



## Special Event Assessment Rating Methodology Background Information Office of Operations Coordination Department of Homeland Security

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The Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) Methodology was created by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in cooperation with the interagency Special Events Working Group (SEWG), to measure the risk of a terrorist attack at a special event. It was first utilized in 2006 and undergoes annual review to ensure it uses the most up-to-date information and reflects the current threat environment. As a result of the most recent annual review, completed in June 2019, the SEAR Methodology underwent minor revisions/updates.

The SEAR Methodology considers the threat, vulnerability, and consequences for each event and uses a mixed qualitative/quantitative analysis when assigning SEAR levels to special events submitted to DHS. The SEWG Co-Chairs are responsible for approving SEAR Methodology amendments and adjudicating all SEAR levels.

The SEAR Methodology determines the relative risk of each special event using a scenario-based assessment, using a variety of terrorist attack scenarios for each event to help determine the event's risk. Currently, the ten attack scenarios are used as benchmarks for threats of concern to special events. The scenarios are limited to terrorism threats and are widely applicable to most special events.

The ten attack scenarios:

- Chemical
- Improved Explosive Device (IED)
- Vehicle-Borne IED
- Water-Borne IED
- Large Group Armed Assault
- Biological
- Aviation
- Vehicle Ramming
- Radiological Dispersal Device
- Small Team Armed Assault

The SEAR Methodology also considers the vulnerability and consequences for each event. Vulnerability is defined as the probability that the attack will successfully cause the specified consequences. Calculating the maximum number of people impacted at a special event helps determine the consequences of an attack. Daily attendance and concentration, population density of the hosting jurisdiction, and crowds immediately outside the venue all help determine the consequence scoring. Additional factors in the SEAR Methodology, such as Head of Country and dignitary participation and whether the venue is iconic, are included in the risk calculation as well.

SEAR levels are dynamic and may change from year-to-year because of changes in the event information or updates to the SEAR Methodology. Additionally, SEAR levels are a relative comparison, and may be affected by the types and total number of special events submitted from across the nation.

For questions regarding the SEAR Methodology please contact,  
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