

2014_April_28_Mike_Edgeron

Stone Security: Hello, I'm Holly Stone, President of Stone Security Engineering and I am pleased to welcome you all to our first ever episode of ***Security Industry Interviews***.

This will be an ongoing series of interviews with industry experts aimed at keeping you up-to-date on the latest and greatest in the security design industry.

We live in a rapidly changing world and we work in a rapidly changing industry. Our goal is to share information on what is new in the security design arena, so that we can all work together to make our built environment a safer place

Today I'm also very pleased to welcome Mike Edgeron who is a principal with Good Harbor Consulting in Abu Dhabi.

Mike has over 25 years experience with Maritime Security, risk management, critical infrastructure protection and crisis management. Mike, Thanks so much for being here with us.

Mike Edgeron: It's my honor Holly, especially to be your first interviewee.

Stone Security: I'm hoping it is going to all go well today!
So, I gave a quick bio for you, but glossed over many of your high points. Can you give a little bit more information about yourself and your experience?

Mike Edgeron: Sure Holly, I'll keep it brief. I've got 25 years experience. I'm a retired military officer and in the military I specialized in security and intelligence so I am familiar with security assessments, as well as threat assessments, and the blending of the two into real security risk.

Additionally, I've spent the last seven years working in the UAE - based in Abu Dhabi but working throughout the region - so I have a pretty strong focus on the Middle East and North Africa region as well.

Stone Security: Our topic today is the new **Abu Dhabi Safety and Security Planning Manual**, which, from my perspective, is a really exciting document because it is one of the first mandatory criteria for civilian buildings that we have seen. A lot of the government agencies, a lot of the infrastructure has mandatory requirements but when it comes to civilian buildings it seems a lot more arm-wavy, 'we'd like to do this but we're not requiring you to do it'. So it is really great to see something that is written down from a jurisdiction. Can you give us an overview of the document and maybe some of the background on how it came into being?

Mike Edgerton: Sure, yes actually it's a great document. It is, I think, unique right now, certainly in the developed world as far as what's out there. It's really a manual of guidance on how to approach safety and security planning at the master planning level, from the initial steps of a potential project. What's important about it, particularly, is it provides non-prescriptive guidance on how to embed safety and security into master planning in a way that's effective but also not really obtrusive and it doesn't interfere with the esthetics of the architecture or the planning process. So it will be good news really for developers and architects and urban planners.

So it's really innovative and it's really useful in an environment where there's rapid development like Abu Dhabi and the UAE and construction projects are really starting to take off there again now that the recession and the slowdown is over.

So the innovation is really based on this inclusion of safety and security in the initial design and of the design stages rather than as a bolt on which you and I have probably seen and probably some of the other people that will be listening to this have seen where safety and security is bolted on as an afterthought.

Stone Security: Yep, I just got a project request today for something that's already in construction documents.

Mike Edgerton: Exactly and we've seen that as well so this is unique in the sense that projects currently – this has been around for a little bit now - but all of the new projects that need to have this included will have it included at the beginning.

This should give a high degree of confidence to urban planners and architects who really worry about the integrity of their design and having it affected by these kind of bolt-on safety and security measures.

It came about as a result of Abu Dhabi's recognition that by including key safety and security concepts up-front the safety, of the public can be enhanced. They also realize that, for anybody who's not been there, they're innovative as far as architecture. There's large developments going up that are high quality, high-end developments, and so they want to make sure that they can enhance the safety and the security of the public but maintain the striking and unique building and development designs and they want to make sure that they're not really affected visually by safety and security. So having them built in, I think, is what they decided is the best way to do it.

A lot of the document manual focuses on the key principals of crime prevention through environment design or CPTED which, those who are listening may know, really talks about designing security in such a way that it's not obtrusive.

So it's a very, very forward thinking approach and it fundamentally is derived out of the Vision 2030 which was a document that came out several years ago, that planned Abu Dhabi's future.

Stone Security: So you said that it's based on principals, and in reading through it they have eight primary principals and then there are sub-principals below that. Out of the eight, from your experience, which ones do you think are going to have the biggest impact on the Abu Dhabi safety and security industry and then therefore on the developments that we're going to see going into the future?

Mike Edgerton: I think it's tough to really single out any of the principals as they're intended to support each other.
And, again, they're based on the strategic vision laid out of Vision 2030, which is also available online, on the Urban Planning Council's Web site.

