

## Legacies of resilience and security in London

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Since Munich 1972, and particularly since 9/11, Olympic security has grown in scale and complexity as security and resilience professionals attempt to deliver the Games with maximum safety and minimum disruption to their schedule and spectacle.



As London has geared up to hosting the Olympic Games, the securitising of sporting spectacles has become increasingly prominent. Security concerns and responses played a critical part in the bidding process and were brought into sharp focus immediately after the host city was announced with the terrorist attack on 7/7/2005, prompting ever more detailed security plans, and quadrupling the security bill from £225 million to over £1 billion. Olympic security concerns were grafted onto a pre-existing security infrastructure, which had evolved over many years in response to the threat of Irish Republicanism and other forms of terrorism. Ongoing resilience planning has further sought to maximise the Government's ability to respond to a range of threats and, where possible, to plan out vulnerabilities in advance. Such risk falls broadly into four main categories: terrorism, organised crime, protest and incivility, and natural hazards, with terrorism dominating debate.

The final preparations for Olympic security and resilience planning are currently being overshadowed by the high profile failure of G4S to fulfil its contractual obligations to provide 10,000 trained security staff, and the subsequent drafting in of additional military and police officers to protect athletes, venues, the 'Olympic family', the torch relay and spectators. Given the importance placed on security provision since London was awarded the Games it is hardly surprising that this enhanced militarisation of the immediate Olympic environs has become a key media leitmotif. However, the current media attention also highlights a wide-ranging set of issues that both the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and Londoners will be forced to confront this summer and beyond. The use of military hardware to control city spaces, airspace and transport corridors, and issues regarding policing the Games in what will be an unprecedented UK peacetime operation have dominated media reports.

Importantly, as the Games approach, the everyday impacts both on Londoners and visitors to the capital are also being highlighted. Restrictions limit access to, and regulate behaviour in, particular dispersal and exclusion zones amidst the fear of hostile reconnaissance such as 'Occupy' protest or unauthorised advertising and trading. Tents are among restricted items for Olympic ticket holders. The enhanced security that London will increasingly experience – both as the Olympics approach and during the event itself – raises key questions over the proportionality of the security effort and the extent to which local people have been consulted, over resilience-related plans that will affect their neighbourhoods.

Less well documented in the coverage of security and resilience planning has been post-games legacy. There is no sign that the hi-tech equipment purchased by police forces will be put away following the Games. The security infrastructure is embedded within transformative urban regeneration programmes and is promoted as central to long term community safety. It is hoped that Olympic related security will assist in developing safer neighbourhoods, through measures such as improved lighting, and lead to a reduction in crime and the fear of crime. For example the Olympic Park area has been granted '**Secure by Design**' ([http://www.securedbydesign.com/news/viewstory.aspx?id=1449&url=http://www.securedbydesign.com/editable\\_pages/SBD\\_1296560660316.html](http://www.securedbydesign.com/news/viewstory.aspx?id=1449&url=http://www.securedbydesign.com/editable_pages/SBD_1296560660316.html)) status presenting a permanent material security legacy to its residents and users. Likewise, a significant repository of knowledge and expertise will be retained in London-based networks regarding civil contingency planning for an array of disruptive challenges, and for designing security into urban areas.

The story of securitising the 2012 Games did not start on 7/7, but evolved over many decades into protection of the Olympic spectacle. Nor will it end once the well-protected Olympic flame goes out in Stratford this summer. The legacy of London's security preparation – the most extensive in Olympic history – will continue in London, and lessons will be transferred to preparations for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, and the 2016 Summer Olympics and Paralympics in Rio. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) dictat of security being comprehensive but unobtrusive is at odds with lockdown security for the 2012 Games, but London's security and resilience attempts do represent the latest phase in securitisation of mega-events and trends towards increasingly militarising our urban areas.

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