Rethinking Physical Security

By Jeffrey Isquith and Morgan P. Muchnick

In recent months we have seen an increase in legislative activity addressing the vexing question of how best to protect our nation’s schools. Unfortunately, this follows numerous active shooter incidents, both in academic environments and also in the law enforcement and civilian workplace.

There is currently thoughtful and bipartisan work being done by various members of the House and Senate, including strong leadership by Representatives Rick Larson (D – WA) and Susan Brooks (R – IN), who are co-chairs of the bipartisan School Safety Caucus. While policymakers on Capitol Hill discuss and debate this issue, including the merits of H.R. 2667, the School Safety Act, it is important to also consider a new paradigm when contemplating the ‘integration’ of security elements to a facility, whether it is a school, hospital or any physical structure.

Until recently, detection, surveillance and physical barriers have been designed to keep possible threats out of a secured facility. However, this ‘fortress mentality’ does little to deal with the increasing possibility that a threat will make it’s way into a ‘secured’ area regardless of the steps taken to safeguard such an environment. In addition, there are growing threats from personnel who already have access to, or inhabit the ‘secured environment’ in question. Examples of this are numerous and include, but not limited to, the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Northern Arizona University, Columbine High School, Aurora theatre shooting of 2012, Washington Navy Yard in 2013, and Ft. Hood in 2009 and 2014.

In order to address and mitigate such threats, the utilization of physical ballistic barriers in the immediate space is imperative. This will enable those exposed to gun violence to seek shelter behind objects nearest to them. While training to seek such protection would certainly be helpful, human behavior will also lead us to instinctively ‘duck and cover’ during such events.

While individuals who inhabit a physical space want safeguards to protect them from harm, they do not necessarily wish to be inconvenienced or feel as though they are working in a physically confining environment. This is particularly true in public and civic spaces, such as schools and universities. Neither students nor teachers want to feel as though they are pursuing their educational pursuits in a bunker-like environment. This is why the seamless integration of well-hidden ballistic barriers, whether it is embedded within interior architectural elements such as walls, door structures or furnishings, can provide a layer of protection that is both pervasive and hidden.

However policymakers decide to address school security, through legislation or other means, the integration of ballistic barriers into interior environments can be an essential part of every security plan. We owe it to the next generation, our most critical asset, to provide them the maximum feasible level of safety and protection.

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Meeting Compliance and Regulation Needs with Video Surveillance in the Transportation Market

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The transportation market – both private and public – is heavily regulated to ensure the safety and security of passengers and the general public, and with that regulation comes specific needs in regards to video surveillance. These entities are tasked with complying with stringent rules in regards to the security systems deployed, and many of them maintain a proactive approach to security in growing urban areas.

The United Nations found that in 2014, 54 percent of the world’s population resided in urban areas, and by 2050, the urban population is expected to increase to 66 percent, or approximately 2.5 billion. Public forms of transportation are lifelines for billions of people across the globe already, and large populations continue to depend on it each day as a result of rapid urbanization and globalization. As the world has watched attacks unfold on transit systems, such as those that took place at the end of March in Brussels, it’s clear these systems – and the people who operate and use them – are at risk every day.

360-degree IP video surveillance technology is increasingly playing a vital role in protecting public transport because this technology offers a number of unique features. The largest advantage 360-degree cameras have is that there is no moving parts and offer PTZ capabilities during playback, enabling users to capture a full panoramic view of the area without blind spots or mechanical delays.

Moreover, the high-resolution 360-degree image captured with a fisheye lens is “dewarped” at the viewer’s discretion, and can be processed in real time or during playback as if the video were live. These cameras come in a range of sizes and discreet interior and exterior designs. In today’s market, where increases in surveillance need to be balanced with the public’s perception of privacy, the discreet form factor of 360-degree cameras are beneficial.

Transit applications are an ideal fit for easily adaptable, scalable and reliable 360-degree camera systems to provide maximum situational awareness for any city’s infrastructure, preferred transportation medium and regulatory requirements. Train and bus stations, whether above ground or below, rely on 360-degree cameras to protect platforms at all hours by panning or zooming into every corner of a station, eliminating the need for a large number of traditional cameras.

Airport traffic is also more voluminous than ever, with some hubs seeing millions pass through each year and dozens of FAA or international air regulations always in flux. In highly metropolitan areas, certain airports are even connected by rail or bus to the center of a city, making follow through of situational awareness even more crucial as people transfer from one transport method to the next. These 360-degree cameras can cost-effectively manage this network of transfer options by cutting back on the number of traditional cameras installed. Though increasing compatibility with VMS and other third-party screening systems, security personnel can ensure the safety and continuity of major transportation hubs.

Cruise ships, a less obvious form of travel, carry thousands of people across international waters to various destinations, yet face significant Coast Guard compliance requirement hurdles when it comes to proper video surveillance. Proactivity toward incident detection is encouraged on board these vessels, where 360-degree cameras and video analytics technologies are being installed on decks and elevators to reduce installation costs, camera numbers and violent or illegal activity onboard.

With the threats in urban areas and to public and private transportation, security is paramount, and making sure rules and regulations are followed is an important factor in keeping the public safe. 360-degree IP video surveillance cameras are an intelligent, cost-effective and efficient investment for transportation security the world over as they provide unprecedented flexibility to evolving regulations without altering the unique and delicate balance of our world’s cities.