

Securing U.S. Hotels in the Age of Terrorism

The Hoteliers' Perspective

Final Paper

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## Securing U.S. Hotels in the Age of Terrorism

### **Abstract**

While hotels in the United States have not traditionally been the target of terrorist attacks, the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino shooting in Las Vegas in October of 2017 exemplified the ways in which terrorism trends are changing, and illuminated weaknesses within hotel security in U.S. properties. While this event highlighted a need for review of hotel security policies in this country, hotels are hesitant to implement stringent security measures that may negatively affect the guest experience. A survey was created and distributed in an attempt to understand the hoteliers' perspective on hotel security, specifically in light of the tragedy in Las Vegas, inquiring about what actions their properties have taken in direct response to the shooting, how they perceive the threat of terrorism on their properties, and what they consider to be the greatest weaknesses within hotel security and measures that could offset those weaknesses. Results showed that of the hotels included in the sample, only 58% have conducted a review of their own security policy since the shooting, while even fewer, only 33% have taken any action to change or update their security as a result of this review. The study found, from the hoteliers' perspective, that guest privacy is the greatest weakness within hotel security, training is the highest regarded solution to the security problem, and that the guest perception of new security is the biggest concern when considering increasing security.

### **Introduction**

While terrorist attacks perpetrated on or at hotels are not uncommon globally, the United States had been largely unaffected by this trend until the Route 91 Music

Festival shooting in Las Vegas in October 2017 (Associated Press, 2017). For this reason, domestic hotels have not taken the same precautions to prevent attacks that are found more commonly in hotels in other regions of the world (Associated Press, 2017). Hotel properties in more terror-prone regions have long utilized more stringent security measures, such as metal detectors and armed guards, to ensure their guests' safety (Associated Press, 2017). Severe security measures of this type previously would have been perceived as overly cautious and costly to hotel management in the United States, however, this incident showed that U.S. hotels are not free from the risk of terrorism. It heightened awareness that flaws and weaknesses exist in the current standard security policies of U.S. hotels, which can be exploited by people looking to do major harm to guests and other innocent people.

The attack and its news coverage made American travelers aware and afraid of a risk that they may not have acknowledged before. While people have grown accustomed to the ever present risk of terrorism, and therefore the security, associated with flying in the wake of 9/11, the TSA level of security would not be feasible for a hotel in the U.S., or acceptable to the American traveler. This incident has, however, illustrated just the kind of damage that can be done as a result of lenient hotel security, and ideally would lead to some practical security changes to limit the chances of recurrent similar violent incidents.

Despite being one of the first attacks of this kind in the United States, one can assume that it will not be the last. Trends in terrorism globally show a general shift by terrorists toward simpler attacks against non-traditional and soft civilian targets, like hotels, and an increase in lone-actor attacks, which are harder to predict and prevent

than larger scale attacks by groups (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP], 2017). Additionally, terrorist attacks are on the rise in western countries including France, the United States, and Germany (Fox & Gilbert, 2016).

In U.S. hotels, the lack of baseline standards for security leave hotels with little guidance on how to best protect their guests, employees and properties from the risk of terror. As a result, the security policies in hotels countrywide are insufficient to deter or combat terrorist attacks on properties, especially when considering current trends that indicate a rise in attacks in western countries, and on soft targets such as hotels. The U.S. hotel industry could feel the impact of its lax security policies if guests become hesitant to stay in hotels for fear of attacks or, should another attack happen, if the hotel is held liable or its reputation is tarnished in the aftermath.

In order for hotels to mitigate the risk of terrorism and offset the resulting impacts, a review of security policies is necessary to identify weaknesses and determine what new policies, if any, would be feasible and practical to implement to meet the unique challenges presented by terrorism. This study set out to investigate what steps, if any, hotels had actually taken to better secure their properties in the aftermath of the Las Vegas shooting, and to understand the hoteliers' perspective of the risk of terrorism and their thoughts on the weaknesses within hotel security that compound that risk.

## **Literature Review**

### **What is Terrorism?**

#### **Definition of terrorism.**

Terrorism is a complicated concept- one that manifests itself in a variety of ways- and is executed by different parties with different motivations using different methods.

No two terrorist attacks are identical, because there are just too many factors to be considered. For this reason, defining and truly understanding terrorism is very difficult. Globally, a multitude of different, and often incompatible, definitions for terrorism are accepted (Jacobson, 2013). This is illustrated in the United Nations' inability to present any anti-terrorism convention including a complete definition of the term because its member states cannot reach a consensus about the word's meaning (United Nations [UN], 2015).

On a smaller scale, even within the same country there are variances between the accepted interpretations of the term terrorism. Internally, the U.S. government has several divergent definitions among the different agencies. The State Department includes attacks on noncombatant targets, while other departments focus solely on attacks on civilians (Jacobson, 2013). The FBI addresses strikes on abortion clinics, businesses that allegedly harm the environment, and medical research facilities, and considers damage done to private property to be terrorism if it was ideologically motivated (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], n.d.). Mass destruction is the focus of the Department of Homeland Security's definition, emphasizing damage done to critical infrastructure, while the Department of Defense focuses on the threat of violence as opposed to the act itself (Jacobson, 2013). These differences in definition, all resulting from a single government, represent only a fraction of the deviations that exist among accepted definitions, and exemplify how complex a concept that terrorism really is.

Despite the lack of a concrete definition of the term, there are some common factors found in all variations of the definition of terrorism. The first and most frequent is that terrorism always consists of violence, or the threat thereof (Hoffman, 2006). This

oftentimes is written in more specific terms, much like the UN's clause stating that terrorism "is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm", but the general understanding is the same (UN, 2015). Another factor that is an integral part of any definition of terrorism is the purpose, which is to instill fear within a population, resulting in intimidation of a wider audience than just those directly affected by action itself (Jacobson, 2013). This facet can also encompass those terror attacks that are intended to influence a government's actions through attacks and the resulting fear and intimidation (UN, 2015). The motivation can vary greatly between incidents, but the very nature of terrorism is that actions, like violent attacks, are utilized to cause terror among the targeted population (Jacobson, 2013). Acts of terror are "specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim or objects of the terrorist attack" (Hoffman, 2006).

While the lack of an established and accepted definition of terrorism complicates understanding what exactly constitutes a terrorist act, the variations demonstrate how diverse and complex an issue that terrorism is. Identifying the commonalities between all the divergent definitions of terrorism gives a baseline for recognizing terrorism and the risk it presents. At its core, terrorism is the "deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of change" (Hoffman, 2006).

### **Challenges of terror reporting.**

The absence of an absolute definition of the term terrorism leaves the determination of whether an act is classified as terrorism or not open to interpretation, which can result in discrepancies in terrorism data (Sanger-Katz, 2016). There are several respected sources of data, like the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and IHS



Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center, that are dedicated to aggregating information about global terrorism, that can then be used to get the big picture view of the problem to determine shifts and trends in terrorist actions (Sanger-Katz, 2016). However, because of limitations in terrorism reporting, the information presented by these databases can differ, or offer skewed views of global trends.

The main cause of discrepancies is the subjective nature of determining terrorism. Methods of measuring terrorism rely on imperfect data and require judgment calls (Sanger-Katz, 2016). The analysts are charged with examining media coverage and other credible reports of violent incidents in order to make the determination of whether an event qualifies as terrorism and should be included in their data, or if it is just a criminal action (Sanger-Katz, 2016). These decisions hinge not only on the definition of terrorism that is accepted and applied by the person or entity gathering this data, but oftentimes also on their personal views (Williams, 2017). The distinction between a terrorist and a non-terrorist act depends largely on whether one sympathizes with or opposes the person, group, or cause concerned (Williams, 2017). For example, some people could argue that the Allied strategic bombing during World War II was a form of terrorism because civilians were targeted in an effort to persuade the government of Japan and Germany to end the war, while others would strongly oppose this assertion based on their personal beliefs or feelings about the war (Jacobson, 2013).

As a result of these judgement calls, data presented on terrorism can look markedly different depending on the events that are included or excluded. This can have an especially significant impact in the west where the number of terrorism fatalities

is relatively small, because excluding just one incident could greatly skew the data between sources (Sanger-Katz, 2016). For this reason, it is important to synthesize information from several sources when determining shifts in terrorism trends, so that the resulting information is more accurately representative of terrorism overall. It is also imperative to remember that there is a margin for error because of the subjectiveness of the determinations, and that despite consulting several sources, the data still may not show the entire picture (Sanger-Katz, 2016).

### **Trends in terrorism.**

Despite the challenges associated with gathering data on terrorism, it is important to use the available resources to identify the changing trends in terrorism, globally and locally, in order to better understand the risk of an attack and to be better prepared. There are a few significant trends in terrorism recently, some positive and some worrisome, that are important to recognize.

According to the 2017 edition of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), a report published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace that details terrorism trends and statistics from around the world, the main positive trend in terrorism is that there has been a decline in the number of terrorism related deaths globally down to 25,673 people in 2016, which is a 22 percent improvement from the peak number of terrorism related deaths globally in 2014 (IEP, 2017). However, this improvement is indicative of terrorism falling significantly in four of the five countries most highly affected by terrorism: Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria (IEP, 2017). Conversely, in western countries there is no such decline in terrorism happening. In these countries, instead, there has been an increase in violent attacks, claiming more than 200 lives in

Western Europe and North America in 2015 (Sanger-Katz, 2016). While this is only a small fraction of the deaths occurring globally each year, the fact that terrorism is worsening in the west is a trend that should not be ignored.

Additionally, terrorism is spreading around the world. In 2016, more countries than at any time in the 17 years covered by the GTI experienced at least one death from terrorism (IEP, 2017). In 2015 only 65 countries had at least one terrorism related fatality; in 2016 this number rose to 77 countries (IEP, 2017). If considering all terrorist attacks, even the ones that did not result in the loss of life, then two out of every three countries in the GTI, or 106 nations, experienced at least one terrorist attack in 2016 (IEP, 2017). So, while the decrease in deaths globally is positive, the fact that terrorism is spreading to previously unaffected countries is concerning.

Furthermore, the way terrorist acts are executed is changing. According to the GTI, there has been a “general shift by terrorists towards simpler attacks against non-traditional and softer civilian targets” (IEP, 2017). This is the result of counterterrorism measures put in place in the wake of 9/11 and subsequent large scale attacks, as large and complicated attacks require more planning and involvement of several people, which make them more likely to be detected, and thus thwarted (Stern, 2017). Instead, terrorists are opting for less sophisticated attacks that are less costly to execute and require less advance planning and participation from others, making their attacks unpredictable and much less likely to be discovered and stopped (IEP, 2017). This trend includes the shift of attacks to soft targets, and the increasing number of lone-actor attackers.

Terrorists favor soft targets over hard because they typically lack appropriate security measures, and there is a vast number and variety of them to choose from (Wagner, n.d.). Soft targets include, but are not limited to, hotels, restaurants and nightlife, museums and unprotected cultural sites, places of worship, and unsecure transportation such as trains and buses (Wagner, n.d.). Since these targets are open to the public and have very little security, executing an attack on one of them provides a large number of unsuspecting victims, and takes little planning or assistance to execute. Moreover, it coincides with the increase in lone-actor terrorists, because attacks on these targets can easily be carried out alone.

There has been a jump in the last ten years of attacks executed by a single perpetrator (IEP, 2017). While there have been 250 total lone actor attacks in that 10 years, only one such attack happened in 2008, while 58 happened in the first six months of 2017 alone (IEP, 2017). Furthermore, of the 250 lone actor attacks, the United States experienced the overwhelming majority with 81 attacks, which accounts for 32 percent of all lone actor violent incidents in that time frame (IEP, 2017).

### **Terrorism & the Hotel Industry**

Terror attacks on hotels are not a new phenomenon, with numerous instances on record spanning back decades. One of the earliest major attacks happened in 1946, when several bombs were set off in Jerusalem's King David Hotel to protest the British occupation of Palestine at the time, resulting in ninety fatalities and approximately fifty additional injured victims ("King David Hotel Bombing," n.d.). While over sixty years have passed since this attack, and a vast number of hotels have been affected by terror since this event, many hotels still do not have the appropriate security in place to deter

such attacks, especially in the U.S., and thus remain attractive targets. This, however, is more of a problem today than ever before as a result of the current trends identified in terrorism. With terrorism in the west on the rise, and terrorists' tactics changing to focus on soft targets, hotels in the United States are facing an increasing risk for terrorism. In order to fully gauge the risk and impacts of terrorism for the hotel industry in the U.S., it is necessary to understand why hotels are such ideal targets, and how terrorism could affect the industry should it become an active problem.

