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THE PRACTICAL DIMENSION OF THE RESPONSE OF PUBLIC SECURITY INSTITUTIONS TO CONTEMPORARY TERRORIST ATTACKS

INTRIDUCTION

Terrorism and terrorist attacks – nature and trends of evolution

Contemporary terrorism is identified as a real and serious threat in national, regional and global dimensions. Despite the decreasing statistics related to terrorist attacks in recent years, the security environment is indicative of the development of terrorist threats. According to the European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2021 (TE-SAT, 2021), the number of persons detained on suspicion of terrorist activities remained high in 2020 (449). There were significantly fewer such persons than in previous years (2018 – 783; 2019 – 723), but according to Europol experts, this may be due to the effects of pandemic restrictions rather than a continuing trend of decreasing terrorist activity. Other observed trends in the development of terrorism are also relevant, which include a steady increase in the proportion of attacks carried out by single perpetrators (lone wolves or solo terrorists), the use of increasingly less sophisticated tools (white weapons, cars, arson), and the involvement of jihadists in rebuilding online propaganda tools (TE-SAT, 2019–2021). A single ideology could not be identified as more prominent than another regarding the background of the attacks. Of the total 57 attacks in the EU, left-wing and anarchist attacks accounted for the largest percentage (25), followed by separatist perpetrators and jihadists (14 attacks) and right-wing bombers (4). This diversity of motivations for terrorist activity has been in place since time immemorial and has been aptly described by Sebastian Wojciechowski, who compared terrorism to a hydra with many heads – symbolising the diverse backgrounds of the perpetrators (Wojciechowski, 2017: 275).

Another trend in contemporary terrorism highlighted by Jason Destein, is concerning its fifth wave and that it has the hallmarks of revenge terrorism (Destein, 2020: 22). The messages of perpetrators who carry out successful attacks are increasingly void of any political context or demands for social change. In most cases, the sole aim of the attacks is violent aggression and violence aimed at targets that are completely random and unrelated to the goals of the organisation or the individual perpetrators. This causes real difficulties at the stage of identifying the targets of terrorist action. Moreo-

ver, it significantly reduces the possibility of using the arithmetical idea of risk assessment (Chunlin, Chong-Kuan, Yea-Saen, Tat-Seng, 2012: 601). In this case, historical data, statistics and evolutionary trends cannot be the only factors influencing the design of prevention and preparedness solutions. The European Commission (2020) also points this out, stressing that many factors not related to mathematical or historical data should be examined in the risk identification process. The threat of terrorism is a combination of various political, ideological and sociological factors. A key step in assessing the likelihood of a terrorist attack is to consider international developments, such as civil wars, clashes between extreme ideologies, and conflicts that leave many people vulnerable to poverty, migration and radicalisation (an example of such a conflict within Europe is the war in Ukraine). These types of international events have an impact on the level of local security and affect the vulnerability of communities to radicalisation and extremism. There is also the economic aspect, which can be an excellent source of conflict and aggression, including terrorist aggression.

Both statistical snapshots (TE-SAT, GTD) and more detailed case studies (Maresova, Kuca, 2015: 50–56), indicate the leading methods and tools of terrorist attacks in correlation to the places they occur. The observed trends are not accidental and result from the evolution and strengthening of anti-terrorist systems in European countries. Among other things, due to the stronger structures and powers of special services in individual states, together with their effective international cooperation (European Council, 2022), the possibilities of preventing attacks organised by complex personal structures have increased. The monitoring of radical and extremist circles has produced certain results by eliminating some terrorist activity at the stage of preparing for attacks (TE-SAT, 2021). In a significant number of cases, the intelligence services are more effective against perpetrators making attempts to communicate, and prepare for attacks by acquiring materials to carry them out. Any activity by members of such an organisation is vulnerable to detection and increases the risk of failure. Terrorist groups perfectly understand the mechanisms of the operational work of the services and adapt dynamically to the increasingly difficult conditions of conducting clandestine conspiracy activities. In an asymmetric conflict, terrorists look for weaknesses in the opponent and opportunities to attack an organised and orderly state or a specific community (Garforio, 2013). Hence the increasing number of attacks carried out by single perpetrators, operating with methods and tools that are widely available (knives, machetes, crossbows, vehicles, etc.). They have started to attack more and more spectacularly to keep the media message attractive. The aircraft became a tool (WTC, 2001), and the icon of democracy and economic development disappeared forever from the image of modern New York. Children, who had hitherto been a mere incidental target, became a tool for the realisation of a terrorist objective at its most macabre with terrifying premeditation (Bieslan, 2004). Contemporary cities have become fields of almost regular battles (Paris, 2015), and the perpetrators, realising the professionalism of special forces, are increasingly using the form of mass murder to maximise the number of victims before the arrival of counter-terrorist sub-units (Utoya, 2011).

