



Home Office



High Footfall Screening Trials

Following the step change in the tempo of terrorist attacks across Europe and the UK, specialists from the Home Office and other Government departments have been working with industry to improve the security of crowded places in the UK. The aim is to give entertainment venues, sports arenas, visitor attractions, shopping centres, etc., an insight into how developments in security technology can reduce the risk of terrorist attacks without inconveniencing their visitors or business.

The Home Office's Joint Security and Resilience Centre (JSaRC), in partnership with the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (the national technical authority for physical protective security, www.cpni.gov.uk), is spearheading this work through a series of trials of high footfall screening technologies at various crowded places across the UK. These focus on techniques for detecting mass-casualty threat items, such as improvised explosive devices and firearms, in crowds entering a site without the delay caused by intrusive security processes.

Thus far, five sites and six technology providers have volunteered to participate. The sites represent typical crowded places who all seek to combine a high level of security assurance with minimum interference with their visitors. The trials help the sites develop optimal concepts of operation that combine people, processes and technology. The aim is to provide an enhanced visitor experience through easy access combined with assurance about their own security.

The technology providers are seeking to understand how their equipment works best in the field. So often, products that seem ideal in the laboratory or test environment fail to live up to expectation when deployed in operational settings. The trials help focus product design and development in a way that is not achievable through other means. One technology provider has commented that the product development lessons learned in a six-week trial is equivalent to a year of market research.

These trials form part of a wider co-ordinated government approach to protecting UK crowded places in partnership with the Police and private sector and support the extensive work already undertaken by the Police's National Counter Terrorism Security Office. Other parts of Government support the early steps necessary to bring innovative technologies to market through testing and evaluation programmes. All of the cutting-edge products deployed in the trials— many of which have been developed by UK companies – have undergone such evaluation to establish their detection capability and safety.

Preventing mass casualty attacks is a global challenge and the UK is a recognised leader in the field. The outcome of these trials will be shared with key international partners, shortening considerably their learning cycle and promoting new technology options to improve protective security. This will enhance the standing of the UK security sector which has a rich history of innovation and skill.

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