### **Hotels as attractive targets.**

The very nature of hotels demands accessibility and openness for guests and other visitors, which makes complete security of hotel properties virtually impossible (Associated Press, 2008). Properties strive to provide a welcoming home away from home experience for travelers, and a space for people to gather, which can complicate the issue of security as guests may not feel comfortable in a hotel that feels like a fortress due to high levels of security (Bergen, 2015). Guests may feel uncomfortable around or inconvenienced by stringent security measures such as metal detectors, armed guards, and other visible measures, so hotels choose not to alienate their guests by implementing these practices, but this makes them an easier target (Bergen, 2015). So, when a terrorist is surveying an area for a possible target, while an airport or embassy would be considered, high levels of security at both would make an attack on those targets far more difficult (Associated Press, 2008). A hotel offers a less secure alternative that still has a multitude of diverse guests to prey upon, and that is much easier to execute an attack against (Bergen, 2015).

Hotels not only host guests paying for overnight accommodations, but also act as a gathering place for people holding business meetings or social events, and have restaurants and bars and lobby spaces that are open to the general public, which gives them a high potential for casualties if targeted for an attack (Associated Press, 2008). This also allows anyone to come on property, whenever and as frequently as they would like, without raising suspicions (Associated Press, 2008). A person plotting an attack would easily be able to blend in with guests and visitors entering and exiting the property, and would not seem out of place as they familiarize themselves with the layout of the hotel in an effort to devise the most impactful assault (Associated Press, 2008). In tourist destinations, hotels also frequently allow guests checking in or out to have their luggage held within the hotel if they arrive before their room is ready or must check out long before they are departing the area (Associated Press, 2008). This presents a great risk as the hotel has no idea what is held within those bags. Additionally, unlike airports or public transportation, it is not nearly as much of a red flag to see a lone bag in the lobby of a hotel; it might even go unnoticed or not be dealt with as quickly, providing time for the attackers to execute whatever plan was in place (Associated Press, 2008). Put simply, hotels are attractive targets because they are easily accessible, frequented by droves of diverse people, and can be surveilled by the potential terrorists without drawing attention to themselves (Bergen, 2015).

In addition to the risk associated with the general openness of and low level security within hotel properties, there are a few other factors that make hotels prime targets for terrorism. The first is the sheer size of hotels, consisting of hundreds of guest rooms, multiple entrances, numerous hallways, and an abundance of places to hide,

which combine to create a target that is very difficult to defend (Associated Press, 2008). There is also the fact that because hotels are not properly guarded for fear of making the guests uncomfortable, they pose very little threat to the perpetrators (Pizam, 2010). For this reason, once an attack on a hotel property begins, there is very little chance that it will be forcibly stopped before the authorities arrive, giving the terrorist time to execute their plan and do major harm before they are ever at risk of being stopped, caught, or killed. This lessens the terrorists' risk of failure for their attack, making hotels an even more appealing target (Pizam, 2010).

Acts of terror committed against hotels also receive extensive media coverage, giving the terrorists' message a platform to reach the masses and cause the far-reaching fear that is the primary objective of terrorism (Pizam, 2010). While terrorist attacks on other target types are covered in the news as well, hotels house travelers from near and far, so the effects are felt by a wider audience, often domestically and internationally. Furthermore, in targeting hotels, specifically well-known and foreign owned brands, terrorists feel they've attacked a "legitimate" target, using that to justify their harm to people and property by arguing they were fighting against outsiders and their influence on locals (Pizam, 2010). This justification is more frequently seen in attacks on U.S. owned hotel brands internationally (Pizam, 2010).

### **Impact of terrorism on the hotel industry.**

As mentioned, hotels have long been attractive targets for terrorism, but hotel attacks had never really been of concern in the United States. It was a tactic used mostly outside of U.S. borders until the Las Vegas shooting, which showed it can happen here, and highlighted the weaknesses in security in U.S. hotels. However, one

incident does not indicate that this will definitely become a recurrent problem in the United States, so why should hotels concern themselves with it yet? The examination of trends in terrorism and of why hotels are targeted in the first place implies that there is a distinct possibility that U.S. hotels could be at risk of subsequent attacks (Fox & Gilbert, 2016). For this reason, it is important to understand how terrorism would impact the hotel industry in the United States should it become an active and recurrent problem, so hotels can weigh if the possible impacts warrant the review of security policy and the possibility of implementing new and stricter security policies. Two factors to consider would include guest fear and hesitation surrounding staying in hotels, and liability issues, which both have the potential to hurt a hotel's bottom line.

Should terrorist attacks on hotels become a recurrent problem in the United States, travelers would become hesitant to stay at properties that are lacking the appropriate security measures (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002). A 2017 survey of 1,053 adults in the United States found that terrorism was the factor that held the most significance among travelers when making travel decisions, with 83% of respondents agreeing that it had "some" or "strong" influence on their travel decisions (Statista, 2017). Terrorism won out over more traditional concerns like weather warnings, contagious diseases, natural disasters, political unrest, and the safety and reliability of transportation, among others, showing that terrorism is a real concern for American travelers, affecting their travel decisions (Statista, 2017).

In a study published by the Journal of Travel Research, the authors examined which had more of a negative impact on tourism, the frequency or severity of terrorist acts, and found that the frequency of attacks impacts travelers' decisions more than the



severity of a single attack (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002). This implies that the tourism industry can recover from even severe acts of terrorism, as long as the acts are not repeated (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002). However, if terrorist attacks, whether of high or low severity, occur at high frequency and regular intervals, tourism demand will decline, thus hurting hotels' occupancy (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002). So, as it relates to the United States, the frequency of hotel attacks has been relatively low, but should they increase in frequency it would negatively affect the industry (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002).

Additionally, if the perception of the risk of terrorism is high among travelers, providing even low level information about the reality of the risk and the security in place is better than leaving travelers in a situation of complete uncertainty (Slevitch & Sharma, 2008). Uncertainty leads travelers to choose other destination and accommodation options where the risk of terror is perceived to be lower, resulting in decreased business for a hotel property (Slevitch & Sharma, 2008).

An increase in hotel terror attacks would also lead to an increase in the lawsuits against hotel properties that typically accompany an event that results in mass fatalities or injuries. An event of this type leaves those affected looking for someone to blame, for someone to receive reparations from. This often gets turned on the venue in which the event happened, with the victims blaming them, in part, for the resulting deaths, injuries, or damages (Hayes, 2017). Potential litigation related to terrorist attacks on hotel properties will typically take the form of negligence suits (Michael & Tibbles, 2016). Plaintiffs generally allege, first, that the hotel owed a duty of care to the guests to have adequate security measures, and second, that the hotel breached this duty (Michael & Tibbles, 2016). Lastly, they claim that this breach by the hotel is what allowed the

terrorist attack to take place and thus caused the resulting harm (Michael & Tibbles, 2016). Other cases have also alleged negligence based on a failure to alert or warn guests once an attack has begun, as opposed to a failure to have sufficient security measures in place prior to the attack (Michael & Tibbles, 2016). The first is the type of lawsuit that was brought against the Mandalay Bay in the aftermath of the shooting in October 2017 (Hayes, 2017). The lawsuit was filed by 450 victims of the shooting and questioned why the hotel was not able to stop the gunman, saying that the hotel instead "contributed" to the events that led up to the attack (Hayes, 2017). The suit alleges that the Mandalay Bay was "grossly negligent in the selection, hiring and training" of its employees and claims that the hotel was not doing its due diligence to surveil people as they entered and exited the property (Hayes, 2017).

This type of lawsuit is difficult to win, however, because in cases dealing with liability for hotels a theory applies that typically requires a prior bad act on the property before any liability attaches, called foreseeability (Dubuc, 2009). This means that in order for a property to be proven negligent and held liable, the attack must have been foreseeable based on past actions on the property, or identified weaknesses within their security (Dubuc, 2009). For example, in a lawsuit filed in relation to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey was held liable for damages because "they had previously conducted security threat assessments that specifically identified the risk of a vehicle bomb placed in the underground parking garage, which is precisely what happened" (Michael & Tibbles, 2016). They were aware of the vulnerability to a vehicle bomb, so the resulting attack was foreseeable, but

because they had done nothing to defend against the risk, they were deemed negligent (Michael & Tibbles, 2016).

However, it could be argued that the events of 9/11 and the various subsequent terrorist attacks on hotels and elsewhere since, when considered collectively, suggest that similar terrorist attacks are now foreseeable, and should be treated as such (Dubuc, 2009). If this were the case, it would greatly affect how hotels handle their security, as they would be liable if an attack were to happen on their grounds without the appropriate security measures in place to try and deter an attack or limit the damage done by an attack (Dubuc, 2009). If additional security measures are not adopted, the owner or operator of a hotel might struggle in defending lawsuits filed by guests injured in a terrorist attack, because the claim that “the attack was not foreseeable” would be an inviable argument (Dubuc, 2009). These lawsuits would leave the hotel paying legal fees and, if found liable, damages. For this reason, enhanced security is a good idea for hotel properties as it not only protects the property’s guests and employees, but it also creates a solid defense against lawsuits, should they arise, because the hotel can show that they took the appropriate measures to try to deter or defend against an attack (Dubuc, 2009).

### **Current U.S. Hotel Security Standards**

The current security standards in hotels in the United States are not sufficient to deter or prevent a violent terrorist attack, primarily because there are no set standards. To determine where the weaknesses exist in the current policies, the standard security measures and policies, or lack thereof, should be reviewed. This will show what

methods are already being utilized to keep guests and employees safe and secure on hotel properties, and where there is room for improvement.

Measuring hotel security across the United States is difficult, as there is no existing baseline for security standards within hotels. Security policy and implemented measures can vary greatly from one property to the next (Strodel, 2003). Utilizing the 2008 data collected by the American Hotel and Lodging Association's (AHLA) Lodging Survey, which is distributed annually to general managers throughout the United States, a study was conducted which examined the physical safety and security features in U.S. hotels, in order to identify an overall safety and security score and to locate where variances occur (Enz, 2009). The author's investigation into the security features of 5,487 U.S. hotels revealed significant differences in the distribution of key safety and security features in various hotel price segments, as well as among hotels of various sizes, ages, and locations (Enz, 2009). After analyzing the scores of the included hotels, they found the U.S. hotels' average safety index score of 70 and the security index score of 64 out of a possible score of 100 (Enz, 2009). However, the standard deviation for both scores was in the 20s, illustrating just how much variance there is among hotels' safety and security measures in the United States (Enz, 2009). Overall, the study found that generally the more upscale, newer, or bigger the hotel was, the higher it's security score, as well as hotels located in urban settings or airport properties (Enz, 2009). With an average security score of 64, this study illustrates that there is room for improvement in U.S. hotels across the board, as far as security is concerned. It also demonstrates the high level of variation between security features in hotels in this country, with newer and more upscale properties having higher scores. This shows that

security needs have changed overtime, thus resulting in new builds with higher levels of security (Enz, 2009). The cost of security is a deterrent to implementing security upgrades, which is arguably why upscale properties have better scores, as they are the ones most able to afford to implement more expensive security measures because they are more likely to recover the cost through high room rates and other amenities (Enz, 2009). This study also found that the hotels with the highest safety and security scores were positively correlated with the hotels that had the highest average room rate, even when controlling for hotel size, age, location, and price segment, which implies “that offering more comprehensive physical safety and security features is associated with the advertising of a higher rate” (Enz, 2009).

Despite the lack of uniformity in security policies because of the absence of an industry-wide baseline for security standards in hotels, there are still some security measures that are generally found across the board in hotel properties. The most common forms of security employed in hotels are electronic security cameras, and security personnel on site around the clock, monitoring the property and doing patrols (Mest, 2017). These security measures are often viewed as preventative measures, to deter crime, and are only allowed in public spaces, so their effect is limited (Mest, 2017). While these two security measures are very effective in preventing low-impact, high-frequency crimes such as vandalism or petty theft, they have very little impact when it comes to preventing high-impact, low-frequency events like terrorist attacks, which require a much more comprehensive approach to hotel security (Amur, 2005).