Stone Security: It is, and we will send links to the document and the assessment toolkit, when we publish this interview.

Mike Edgerton: Perfect, and so Vision 2030— these are derived out of that. I don't really want to get into which ones are going to be more important than others because I think they're all important.

I think the key thing is that they need to be considered within the framework of the four factors that are included on there in the document and those are really kind of – they provide the context for the SSPM and those are the factors that, in short, that recognize the importance of maintaining and preserving the very rich Emirati culture.

Making sure the designs (comply) with the religious and social values of Abu Dhabi. An example is family privacy is hugely important, it's a key issue, and so when housing developments are built they need to reflect that priority, that family privacy is extremely important from a cultural perspective.

And, you know, Emirati culture is very, very rich. The history going back to the 1700's and before is something that they're very proud of and that all needs to be, both from an esthetic point of view and a cultural point of view, reflected in everything that's built there - particularly in the housing area.

So a couple of the other areas that those factors are included are also some of the unique weather issues such as the extreme summer heat.

Stone Security: Yes. Yes indeed!

Mike Edgerton: 120 degrees or 50 degrees Celsius depending on where you are; very, very fast rapid development that's kind of really taken off again now that the downturns over and kind of the consideration of the current state of Abu Dhabi where the more established areas have very dense neighborhoods. For the city itself, transportation by car is the emphasis rather than pedestrian transport or public transport.

So those are some of the key factors that need to be included and then the principals derive out of those but it all comes out of Vision 2030 ultimately.

So I didn't answer your question but I can't really.

Stone Security: You went with the factors instead of principals but it makes sense. In reading the document, what I really saw, like you said, was a lot of emphasis on the CPTED and trying to make it a more flowable city.

Mike Edgerton: Exactly.

Stone Security: That gives safety and security to the people who are managing their way through it.
One of the requirements is also a risk assessment and I was hoping that you could talk a little bit about when a risk assessment is required, the types of things that need to be considered, and who is looking at them and who is giving approval and guidance on the risk assessments.

Mike Edgerton: The risk assessments are required for any of the projects that are designated as high priority. I know you mentioned a decision support tool and I suspect we'll talk about that a little bit later, but that's the tool that gives you the indicator as to whether your project will be high priority or not.

The risk assessment needs to be conducted for those high priority projects. The risk assessment methodology this uses is based fundamentally on the internationally accepted ISO 31000 methodology.

Which is derived ultimately from the risk methodology used in Australia and New Zealand, 4360, AS/NZ4360. So it involves the steps that are probably familiar to a lot of the people who will be listening to this, which are establishing the context, identifying the potential risks, analyzing those risks, and evaluating them. And in evaluating them you are also looking at the risk tolerance of the development, whatever it is that you're looking at. In this case you're looking at the risk tolerance probably of the community.

Stone Security: Right.

Mike Edgerton: And then you're developing out of that a risk register, prioritizing the risks, and then you're developing your treatment strategies. And the treatment strategies aren't necessarily just mitigating or eliminating the risks but in some cases it could be accepting them, transferring them and all of the other things that you do with risk.

Throughout the process, however, it also emphasizes the need to communicate and consult. So on each one of those steps there's a lot of emphasis put on stakeholder engagement, consulting with both government and other affected stakeholders, and then the other piece is that it's designed to comport with a lot of companies or ISO 9001 certified or at least use a system that calls the Plan-Do-Check-Act model.

This system is designed to comport with that so it's kind of a never ending process that can be reviewed. Once it's built it needs to be reviewed again to do it properly.

So the process is a little bit different from what a lot of security consultants have probably seen. In my experience US Security

Consultants, where the two key issues of risk treatment rather than risk mitigation, and assessing risk tolerance are typically not commonly used in a lot of security risk assessments.

So it's a more nuanced approach than some of the folks may be familiar with.

Stone Security: Going back to the risk tolerance again, when you say that the risk tolerance has to be established, is that done as, again, part of that back and forth between the government as well as the developer and the community around it?

Mike Edgerton: Sure, yeah. It has to be because the government ultimately is going to have – if they don't have high risk tolerance for a specific issue and identified risk, then that's certainly going to affect the treatment. I would use maybe the example of high speed traffic in a residential neighborhood.