Despite the increase in the number of terrorist attacks involving single perpetrators, one cannot still exclude the possibility of preparing and carrying out an organised attack involving several perpetrators, multiple locations and a variety of tools. What is more,

the key factor in such cases is very often the time factor, which can be a determinant of the execution of an attack in a simultaneous formula (several attacks in different places at the same time) or in a sequential formula (several attacks occurring immediately after each other). Such deliberate time management by the perpetrators increases momentum and chaos and disorganises the response of the first on the scene. Kathleen Deloughery (2003) points out that organising simultaneous attacks from the perpetrators' perspective guarantees them more victims, and greater spectacularity and thus translates into greater appeal from a media perspective. Thus, attacks organised in the formula of several smaller attacks have a greater chance of ensuring the success of a terrorist organisation. From the terrorists' perspectives, success is usually understood as the achievement of long-term effects in the form of lasting fear and terror in society, as well as susceptibility to change in the area of the terrorist organisation's main political objectives.

The above trends and key theses from analyses and reports on terrorism allow some basic conclusions to be drawn about the nature of the threat. First and foremost, terrorism is an asymmetrical threat, difficult to predict and does not fit into any of the standards and classifications of regular armed conflict. The perpetrators of attacks are constantly adapting their methods and tools of attack to the increasingly effective counter-terrorism efforts of special forces. Attacks are increasingly committed without coordinated preparation (single perpetrators using simple tools of the crime). The key factor used by the perpetrators is time, both in terms of simultaneity and sequencing (to increase the impact and reduce the possibility of responding effectively to multi-area organised attacks) and to maximise the time of the attack in the case of mass killers (to increase the number of victims before police or special forces patrols arrive). All these features of contemporary terrorism make responding to terrorist attacks a multi-area challenge for the state and the international community.

Responding to terrorist attacks in the institutional dimension

From the subjective aspect, the response to terrorist attacks can be considered in at least two areas. The first is focused on the personal dimension of security and is carried out by an individual or a social group not organised into a specific institution. It will involve a direct response to incidents, with the primary goal of saving the lives, health and property of threatened individuals or groups (Stelmach, 2021). The second one (which is the subject of this discussion) concerns the institutional dimension and is carried out by public security actors, which include both the state sector (services, guards, police forces, rescue forces, etc.), the private sector (physical security personnel, technical security area, critical infrastructure operators, etc.) and the social sector (associations, foundations, volunteers, etc.). This two-area (personal and institutional) dimension of the response is complemented by appropriate legal bases, procedures, financial and material security, communication, command and cooperation elements. All these elements should form an efficient, coordinated and effective system of response to terrorist events.

Institutional responses to attacks will involve a variety of competent and territorial security actors (depending on the scale and nature of the attack). When a terrorist at-

tack overwhelms the resources and capabilities of local security organisations, rescuers from other cities, regions and countries will arrive on the scene to support local first responders. In the case of long-term attacks such as hostage situations, the cooperation of police and military components cannot be excluded. Also in the area of emergency medical care, there will be many tasks involving a range of institutions both on and off the scene (paramedics, medical transport, hospital emergency departments, etc.). At the scene of an incident, a variety of security actors are expected to be responsible for securing the scene (police, military), obtaining information (special services), fire safety (fire brigade), administering threatened public or private spaces, organising evacuations, and securing the scene of the attack from an operational and investigative perspective. Skilled support staff may be deployed for specialised activities such as debris removal, restoration of infrastructure and transport. Local community members and volunteers can travel to the scene of the attack to try to assist the response system. Other concerned individuals and organisations may send food, supplies and equipment (in the event of a prolonged terrorist threat). Due to the media nature of the event, it is important to be aware of the presence of a significant number of journalists, as well as bystanders interested in the event regardless of the threat to life and health that exists. It is also the duty of those responding to an attack to organise a place for collecting and verifying the bodies of victims, dressing the wounded, providing psychological assistance, preparing information and assistance points for family members arriving at the place of the completed or unfolding attack. The scope and scale of the institutions involved in responding to a terrorist attack will always depend on its nature, momentum and duration. Added to this is the need to secure the scene against secondary attacks, weather conditions and other factors that may unexpectedly arise and complicate crisis management at the scene (RAND Corporation, 2004). In addition to the institutional dimension of responding to assaults, critical organisational elements should be highlighted. These will include the command of operations at the scene of an attack, the coordination of undertakings at different territorial and institutional levels of the crisis management system, communication and liaison representatives, which are crucial when tasks are being carried out by many actors under time pressure.

Due to the nature of a terrorist attack, especially its significant impact of fear on the attacked community, response efforts should focus on minimizing the psychological effects and preventing the emergence of secondary effects of terrorist activity. Alongside public security institutions, psychologists, community leaders and representatives of public administration should be on the scene. They will be responsible for direct assistance to the victims of the incident in the sphere of maintaining high psychological conditions. They should increase the mental strength of the community in the fight against an attack targeting the sense of personal and collective security (RAN, 2020).