Hotels also generally have set security policies in place, as well as emergency plans, that they should be reviewing and updating regularly to meet changing risks

(Mest, 2017). Hotels often train many departments, including housekeeping, maintenance, front desk and more, who are not technically security personnel, on these security policies and emergency plans in an effort to extend the reach of the security team, as it requires many eyes and many ears to ensure that a sizeable hotel property is safe (Mest, 2017). These emergency plans, however, are oftentimes simplistic prescriptive models which provide directions or checklists on what managers should do before, during or after emergencies, that are not widely applicable to various situations (Ritchie, 2004).

Outside of these few commonalities, in addition to other simple standards that are considered a given, like checking identification upon check-in and deadbolt or bar locks on guest room doors, the level of security in place, and specific measures, vary greatly from one U.S. hotel property to the next. Some hotels restrict guest elevator access to only the floor on which the guest is staying, and some arm their security teams. Some hotels have physical security measures in place, while some do not have any security other than the few common measures discussed. This demonstrates just a fraction of the variances that exist between security levels in hotel properties.

### **Weaknesses & resulting risk.**

Several weaknesses have been identified within current U.S. hotel security in the aftermath of the Las Vegas shooting, which open the properties up to the risk of terrorism. Many of these overlap with the previously discussed reasons why hotels are attractive targets for acts of terror, and revolve around the open and accessible nature of hotels (Associated Press, 2008). The majority of weaknesses in hotels stem from the

property trying to balance security with guest privacy, convenience and satisfaction (Mest, 2017).

Hotels need to preserve the guest experience and ensure that guests do not feel scrutinized or inconvenienced, because that could lead to a loss of their business (Mest, 2017). Hotels don't want to limit the flow of people into and out of their properties, or implement stringent security measures for fear of alienating not only guests, but visitors to the property who have come for a meeting, dinner, or just for drinks at the bar (Wroten, 2017). All of that traffic generates revenue for the hotel that they do not want to risk losing, so hotels avoid security measures that would jeopardize that business (Wroten, 2017). However, by concerning themselves so much with the guest experience, they can hurt the security of their property. "Do not disturb" signs and the absence of bag screenings preserve the guests' right to privacy to the detriment of their security, as this allows people to bring in any weapons unnoticed, or to house them in their guestroom (Wroten, 2017). This is exactly how the Las Vegas gunman was able to execute his plan, as he brought his guns up to his room in suitcases, and he denied housekeeping for three days leading up to the attack so the staff would not see the arsenal in his room and possibly foil his plan (Wroten, 2017). Additionally, increasingly common convenience measures for guests, like mobile check in, while ideal for a traveler, limit the effectiveness of security measures, as the guest is able to completely bypass the front desk, evading all human interaction and entering a property undetected (Mest, 2017). This eliminates the employees' main opportunity to meet and observe the guest, and to recognize any suspicious behavior they might be exhibiting (Mest, 2017).

Some experts argue that a major weakness in current hotel security is hoteliers' over-reliance on electronics as a method by which to assess threats and vulnerabilities, rather than implementing built access-limiting devices and engineered physical improvements to their properties (Amur, 2005). These proponents of increased physical security argue that "blast vulnerability" and "collateral-damage-type engineering" assessments are needed in order to "harden buildings at strategic locations to protect them from bombings", in turn protecting guests and employees (Amur, 2005). One such physical security measure that many U.S. hotels are missing is perimeter and access limiting structures, like barriers between a property and its vital locations, such as the main entrance, that keep cars from driving into the building during an attack (Arlotta, 2017). This can be accomplished through a built or environmental design, creating a physical obstacle between the public and the hotel structure (Arlotta, 2017).

Other weaknesses specifically highlighted by the Las Vegas shooting included the ability of the shooter to tamper with and break the windows without security being alerted, the utilization of the service elevator by a guest unnoticed by employees, and the communication issues both internally after the security guard had reported shots fired, and externally to guests staying in the hotel (Wroten, 2017). This discussion of the weaknesses within hotels is not comprehensive, as security does differ so much among properties, and instead offers an overview of the main problems within the industry, with examples of the resulting holes in security, and the risks that derive from them.

### **The Future of Hotel Security**

There is a lot of speculation about what the future of hotel security in the United States could look like in light of the increased risk of terrorism. It is clear that hotel



security policy is changing as a result of the Las Vegas shooting, even if some hotel companies are not publicly acknowledging that was the incident that sparked the conversation about, and thus the review of their security. This is seen in the change that has already started to take effect concerning the “do not disturb” policies in hotel companies (Parry, 2018). In the months since the shooting, several hospitality and gaming companies, including Caesars Entertainment, Disney, Hilton, MGM Resorts International, Wynn Resorts and Boyd Gaming, have adopted policies requiring guest rooms to be checked periodically, even if a “do not disturb” sign is in use (Parry, 2018). The frequency of the required checks varies between companies, from twelve hours to two days, and the checks are to be conducted by security personnel (Parry, 2018). It is hard to know as of now how guests will respond to these changes, as they have yet to be fully implemented, but the new policy does encroach on the privacy of guests and may not be received well. This is indicative of the fact that more security changes are to come.

Most of those discussing changes to hotel security admit that drastic and stringent security updates are unlikely (Associated Press, 2017). They generally are too costly, too labor intensive, or too negatively received to be practical and effective solutions to the risk of terrorism (Associated Press, 2017). For example, nearly every article on the subject acknowledges that metal detectors and bag screening as you enter a hotel would greatly decrease the likelihood of a violent attack. However, the cost, manpower requirement, and reception by the public would make implementing this as a security policy infeasible (Wroten, 2017). It would also result in a different risk, as large crowds of people would gather in or outside of the lobby because of the bottleneck

caused by the bag screening, and would result in a new, even more accessible target (Wroten, 2017). This lesson was learned from the airport attack in Brussels, where increased security screening pushed the soft target out of the actual planes and into the uncontrolled, pre-security checkpoint, lobby of the airport (Wroten, 2017).

Since these stringent measures are unlikely to be implemented, many alternatives have been discussed that would improve security without the excessive cost or backlash from guests. One such suggestion was that since screening bags is not practical, instead consider bringing in bomb sniffing dogs to ensure no one is carrying explosives onto the property (Wroten, 2017). A few suggestions have revolved around the guest room windows, including using laminated glass in guest room windows, which would limit the ability to break out the window, forcing it to be shot at several times in order to break through, and increasing the chances of someone hearing and reporting it, or installing window alarms that would alert the front desk if the window broke or was tampered with (Wroten, 2017).

One main improvement that seems likely to happen is an in-depth retraining of all employees on what constitutes suspicious behavior (Associated Press, 2017). This would include training for the front desk staff who interact with the guests and see them coming and going, as well as the housekeeping staff, who should be trained on what suspicious materials or weapons in guest rooms warrant reporting to security, and the appropriate steps to follow should something need reporting (Associated Press, 2017). Hotels could even partner with local law enforcement agencies for this type of training. After the shooting in Las Vegas, the New York Police Department began offering training to area hotels on how to identify a gun case, and what it looks like compared to

a case for a banner, which are common at convention center hotels (Wroten, 2017).

This sort of practical application supplied by the police could take training on suspicious behavior and make it even more effective. Additionally, by implementing an adequate active threat training program, hotel employees will gain the confidence to take decisive action at the first indication that something is wrong (Killion, 2017). They will learn that quickly notifying law enforcement of the situation is essential to reestablishing order, and will practice how to communicate clearly about the emergency with coworkers and guests so they can quickly move everyone to safety (Killion, 2017). Lastly, this type of training will teach employees strategies on how to remain safe until law enforcement arrives to take control of the incident (Killion, 2017).

Other easily implementable solutions include installing additional security cameras to limit blind spots, and ensure that all public areas are surveilled, and increasing the security personnel presence on property (Associated Press, 2017). Elevator and stairwell access to guest room floors and non-public areas can be limited to guests staying on those specific floors or with granted access, controlled by access control management software (Arlotta, 2017). This same software can be utilized to secure the service elevator and employee entrances, so only employees with the appropriate key card access could get on property and up to the guest floors (Arlotta, 2017). Physical security upgrades could be introduced to improve a hotel property's security level, like moving the porte-cochere away from the building and creating some physical barrier between the driveway and the hotel to ensure cars do not attempt to drive into a property to execute an attack, or creating a perimeter around the property to limit access points and make surveillance simpler (Arlotta, 2017). Hotel properties could

also consider using predictive analytics in order to predict and prevent possible attacks (Wroten, 2017).

It is impossible to know as of yet what, if any, of these security measures will be adopted in U.S. hotels. There may be possible solutions that have not even been hinted at yet. We can, nonetheless, infer by the review of “do not disturb” policies that is already underway in this country, that there are more hotel security changes still to come.

### **Methodology**

The risk of terrorism in U.S. hotels is a problem that is not likely to go away. On the contrary, it seems to be growing. On October 1, 2017, tens of thousands of people gathered at an outdoor concert venue in Las Vegas for the last night of the Route 91 Harvest music festival, with no indication that anything was awry. They were blissfully unaware that across the street at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, a lone gunman was perched in a hotel room on the thirty-second floor, overlooking the festival with malicious intent. The man had, over the course of several days, managed to bring a cache of more than fifteen high powered, modified semi-automatic rifles into his hotel room unnoticed (Pirani, 2017). On this night, at 10:08 pm he proceeded to open fire on the festival goers below, leaving fifty-eight dead and well over five hundred injured (Pirani, 2017). This horrific event, which spanned only about ten minutes and has been characterized as the worst mass shooting in modern American history, brought the conversation of hotel security to the forefront in the news, inviting speculation about what the property could have done to prevent, or lessen the impact, of this event. The attack raised new questions among the American public, as they wondered how the

shooter was able to get so many guns up to his hotel room unnoticed, how he could break the window without anyone hearing or being alerted, and how housekeeping did not notice the arsenal being held in his hotel room.

This event, and the attention it brought to hotel security in the United States, prompted this research study. As the public considers whether the hotel and its security policies played a part in this tragedy, and wonders if the same issues exist in other properties resulting in a risk for similar attacks, hoteliers must examine their own policies and identify their weaknesses in order to relieve the public's fears, and lessen their own risk. As such, this study set out to explore how hotels have responded to the tragedy in Las Vegas, and how concerned U.S. hoteliers are about the risk of terrorism on their properties after that incident. It also aims to investigate what hoteliers view as their properties' biggest weaknesses in security and what hesitations exist when it comes to implementing new security measures on property, as well as to discover what they, as people with first-hand knowledge of the industry, believe would be feasible and effective security measures to combat the risk of terrorism.

## **Participants**

This study was examining hotel security from the perspective of hotel professionals, and as such, those included in the study had to be people with experience working in hotels. However, with the subject of the study being a sensitive topic, and with questions asking for information that a line level employee might not be privy to, the participants needed to be hotel employees of at least management level, focusing on mostly general managers and department heads within hotel properties. The participants were varied in their properties' classifications, service levels and

locations across the country, and their experience level, though the ideal participant has spent a moderate amount of time working in the hotel industry in some capacity.

The surveys were sent to approximately 90 people who fit the necessary classifications, and the goal was to achieve at least 30% participation from the targeted sample that received the survey. That would be approximately 25 to 30 complete and usable surveys. While more responses would provide a wider breadth of information and possible analysis and implications, at least 25 complete responses were needed to really be able to identify any patterns or to draw any conclusions from the information.

### **Procedure**

The participants in the study were identified primarily through shared contacts in the industry, as well as online sources such as LinkedIn and hotel websites. The majority of people asked to participate were contacted via cold call or email.

When identifying prospective participants for the study, a few different sampling techniques were utilized. As a result of the fact that this study is looking for an industry perspective, the researcher used a purposive sample, a non-probability sample that is chosen based on attributes of a population and the aim of the study (Crossman, 2017). Because the study is looking specifically for the perspective, ideas and opinions of experienced hotel professionals, it could not rely on a probability or random sampling to provide participants, as that would not guarantee that the sample has the necessary knowledge of and experience in the hotel industry (Crossman, 2017). The resulting purposive sample was a combination of a homogenous sample and an expert sample. A homogeneous purposive sample is one that is selected because all of the participants share a certain characteristic or set of characteristics, while an expert sample consists

of people with knowledge rooted in a particular form of expertise (Crossman, 2017). These were chosen because the participants needed certain characteristics to be valuable and relevant to the study, and because they needed the knowledge that comes from time and experience in the industry to contribute to the research. The desired characteristics in this study were hotel professionals of at least managerial level, preferably General Managers, Department Directors, and because of the subject matter, Directors of Security. The participants in the sample were from a range of property service levels including luxury, full and select service, and timeshare hotel properties, as well as a variety of classifications including urban, airport and resort properties, and conference and convention center hotels.