Okay, some people, some entities or stakeholders may have a higher level of tolerance for that than others. Certainly people with kids or the government are probably going to have a lower level of tolerance and so that has to be reflected, but it's all done through this ongoing stakeholder engagement and consultation process.

Stone Security: And the document provides an outline and an approach for that ongoing engagement to occur, correct?

Mike Edgerton: Yeah, the SSPM provides the overview of it, it's a lot more involved. Again, the SSPM is an excellent guidance manual but its certainly not going to give you all of the deep nuts and bolts that you'll need to do it

and it certainly makes you competent enough to understand what you have to do.

Stone Security: Which brings us to the next thing, which is the decision support tool- I will also include a link for this when we send this out. You said the decision support tool will help us decide high versus low priorities. Can you talk through that a little bit?

Mike Edgerton: Sure, it's actually an Excel-based tool you can download and it's essentially a self-assessment. You enter the information regarding the proposed project, answer the questions and then the outcome gives you a preliminary decision as to whether it should be considered a high or a low priority project.

Some of the kinds of questions that it will ask is whether the project will be residential, commercial, government or mixed use. It will ask if it involves multiple plots, what sorts of facilities will be included, such as retail, recreational facilities, infrastructure, things like that.

It's very intuitive. I'm sure that the engineering of it was pretty involved but the actual utility of it, use of it, is pretty simple.

Stone Security: Which is the sign of a great tool.

Mike Edgerton: Right, exactly.

Stone Security: So thinking, from a developer's perspective, if they're coming in to build a new project, do you see any challenges that they should be aware of before they go into the process? Any pitfalls that they might come across that maybe they could avoid by listening to this?

Mike Edgerton: Well with the SSPM, the key is to get familiar with it. One of the good things is that the staff at the Urban Planning Council, the safety and security staff over there, are certainly happy to meet with anyone who's looking at a project. I'm sure that if people have questions they'll answer the questions. They'll be very accommodating. They want to see the right project succeed.

So that'll be the key. Ask a lot of questions if you're meeting with them. Basically, be very familiar with the guidance. If you are not familiar with elements of this or methodologies, get familiar. However you can do it.

Generally speaking, I think the key thing for a developer coming in is to really focus on a getting a local partner, which really you almost have to have.

You need to invest on being on the ground, and by that I mean you need to show a commitment to Abu Dhabi and the region. You need to be there, be reachable, be available, and obviously that takes resources. It takes people and money, but in the past a lot of companies have tried to come in and make fast money and then get out and the business environment there is no longer tolerant of that model.

They want people who are going to be there for a while and are there to make a difference as well as do business.

Stone Security: Right.

Mike Edgerton: And then really the other thing is probably to plan for a longer business development pipeline than they may be accustomed to. The opportunities there are real but there's a lot of competition and

business is about relationships, which need to be cultivated - which can extend the BD pipeline a bit.

So those are some of the key things. Obviously having a local partner, having local advisors is probably the first step before you do anything else.

Stone Security: That brings me to another question: even for the people who are local and have been there for quite a while, it's a fairly new document. Have there been trainings, are there trainings that are ongoing that either the UPC or anybody else is doing to help orient people and to help them get a better holistic view of how the process works?

Mike Edgerton: It has gotten a lot of publicity. I don't know for sure if there have been formal training sessions made available to the public, but UPC has been very transparent about this and they really advertise. Making everything available on their Web site, downloadable, is a sign of their willingness and their sincerity in making sure that this, A) gets used but, B) that people have an opportunity to learn how to use it.

The other option obviously is that if you find people like our company who have been in this position and have successfully assisted developers and A&E firms, etc., in getting their projects approved through this process then obviously that's another way to go about getting smart on it.

Stone Security: That is always the best way to go when it really comes right down to it, isn't it?

Part of the document, is that there are four stages. They break it into four stages of the development process, correct?

Mike Edgerton: That's right.

Stone Security: From a security perspective, if you could pick out maybe one or two things that are most important in each of those stages, or the decision nodes that would be most important in each of those stages?

Mike Edgerton: Sure, the preplanning stage, which is the first stage is the one where you'd make the determination as to whether it's going to be a high or a low priority project. And so the decision support tool is going to be valuable, as well as any consultations you have with the Urban Planning Council.