The components of the institutional dimension of the response indicate that it is a heterogeneous area where effectiveness will be influenced by many factors. These include the legal basis for action, personnel and material resources, time of readiness for action, elements of cooperation, coordination and command, procedures for action, the infrastructure necessary to minimise the effects of attacks in the form of command posts, means of rescue transport, hospitals or centres providing psychological assistance (Grocki, 2020: 42). The factors listed above are those that are closely related

to the institutional dimension of the response and can be properly planned, prepared and used by the state in a crisis. In addition to them, several variables are independent of the institutional dimension of the response and these are mainly the characteristics of the perpetrators. This includes their number, the methods and tools they use, the behaviour of the victims (including the panic dimension), the number of victims and people on the scene, the weather conditions and the time that may generate further challenges and threats. The simultaneity and sequence of attacks can complicate the coordination of rescue efforts (Deloughery, 2013), and the prolonged nature of the emergency may result in increased media on the scene or depleted resources on the part of those responding to the event. There are many more of these elements and factors affecting the outcome and quality of counter-terrorism operations at the scene of a crisis, and the final number and variety will depend on the nature of the attack.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research area of contemporary terrorism and terrorist attacks has been explored in recent years by many scientists and experts representing a variety of research and academic backgrounds. According to reports and analyses published by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), the number of terrorist attacks worldwide has decreased by over 50% since 2014 and the number of fatalities by over 54% (GTD 2019). Similarly, successive terrorist threat reports published by Europol show a continuing annual downward trend in the overall number of attacks, victims and persons arrested for terrorist activities (TE-SAT, 2010–2021).

In the context of attack perpetrators' methods, researchers highlight a significant increase in incidents carried out by lone perpetrators using simple tools that are widely available and do not require special permits or group coordination (Pauwels, 2021: 678–691). These include 'home-made' explosive devices, firearms, knives, machetes and vehicles (TE-SAT, 2021). Terrorist organisations in their propaganda encourage perpetrators to carry out attacks using such tools, as they result in a low probability of detection in the preparation of the attack and high effectiveness in the first minutes after the attack begins (until the arrival of police forces). Current statistics and trends in the perpetrators' choice of attack locations indicate an increased targeting of soft targets by attackers. This causes real difficulties in preventing incidents (given the need to maintain the public nature of the site and public space) and makes a response in populated spaces and buildings more difficult (Schmid, 2021).

Much less popular than research into the meaning of terrorism and the specifics of attacks is the area of counter-terrorism and counter-terrorism among researchers (especially in terms of actions on the scene). The reasons for this tendency were subjected to scientific analysis, the results of which were published in *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Schmid, Forest, Lowe, 2021). According to researchers, the low number of studies and publications in this area may be due to several reasons, including objective difficulties in obtaining open and reliable information on the implementation of tasks both by special services at the stage of preventing attacks and special forces at the stage of responding to events or during the arrest of persons suspected of terrorist activities.

There is also, as in the case of terrorism, a certain problem of definition, which manifests itself, for example, in different definitions of basic concepts such as anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism. Differences in meaning occur in this area both in the legal acts of selected countries and in the definitions of the mentioned activities proposed by researchers. The present research shows that the most well-known publications among practitioners and researchers addressing the issue of counter-terrorism are (in order of percentage of their familiarity among the surveyed experts) *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (Silke, 2019), *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers* (Ganor, 2005), *Countering Terrorism* (Crenshaw, LaFree, 2017), *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Art, Richardson, 2007) and *Essentials of Counterterrorism* (Forest, 2015). Two things should be stressed in this regard. Firstly, all of these publications mainly refer to the concept of counterterrorism in very broad terms, primarily describing counter-terrorism without referring comprehensively to the actions of forces and services at the scene of an incident. Secondly, the scale of familiarity of the surveyed experts with these works is only between 4% and 17% (Schmid, Forest, Lowe, 2021).

Thomas Renard draws attention to the noticeable deficit of publications on counter-terrorism, especially anti-terrorist policy. He stresses that with a significant number of books, scientific articles and reports from expert centres, there are few titles dedicated to combating the threat or minimising the effects of attacks. A significant amount of research has been conducted on various aspects related to the responses to terrorism. There have, for instance, been many studies conducted on specific counter-terrorism operations or campaigns, as well as on specific aspects of counterterrorism such as targeted killings, the use of drones, or counter-terrorism ethics more broadly. He points to the lack of scientific journals and publishing series dedicated to countering the threat in the dimension of actions at the stage of responding to terrorist attacks. He mentions the EU-funded Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues as examples of content related to combating terrorism (Renard, 2021).