In addition, participants were identified through snowball sampling, also known as chain-referral sampling, which is another non-probability sampling technique. In this sampling style, the researcher relies on referrals from initial survey or interview subjects to generate additional prospective participants (Snowball Sampling, n.d.). In this study, that meant that some of the participants who had completed the survey then forwarded the survey link to contacts they thought would be willing to participate, knowledgeable about the subject, and who met the set criteria for participation, so they could also complete the survey. While this method was responsible for only a fraction of the surveys sent out, the rate of completion by these subjects was markedly higher than by those who had been cold-called or emailed and asked to participate.

## **Measures**

Initially, the study was going to be conducted as in-depth interviews with hotel professionals, focusing on general managers and the security department, but due to

the sensitive nature of the subject, people that were approached about possibly being interviewed were very reluctant to participate. As a result, the study was changed to instead consist of an entirely anonymous survey. This was done in order to abate the participants' hesitations about speaking on such a sensitive, and oftentimes confidential topic, in an attempt to garner more participation among the targeted sample. This was intended, also, to ideally increase participation because the survey could be completed at the leisure of the subject, and was far less time consuming than an in depth, in person or on the phone, scheduled interview.

The survey research was conducted in order to gain an understanding of how hotel professionals view their properties' current security in light of the Mandalay Bay shooting in Las Vegas. Therefore, questions were created to gauge if any changes have been made to security policy, physical security, or staffing levels on their properties as a direct result of the Las Vegas shooting, and to examine what the hoteliers deemed to be weaknesses in hotel security, as well as their ideas for possible solutions. The survey also asked about the subjects' opinions on the costliness of security and what they believe causes hesitation among hotel properties when considering implementing new or more stringent security measures, among other things (see Appendix A for a complete copy of the survey questions).

These questions came together to make up the 19 question, online questionnaire, which was sent to the chosen sample to complete. It was kept brief in an effort to ensure higher participation. The questionnaire, which was built through SurveyMonkey, consisted of a variety of question types and formats including filter questions and prompting questions, as well as multiple choice questions, response



scale questions, and open ended questions (Response Format, n.d.). Once finalized, the link to the online questionnaire was sent out to the prospective participants via email, alongside a brief description of the topic of research, the purpose of the study, and information on the survey itself like the estimated time to complete and the number and type of questions included. One reminder email was sent to the sample group, approximately a week after the original email containing the survey link was sent.

Once collected, the data gathered through the completed surveys was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative measures. A few of the questions on the survey, like the rating scale and the multiple choice questions, lent themselves to quantitative analysis, looking at the most frequent responses, the averages and the variances, to gain an understanding of the respondents' feelings on the subject and how they differ, or to grasp commonalities and differences between practices at different hotel properties. The majority of the responses gathered, though, were analyzed using qualitative measures. This included all of the open response questions, where all the answers needed to be read carefully and understood, before patterns in the data could be established and applied. The responses were examined individually, before being looked at collectively, to identify categories, patterns and common themes among the answers, as well as areas of the research where such patterns are missing. These patterns and common themes, or lack thereof, were then analyzed to see what they could reveal about the state of hotel security in the United States in regards to terrorism.

### **Results & Analysis**

For this study, a survey was distributed to hotel professionals to garner their thoughts and opinions on the current state of hotel security in U.S. properties, as well as

to investigate what, if any, changes have been made to their properties' security practices and policies in the six months since the Mandalay Bay shooting in Las Vegas in October 2017. The online questionnaire was distributed via email to the aforementioned sample of approximately 90 people fitting the necessary classifications of hotel employees of managerial level or above, with the necessary knowledge and experience to speak on the subject of security within hotels. The survey was kept open to respondents for a month. After that time frame, of the surveys distributed, 24 fully complete and usable responses were received, resulting in a completion rate of 27%. Of those who participated in the survey, job titles and departments varied, as well as their experience levels and hotel property types.

Respondents all fell into the following departments within their properties: security, hotel operations, sales and marketing, conference services, front desk and guest services, general management, and one casino floor manager at a Vegas Hotel and Casino property. Managers and directors from the sales and marketing department and the front desk and guest services department each made up one third of all respondents, while the remaining third of respondents were spread out: three in operations, two general managers, and one each in security, conference services, and casino management.

One characteristic of participants that was important was experience level, in order to ensure they had been in the industry long enough to speak knowledgeably about hotel security policies and issues. As such, the survey asked about the respondents' time in their current position, and their time in the industry overall. The majority of respondents, approximately 71%, have held their current position for at least

a year, of which more than half have been in their position for more than 10 years. Of the 29% of respondents who have been in their positions for less than a year, only one respondent held their position for less than 6 months. While this shows their time spent at their current property, and thus their knowledge of that property's security policies and procedures, the respondents' overall time in the industry is a better indication of their understanding of the industry as a whole, which lends credibility to their perception of terrorism as a threat, and their opinions on the weaknesses in hotel security and possible feasible solutions. The respondents were pretty evenly spread out concerning experience, with one third of respondents having up to 10 years of experience, one third having between 10 and 20 years of experience, and one third having more than 20 years of experience.

The participants were also asked about the service level of their hotel properties, and the classification that best describes it, in order to be able to compare across types and service levels should any notable differences or similarities present themselves (see Appendix B for the graphs displaying hotel service levels and classifications of respondents). The service levels listed as options included luxury, full service, select service, budget or economy, and other. Respondents who chose "other" were asked to specify what that other would be. Full service was the most common service level among respondents' hotel properties, representing 54% of all responses. Select service was the second most common, making up 21% of all responses. The remaining 25% of responses consisted of two luxury properties, one economy property, and three "other" properties, all of which happened to be timeshare properties. The classification type options in the survey were as follows: urban, suburban, airport, resort, suite, extended

stay, conference and convention center. The majority of respondents identified their properties as urban, making up 37.5% of responses. Airport properties, resorts and conference centers each accounted for 16.67% of properties, making up 50% of the total. Suburban, suite, and extended stay properties made up the remaining 12.5%, representing 4.17% each.

### **Hotels' Responses to the Las Vegas Shooting**

#### **Current policy.**

In order to understand what measures were taken in terms of reviewed or updated security in the aftermath of the Las Vegas shooting, the survey first asked a few questions about the frequency of hotel security policy reviews and of staff security training, as well as about the existence of an emergency communication system and what it may consist of, in order to understand the current standard within their properties. When asked how frequently their properties review their security policies and practices, the most frequent answer, making up nearly 30% of all responses, was quarterly. Monthly reviews were the second most common choice, with 25% of respondents choosing it. Together, approximately 55% of respondents reported that their hotel properties regularly review their security at least four times a year. If the biannual and annual options are included, representing 8% and 21% of all responses respectively, then more than 80% of the hotel properties represented in this sample review their security at least once annually. Of the remaining responses, one property reviews their security biennially, or once every two years, and one chose "other", specifying that their review schedule is a combination of options with various security

aspects checked monthly, while others are reviewed by period. Two respondents admitted that their security policies are not reviewed with any set frequency.

Participants were also asked about the frequency of security training and retraining for their hotels' employees. For this, respondents were permitted to give two answers, as employees may be trained upon hire as well as retrained at regular intervals. Eight of the twenty-four respondents did choose two answers, and of those eight, seven of them chose "upon hiring" in addition to their regular training intervals. This means that only approximately 30% of properties train employees on their security policies upon hiring apart from their normal training routine. The remaining respondent out of those eight chose "other" in addition to their property's training schedule, specifying that frequency depends on threat level, especially in high profile hotels, because if the threat is high enough, security could be discussed as frequently as daily in stand up meetings. Apart from those eight answers, the remaining responses indicate the regular frequency of security trainings within properties represented by the participants. One third of respondents indicated that security training was conducted on their properties quarterly, making it the most frequent training interval. Only two respondents, or 8%, trained more frequently, conducting trainings monthly. Biannual and annual trainings each make up 21% of all responses, meaning that of the responses received, more than 80% train or retrain staff on their security policies and protocols at least once a year. One respondent revealed that their property trains employees on hotel security only once every 2 years, while three do not train or retrain their employees on hotel security with any set frequency at all.

The last of the current hotel policies that the survey inquired about was the existence of a communication plan for alerting the authorities, hotel staff and guests of an emergency situation like a violent attack on the property. Only 12.5% of respondents admitted that no such plan was in place at their properties. The other 87.5% indicated that they do have a communication plan in place for emergency situations, but the descriptions of the plans varied greatly (see Appendix C for a chart of all the respondents' descriptions). They ranged from the simplest of plans such as doing an all call and sending a message to the guest rooms, or calling 911 and activating an alarm to evacuate the hotel, to much more in depth, detailed plans like the one this respondent described:

“Our resort has certain individuals that are designated as first responders. Once an employee has become aware of an emergency they are to contact a first responder over the radio system. They will then go to the scene of the emergency and alert the desk if 911 needs to be called. In the event of a serious emergency where all guests and staff need to be made aware of the situation, we do have an intercom system that can be used to broadcast an alert to anyone currently in the resort.”

In the received responses, while they vary greatly, it appears that some common threads among the communication systems exist, including intercom or alarm systems to alert guests and procedures for reporting emergencies to security or management.

### **Review of security policies.**

The incident in Las Vegas highlighted many security weaknesses within hotels that could be exploited should someone want to do mass amounts of harm. For this

reason, one of the things the survey set out to examine was if other hotel properties had conducted a review of their own security practices as a result of the shooting in Las Vegas, and if any changes had come as a result of those reviews. The results of the survey showed that 58% of properties represented by the respondents had conducted a review of their own security policies and practices, while 42% of the properties had not. Respondents were also asked for the reasoning behind this decision. Among the responses of those who had conducted a security review, several mentioned scheduling classes with local law enforcement to run through an active shooter situation, some discussed the “do not disturb” policies, and others referred to it as a learning opportunity or a standard precaution. Most of the respondents that said their property had not held a review left the reasoning blank, however there were a few interesting explanations. One respondent explained that because of the different layout of their hotel property, the likelihood of this type of attack happening was low, while another responded that upper leadership would say it was because they are in the height of their busy season. That respondent also noted the irony in that reasoning, adding that the busy season should be the best reason to conduct a review. A couple of respondents revealed that there was no real or specific reasoning behind the decision to not hold a security review, simply that they had not conducted one.

### **Resulting changes.**

The survey continued by inquiring about what changes, if any, the respondents' properties had taken steps to implement as a result of the shooting in Las Vegas and their subsequent security reviews, if they had conducted one. The survey specifically asked about changes in four areas: general security changes or upgrades, staffing level

changes, physical security improvements, and new brand standards coming from corporate. Regarding general security changes or upgrades that had been implemented in response to the incident in Las Vegas, 33% of respondents answered that changes had been made to their security policy or practices, while 67% said that no such changes to security had been implemented. However, one of the respondents in the “no” group specified that there were changes in the works, they just had not been implemented yet as they were being reviewed by the legal team. The responses of those who answered “yes” included descriptions of the changes that had been made. One respondent’s property had a vulnerability study conducted by the local police department, while two respondents mentioned more stringent security around special events, such as New Year’s Eve, with one even bringing in the K-9 unit to patrol the property during the festivities. A few properties have implemented new training programs, with one having conducted active shooter simulations. One property changed their policies in order to address the issue of too many points of entry to monitor, by locking all exterior doors to the property from sunset to sunrise with the exception of the front door to the lobby.

Despite the fact that 58% of the respondents’ properties had held security reviews, and that one third of all properties had implemented some sort of change to their security policies and practices, the number of respondents whose properties had made any changes to staffing levels or the hotel’s physical security were very low. When asked about staffing levels, only one respondent answered that yes, they had adjusted theirs in order to better secure the property as a result of what happened in Las Vegas. This respondent’s property not only ensured that there is 24 hour on-



property security coverage by adding a full 3rd shift, they also adjusted schedules to add additional weekend daytime security staff members. No other respondents reported any change in staffing, in the security department or otherwise. On the subject of physical changes to their hotel properties in order to increase security, 100% of the respondents said that no physical changes have been made. This is not a surprising result as the shooting in Las Vegas happened less than a year ago, and physical upgrades require substantially more time and money to implement than other, non-physical alternatives. However, one response explained how a certain physical upgrade had been made to their property just prior to the shooting. This upgrade was made to their elevators, which now require guests to have a key card to ride up to their specific floor, keeping just anybody from reaching the guest room levels of the hotel.