So the key there is to really – that's where you figure out how much of a formal process and engaged process you have to have with the UPC for safety and security. What happens with the low priority projects is there's still an expectation that the Safety and Security Planning Manual will be used as guidance for developing safety and security with the projects, but there is no formal approval that is required, which is required under the high priority projects.

And then in the planning stage, the next stage, that's where the guidance of the SSPM needs to be embedded in the project and they have a planning toolkit for the planning stage, which is in the manual - it's a full chapter in the manual - and it provides guidance on some of the key elements. There are ten key elements; things like access control, site selection, building orientation, infrastructure, etc., and they provide more detailed guidance on what needs to be considered when you're developing your safety and security approach to those elements.

There's a design stage, there's a chapter in the SSPM that has a design toolkit and that really focuses on things like landscape and urban design. A lot of the CPTED principals will come into play here as well as architectural system design.

And then, during the final stage which is the actual construction and commissioning, the real key point there is to make sure that everything that has been promised as far as safety and security in the planning and design stages is actually implemented.

Stone Security: How active is the UPC or and the government in that last stage, especially the commissioning, are they involved in confirming the final commissioning of the project?

Mike Edgerton: They're involved throughout the process. They'll get the approvals, I think they actually call it a non-objection certificate, but that will happen once they approve the planning and things but then obviously they have a role in assuring that everything, that is built and goes through the process as do the other government agencies, civil defense for fire safety and evacuation and there's a number of other agencies that will be involved.

Stone Security: So this is just another layer on top of meeting fire code, meeting building code and all of that? This is another one handled in the same manner?

Mike Edgerton: It's handled in the same manner but, again, I think the unique part of this, and the really innovative part of this is the fact that they've recognized the need to embed it in the process from the start and that is, in my mind, the real kind of imaginative solution they've come up with.

Stone Security: Yes, it is great. I must say I have not seen much of that, so it is really nice to see it and hear it.

Changing tacts just a little bit, you were talking about the access control and CCTV - where there are different types of physical security products that have to be implemented into a project do you find that there is a robust market over there now, or are people having to go outside of the UAE to be able to source the required products?

Mike Edgerton: For manufacturing, for manufactured products and the hardware, the market is fairly mature - I think - in the region. It's pretty mature, so if somebody wants to think about going in there, again, the key thing is to get a local partner which you're pretty much going to have to have to do business within the country.

And I think the real key thing there also is to then have a unique selling point. What do you have that's a differentiator because, again, I think the market is fairly robust, they get a lot of things from around the world, they're centrally located so they can get hardware from Europe from Asia, from wherever they need. So the key there is to really have a unique selling point.

Stone Security: I guess this one is a little bit of a curveball, I didn't let you know about this question ahead of time; but as we've been talking, I've been thinking that we are really talking very Abu Dhabi focused. But is the whole country also involved in this or is it separate for the different Emirates?

Mike Edgerton: Right now this is an Abu Dhabi specific initiative. Dubai has their own processes of ensuring safety and security and developments, but right now this is specifically an Abu Dhabi initiative. Now, whether

something like this ends up spreading out to the other Emirates remains to be seen.

Stone Security: I think that pretty much goes through my questions. From your perspective, is there anything that you feel like that - as a primer and a quick overview of this document – there is anything that we missed?

Mike Edgerton: No, I think you hit the key points. Again, I would just reinforce that it is really an innovative approach, but people who want to do business over there need to really think about investing and being on the ground and making sure that they're tied into having a local partner and advisors.

Stone Security: Mike, before we sign off, I first want to thank you. I really appreciate not only you doing this, but also your being the guinea pig for the Security Industry Interviews.

Mike Edgerton: Happy to do it.

Stone Security: But, as you are a consulting firm, I would love if you could share a little bit of the type of work that you guys do and I'll make sure that I also include your contact information when I send this out.

Mike Edgerton: Oh great, thanks. Good Harbor is actually an Emirati strategic security and safety consulting firm. We're based in Abu Dhabi, we work throughout the MENA region, (Middle East North Africa). We have been based in Abu Dhabi for eight years, and have a strong record in supporting safety and security master planning - which is why this SSPM is exciting to us as well.

We also work in emergency management, we do security risk assessments of other critical infrastructure, we do resilience and business continuity consulting - not only in the UAE, but throughout the region. We have worked quite a bit with the UPC, and we have a strong track record in supporting developers in their master planning efforts in the area.