



## Insider Threats and the Evolving Risk of Mass Casualty at Large Venues

For nearly two decades, large venues and events have been and remain prime targets for domestic and international terrorism. In 2017, two radicalized brothers carried out the Manchester Arena bombing, killing 22 and injuring over 1,000 during an Ariana Grande concert. The foiled 2024 attack on a Taylor Swift concert in Vienna underscored a troubling evolution in tactics - one of the suspects had gained employment at the stadium, granting them insider access. This incident highlights the critical need for robust employee screening and continuous monitoring, both before and after hiring.

-  Radicalization has long been a catalyst for violence, serving as a tool for terrorist organizations and hostile nation-states to find and exploit individuals to plan, assist, or execute attacks. The threat landscape is evolving, with radicalized individuals increasingly targeting high-profile events such as concerts, sporting games, and pre/post-event activities - venues that offer visibility, dense crowds, and challenging security postures.
-  The "Pathway to Violence" model illustrates how radicalized individuals progress from ideological alignment to planning and executing attacks. Studies have shown that pre-radicalization criminal behavior, violent or nonviolent, is the single strongest non-ideological predictor of post-radicalization violence among U.S. extremists.
-  This risk is compounded by growing societal polarization - political, racial, social, or ideological - which fuels anger and desperation in some individuals, pushing them toward extremism. While most find healthy coping mechanisms, a subset will exploit these conditions to justify violence.
-  Employees, contractors, and volunteers represent the most significant risk vector in large venues. These individuals often pass initial background checks but may later develop extremist views or become radicalized, often accompanied by unseen warning signs unless continuous monitoring is in place.

To effectively mitigate risk, public venues must implement continuous monitoring of staff and contractors for behavioral anomalies, indicators of elevated stress, or other evidence-based risk indicators that may signal an employee is on the **"Pathway to Violence"**. This requires regular updates to policies and contractor flow-down requirements, leveraging technology, and a commitment to cultivating a culture of vigilance. Integrating threat assessment protocols into daily operations further strengthens an organization's ability to detect and address risks early. By prioritizing insider risk management, venues can safeguard public safety and reduce the likelihood of catastrophic incidents in an increasingly polarized and radicalized environment.