

Peter Ford, Director, Northeast Region, G4S Corporate Risk Services Talks About Event Security

In The Boardroom On SecuritySolutionsWatch.com

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, US, February 24, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Thank you for joining us today to talk about event security. It's an honor to speak with a 32-year veteran of the U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service. Before drilling down into event security planning please tell us more about your background.

Peter Ford: Thank you Martin. I believe I had the best job in the Foreign Service, if not the U.S. government. Six months after graduating from the Diplomatic Security Service training academy in 1985, I left a headquarters assignment and volunteered to work at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. That was during the time Col. Oliver North used to visit the embassy. Beirut was the first of several interesting diplomatic security assignments that include Honduras, Panama, Sudan, Venezuela and Iraq. I also served as Hostage Affairs Director in Iraq and as Olympic Security Coordinator in Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 games.



Peter Ford, Director, Northeast Region, G4S Corporate Risk Services

Some other assignments included being a Mobile Security Division team leader where we would protect U.S. embassies in high-threat areas. I did two tours on Capitol Hill on the Foreign Affairs and Homeland Security Committees. In addition, I was the Regional Security Officer (RSO) in Armenia and Switzerland. In all, I visited 114 countries and trained in five languages. When I retired I joined the G4S Corporate Risk Services (CRS) team. The work in CRS is very similar to the work as a Regional Security Officer.

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We are honored to have Peter Ford, Director, Northeast Region, G4S Corporate Risk Services join us “In The Boardroom” on SecuritySolutionsWatch.com to talk about Event Security”
Martin Eli, Publisher

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: We couldn't agree more with the theme of your recent webinar (<https://www.securityriskiq.com/event-security-webinar>), the challenges of securing special events — from corporate meetings and large-scale public occasions to global sporting events — this task has never been more challenging and complex.

We also understand from the 2019 Unisys Security Index U.S. Press Conference (<https://vimeo.com/341820064>) that 83% of attendees are concerned about personal attacks, 81% are concerned about data security and, as a result of these concerns, a rather high percentage of people are considering not attending such events.

That being said, Peter, what are your thoughts regarding pre-planning, your “best practices” checklist if you will, from passports, to medications, to tickets that attendees should implement to assure that their attendance at large scale events proceeds as smoothly as possible.

Peter Ford: One can write a book on “best practices,” but I’d like to address passports, medications and tickets here. When it comes to passports, the first thing to do is look at the expiration date as soon as you decide to travel. Remember, you need at least six months before the expiration date before you start your travel. Seasoned travelers have been sent home from the airport because the airline did not let the traveler embark on the plane due to the passport expiration date. If your passport is going to expire in less than six months, get it renewed.

Next, take a picture of the biographical page of your passport and send it to a work associate and a family member. This will save a traveler days when trying to replace a passport abroad.

You should also check the host-country’s website to see if you need a visa to enter the country. Many times, the country waives the visa requirement during a large-scale event, which was the case in Brazil due to the Olympic Games.

As for medications, this is one of the frustrating aspects of traveling to large events. For example, say you’re taking a medication that is approved by the FDA. In other countries, that same medication is deemed harmful and it will likely be confiscated at the airport, or in a worst-case-scenario, the authorities could charge you with a crime.

On my ticket checklist, it’s all about your risk tolerance. I understand the desire to buy event tickets the cheapest way possible. However, I know of many cases where an unsuspecting spectator shows up with his ticket and it’s a forgery. If your risk tolerance is low, buy your tickets on the official event website; if you have a higher risk tolerance, buy your tickets on un-vetted websites, but beware.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: What are the free government resources that are available?

Peter Ford: There are several free services for U.S. citizens that can help them before traveling and in the event something occurs while traveling. Prior to traveling overseas, if you want to know about travel “issues” in a city or country, Travel.State.Gov (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>) has a wealth of resources and information, including travel advisories, a checklist of items to consider before a trip and safety and security information.

Here are some particular items every international traveler should take advantage of:

- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) program (<https://step.state.gov/step/>). You can receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Get a telephone consultation: (888) 407-4747 (toll-free in the United States and Canada) or

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(202) 501-4444 (from all other countries) from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

- See the State Department's Travel Advisories (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>).
- Sign up to follow Consular Affairs on Twitter and Facebook.
- Download the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler App (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/smart-traveler/id442693988>).

I'd like to add that the biggest travel issue with U.S. citizens traveling overseas is a lost or stolen passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, call the nearest embassy or consulate. If you get a recording (afterhours, weekend, or holidays) wait for the marine guard to answer, and ask to speak to the consular officer on duty and send her your passport biometric information page that you saved prior to the trip. Doing this will save you days in the renewal process.

In addition to passport issues, here are some of other services the embassy provides:

- Help you find appropriate medical care (<https://na.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/doctors/>)
- Assistance in reporting a crime to the police (<https://na.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/victims-of-crime/>)
- Contact relatives or friends with your written consent
- Explain the local criminal justice process in general terms
- Provide a list of local attorneys (<https://na.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/attorneys/>)
- Provide information on victim's compensation programs in the United States (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Namibia.html#ExternalPopup>)
- Provide an emergency loan (<https://na.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/emergency-financial-assistance/>) for repatriation to the United States and/or limited medical support in cases of destitution

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: A lot of readers can probably benefit from you addressing a scenario that we don't often want to think about but should be prepared to handle in a public setting and that is an active shooter situation. Could you provide some practical actions people should take? What should we have done PRIOR to arriving at the event, in case of that "what if" moment?

