

CIVIL UNREST PREPAREDNESS

PROACTIVE SECURITY RELATING TO CIVIL UNREST

Throughout the past 70 years, the United States has seen numerous demonstrations stemming from social justice and national policy issues. While these demonstrations often occur in the form of a peaceful march or rally, some gatherings have seen violent outbreaks and rioting¹.

In the wake of widespread demonstrations during the Summer of 2020, many small business owners hired local private security contractors to provide guards to protect their businesses. Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland saw the most violent activity per capita and the most sustained demonstration activity. Private security firms in these and other cities report having to turn potential clients away due to the high demand for services². Demand has increased not only due to the desire for a crime deterrent amid unrest but also due to decreased response times of overwhelmed police departments. Given the police focus with demonstrations in major cities, local business establishments have reported up to an hour wait time before police are able to respond to emergency calls for assistance in dealing with opportunistic looting or vandalism stemming from the riots. Some of the most prevalent risks in these areas share three common trends:



Personnel and property

Criminal activity such as theft, looting, and arson is more likely to occur after dark, particularly in urban environments where there is easier movement between areas. Response limitations on law enforcement personnel have the potential to exacerbate this situation.



Infrastructure

The biggest infrastructure risks will likely be to private property and retail storefronts which are in or near protest areas and not necessarily a focus of law enforcement.



Reputation

Recent trends indicate that reputational risk with financial impact can be caused when a business or its key leadership is associated with a political party or candidate. The specific threats from social media call for boycotts.

¹ "Protest or Mayhem? How to Prevent Rioting with Private Security," ISSM Protective Services. September 9, 2015.

² Baker, Geoff. "More Businesses Fearing Property Damage Hire Private Security Guards in Wake of Protests," Seattle Times. June 11, 2020.

COMMERCIAL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

Have a robust intelligence capability in place.

Intelligence support during a time of unrest will allow local operations or security managers to have a near real-time overview of the local climate and operating environment should tensions rapidly escalate.

Minimize presenting facilities as a soft target for opportunistic criminal activity.

Having a proactive plan in place to deter criminal activity will aid in protecting employees and assets.

Advance Planning

Consider identifying and procuring security services to augment existing security team. Contract security companies will likely experience a surge in demand for their services and may prioritize service to existing clients.

- Conduct security system tests to make sure all CCTV, communication, barrier, fire suppression, and alarm systems are fully operational and make any necessary repairs.
- Evaluate placement of high-value assets to limit ease of access if unrest occurs (i.e., nothing of high-value next to the front door or visible through windows) and the proper security storage of high-value assets.
- Conduct tabletop and operational exercises and training for security and GSOC operators to ensure they are fully prepared for potential threats and emergency situations.
- To avoid complacency, ensure security personnel are briefed and remain alert for potential threats and known risks associated with civil unrest in their local area.
- Ensure applicable environmental security concerns such as afterhours office and parking area lighting and perimeter fencing are inspected and operational.
- Work with operations and facilities to source vendors to respond in the event that immediate physical repairs are needed. Determine the most vulnerable locations and proactively secure these services before damage occurs.

Work with the business operations team and HR to determine process to secure the locations in the event immediate evacuation is needed.

- Key control
- Securing locations via alarm activation
- Contact protocols
- Notification process for all employees

Return-to-Work protocols

- Ensure emergency kits are fully stocked, operational, and in an easily accessible location.
- If possible, have employees return home prior to dark and avoid coming into office locations during periods of civil unrest.

SECURITY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

1. Review current crisis plan

Consider conducting exercises or drills to ensure that all relevant personnel are fully aware of current policies for emergency preparedness and business continuity, especially as it relates to closing and evacuation procedures.

- Closing procedures
- Evacuation procedures
- Communication protocols

2. Establish and maintain communication

Ensure there is an established communications plan that provides positive communication processes for use during critical incidents. This will facilitate effective emergency notifications and responses among employees, executives, and clients.

- A reliable means of information dissemination is critical during times of crises.
- Communication should occur at regular intervals to ensure a consistent flow of information is maintained.
- A formalized plan should include built-in redundancies for primary and alternate communication methods if various digital and cellular systems are disrupted.