A significant deficit of scientific publications is also identified in the area of response to terrorist attacks. The indicated gap in the practical dimension is filled by reports, analyses and instructions from national and international expert institutions. A comprehensive source of information in this regard is the manual published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency entitled *Managing the Emergency Consequences of Terrorist Incidents* (FEMA, 2002). The document is divided into several chapters and refers in detail to the specifics of terrorist attacks, conceptual aspects of response planning, and lists and describes many specific solutions for conducting activities on the scene. The document is intended for use by US public safety institutions, but many of the solutions proposed therein can be successfully implemented into most attack response systems. Similar in nature is London's *Preparedness to Respond to a Major Terrorist Incident* (Harris, 2016) which identifies and describes the preparedness of London's public safety institutions to respond to terrorist incidents. The examples of good practice but also shortcomings in action planning described within can serve any urban environment. Harris points out the need to pay attention to the preparedness for response, especially in terms of the preparedness of key institutions

on the scene such as the police, fire brigade and emergency medical services. These actors will play a leading role in minimising the effects of an attack, so their preparedness must meet the conditions posed by the attackers in the form of time deficit, simultaneity, the multiplicity of possible tools and unimaginable determination to carry attacks out. In addition to the above-mentioned documents, there are several reports and analyses of specific attacks, or one can find reviews on the use of a selected attack tool or guidelines for responding in various categories of facilities. Such detailed case studies are an excellent source of knowledge, although each time they should undergo a process of scientific analysis and verification to become a reliable source of knowledge for researchers and practitioners.

In the context of responding to terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure (CI) sites, experts stress the key role of interoperability, with the assumption that the response to a crisis event will be undertaken by the lowest level (if sufficient) with full support and monitoring of the response process by the highest level. In cases where national security institutions take action in areas critical to the safety of the local community or the state, deployed officers should be aware of and knowledgeable about potential secondary hazards and risks associated with industrial activities taking place on the site. It is essential to prepare for an effective response to a terrorist attack on cities in a multidimensional way by preparing procedures, means of communication, security rules, ways of cooperation, coordination and command in advance. It is also critical to subject all these elements to a process of verification through planned training, workshops and practical exercises (Interpol, 2018).

The Polish researchers of the Police Academy in Szczytno, and other research centres, have contributed significantly to the development of the area of research on counterterrorism actions at the scene of an incident. They point out the need for exploration of combat activities of special forces derived from the use of scientific methods which can directly contribute to increasing the effectiveness of actions conducted by the police and other formations of security systems. They describe in detail the competencies, capabilities and the need to have and use a central counterterrorist subdivision (Jałoszyński, 2021), the use of counterterrorist subdivisions in the event of armed actions (Zubrzycki, 2014) and the complex area of command of counterterrorist actions (Stępiński, 2015).

A comprehensive resource on the institutional dimension of response is *Policing Terrorism: An Executive's Guide* (Newman and Clarke, 2007), which analyses the nature of attacks from the perspective of responding officers and draws universal conclusions about the nature of their actions at the scene. According to the authors, a terrorist attack should be treated in the context of response as a local event, regardless of the origin or motive of the perpetrator. It is the first on the scene who will play the most important role in minimising the consequences and their role will be in charge of a significant part of the operations. On top of this, it is important to remember the critical role of preparing resources and organising the response, coordination, communication and command. This is because all of these elements are crucial during on-scene crisis management and cannot afford any deficits.

The need to prepare for institutional responses to terrorist attacks is pointed out by Alex P. Schmid in his published *Twelve Rules for Preventing and Countering Terrorism* (2012). He highlights the seventh principle, which reads, "Prepare for crisis- and

consequence-management for both ‘regular’ and ‘catastrophic’ acts of terrorism in coordinated simulation exercises and educate first responders and the public on how to cope with terrorism” (Schmid, 2012).

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the publication is to identify the basic task areas that are critical in the response of public security institutions to contemporary terrorist attacks and to propose directions for their improvement. Developing these areas can be a source of knowledge both in scientific and practical terms, giving the possibility of expanding the area of research on the issues thus highlighted. To achieve the assumed aim, a diagnostic research strategy has been adopted, and the developed diagnosis in the present research subject is to play a descriptive-evaluative role. The general research problem posed in this text is the question of what are the critical task areas in the response of public security institutions to terrorist attacks and what are the possibilities for their improvement. The research hypothesis is the conjecture that the critical task areas in responding to attacks are command, cooperation and coordination of activities, the improvement of which is possible on the ground of planning, material security and exercise processes.

Combined research approaches were used in the preparation of this article. Desk research, case studies and participant observation were used to investigate the issue. The use of triangulation of research methods provided an opportunity to learn more fully about the issue under investigation and to eliminate potential cognitive errors (Bodziany, 2016: 308).

During his many years of service in the Military Gendarmerie and as a researcher and academic teacher at the Military University of Land Forces in Wroclaw (Poland), the author had the opportunity to participate repeatedly in anti-terrorist exercises, scientific research and expert projects focusing on anti-terrorist and counter-terrorist activities. He prepared procedures for the response and cooperation of public security institutions in the event of a terrorist attack, familiarising himself with a wide range of reports, analyses, legal acts and internal instructions in domestic and international dimensions. This active observation and practical experience resulted in the identification of a research problem in the form of a question to identify the main and critical task areas in responding to attacks. An in-depth literature analysis identified a deficit in this area of research and confirmed the feasibility of this research.