Peter Ford: Your question deals with crowd control as well as reacting to a security incident. There are more deaths and injuries from mass hysteria resulting from spectators believing there is a security incident (e.g., active shooter), than the actual incident.

People need to realize when spectators enter the different "concentric rings" of security around an event, the possibility of an active shooter or bombing decreases. However, every time you attend a large event, be aware of the exit lanes, security and medical personnel/tents. For me, my security awareness is heightened when I'm in the metal detector line. This area has the highest risk of an active shooter or suicide bomber — many people packed tightly together before the first "hard security point."

If you're attending an event as a spectator, my recommendation is to review the emergency plans on the stadium's website and do some research on prior security incidents at the venue where you will be attending.

Let's say you are attending a stadium event and hear gunshots, these situations have lots of variables, so it's difficult to say exactly how an individual should respond. It all depends on the specifics of the incident. But in active shooter situations, the best advice I could give is to follow the run, hide, fight methodology. The top priority is to get away from a shooter or shooters. If that is not possible, you should try to find cover and concealment out of the shooter's view.

Finally, if you find yourself unable to run or hide, you might find yourself in a situation where you must commit to act as aggressively as possible against the shooter. At this point, you should be prepared to cause severe or lethal injury to the shooter.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Drones are the making headlines all too often (<https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/07/politics/us-iran-high-alert-drone-attacks/index.html>), and it's quite scary to think about the panic that one bad guy with a low-cost drone could cause at the next Super Bowl. What can be done about drone risk, Peter?

Peter Ford: There is no solution to end drone threats at largely attended events. This is a clear and present danger to these types of events. Drones are getting faster, more durable, quieter, cheaper and able to carry more payload every day. Not only are they a serious threat today, but they increase in lethality every year. While they can they drop an explosive charge, for me the bigger threat is the dispersing of a liquid agent against stadium spectators.

As a security professional, there's not much one can do to mitigate the threat. However, you should plan for the response to a drone attack. We need the U.S. government, in conjunction with the private sector to act decisively in the development of counter-drone technology and to continuously refine its security plans regarding the drone threat at widely attended events.

Here in the United States and even in Europe, there's a struggle to find balance between freedom and security when it comes to drone use. In fact, U.S. law prohibits private organizations and individuals from interfering with drones in flight. This includes jamming signals because that can potentially interfere with other aircraft and medical devices.

I agree with my colleagues in the security business who say that drone detection and assessing intent is what security professionals should focus on.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Congratulations, Peter, on your appointment as U.S. Olympic Security Coordinator for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games. Can you share with us some of the "lessons learned" from the Rio Games, and do you have any advice for those engaged with security at the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics?

Peter Ford: The Brazilian Olympic security officials were very good at engaging police officers from the countries participating in the Olympics. For example, the chief Interpol official in Brazil, invited foreign police officers to work in the International Police Coordination Center. Fifty-five countries accepted and sent police officers. Each country provided their own threat intelligence information, which proved invaluable to the overall security of the Olympic Games. Hopefully, the Japanese Olympic security officials will make the same gesture in Tokyo.

If you are planning to attend the games and have not made reservations or pre-planned for the Tokyo Games, you are already behind schedule. My recommendation is to request a meeting with your C-Suite and have a frank discussion regarding the company's attendance either for its senior staff or for its clients. Executives who like to arrive in the company's private plane or who are not accustomed to waiting in line, must have a "reality check" before departing for the Olympics. As a security professional, you definitely do not want to overpromise and under deliver your service to your company, especially during the Olympics.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: In summing up here, we think Benjamin Franklin was right on when he said, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." Please share some key takeaways for our readers today.

Peter Ford: Plan, plan and plan early. If the C-Suite decides to attend a big event overseas at the last minute, have a basic security plan for large events already organized so all you have to do is fill in the blanks. Use the resources that the U.S. government provides and the resources that

professional security firms provide for these types of scenarios. Use your connections that you've made through OSAC, DSAC, ISMA, ASIS or LinkedIn to make your job easier.

Additionally, we can help plan your company's events overseas by utilizing G4S' Corporate Risk Services large-event security expertise and G4S' deep reach throughout the different regions of the globe (G4S is one of the largest employers in the world and is represented in around 90 countries).

Finally, I also strongly recommend professionals in our industry join the U.S. Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), which can astronomically increase the safety of your personnel, your facilities and help you protect information. Please check out OSAC.gov or call (571) 345-2223 if you have any questions.

Thank you for providing me this opportunity to discuss a topic I enjoy talking about. If you wish to discuss this topic further or if you need assistance in your company's security program, I can be reached at: peter.ford@usa.g4s.com, or LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/peter-ford-8b841710/>

For the complete interview with Peter Ford, Director, Northeast Region, G4S Corporate Risk Services, "In The Boardroom" on SecuritySolutionsWatch.com please click here: <http://www.securitysolutionswatch.com/Interviews/in Boardroom G4S Ford.html>

Please also see our "In The Boardroom" interview with Robert Dodge, Executive Vice President, G4S Corporate Risk Services <http://www.securitysolutionswatch.com/Interviews/in Boardroom G4S Dodge.html>

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