

# The ISIS War on Soft Targets: Is Your Business Vulnerable to a Terrorist Attack? Top 5 Ways To Prevent Threats on Your Business



*By Jessica Robinson, Founder & CEO, [PurePoint International](#)*

Another terrorist attack on soft targets in France isn't just scary, but utterly terrifying for a nation still recovering from the [Charlie Hebdo](#), a news publication, attack less than a year ago. This is the most deadly terrorist attack, 132 killed, in Europe since the train bombings in Spain, in 2004, which killed 191 people.

**These attacks beg the question what can people, and small and medium sized businesses, do to protect themselves?** As someone who has worked with private sector businesses and nonprofit organizations for ten years, this is a question I continually ask myself. The "war on terror" by western leaders, has become a "war on western citizens" by violent extremists.

The beginning of the holiday season, Friday's terrorist attack in Paris, caused the President of France, Francois Hollande, to close its borders for the first time in modern history, stating "ISIS has declared war." ISIS has claimed responsibility for the three targeted attacks on a sports

stadium, the Bataclan concert hall, and la petit cambodge, a Cambodian restaurant. In January 2015, when Charlie Hebdo was attacked in Paris, a small kosher grocery store was also under siege where four people were killed.

Last year as people were getting ready for the holidays, terrorists held a gun to an employee's head at the Lindt Café in northwest Sydney, Australia. A man screamed he "represented an Islamic state" and that this was a terrorist attack. A 16 hour hostage crisis ensued. In February 2015, Al Shabaab called for an attack on the Mall of America, the United States largest shopping mall, located in Bloomington, Minnesota.

It's clear that places which were once the "Disneyland's of the world" are no longer as safe as they once were. The question remains, how can businesses and individuals protect themselves from these attacks? Reportedly, France authorities thwarted five previous attempts prior to Friday's attack. The truth is, unless counterterrorism authorities stop an intended attack, as an individual or a business, there is no way to 100% prevent a physical assault.

**As a small and medium sized business, here are five ways to be proactive against any physical threat that could occur, including an act of terrorism:**

1. **Have a [security](#) prevention plan:** As a business, especially if you operate a concert hall, sports stadium, movie theaters, or any other ticketed venue, one of the best actions you can take is to conduct a threat assessment and have an updated security plan. This can include magnetometers, no admittance of bags or bag checks. Procedures that directly let people know they cannot take any weapon, including an AK 47, inside of your building without being stopped is critical, which unfortunately, was *not* the case at the Bataclan concert hall. The right security consultant can help you get a plan in place within a few days after a threat

assessment.

2. **Focus on incident response:** For places, like shopping malls, restaurants, movie theaters and grocery stores where anyone is welcome into your establishment without passing through any security measures, an incident response plan is critical. This includes an Emergency Response Plan and a Business Continuity Plan. Having proper technology like digital camera systems and access control measures can be helpful in prevention of, and in response to, violent incidents. For any brick and mortar business this is especially important during the holiday season. Again, a physical security consultant can help you get this established quickly.
3. **Involve your employees:** In developing plans for your business, this includes training the employees on how to both prevent and respond to potential incidents. Your employees are your first line of defense. They can let you know if something seems out of place or if they have a bad feeling about something or someone. Train them well and listen to them. You will be surprised how much information they absorb on a daily basis that you are not aware of in your own business. Not sure on the best way to train them? After an initial consultation, so an expert can get a good idea of the risks to your specific business, ask a security consultant to sit in on your next staff meeting to cover the five most important things for them to know to help keep your business safe and secure.
4. **Involve your guests:** Living in New York City, the New York City Police Department and the Metro Transit Authority are constantly engaging New Yorkers with their campaign "If you see something, say something." Have the same approach in your location. Encourage customers to share information that is important for you to know to enable a safe and secure experience for them. This can include sharing experiences of an interaction with another customer or an employee. Again, you will be

surprised what information you receive, not only about other guests, but about your own employees. You can easily establish this with a generic email address or phone number for people to contact. Of course, the best way is through great customer service and asking people while they are in your store about their experience.

- 5. Develop great relationships with law enforcement:** Be involved in public/private partnerships committees and organizations. This can be with your local police department, or state and federal law enforcement. Being a member of public/private partnership committees, you can get updates on local intelligence, develop relationships with various law enforcement officials, and engage in information sharing with other businesses. The law enforcement community needs you as much as you need them in these situations. Contact your local police department and ask about their private sector initiatives.

In the end, if someone plans a suicide attack or intends to cause bodily harm, you may not be able to stop it. However, preventative measures can make it more difficult for a threat to occur, or can limit the amount of people hurt.

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