The research method used alongside observation and literature analysis was an exploratory case study focusing on three purposefully selected examples of responses to attacks. The sample selection below was based on the assumption that the examples studied would reflect the diversity of potential methods of terrorist attacks in recent years. Describing institutional responses to the various forms and methods of terrorist perpetrators allowed for the construction of more general nomothetic theories of repeatable failures and successes in institutional responses at the scene. This is because it is important that in the process of generalizing and discovering rules and principles of selected social phenomena and actions, one should strive to examine the diverse cir-

cumstances and conditions of their emergence. Then, with such diverse initial conditions, it is certain that the conclusions obtained in the research will not be subject to the error of unauthorised generalisation or illogical reasoning (Babbie, 2019: 31). When describing selected examples of response to attacks, the same pattern of descriptive flow was used (course of the event, response to the attack, factors hindering response, selected problem areas of response, conclusions), and sources of knowledge were obtained from official and authorised government reports and analyses, supplemented by scientific publications. The qualitative data extracted in this way became the basis for an inductive search for regularities in the extracted and qualitatively diverse examples of terrorist events and the lessons learned from responding to them. From these regularities, using synthetic comparison and generalisation, universal task areas were developed, which should be taken into account when designing solutions for institutional response to contemporary terrorist attacks.

RESULTS

1. London bombing (7/7) – 7 July 2005

The course of the event:

At around 8.50 am three explosions took place almost simultaneously on three London Underground trains: between Aldgate and Liverpool Street stations, between Russell Square and King's Cross stations, and at Edgware Road station. A bus, No. 30, was destroyed by the fourth explosion near Tavistock Square. The suicide bomb attacks killed 52 people and injured more than 700. It was an act of revenge for which al-Qaeda took responsibility, and the direct perpetrators of the attacks were four UK citizens (Coroner's report, 2011).

Response to the attack:

In the first minutes after the attack, there was no concrete and confirmed information about the locations and causes of the explosions (the first theories related to the failure of the high-voltage system). The response of first responders on the scene was rapid and undertaken by all necessary institutions (e.g. metro workers, police, fire brigade, emergency medical services). First responders on the scene acted in information chaos, compounded by the significant amount of information being transmitted and the thousands of calls being made to emergency numbers. In the first minutes after the explosions, first aid was provided by fellow passengers and assisted by underground works (placing improvised tourniquets, evacuation from the place of danger, mental health support). When the first ambulances and fire engines arrived on the scene, their crew members started to act as incident managers. The actual on-scene command and control structures were established after the 'golden hour'¹ from the start of the attack.

¹ The "golden hour" is the term often used in trauma or emergency care to suggest that an injured or sick person must receive definitive treatment within the first 60 minutes from the time of injury or

Given the scale of the devastation after the attacks, the institutions' actions on the scene took the form of rescue operations rather than counter-terrorism. The response to and minimisation of the effects of the attacks were carried out under the terms of the Prevention of Emergencies and Civil Protection Act, which received Royal Sanction in November 2004, becoming the main legal basis in this regard (Prime Minister, 2006).

Factors hindering the response:

- The simultaneity of the attack (information chaos, difficult communication, limited resources, public panic);
- The site of an attack in underground tunnels (problems in evacuating casualties and with the arrival of rescue teams, difficult communication and cooperation);
- significant number of casualties (panic, scarcity of resources, communication constraints);
- Additional risks resulting from the terrorist nature of the attack (risk of further explosions and use of CBRN, probability of electrocution, panic, a large number of people on the scene including media and families of the injured).

Selected problem areas of response (Prime Minister, 2006; Coroner's report, 2011):

- Organisation of the provision of mass and rapid assistance to casualties – shortcomings in the provision of first aid kits in metro facilities and trains, uncertainties in the conduct of TRIAGE, deficits in the number of rescue teams and in the ability to evacuate from the scene to the hospital, difficulties in identifying casualties quickly and reliably;
- Communications chaos – heavy strain on both radio and telephone connections resulted in a considerable amount of unconfirmed information being passed between entities, diversion of rescue resources to non-threatened areas and significant delays in response. On top of this, there was a disconnection of mobile phone network access for ordinary users in the affected area to increase the possibility of access for officers (as a result, selected security institutions also lacked communication). Real problems occurred with communications at the tactical level between officers in the metro tunnels and those operating outside. The lack of cellular and partly radio communications in the tunnels resulted in the need for information to be relayed by so-called "runners", which increased response times;
- The area of command and cooperation – especially in the designation of places providing individual services, in finding commanders and coordinators from specific institutions on the scene. Successive forces arriving at the scene of attacks were not able to identify the managers and the place where their assistance could be coordinated and effectively carried out. The lack of designated meeting places and coordination for institutions significantly weakened the quality of the response;
- Communication failure and information deficit in the police Victims' Bureau. At the height of the event, 43,000 telephone attempts per hour were received and the details of 7,823 people believed to be missing were taken throughout the event. The lack of physically organised reception centres to which victims of the attacks,

appearance of symptoms. It was believed that once this time has lapsed, the risk of death or long-term complications will significantly increase (Uttekar, 2021).

concerned families, and friends could go after the attacks caused frustration and the spread of misinformation;

- Restrictions on the initial collection and subsequent sharing of personal information between the police and humanitarian agencies made it difficult for survivors to contact aid sites, such as the Aid Centre. There were fears of data breaches when information on affected people was shared;
- Problems with updating news releases for the media;
- Secondary threats – for much of the day of the attack, the complete closure of the London Underground, bus networks in the attack zone, some central London trunk line stations and the evacuation of areas around the attacks meant that the public transport system was severely overloaded.

