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Fortifying the Halls of Justice: Infrastructure Considerations and Emerging Threats in Court Security Planning

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Points of Discussion

- Purpose and Function of Courthouse Security
- Basic Elements of a Security Plan
- Five Zones of Courthouse Security
- Emergent Threats

*Happy is the city which in a time of
peace thinks of war.*

Purpose of Court Security

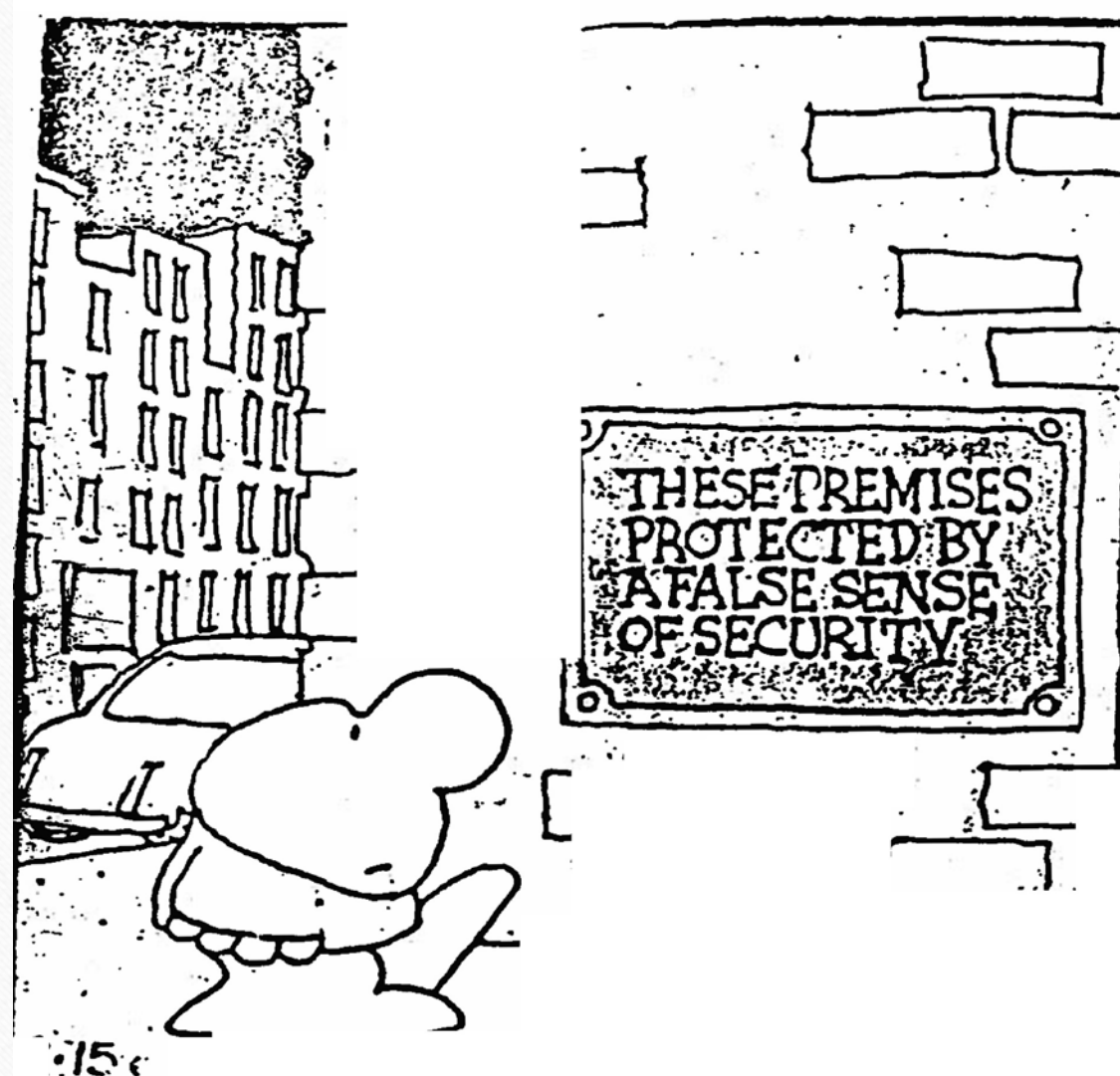
Court security is developed so judges, court staff members, litigants, attorneys and the public may be reasonably assured of an orderly and safe environment so that the court can carry out its purposes and responsibilities in the administration of justice.

What is Security?

- A feeling of safety combined with the measures taken to provide that feeling of safety – against personal injury, property damage, and the loss of records housed at the court.

AND

- The combined effect we are able to achieve to cause one to believe in the likelihood of detection/arrest so as to render criminal/violent acts as too dangerous and costly.



Security Plan

A plan should address 3 elements of securing the court and its stakeholders:

1. General Security of the Facility
2. Procedures for Handling Continuing Security Issues
3. Contingency Plans for Major Security Issues

Within these 3 elements, there are 3 areas of consideration:

1. Architecture
2. Operations
3. Technology

Zone One – Facility Perimeter

Property Line to Building

- Architectural Considerations: Lighting, fencing, parking, landscaping, etc.
- Operational & Technological Considerations: Elements, types and maintenance of alarm and camera systems.

Zone Two – Facility Exterior

- Architectural Considerations: Entrances, windows, walls, fire escapes, and other openings.
- Operational & Technological Considerations: Surveillance systems, intrusion alarms, entry screening, access control, etc.

Zone Three – Public Access Areas

- Architectural Considerations: Use of barriers and good signing to keep public from restricted areas.
- Operational & Technological Considerations: Mirrors and cameras used to increase observation.

Zone Four – Restricted Access Areas

- Architectural Considerations: Infrastructure issues can be mitigated by personnel and hardware.
- Operational & Technological Considerations: Lighting, locking mechanisms, duress alarms, etc.

General Surveillance Considerations

- ✓ Placement of monitoring stations
- ✓ Selection of monitoring staff
- ✓ Camera and equipment selection (capability, flexibility, and capacity)

Space Planning and Architectural Guidelines

- ✓ PRIVATE corridors, stairs and elevators for each category of persons.
- ✓ SEPARATE ACCESS to courts for judges and staff, jurors, witnesses and attorneys, public and detained defendants.
- ✓ CONTROLLED ACCESS to chamber and employee spaces with separate floor areas.
- ✓ DETENTION FLOOR areas in a criminal courthouse connected directly to a detention building and feeding directly and only to spaces where prisoners are routinely sent.
- ✓ DETENTION SPACES directly feeding each criminal courtroom.
- ✓ VIDEO CONFERENCE with well thought out seating for public.

Zone Five – Cybersecurity

The art and practice of protecting networks, devices and data from unauthorized access or criminal use and ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information.

Emergent Threats

1. Physical Threats

- Direct
- Indirect

2. Virtual Threats

- Direct
- Indirect

Individual Security Measures

- Pedestrian Safety
- Automobile Safety
- Residential Safety
- General Vigilance



Thank You