The last area of changes inquired about in the survey was whether any new brand standards regarding security had been put in place by corporate since the incident in Las Vegas, or if properties are responsible for creating their own security plans. Only 25% of respondents said that their property had received new brand standards from corporate concerning security. The majority of these responses referred specifically to changes coming down from corporate in regards to housekeeping procedures and the “do not disturb” policies on property. The other 75% of respondents either have not received any new brand standards, or their properties are responsible for creating their own security policies. Of these respondents, approximately 56% of them had not received any new brand standards, or any changes to existing standards being passed down from corporate, while the other 44% work at properties where it is

up to them to create and maintain their own security policies. One respondent, from the latter group, described the process as follows:

“There are certain brand standards when it comes to reporting emergencies and the hierarchy of who must be contacted. These have not changed. There is also a handbook of guidelines for handling various types of emergencies, however it is up to each individual resort to cater it to their own property.”

### **Hoteliers’ Perspective on Hotel Security & the Risk of Terrorism**

#### **Concern about the risk of terrorism.**

In addition to information regarding their hotel properties’ response to the Las Vegas shooting, the survey also asked respondents for their perspective on a variety of topics concerning hotel security, such as their opinions on weaknesses within hotel security and possible solutions, and what they think are the factors that cause hesitation when considering new security measures. First, the survey aimed to gauge the respondents’ level of concern about the general risk of terrorism in U.S. hotel properties, by asking them to judge it on a scale of one to ten (see Appendix D for the graph showing the received responses). The responses to this question were quite spread out, with every option between one and ten being chosen at least once. The mean of the responses was 6, and the median was also 6, while the mode was 5. This means that while the majority of respondents, 21%, chose 5 as their level of concern, the distribution of the other responses raised the average to 6. This shows that while a few of the respondents are extremely concerned, and a few are not at all concerned, that the majority land in the middle of the scale. The standard deviation was calculated to quantify the amount of variation among the responses. The standard deviation of the

responses was 2.5, which for this set of data is fairly high as all of the answers were confined to land between one and ten. Approximately two thirds, or 67% of all responses fall within one standard deviation of the mean, while the remaining one third of the responses fell outside of that range, with half being above and half being below one standard deviation.

### **Current hotel security weaknesses.**

In the remainder of the questions, there were no answer choices provided. They were formatted as open response questions in an effort to garner the respondents' honest thoughts on the subject without limitation or boundaries. The first of these questions asked the respondents what they deemed to be the biggest weaknesses in the current security practices in the hotel industry within the United States. Their responses were examined, and were utilized to determine categories that the responses all fell into. For the received responses regarding weaknesses, five main categories were established (see Appendix E for a chart of all responses and corresponding categories). The five categories that encompassed all the weaknesses were: guest privacy, physical, training, staffing, and the nature of the hospitality industry.

Of these, the most prevalent within the responses was guest privacy concerns, making up nearly 30% of all weaknesses mentioned by respondents. These responses mentioned issues like the fact that guests can deny housekeeping and thus keep hotel staff out of their room, the lack of luggage screening allowing guests to bring anything on property without the hotel's knowledge, and the lack of surveillance on guest room floors or the increasing use of mobile check-in, allowing guests to bypass the front desk entirely.

Physical weaknesses and weaknesses in training made up the two next most common responses, each representing 25% of the total responses. Physical security weaknesses that were referenced included open elevators, multiple unsecured entry points, and the lack of screening equipment. One especially interesting point made about physical security was the lack of exit options that do not go through the main lobby, because if there was an active shooter situation the lobby is the last place mass amounts of people should be lead. Responses that fell into the security training weaknesses category included a general lack of security training leaving employees unprepared should an emergency occur, a lack of awareness among staff of what constitutes suspicious behavior, and the need for individualized training on emergency plans. This would constitute each team member being instructed clearly on what their individual responsibilities would be should an emergency arise, not just relying on a written procedure to follow as a team with no defined roles, because that leads to confusion when it's time to act.

Approximately 17% of respondents alluded to the very nature of the hospitality industry being the greatest weakness concerning hotel security, explaining that hotels are open to the public and are expected to be hospitable to people, guests and otherwise. Acting suspicious or unwelcoming of patrons could hurt a hotel's business, and implementing new stringent security measures could alienate or inconvenience guests so much that they choose to go elsewhere, so in order to avoid this problem, security is kept lax to ensure people feel welcome. One lone respondent, making up the final 4%, said that staffing is the main weakness in hotel security, specifying that when

employees are stretched too thin due to understaffing, they do not have the time nor ability to really observe guests and spot suspicious activity should it occur.

### **Possible security solutions.**

After establishing what the respondents viewed as the main weaknesses in hotel security, the survey went on to ask for ideas on how to improve hotel security. Every respondent was asked for up to five suggestions of security practices or improvements that they believed could be implemented on hotel properties to increase security in order to better deter or combat the risk of terrorism or violent attack. A total of 87 responses were received from the 24 participants. Again, the responses were analyzed in order to develop categories of the provided suggestions. The 87 ideas for security improvement fell into six main categories, with a few outliers landing in an “other” category (See Appendix F for chart of all the responses and corresponding categories). The derived categories were: training improvements, physical improvements, staffing changes, policy changes, partnerships, and technology upgrades.

The most suggestions, 25% of total responses, fell into the training improvements category. While several suggestions were as simple as better quality or more frequent security training for staff, many offered more detailed or specific ideas. Numerous respondents thought that unannounced active shooter or emergency situation drills, much like fire drills, would better prepare staff members for a real emergency event, one of which specified that these drills should be in small groups so every member would have to actively participate and learn their role. Others mentioned introducing training to teach staff to be more aware of their surroundings, to spot suspicious behavior among guests or visitors, and to report such behaviors. A few

respondents focused on the training of the security department specifically, instead of the hotel staff collectively, suggesting continuous high quality training for security personnel.

Physical improvements were also frequently suggested, making up 22% of the total responses. Respondents proposed installing more cameras in public spaces, including coverage of public spaces on the guest floors and areas outside the building, such as in parking structures and around the perimeter of the property. They also discussed securing the building by limiting the number of access points, some suggested this should be done by limiting the entrances to those that can easily be monitored, while another mentioned keeping all external doors locked except the main entrance into to lobby, but allowing guests to access them with use of a guest room key card. The most common physical suggestion was the installation of metal detectors or TSA style screening equipment at entrances to the property, though some respondents did note that this would be an extreme measure. Other suggestions included elevators that require a room key and only allow access to the guest's floor, upgraded lock and key systems on the guest room doors, installation of emergency or panic buttons in discrete areas where staff can access them in case of an emergency, and securing back-of-house and employee areas by requiring staff to have key cards to access them.

Staffing and policy changes were the next most common categories that the respondents' suggestions fell into, each representing 18% of total responses. Staffing related suggestions revolved around the need for more uniformed security personnel, so they are visible and identifiable by guests, provide around the clock security, and have the manpower to monitor all the security cameras, entrances, and public guest

spaces to ensure the property is safe and secure. Several respondents also proposed that these security personnel be armed, so should an emergency happen they can spring into action until the authorities arrive. Among the staffing suggestions, there was also mention of K9 units being utilized on property, and people with a law enforcement or military background being hired onto hotel staff. The main policy suggestions received were related to the “do not disturb” policies that have previously allowed guests to keep hotel employees out of their rooms indefinitely. This change would involve requiring housekeeping to notify security when a guest has denied entry for more than 24-48 hours, so they can then do a wellness check and sweep the room. In addition to this policy, suggestions included policies such as increasing random bag checks, linking the reservation or brand systems to the no-fly list or other government watch lists, handling same day reservations differently, and changing the luggage storage policy within hotels.

The remaining responses were categorized as partnerships, technology, and “other”, representing 7%, 4%, and 6% of all responses respectively. The suggestions that fell into the partnership category involved hotels creating partnerships with local law enforcement agencies for training, vulnerability studies and things of that nature. Respondents also mentioned having a police presence on site at all times, with one suggesting that it could be an undercover or plain-clothes police officer, functioning like an air marshal would on an airplane. The technological suggestions involved utilizing the most up to date technology for the security cameras, lock and key systems, and detection software, along with other security features of the hotel. The responses that fell into the “other” category were the outliers that did not fit into any of the other,

existing categories. These suggestions included posting the communication protocols for an emergency, so staff has quick access to it should one occur, and to establish open and effective communication channels, especially between the security department and the rest of the staff. One particularly interesting suggestion in this category was for hotel staff to make sure they are speaking to and checking in with guests as they come and go from the property, making eye contact and acknowledging them, so that the guests know the staff is aware and observing what is going on around them within the property.

### **Hesitations.**

It appears that hoteliers are aware and concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks on their properties, and they are able to identify weaknesses and suggest measures that could be implemented to improve their overall security. However, few, if any, of the suggestions for improved security are put into practice. For this reason, the survey went on to ask about not only the hesitations that the respondents have when considering new security measures, but also how they feel about the cost that generally comes along with increased security. The responses received regarding the factors that cause hesitation when considering new security measures overwhelmingly pointed to the guest perception and impact of new security policies and practices (see Appendix G for chart of all responses). Two thirds, or approximately 67% of respondents said that the impact to the guest, or the guest's perception of security, was the main factor that caused pause when thinking about implementing security changes or improvements. The current process of flying in this country was used as an example, arguing that people complain about how stressful flying is with TSA and safety concerns, and



allowing that to become the hotel experience would be greatly detrimental to the hotel business. Additionally, these respondents discussed guest privacy and satisfaction, and their perception of the property as “high risk” if the security implemented seems excessive. One respondent clearly explained it by stating that the property is “always looking at the impact to the guest. Any changes that are made will affect the guest in some way or another. These different effects can have an impact on revenue generation and repeat guest income”.

The only other factor that caused hesitation among several respondents was the cost of security, which 21% of respondents mentioned. Three of these respondents put cost as a factor in addition to guest impact, so there is some overlap in these percentages. These responses concerning cost mentioned budgetary concerns and the high cost of implementing new security measures as a deterrent to increased security or changes to security policy. One lone respondent said that management was their main hesitation, explaining that concerns over a manager’s willingness to implement new security measures is what causes them to hesitate when considering the options. The remaining respondents, 21%, said that they had no factors that caused hesitation when considering more or new security on their property, because their guest’s safety and security is their highest priority.

The final question on the survey asked the respondents if they view the cost of security as prohibitive to implementing new and more stringent security measures in hotels, and why they felt that way. The respondents were split on this, with 54% of them saying no, they do not view the cost of security as prohibitive, while the other 46% disagreed, believing that security is prohibitively expensive. Of the slight majority who

chose “no”, numerous respondents echoed the sentiments from the previous question, saying that the decision to implement or not is more about the guest experience than it is the cost. In the “yes” responses, explanations mentioned how important the hotel budget is, how the expense is seen as disproportionate to the need, especially for smaller properties, and how hotel asset managers generally deem costly measures as unnecessary unless implemented from and required by corporate. However, respondents on both sides of this issue talked about the need to strike a balance between security, cost, and guest satisfaction for any security measures to be feasible.

### **Key Findings**

The first finding worthy of note was how greatly the perception of the risk of terrorism ranged between respondents, with some saying that it was not a concern of theirs whatsoever, and others rating it of the utmost concern. Prior research referenced in this study discussed the trends in terrorism, such as the increase in lone-actor attacks and the preference for soft targets, that point to the fact that the risk of terrorism not only exists for U.S. hotel properties, but is also growing. Considering these trends, and the fact that hotels have just seen what can happen should an emergency occur, one would expect the concern level of hoteliers to be more consistent, and markedly higher. This discrepancy between expectation and reality prompts questions about why hoteliers are so varied in their perception of the threat of terrorism. This could be because of a lack of information and understanding pertaining to the risk of terrorism on soft targets in the U.S., as the hotel industry does not track the aforementioned terrorism trends. It could also be because hoteliers stay busy ensuring that the day to day operations run smoothly and that their guests have a pleasant experience, so they do not concern

themselves with the possibility or threat of an attack until it is shown to be an active problem. This is problematic because, as evidenced by the shooting in Las Vegas, terrorism is an active, albeit infrequent, problem for hotels in the United States, and should be regarded as such.