Conclusions:

Due to the simultaneous nature of the attack and the use of explosive devices by the perpetrators, the terrorist attack in London had all the characteristics of a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI). Significant difficulties in responding were generated by fear of further attacks and information confusion. Therefore, a special word of appreciation and admiration is due to all the people and institutions involved in minimising the effects while operating in London at that time. It should be remembered, however, that when many security entities operate on the scene of an incident, the key determinants of effective action will be communication, coordination and cooperation. Deficiencies in these areas can degrade the quality of the response and give the impression, particularly to the public, of inadequate preparation and execution for an institutional response.

2. The 2011 Norway attacks in Oslo and on the island Utøya (22/7) – 22 July 2011

The course of the event:

The far-right radical Anders Breivik, as a single perpetrator, carried out a simultaneous attack consisting of two stages. At 3.25 pm, a bomb placed by the perpetrator in a Volkswagen Crafter truck exploded in front of a government building in central Oslo. The explosion killed eight people, while more than 200 were injured. After the explosion, Breivik went disguised as a police officer to the island of Utøya, where about 570 participants of the Norwegian Labour Party's youth organisation camp were staying. At around 5.20 pm, he opened fire on the first people on the island, and in a shootout that lasted over an hour, he killed sixty-nine people and wounded over one hundred. He was detained by the police at around 6.32 pm compliantly and without confrontation (Police report, 2012).

Response to the attacks:

Following the explosion of the booby-trapped car at 3.25 pm, emergency services undertook a coordinated rescue operation, fires were extinguished, buildings were searched by the fire service and police, and within an hour the injured were taken to hospitals and temporary treatment facilities. Endangered facilities were evacuated.

Crisis staff were set up in the emergency services, police, civil defence and Oslo Municipality. At approximately 6.45 pm, the serious threat to life and health in Oslo was contained. The police were working intensively on securing the scene and “conducting investigations. From about 5.25 pm, information began to flow into the operation centres in Oslo and nearby towns about a perpetrator killing young people gathered on the island of Utøya (about 40 km from Oslo) with a firearm. Police officers and rescue workers were sent to the scene. After technical problems related to the failure of one of the police boats (due to overloading), National Police Tactical Team (Delta) police teams reached the shore of the island in private boats at around 6.32 pm. After apprehending the perpetrator, officers searched the island and the water area for people in need of help. The Red Cross, fire brigade, wildlife wardens and civilian boats were used. Divers from the fire brigade conducted underwater searches. Significant assistance was also provided by volunteers and NGOs” (Wood, 2020).

Factors hindering the response:

- The simultaneous nature of the attack (caused concentration of forces and resources at the site of the explosion and impaired sensitivity and responsiveness to subsequent events);
- The location of the attack on the island (resulting in the impossibility of directly and quickly neutralising the threat and providing assistance);
- A large number of casualties (hampered rescue operations);
- Camouflage of the perpetrator (the use of a police uniform promoted confusion among responding personnel after the explosion and among the victims as they were approached during the shooting);
- Secondary threats (in the form of the need to neutralise Breivik’s vehicle left at the port from which he sailed to the island).

Selected problem areas of response (Wood, 2020; NOU, 2012: 14; Police report, 2012):

- Limitations in the tactical readiness of police in particular areas of responsibility – caused by lack of up-to-date risk analysis of summer events on the islands, low staffing, lack of or low readiness to use a transport helicopter, being equipped with patrol boats rather than tactical or transport boats;
- Communication problems (including incompatible radio networks) between the national tactical team and the local police officers caused frustrating delays in deploying the Delta members to the island;
- Critical role of first aid – the incident was a mass casualty incident and as such the role of first aid was critical, particularly in the dimension of dressing mass haemorrhages using actual and improvised dressings and tourniquets;
- Limited operational and strategic capacity in terms of coordinating activities at the local and national level – caused by low staffing of police coordinators (at the time of receiving information about the shooting, there was one police officer in the local command centre in Oslo) and insufficient practical training of officers (in the period before the incident two planned operational command exercises were cancelled);
- Lack of explicit standards or requirements for response times to crisis events depending on their nature and location;

- Emergency information management – lack of conclusion and action from information given to the police at 15.34 about a suspicious man in police uniform with a gun in his hand driving away from the scene of the explosion in a van with registration number VH 24605 (could have resulted in the prevention of an attack on the island);
- Problems in planning and organising rescue operations in dangerous areas – this is a problem that still exists in many countries, manifesting itself in dilemmas related to directing rescuers into areas where the perpetrators pose a real threat (mass killings);
- Significant difficulties in coordinating and commanding operations due to an overabundance of information from various sources and a lack of confirmed information, deficits in time and resources, and the need to perform command activities in multiple task areas (with real personnel and material constraints);
- Problems in registering casualties evacuated from the island to the various evacuation sites reduced the ability to provide information to families. This also resulted in difficulties in determining the number of people rescued and the number of fatalities or injuries (a situation further complicated by data protection legislation and the water environment near the site);
- Organisational problems regarding the operation of a centre and a helpline for assistance to victims' families (due to different staff training, technical capacity to handle a large number of calls, and operators working under a heavy psychological load);
- The critical role of crisis communication with the public, including particularly important professional media management and public information.

