plans to support the work of their employees in areas designated as of potential risk?
- Have they sufficiently mitigated their corporate responsibility effectively under current governance laws?
- Do they undertake exercises annually to determine their actual capability?
- Do they have the capability to manage a potential crisis?
- Do they provide the appropriate training for international travel?
- Can they deal with the media?

There are integrated solutions to these challenges. One solution is that offered by Europe's National Security and Resilience Consortium – www.nsandr.co.uk

John Baker, Head of NS&RC UK and International Operations, said: *"In association with TAG International Training, we have created a formidable integrated capability entirely suited to the types of scenarios and threat levels we all now face when travelling abroad. This extends from risk analysis, media training, computer modeling and role play, through to real-time 24/7/365 monitoring of personnel and ultimately to actual crisis management and interventions which support the rapid extraction or safe evacuation of personnel."*

Large, modern aircraft have made travel to the four corners of the world achievable, usually within 24 hours. With that freedom comes a host of possible scenarios that can quickly overwhelm the unwary traveller.

To ensure that your employees return safely and mitigate the risk to your company in terms of current legislation, the planning, preparation, response and support to travellers and their eventual repatriation are important. Using the right expertise to support your company is the first major step.



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