This is also why it was surprising to find that nearly half of all properties represented by the sample did not conduct any type of review of their security practices or policies in the aftermath of the Las Vegas shooting. After being confronted with exactly what a terrorist attack perpetrated on or at a hotel property could look like, and the damage it could do, these hotels have not even taken a moment to examine their own security comparatively against the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino to see if they share any of the same security weaknesses as the ones exploited in that attack. They have not asked themselves if there is anything they could improve on to lessen the likelihood that a similar attack would happen on their properties. Additionally, only one third of properties have actually gone through with any changes to their security as a result of those reviews, primarily regarding training and “do not disturb” policies. When considering that just over half of respondents conducted a review, however, for one third of that same pool of respondents to have actually implemented any change means that once properties take the first step by conducting a review, the transition to actually implementing changes happens more often than not- two thirds of the time.

Another finding that was surprising was the fact that no real correlations between property service level or classification and the property’s reaction to Las Vegas shooting or the respondents’ views on hotel security existed within the results of this survey. This could be a result of the small sample size of this study, as there were not enough

participants to be representative of any whole property type. Despite not seeing these patterns as expected, it should be acknowledged that security needs vary between different property service levels and classification types. The threat level for hotels is not uniform across the board. Large hotel properties in big, tourism driven cities like New York, or in a political center like Washington D.C, are generally at a higher risk than a smaller hotel property in the suburbs, even though this data did not fully support that assertion.

In the responses, while cost was an important factor in determining whether to implement new security measures, it was unexpected to find that the impact on the guest and how they perceive the change to security is actually the bigger concern to respondents. The researchers had presumed that increased security and the high cost associated with implementing it would be the biggest deterrent when weighing security options. However, many respondents did echo an idea present in prior research on the topic, stating that numerous weaknesses within hotel security are simply the result of the industry attempting, unsuccessfully, to balance security with the guest experience- privacy, satisfaction, and convenience- and cost. This is why metal detectors, luggage scanners, or bag checks would not be feasible security options, despite being the most common physical upgrade that was suggested by respondents to the survey, and probably the most effective at preventing crime. The cost of the equipment and staff needed to run it, as well as the impact it would have on hotel guests' experiences, and other problematic resulting impacts, make it quite obviously an impractical security measure at this time in U.S. hotels, with some respondents even calling it an extreme measure.

One key finding that was not all that surprising was the fact that guest privacy is perceived by hoteliers to be the biggest weakness within hotel security. The expectation by the guests to be able to keep hotel employees out of their guest rooms indefinitely, and to carry anything they please onto the property without question really inhibits the hotel's capability to secure the property and protect the guests. This is especially challenging when considering the fact that the respondents' biggest hesitation when implementing new security measures is how the new measure would be perceived by the guest, or the impact the new measure would have on the guest experience. Guests are currently accustomed to this level of privacy when staying in a hotel, so naturally if those policies were to change there would be negative feedback from guests. The dilemma then becomes how to balance these two issues; how does one improve upon the issue of guest privacy without causing problems relating to the guest impact? Is it even possible, without completely disregarding guest impact and satisfaction, that the problems caused by the issue of guest privacy can be mitigated? It appears that "do not disturb" policies are changing despite the guest perception and impact, as a direct response to the Las Vegas shooting, where the attacker held dozens of guns in his room for days unchecked. This will at least limit guests in how long they can keep hotel staff from entering their rooms. As for monitoring what guests bring on property either through metal detectors or bag checks, like mentioned above, this security measure is not likely to happen unless incidents like the one in Las Vegas become much more pervasive in the hotel industry, as the impact on the guest is too high to justify after one attack.

Furthermore, regarding hesitations around implementing new security measures, 21% of respondents said that they had no hesitations holding them back at all, with some even going so far as to explain that there were no hesitations because the guests' safety and security is the highest priority. Even so, when compared against the responses received about whether any changes had been made to the security policies and practices at their properties since the incident in Las Vegas, none of these properties have implemented any changes at all. This is rather shocking, because if security is their highest priority, and they have absolutely no reservations about implementing new security measures, why is it that no upgrades or changes have been made in the aftermath of this event? One explanation could be that these properties' security was already at a higher level because, as they stated, the guests' safety and security is the top priority. This could also be because their survey results were biased or not entirely candid. Despite the anonymity guaranteed by the survey, the respondents may have wanted to avoid saying something they felt was callous- that the effects of new security, the added cost and the impact on guest satisfaction, both of which affect the hotel's bottom line, have to be weighed against the potential threat of an attack and the measures that could protect the lives of their guests. If this were the case, it would indicate that these hotel properties do in fact have hesitations when it comes to implementing new security measures, and could explain why these properties, like the majority of the others included in the study, have not taken any steps toward increasing or upgrading their security policies.

The final takeaway from this study is that, based on the survey conducted and the prior existing research, training seems to be the most immediate and likely change

to hotel security that will come as a result of the shooting in Las Vegas. Training is the most common response to the tragic incident presumably because it is one of the scare options for updating security that has very few, if any, tangible negative effects on the hotel guest. Again, because guest impact is the highest concern of hotels implementing new security measures, the measures, like training, that can easily be put into practice without outrageous cost or disruption to the guests will be the first implemented.

Training may also be a focus of hotels in the aftermath of the Las Vegas shooting because it was explicitly mentioned in the lawsuit brought by victims of that attack against the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino. Physical security measures were not focused on by the lawsuit, while staffing, training, and monitoring were clearly referenced. The lawsuit alleges that the Mandalay Bay was "grossly negligent in the selection, hiring and training" of its employees (Hayes, 2017). The lawsuit also claims that the hotel was not doing their due diligence to surveil people as they came and went from the property (Hayes, 2017). For this reason, it makes sense that training would be the first course of action that hotels take to better prepare themselves for an event like the Las Vegas shooting, and to protect themselves from similar lawsuits that would undoubtedly come as a result of such an event.

### **Conclusion**

Unfortunately, terrorism is not a phenomenon that is going away. Earlier in the study, the current trends in terrorism were discussed, and they point to an increasing risk in the United States of acts of terror perpetrated on or within hotels. The rise of lone-actor attacks, especially in the United States, and the attractiveness of soft targets, like hotels, both support that assertion. Once this risk is acknowledged though, the

question becomes what are hotels going to do about it? Properties have been faced with the reality of what can happen during an attack on a hotel property, illustrated by what did happen in Las Vegas, so they should be considering taking steps to mitigate the risk of terrorism on their properties now more than ever. However, after reviewing the results of the survey it became clear that, not only are most hotels holding off on increasing security due to concern about the guest impact or cost, but that many have not even conducted a review of their security in the time that has passed since the shooting. It is imperative that hotels take a look at their own practices and policies to determine, should an attack happen on their property, if they are prepared to handle such an event. If they find that they are not equipped for an emergency situation, steps should be taken immediately to strengthen their security, not only in order to protect their guests and employees, but also safeguard themselves against the backlash that would result from an attack on their property after they had seen where security failed in the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino and still chose to do nothing.

While there was plenty of existing research on hotel security, and on terrorism, and even some on terrorism in hotels, focused primarily on other countries, there was a lack of research on hotel security in relation to terrorism in the U.S. This is especially true when looking for research concerning what happened in Las Vegas, as it is still such a recent event. This study attempted to fill part of that void by getting the perspective of U.S. hoteliers after the incident in Las Vegas, seeking out their thoughts on current security weaknesses, ideas to improve it, and how concerned they really are about terrorism in hotels in the U.S. It focused on the response of hotel properties in the



United States to the shooting in Las Vegas, and to the increasing threat of terrorism for U.S. hotels.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited by several factors, the first of which was the small sample size used in the primary research. Due to the small size of the sample, this research is not representative of the hotel industry as a whole, and therefore generalizations drawn about the entirety of the U.S. hotel industry from this research may not accurately represent the truth of the situation. This study is also limited in its scope, as it is only concerned with hotels in the United States. The information in the study would not be applicable to hotels in other regions of the world where the terrorism risk is higher, and thus stringent security measures are already the norm. The scope of the study is also limited to solely the perspective of hotel employees, specifically managers, giving no indication of how guests feel about security within hotel properties. Furthermore, due to the sensitive nature of the subject, the study was limited in the format it could take. Originally, the plan was to conduct interviews, but those approached were hesitant to participate due to the subject matter, so the format had to be changed to a survey that could be taken anonymously in order to garner sufficient participation. The resulting responses, even with the anonymity, still may not have been as candid as hoped for. The self-reporting of survey answers could allow for bias of respondents to influence the results of the survey, though this is an issue for any primary research, whether surveys, interviews, or other methods.

### **Opportunities for Future Research**

Should anyone want to continue the research started in this study, it could be beneficial to look at the guest perspective on hotel security as an accompaniment to the hotelier perspective examined in this study. This could flow directly from this study, by asking guests about their view on the different security measures suggested by hoteliers within this study, to gauge their receptiveness, since hoteliers said that guest impact and perception was the biggest hesitation. It could also be a stand alone study created to investigate what guests look for in hotel security, if their security expectations have changed since the Las Vegas shooting, and what measures, if implemented, would make them feel more confident that they're being kept safe on property. Another research option would be to conduct feasibility studies or cost benefit analyses looking at different security measures suggested in this study. It was mentioned by respondents in this study that hotels need to find a balance between security, guest experience, and cost, so it would make sense to continue this research by looking at just that- which proposed security measures most effectively balance these factors? For each measure the study could examine its potential effectiveness in preventing emergency events, the cost to implement and maintain, the impact it would have on the guest, and if that impact would wane over time as guests became accustomed to it, in order to find the measures that provide the most benefit for the least amount of detrimental effects.

### **Implications & Recommendations for the Industry**

Through this study, it has become evident that hoteliers are at least somewhat aware of the risk of terrorism, especially after the shooting in Las Vegas, and of the weaknesses within hotel security, as they were able to identify many in their responses. But, it seems that these hoteliers and their properties still are not taking many steps to

improve upon these weaknesses for fear of inconveniencing, alienating, or displeasing their guests. They don't want to lose business as a result of these guest impacts, so they hold off on implementing. However, if the terrorism trends that indicate an increasing risk of terror on hotels in the U.S. prove true, hotels may put off implementing necessary security changes for too long, allowing, through their inaction, another incident like the Las Vegas shooting to occur. Right now the urgency is high, and the need for increased security is clear because the shooting was so recent, but the more time that passes, the more likely hotels are to move on from the topic of security to other concerns, until the next tragic attack happens bringing the issue to the forefront once again. The only problem is that next time, it will not be the first time, it will not be a new shock. Instead the public will wonder why hotels did not take any steps to keep it from happening again; why they did not do anything to protect their patrons?

Also in the course of this research, it has become apparent that physical security upgrades, despite being among the most frequently suggested courses of action, are unlikely to be implemented until events like the shooting in Las Vegas become more prevalent in the United States. After only one such event, the measures and their associated cost and guest impact are still deemed too extreme for the perceived threat level. However, if subsequent attacks were to happen, illustrating that the Vegas shooting was not an anomaly or outlier event, but actually part of a bigger trend, then the need for these more extreme measures would become obvious, and they would be much more likely to be implemented by hotels and accepted by guests.

Additionally, it became overwhelmingly clear that a lack of consistency exists across U.S. hotel properties in both their perception of terrorism as a risk, and the

security policies and practices in place to protect guests and employees. It is important for hotel properties to stay abreast of the changing trends in terrorism, such as attack type and ideal targets, in order to understand their own risk or vulnerability to attack and maintain a level of security that is appropriate to handle mitigate that risk.

In order to mitigate the risk of terror on hotel properties and to lessen the inconsistencies between security practices and policies on hotel properties, an industry standard should be created. Industry standards are generally accepted requirements, or in this case guidelines, followed by the members of a specific industry. A standard set of guidelines and suggestions of security practices and policies should be created and implemented industry wide in order to keep security more uniform across the industry.

This would best be done by a committee or task force consisting of representatives from all the major hotel companies, the American Hotel & Lodging Association, local or federal level law enforcement, and others from the security, hospitality, and technology fields. They could come together and collaborate to determine the most practical security measures, measures that are effective but not overly costly or bothersome to guests, to be passed down to the individual properties to implement. This committee of representatives would work better than a standard set of guidelines coming from an outside entity, because the representatives from each company can ensure that the guidelines get passed on to their properties and implemented as a requirement from corporate.

