

The context and significance of this report is rooted in the response of cities to terrorist attacks in the United States and Europe over the past decade. These events prompted many cities to implement security measures to protect sensitive government sites, financial centres and important landmarks. However, many of the measures implemented in cities such as New York and Washington immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were rather crude and often had the effect of restricting access to traditional public spaces and creating a feeling of fortification in those areas. Efforts have been made to address these shortcomings through planning and design guidelines, one particularly notable case being the security design plans for Washington, DC. Given the relative high profile of Parliament Hill and the surrounding federal buildings being evaluated in this report, it seemed appropriate to analyze these sites to determine how secure they were and if the design strategies reflected best practices.

The methodology of this report

The basic theories and evaluation criteria used in the report are based on another report wherein a similar evaluation and analysis was performed. A review of relevant literature, analysis of planning policy and examination of recognized security design guidelines helped provide the information needed to perform a critical analysis. This research resulted in the use of the popular and well-respected theory of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) as the basis for the evaluation and recommendations. CPTED principles of Territoriality, Surveillance, and Access Control formed the three categories used to evaluate the subject sites and make design proposals.

In evaluating the sites, vulnerability to attack and the potential consequences were critical aspects to consider as they provided guidance as to what baseline security measures should be in place. The vulnerability of each site was determined using a CPTED evaluation which drew on information gathered from a site visit, photographs and other research. After performing the evaluation, an overall risk assessment was conducted for each site. The rationale for an overall risk assessment was that some sites, such as the Centre Block building in the Parliamentary Precinct and the Supreme Court of Canada building in the Judiciary Precinct were rated as having a higher overall risk and significant areas of vulnerability were identified. The other subject sites, the East and West Block buildings and the Confederation and Justice Buildings were also identified as being vulnerable to attack, though their risk was not as high.

The recommendations made for the sites are based on best practices, including design elements and strategies used in the security design guidelines for Washington, DC and Canberra, Australia. These best practices provide context-sensitive design strategies which are used in the report to address the shortcomings identified by the risk evaluation conducted for each site. The scope of the recommendations depends on the level of risk assigned for each site. The Centre Block and the Supreme Court of Canada buildings were deemed to be at higher risk relative to the other sites, so the associated design changes for those sites are more extensive. Similar to the evaluation structure, recommendations are grouped under the three CPTED principles to provide a logical framework under which the various policies, recommendations and practices analyzed in the research could be applied.

The results of the site evaluations identify the strengths and weaknesses of the security design measures in place, including how well these measures reflect best practices. While there is some evidence of good design at these sites, the security analysis revealed some serious shortcomings. The design recommendations provide some possible remedies.