3. Social media/local media/open source intelligence monitoring for location and brand threats

Opportunists, criminals, and influencers have continued to use social media to communicate, coordinate, and disseminate information. These individuals use simple words or phrases to create a “trending” topic that allows others the ease of access to current information ranging from demonstration locations to police responses.

- Monitoring social media or online forums and acting upon credible threats and trends will allow security details and site managers to adequately prepare to deter any threats.
- Subscribe to local, state, and federal governmental outreach programs and intelligence products such as OSAC, DSAC, state intelligence fusion centers, etc.
- Meet with local, state, and federal law enforcement personnel for intelligence and information sharing.
- Participate in business alliance groups for intelligence and information sharing.

Monitoring for the following will provide advanced warning and the time needed to mitigate the threats and risk to your people, facilities, assets, operations, and reputation.

- Public sentiment
- Brand, company, facility, locations, and personnel mentions
- Known and evolving influencer hashtags
- Protest announcements and updates
- Trending trial announcements, social or racial injustice mentions and hashtags
- Local news coverage to stay up to date on protests and any breaking events.

4. Prioritize Historical and Known Threats

Businesses should consider ranking their locations in terms of risk regarding possible demonstrations, both in terms of facilities near probable demonstration hot spots and potential risks should demonstrations occur.

- The highest-risk locations should consider preemptively securing their premises to minimize property damage—including the potential of boarding up windows and doors.

5. Contingency Planning for Unanticipated Threats

Businesses should also consider including intelligence inputs into their crisis management plans and providing a feedback loop to ensure intelligence is disseminated timely and that analysts' focus is evolving to the priorities of the moment which allows for more time to mitigate the threats.

6. Transportation Routes Should Be Reviewed and Contingency Plans Made

Include alternative routes, particularly if the primary route travels through areas likely to encounter civil unrest. This is especially the case when moving people or assets after dark.

7. Companies Should Assess the Outside of their Critical Infrastructure

See if there are any unsecured objects that could be used by individuals for blockades or projectiles. These items should be removed and secured. If renting, work with the landlord to secure items or mitigate access to them.

8. Secure Resources

During times of crisis, security resources are likely to become constrained. Securing resources prior to crisis events will be critical to success. When planning for coverage, a minimum of two security personnel should be stationed at a location where security will be needed.

9. Consider Partial Closing of Retail Branches

Retail locations are likely higher-probability targets. Consider closing lobbies and drive-thru locations at some point on the day the verdict is expected to be handed down, if the situation merits, based on risk evaluation of the location.

10. Conduct Security System Tests

Confirm that all CCTV, security, fire, and alarm systems are operational. Ensure process for either mechanical or electronic lock-down of perimeter doors is in place and tested. Companies should also consider retaining video footage for a minimum of 30 days.

11. Review and Enforce Company Social Media Policy Regarding Political Commentary from Employees

With high political tensions, personnel should be aware that any comment, for or against the outcome, may be used by the opposite side to bring unwanted attention to the individual and the company. As seen in other incidents, social media comments may be used to incite boycotts, targeted protests against the company, harassment, property damage, and even potential violence. Companies should consider forewarning employees that references to political statements in car bumper stickers, shirts, caps, backpacks, and other personal items may draw unwanted attention.

12. Plan for Recovery

Make necessary arrangements in advance for repair and recovery resources to clean up and restore damaged sites and bring them back to full operation quickly.

EXECUTIVE AND RESIDENTIAL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

Clients are consistently requesting additional protective agent resources, including critical incident response teams at office locations and residences.

Protective agents patrolling or conspicuously standing by a site act as a strong deterrent to opportunistic criminal activity.

Executives should consider leaving crowded urban locations and centers for alternative residences in more remote locations.

Additional coverage and support can be provided at those remote locations.

Consider adding EMT and medical personnel to existing support teams for time periods surrounding the trial in areas prone to violent protests.

With decreased response times from emergency services due to demonstrations or potential riots, having medically trained personnel on site will decrease reliance on first responders for medical emergencies.

Recommendations provided to clients

- If a location is not a priority or if it is near a potential demonstration, shut down and board up the office location(s) on the day prior to any planned demonstrations related to the verdict, where there is a significant chance of violence.
- Corporate locations: Provide critical incident response teams prioritized for internal employee support and evacuation—not to fend off intruders.
- Residential locations: Provide additional support for executives during a time of high stress.

QUESTIONS?

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