The guide would consist of the baseline level of security suggestions that would secure an average hotel. It would specify appropriate security practices such as the ideal staffing levels for securing a hotel property based on size or the number of

sleeping rooms, and the most effective security training techniques, schedules, and frequencies, with approved security training plans included. It would also suggest physical and technological security measures like elevators that require key cards, security cameras, up to date door lock technology, and limited entrance points to the property that can all be monitored. These guidelines and more would make up the security protocols, policy and practices, that would then be considered the standard. Because different hotel properties have different risk levels, the standard would also include suggested modifiers for higher level targets, like urban hotels in tourist destinations- New York City, Washington D.C., or Las Vegas, and lower level targets, smaller suburban properties in areas with less tourist traffic or budget properties. These modified suggestions might include that higher level targets consider having armed security on premises, or that lower level targets may not require as high a security presence on site at all times.

This same committee could also take on the task of monitoring and tracking attacks on hotels in the U.S. and distributing that information to hotels properties. This would better allow the industry to stay abreast of terrorism trends, to stay informed of the risk, and to maintain a security level that is appropriate for the changing threat level and techniques of attackers. This would, however, require a level of transparency in reporting between the hotel companies and government agencies involved. This is because while most events of this nature make national news, if events were to occur on properties, or be prevented on properties, that didn't make the news, those events should still be reported to this committee so they could be included in terrorism

information they track, and considered during the creation of the standard security guidelines.

Another recommendation would be for the industry to undertake a study of the guests' perceptions of hotel security in the United States. If the guest impact and perception is the most important factor causing hesitation when considering increase security, hotels or industry organizations should take the time and initiative to ask guests how new measures would be received, or what security they would like to see implemented in hotels. This could also be done by the committee, they could put together surveys to be distributed to guests through their hotel properties and brand systems. They could ask about the guest perception of hotel security levels, what they look for in a hotel as far as security is concerned, their thoughts on various different security measures, and even if they'd be willing to pay a slightly higher room rate to offset the cost of increased security at hotels. They could then use this information to further flush out their standards, and use the data gathered to support their security plan.

This security plan, created by the committee, should be implemented within all the member organizations' properties, but should also be made available to independent hotels not affiliated with a big brand, should they want access to it. It could be included on the AHLA website or somewhere where it can be accessed by any property that might need it. Security information is not a business secret, and ways in which a hotel protects guest lives should not be proprietary information. I understand not sharing the securing plan with the general public, but these hotel companies should

not shy away from working together to ensure that their guests and employees are safe, and their properties are secure.

The last recommendation would be in regards to the training of the hotel employees. Because training activities- frequency, content and quality- seem the most likely and immediate change to occur to hotel security, programs should take a less traditional format than is normal. A classroom setting may be appropriate for training mass groups of employees about other things within the hotel, but security training in that setting does nothing to help in the event of an actual emergency. Security training should take the form of role-plays or drills, conducted in small groups, possibly by department, so that instead of a big group being talked to about the general hotel wide emergency plan with no idea of how to practically apply or execute it during a real situation, individual departments can run through an actual scenario. This would allow the employees in each department to see what their collective responsibilities as a department would be in an emergency situation, as well as what their individual roles would be, and how best to execute those in a high stress environment. Without specifying individual roles and responsibilities during an emergency, in a situation where it actually matters, employees will all look to someone else to act, and no one ever actually will. Without learning this practical application, and running through a situation in a role-play or active shooter drill, all of the classroom training will immediately be forgotten in the face of an actual emergency.

In summary, while balancing hotel security against guest impact and satisfaction remains a challenge, should any of these recommendations be implemented, they could have lasting effects on the security of U.S. hotels by aiding in the prevention of

subsequent violent acts, after the shooting in Vegas. By creating an industry standard for hotel security to promote consistency, monitoring the changing risk of terror, seeking out the guest perspective on security measures in hotels, and updating training formats to be more effective and applicable, the industry can ideally increase security to deter future attacks, but should one happen, they can be better prepared to act.



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**Appendix A****Hotel Security & Terrorism**

\* 1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how concerned are you about the risk of terrorism on U.S. hotel properties?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\* 2. How frequently are your property's security practices and policies reviewed?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Monthly                | <input type="radio"/> Annually                        |
| <input type="radio"/> Quarterly              | <input type="radio"/> Biennially                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Biannually             | <input type="radio"/> Not reviewed with set frequency |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |   |

\* 3. How frequently are hotel staff trained/retrained on hotel security practices and policies? (Choose up to 2 answers)

- ☐ Upon hiring
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Biannually
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Biennially
- ☐ Not trained/retrained with set frequency
- ☐ Other (please specify)

\* 4. In the event of an emergency, does your hotel property have a communication plan in place to alert the authorities, employees and guests of the situation? If so, please briefly describe the procedure.

- \* 5. Has your hotel conducted a review of security policies since the Mandalay Bay Shooting in Las Vegas? Why or why not?

- \* 6. Have any resulting security changes/updates been put into action at your property since the incident in Las Vegas? If so, what?

- \* 7. Have any physical changes to your hotel property been considered or implemented since the incident in Las Vegas? If so, what?

- \* 8. Have staffing levels in your hotel changed since the Las Vegas shooting? If so, please briefly describe.

- \* 9. Are there any new brand standards that pertain to security or are individual properties responsible for creating their own plans? Please explain.

- \* 10. What do you believe are the main weaknesses in hotel security that open hotel properties up to the risk of terrorism or violent attack?

\* 11. Please list up to five (5) security practices or improvements that you believe could be implemented on hotel properties to increase security in order to better deter/combat the risk of terrorism or violent attack?

Suggestion 1

Suggestion 2

Suggestion 3

Suggestion 4

Suggestion 5

\* 12. What are your main hesitations when considering new or more stringent security measures in hotels?

\* 13. Do you view the cost of security as prohibitive to implementing more stringent security measures in hotels? Why or why not?

14. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments on the subject of hotel security as it pertains to terrorism?

\* 15. What is your current job title?

\* 16. How long have you been in your current position?

☐ Less than 6 months

☐ 3 - 5 years

☐ 6 months - 1 year

☐ 5 - 10 years

☐ 1 - 3 years

☐ Over 10 years



\* 17. What service-level best describes your hotel property?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Luxury                 | <input type="radio"/> Budget/Economy                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Full Service           | <input type="radio"/> Corporate Level (not on property) |
| <input type="radio"/> Select Service         |   |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |   |

\* 18. What classification best describes your hotel property?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Urban                  | <input type="radio"/> Suite                          |
| <input type="radio"/> Suburban               | <input type="radio"/> Extended Stay                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Airport                | <input type="radio"/> Conference / Convention Center |
| <input type="radio"/> Resort                 |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |  |

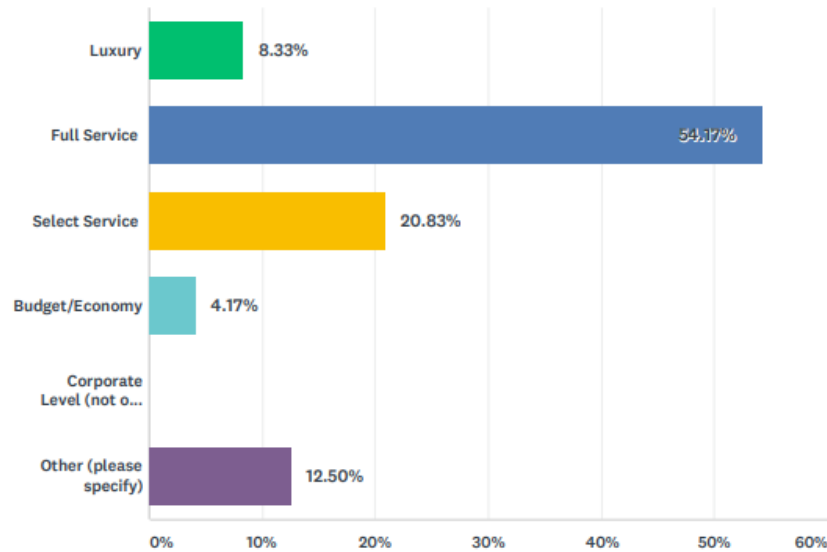
\* 19. How long have you been in the hotel industry overall?

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 5 years | <input type="radio"/> 15 - 20 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 5 - 10 years      | <input type="radio"/> Over 20 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 10 - 15 years     |                                     |

## Appendix B

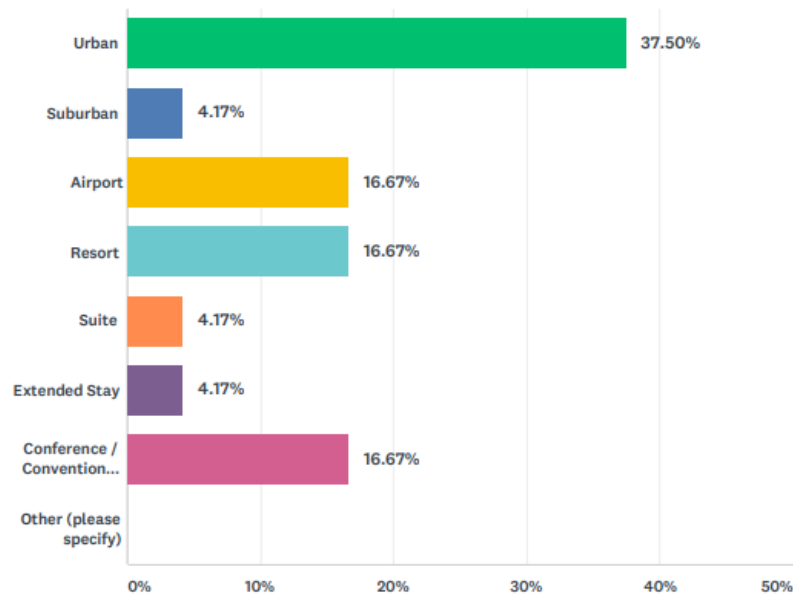
### Q17 What service-level best describes your hotel property?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



### Q18 What classification best describes your hotel property?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



### Appendix C

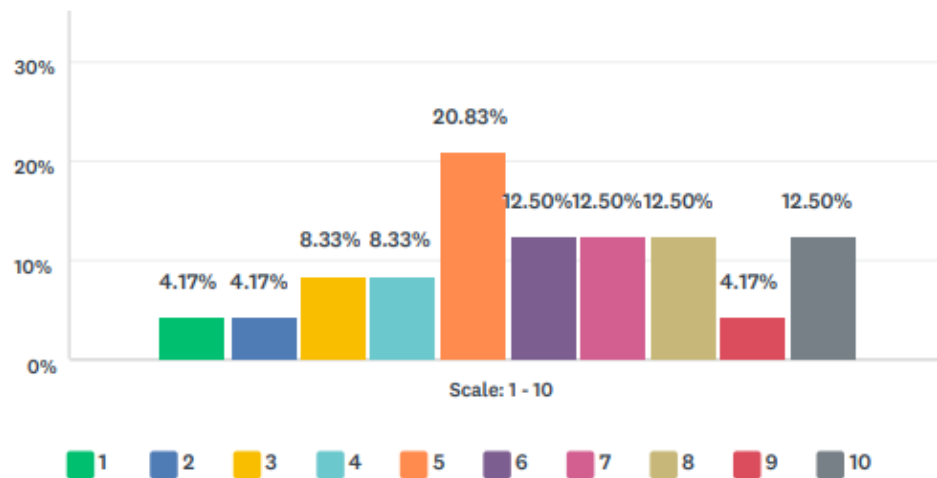
<b>Q4</b>	In the event of an emergency, does your hotel property have a communication plan in place to alert the authorities, employees and guests of the situation? If so, please briefly describe the procedure.	
Respondent	<b>24 total responses</b>	
1	Yes	AT&T Emergency Text Msg for Key Mgrs, PA System, email communication, and dialing 911
2	Yes	We have an emergency response plan that is cloud based, it can be accessed all the way up to our corporate HQ. It updates digitally based on personal movement
3	Yes	Current procedures dictate a Calling Tree Approach. The Manager on Duty will call the GM to inform them of the situation after calling the authorities. The general manager will dispense the information to department heads, who will call all employees. Our Security team will also interface with authorities under direction of the general manager.
4	Yes	All call / message guest rooms
5	Yes	We have an app that will send messages to the Leadership committee. We also have a hotel PA system if we need the guest to leave the hotel or to advise them to shelter in place.
6	Yes	Manager on Duty alerts proper authorities and advises guests and employees if needed based on the seriousness of the emergency.
7	Yes	
8	Yes	We have a protocol of who is contacted and in what order, authorities, property security, manager on duty, our immediate supervisor is the order
9	No	
10	Yes	Our Resort has certain individuals that are designated as First Responders. Once an employee has become aware of an emergency they are to contact a First Responder over the radio system. They will then go to the scene of the emergency and alert the desk if 911 needs to be called. In the event of a serious emergency where all guests and staff need to be made aware of the situation, we do have an intercom system that can be used to broadcast an alert to anyone currently in the Resort.
11	Yes	Depends on the situation, usually the alarm panel will automatically let authorities know, but we can always contact them in case of emergency through the 911 phone.
12	Yes	Call 911. Contact General Manager. Department Heads are required to meet in the lobby. Managers are updated on the situation, then follow emergency plan as it applies to the situation.
13	Yes	Plan is written and reviewed. Chain of command re communications established. Command room established.
14	Yes	Call 911, hotel mgt, corporate contact
15	Yes	Different plans in place depending on the emergency (i.e. fire vs. injury, etc).
16	Yes	If you see someone suspicious, you call the hotel security and ask for NORA (which an acronym for emergency response, without tipping off the suspect(s)) and they are to immediately respond. We also have an alarm that goes off on property if an emergency is