Conclusions:

The massacre in Norway was the largest attack with weapons and explosives in Norway since the Second World War. The simultaneity of the attack, tactical preparation and the ruthlessness of the perpetrator surprised police officers and other services. Despite the greatest determination and commitment of the security institutions in responding to the attack, problems emerged that significantly hampered the effectiveness of the actions taken. Particularly disappointing was the area of risk analysis and the system of responding to potential threats prepared on its basis. Due to the lack of sufficient material and personnel resources, problems in communication, coordination and command quickly emerged, which in turn translated into the quality and time of response at the tactical level. This example shows the importance and relevance of crisis preparedness and the aspect of unpredictability, which takes on particular significance in combating asymmetric threats.

3. London Bridge terrorist attack – 3 June 2017

The course of the event:

Marauding terrorist firearms attack carried out by three perpetrators using several assassination tools (a car, knives and waistcoats with explosives which later turned out

to be dummies). At around 10.07 pm a white Renault Master vehicle drove into pedestrians on London Bridge, stopping after a few dozen metres near Southwark Cathedral. Three perpetrators got out of the vehicle and began stabbing people in nearby pubs and restaurants, moving towards Borough Market. While the terrorists were engaged in that attack, an armed response vehicle of the City of London Police (“CoLP”) arrived on Stoney Street. On seeing the officers arrive, the attackers immediately charged them, knives raised. The officers responded by firing on the attackers and keeping them covered with firearms because they believed them to be wearing suicide vests. Eventually, all the perpetrators were killed by police gunfire. The perpetrators killed eight people and injured forty-eight. In the context of rescue operations, a large-scale operation was mounted by the police forces, the London Ambulance Service and by the London Fire Brigade (Coroner’s report).

Factors hindering the response:

- The active nature of the attack in a public place with many people present translated into a real deficit of time and information and the creation of panic among those attacked;
- The multiple methods used by the perpetrators and the threat perceived from IED vests;
- Use of firearms to neutralize a perpetrator equipped with IED vests (risk assessment, speed of decision, location of shot – all in priority to prevent explosion);
- Aspect of rescue operations in hot, warm and cold zones.²

Selected problem areas of response (IPCC, 2017; Coroner’s report, 2019):

- The issue of equipping police officers arriving at the scene was critical to the effectiveness of the response – equipping them with bulletproof vests, helmets, ballistic shields, first aid kits including tourniquets and appropriate firearms (in this incident an unarmed traffic police officer was not effective in responding to the attack and was injured by the perpetrators with a knife, in addition, first police officers to encounter the attackers were armed only with batons and irritant sprays);
- The problem of conducting fires in open spaces and public buildings creates additional challenges in terms of risk to bystanders, necessitating the deployment of suitably trained and experienced officers to such operations;
- The issue of police officers neutralising the threat leaving injured and fleeing people they encountered unassisted – due to the priority of disrupting the perpetrators’ deadly attack;
- The problem of different radio channels used by intervening police officers from different police units can result in a lack of direct communication between them at the scene;
- Coordination of threat neutralisation activities is key – in the time deficit, there were specific difficulties in coordinating the activities of different patrols and forces led by different police units;

² Hot zone is an area of greatest threat, where attackers still are or may be. A warm zone, typically adjacent to a hot zone, is an area where attackers are not believed to be but where a threat remains (e.g. because attackers may return to the area). A cold zone is an area where no known threat exists.

- The challenge at the time of the attack was to identify the location of the nearest available ambulance, and using a technical solution in this area could greatly improve the delivery of aid to the injured;
- A real problem was the search for potential victims, including checking bodies of water, in this case, the River Thames.

Conclusions:

This was the first time in the United Kingdom that officers have engaged multiple marauding terrorists wearing IED vests in a public place. This type of attack utilized so many methods in a changing public environment and was a huge challenge for police forces. It required the highest level of tactical preparation and equipment from those first on the scene, a great deal of determination and measurable risk-taking. All the while, the responding officers were in a time and information deficit. Hence the key role of coordination of activities including communication and command at operational levels of crisis management.

DISCUSSION

The extent to which an organisation responds to a terrorist attack is complex and evolves as the public safety environment changes. The aforementioned examples of events, conclusions from the literature review, and the author's participatory observation do not exhaust the possibilities of scientific and practical exploration of this topic. Their scope is limited and constitutes only a foundation for further and more in-depth research. Many questions remain to be solved, such as the specificity of response to events that have a terrorist background in comparison to identical methods of action by perpetrators with criminal motivation or one who has been deemed insane. Time and its impact on minimising the effects of attacks is also a critical aspect of the response. Research in this area could develop a measurable relationship between response time and the effects of an incident. The use of weapons in the dimension of a fatal shot remains a critical problem to be solved; its respective solutions should reconcile the need to save the lives of victims with the need for national security institutions to provide a humanitarian dimension to the response (Wosek, 2017). There are several opportunities for research efforts in the area of responding to terrorist attacks that may result in innovative theories and effective solutions in the practical dimension.