		detected. Security responds to it, to either verify that we have a true emergency or dismiss it if it was a minor issue that has been handled.
17	Yes	
18	Yes	Any outgoing emergency call is sent via email to all managers. Appropriate announcements can then be made to guests via the hotel public address system.
19	Yes	We call 911 and can activate an alarm to evacuate the hotel.
20	Yes	Depending on the alert. Each one has a separate procedure. Each starts with notifying internal security and they will assess the level to know who to contact. ie local police or bomb squad, etc...
21	No	
22	Yes	There is an emergency/terrorism multi-channel communication we can use
23	Yes	Typically, the front desk will be the first to alert the authorities. When a call to 911 is placed, an alarm goes off signaling to employees that they have been called. At that time it is discussed whether or not evacuation steps are necessary.
24	No	

**Appendix D**

**Q1 On a scale of 1 to 10, how concerned are you about the risk of terrorism on U.S. hotel properties?**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



### Appendix E

Q10	What do you believe are the main weaknesses in hotel security that open hotel properties up to the risk of terrorism or violent attack?	
Respondent	<b>24 total responses</b>	<b>Category</b>
1	Bridging facility policing and hospitality is a fine line when staff's primary focus is Hospitality. This is the very same formula which makes us susceptible to terrorism.	Nature of hospitality industry
2	Open elevators, lack of screening at front door.	Physical
3	Inadequate training of front desk staff. Ensuring that team members are trained to identify issues and keep guests safe is the first and most important line of defense.	Training
4	Open campus	Physical
5	Location and size of the hotel. The number of entrances to the hotel.	Physical
6	The ability for guests to keep hotel staff out of their room	Guest Privacy
7	Not enough knowledge of what to look for/what constitutes suspicious behavior.	Training
8	Lack of training for front desk staff or staff in food and beverage outlets that are near common areas (possibly event banquet staff) as to what specifically constitutes suspicious behavior -- ie wearing an heavier coat that required by that days weather, strollers without a child present, little to no luggage, etc. so that reporting these or other behaviors to leadership becomes routine and takes the fear of appearing to be overreacting out of the equation because it's just a normal part of the job to observe and report. Also, having each team member know clearly what to do in an emergency, not just a procedure to follow as a team, but each specific person has a specific role and position to assist in getting other team members and guests to safety, to limit confusion	Training
9	The fact that there is no way to tell what stuff guests are bringing in their luggage is perhaps one of the biggest risks.	Guest Privacy
10	The fact that in most Hotels and Resorts, anyone can just walk in without actually being a guest- it is generally not considered "hospitable" to corner someone inquiring if they are actually staying at your location. Also I believe Hotel properties are at a higher risk of terrorism simply due to the large amount of people inhabiting a small concentrated area. It definitely makes hotels and resorts more of a target.	Nature of hospitality industry
11	Being understaffed, especially on busy days, so it's hard to tell suspicious activity around or inside the hotel.	Staffing
12	I think it would be the multiple entry ways into hotels. Most properties have 4 to 5 different points of entry.	Physical
13	access to information, training of staff.	Training
14	General awareness of people coming and going and anything that looks suspicious.	Training

15	Hotels are "open" to the public and guests are constantly coming and going. The main weakness is monitoring the sometimes 100's of people coming and going without any extreme security measures in place.	Nature of hospitality industry
16	No metal detectors, no checks on room keys before entering an hotel room elevator, no car trunk checks, and some properties (including mine) don't have a main security booth that is visible for the public to go to.	Physical
17	It's open to everyone and to all kinds of packages. Guest can place a Do Not Disturb and anything can go on in those rooms.	Guest Privacy
18	Guest privacy rules make it quite difficult to tell what items guests are bringing on property.	Guest Privacy
19	Criminals are going to find a way. Unless hotels start searching bags like the airlines, there is not a way to detect someone bringing in firearms.	Guest Privacy
20	No bag check, mobile check in (guest goes straight to room, no need to stop by the front desk). No cameras on floors.	Guest Privacy
21	Guest luggage, invasion of privacy concerns	Guest Privacy
22	they are public places. DC has additional risks due to its high population of politicians/world leaders.	Nature of hospitality industry
23	Lack of exit options that do not have to go through the main lobby.	Physical
24	Terrorism or violent attack trained staff not available. Hotels don't take this very serious.	Training

### Appendix F

Q11	Please list up to five (5) security practices or improvements that you believe could be implemented on hotel properties to increase security in order to better deter/combat the risk of terrorism or violent attack?	
Respondent	<b>87 total responses/ 24 total respondents</b>	<b>Category</b>
1	Training of Hotel Staff	Training
	CCTV System and door perimeter door detections	Technological
	Working with the community	Partnerships
	Partnering Local Agencies	Partnerships
	Hotel Security engagement level throughout the property	Staffing
2	Visit all DND rooms	Policy
	Increase random bag checks	Policy
	Reservations database to check on watch list	Policy
3	Education of Staff on types of weapons	Training
	Unannounced security drills	Training
	Constant vigilance training on guest behavior	Training
	Ensuring key and door systems are up to date	Technological
4	Uniformed Security on patrol 24/7	Staffing
	Keep all exterior doors locked 24/7 and only accessible by guest room key	Physical
	Security cameras at all entrances and roadways monitored 24/7	Physical
	Like fire drills have mandated active shooter drills	Training
	Have trained concealed carry armed employees that can go into action in an emergency till the police arrive.	Staffing
5	Armed Security	Staffing
	Police Presence on-site	Partnerships
6	Ensure rooms are serviced by hotel employees daily	Policy
7	More Security personnel	Staffing
	Better training for staff	Training
	More cameras, monitored	Physical
	metal detectors	Physical
8	review a safety protocol during pre-shift	Policy
	assign and train each team member or position a specific role to perform during an emergency	Training



	post communication protocol highly visible area for each team	Other
	stronger training in the warning signs of potential emergencies, make reporting anything suspicious routine to take the apprehension away	Training
	have practice drills in small groups, where each participant is actively involved	Training
9	Luggage scanners as check in process	Physical
	Implementing daily security inspections in rooms	Policy
	Train staff to properly report suspicious activity	Training
10	TSA style luggage scanning	Physical
	Improve quality of training for security guards	Training
11	Have better security locks installed on doors	Physical
	Monitor activity more frequently	Staffing
	Monthly safety meetings go over security policies	Training
	At check in, verify IDs and Passports	Policy
12	Security personnel	Staffing
	Continuous police presence on site	Partnerships
	Employee's being aware of their surroundings, reporting if something looks out of place.	Training
	Partnerships with law enforcement	Partnerships
	Greater awareness, quality training	Training
13	check each room each day regardless of DND	Policy
	manage same day reservations differently	Policy
	physical presence of security	Physical
14	Review ID at check in to ensure the guest is who is on the ID	Policy
	If you suspect anything out of the ordinary, notify a supervisor	Training
	Check in with your guest as they come and go- making eye contact and ensuring the guest knows you are talking to them and they are aware you.	Other
	Keep an eye out for a lot of baggage or large containers- anything out of the ordinary	Training
	Stay in contact with in house security and ensure they are walking floors regularly.	Other
15	More cameras in public areas	Physical
	Cameras being monitored (public areas)	Staffing
	Full time on-site security	Staffing
	Security detectors (extreme)	Physical
	Link no-fly list to brand systems	Policy

16	Metal detectors/wands	Physical
	More visible security personnel	Staffing
	Random Checkpoints at state lines	Other
	Mandated "wellness" checks every 48 hrs if do not disturb sign is on hotel door for longer than 24 hours	Policy
	K9 dogs	Staffing
17	Metal detector at check in	Physical
	Having a undercover cop on staff 24/7 like the airlines when flying	Partnerships
	Need to do something with storing luggage, no telling what could be left...	Policy
18	Armed security staff	Staffing
	Limit the number of public access points to the property	Physical
	Provide employees keys to keep back of the house entrances more secure	Physical
	Place discreet emergency buzzers in certain areas of the hotel with employees who are instructed on how/when to use them.	Physical
	Add more violent acts response trainings for all employees	Training
19	Constant training	Training
	metal detectors	Physical
20	weapons detector at entrance that are built into the doors so guests do not know that they are going through one.	Physical
	Notify front desk if have a weapon in room for work (FBI, CIA, etc..)	Policy
	More detailed guest profile upon check in.	Policy
21	more staff security training	Training
	armed guards	Staffing
22	Train employees to be aware	Training
	have an emergency situation system/plan in place	Policy
23	Key cards being necessary to enter hotel elevator	Physical
	Update guest room locks	Physical
	Monitor parking garage security	Staffing
	Monitor security cameras at all times	Staffing
24	Hiring the right people (Law enforcement, military background)	Staffing
	Continuous training: security department	Training
	Replacing old equipment with newest technology (CCTV, safety equipment in general public and in-room)	Technological
	Creating more effective communication channels	Other

	Periodic training schedule: all departments especially night auditor	Training
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### Appendix G

Q12	What are your main hesitations when considering new or more stringent security measures in hotels?	
Respondent	24 total responses	Category
1	Guest experience, although stringent protocols will be more acceptable if acts of terror become more frequent in the region. This would make these stringent protocols the new norm, and expected in properties.	Guest perception/impact
2	Our guests safety and security is our highest priority	None
3	You are always looking at the impact to the guest. Any changes that are made will affect the guest in some way or another. These different effects can have an impact on revenue generation and repeat guest income. Staff training is also an issue alongside building upgrades, due to the costs associated.	Guest perception/impact & Cost
4	Alarming guests	Guest perception/impact
5	None	None
6	Guest privacy	Guest perception/impact
7	None	None
8	Creating an unwelcoming feeling for guests if team members have increased suspicion	Guest perception/impact
9	Customer satisfaction is probably the main hesitation.	Guest perception/impact
10	There's obviously budgetary concerns involved as well as ensuring a positive guest experience- we don't want guests feeling uneasy due to increased security measures.	Guest perception/impact & Cost
11	Manager's willingness to implement	Management
12	Will clients perception be that your property is a high safety risk.	Guest perception/impact
13	Cost	Cost
14	Financial	Cost
15	Not offering guests a peaceful stay. You hear all the time how stressful and annoying it is to fly "these days," so we wouldn't want to provide that experience to guests.	Guest perception/impact
16	Guest privacy rights.	Guest perception/impact
17	None	None
18	Guest dissatisfaction with the measures. High cost of implementing the new measures.	Guest perception/impact & Cost

19	The guest experience and privacy.	Guest perception/impact
20	Hospitality industry should be friendly and accommodating so putting restrictions hinders that notion	Guest perception/impact
21	Angry guests	Guest perception/impact
22	Abuses of and infringement on the rights of guests	Guest perception/impact
23	There is a fine line in today's culture, where guests do not want to feel we are controlling them or impeding on their space	Guest perception/impact
24	No hesitations.	None