The referenced case studies, literature review, reports and analyses, as well as previous research in this area, allowed the author to propose universal task areas, which are elements of institutional response to terrorist attacks:

1. The response should be based on prepared, tested and consistent procedures, developed on a sound and unambiguous legal basis and on an analysis of the local public safety environment (including most likely and most dangerous scenarios);

2. Training and exercises in preparation for an institutional response must be realistic, comprehensive and cyclical;
3. Information management in times of crisis is fundamental to initiating and conducting an adequate and effective response. Ensuring uninterrupted communication between officers and institutions at the scene of an attack and subsequent levels of command is a “tactical obligation with operational implications”;
4. Informing, alerting and evacuating people at risk is key to effectively minimising the impact of terrorist attacks;
5. The response time of selected public safety institutions should be specified and achievable under all conditions of the external environment;
6. Manpower deployed shall be appropriate to the specific threat in terms of competence, training and professional experience;
7. The individual equipment of officers and material security of operations should be adapted to the nature of terrorist attacks (e.g. firearms, ammunition, means of direct coercion, personal protective equipment, first aid kits, tourniquets, communication means, command posts);
8. Response priorities will depend on the nature of the attack and the role of the institution in the response process (e.g. neutralisation of the threat, evacuation, rescue operations, securing the scene);
9. Rescue operations at the scene of a terrorist incident will most often be conducted under mass casualty conditions and require special preparation and handling;
10. The operation of the various public safety institutions at the scene of an incident requires a prepared clear division of competencies, cooperation, coordination and a clearly defined command system.

The above catalogue is not closed but can be a starting point for developing a dedicated institutional response model for a specific public safety environment and system.

The research results presented in this text support the hypothesis that the critical task areas in responding to terrorist attacks are command, cooperation and coordination. The study of selected terrorist attacks and the conclusions of the literature review also support the conjecture that there are opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the response to attacks through proper planning, an organization in terms of personnel and materials, and testing through real exercises. Due to the established research limitations in the form of the number of cases studied and the lack of access to departmental reports including those of a classified nature, the obtained results of scientific inquiry require supplementation and verification. Therefore, it is postulated to conduct further targeted research activities in this area by communities composed of scientists and representatives of public security institutions.

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ABSTARCT

The research results presented in this publication aim to identify the basic task areas that are critical in the response of public security institutions to contemporary terrorist attacks. Corresponding to the objective of the research process is the research question - what are the key task areas of public security institutions that will be critical in responding to contemporary terrorist acts? The author assumed in the research hypothesis the existence of such key task areas, initially assigning them to organisational, communication, educational and logistical activities. The research described in the text was based on scientific methods in the form of document analysis, case studies and participant observation. The research results obtained became the basis for developing key task areas that should be taken into account in the preparation of solutions for institutional response to contemporary terrorist acts. The results of the research also concern several universal features of contemporary terrorist attacks, which take into account the diversity of methods and tools used in carrying them out.

Keywords: terrorism, responding to attacks, anti-terrorism, counter-terrorism

PRAKTYCZNY WYMIAR REAGOWANIA INSTYTUCJI BEZPIECZEŃSTWA PUBLICZNEGO NA WSPÓŁCZESNE ZAMACHY TERRORYSTYCZNE

STRESZCZENIE

Celem badań, których efekty zostały przedstawione w niniejszej publikacji, było zidentyfikowanie oraz wskazanie podstawowych obszarów zadaniowych, które są krytyczne w reagowaniu instytucji bezpieczeństwa publicznego na współczesne zamachy terrorystyczne. Z celem procesu badawczego koresponduje pytanie badawcze – jakie są podstawowe obszary zadaniowe instytucji bezpieczeństwa publicznego, które będą krytyczne w reagowaniu na współczesne zamachy terrorystyczne? Autor założył w hipotezie badawczej istnienie takich kluczowych obszarów zadaniowych, przyporządkowując je wstępnie do aktywności organizacyjnej, komunikacyjnej, edukacyjnej i logistycznej. Badania opisane w tekście oparto na metodach naukowych w postaci analizy dokumentów, analizy przypadków oraz obserwacji uczestniczącej. Uzyskane wyniki badań stały się podstawą do wypracowania kluczowych obszarów zadaniowych, które powinny być uwzględniane w przygotowaniu rozwiązań w zakresie instytucjonalnego reagowania na współczesne zamachy terrorystyczne. Wyniki badań dotyczą także szeregu uniwersalnych cech współczesnych zamachów terrorystycznych, które uwzględniają różnorodność metod oraz narzędzi stosowanych w ich przeprowadzeniu.

Słowa kluczowe: terroryzm, reagowanie na zamachy, antyterroryzm, kontrterroryzm