
# Welcome to this week's edition of Defuse News

A weekly briefing for individuals, families and the advisers who work alongside them — on protecting privacy, understanding exposure, and managing personal risk calmly, before problems escalate.

Each week, I draw on what I am seeing in my own work — behavioural threats, unwanted attention, fixation, reputational pressure, and the calls most people are never properly taught to make — and write about it plainly. Alongside the casework, I also write about the things that quietly hold the best adviser relationships together: trust, discretion, specialism, independence, judgement, and the personal connection that good advice depends on.

Serious situations very rarely arrive without warning. They build slowly, often in plain sight, and the most common mistakes are doing nothing when something is actually wrong and overreacting when nothing is.

The aim of Defuse News is to help the people around prominent clients recognise these situations earlier, respond to them appropriately, and reflect on the advisory relationships that underpin them.

Defuse Global has no commercial ties to close protection teams, technology providers or security firms. The judgement we offer is independent. Clarity, not protection, is the outcome that matters.

**Philip Grindell MSc CSyP Founder & CEO Defuse Global**
Trusted Adviser on Behavioural Threats and Risk Mitigation, Author, *Personal Threat Management: The Practitioner's Guide to Keeping Clients Safer*,
Former Counter-Terrorism Security Coordinator, UK Government and Royal Family,
Listed in the *Spear's 500* as Top Recommended in Security, Intelligence and

Investigations

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## 👋 Before we begin

## Fair warning: this week's edition runs a little longer than usual.

**The subject deserves it.**


## 📺 A conversation that prompted this week's edition

Ahead of this morning's **Good Morning Britain**, I was asked to review the report said to sit behind Prince Harry's request for armed protection in the UK, and to give my professional assessment of it.

I won't repeat everything I said on air; the principle underneath it matters more, because it applies to any prominent person worried about their safety.

**But based on the document shared with me, I can see why RAVEC, the committee that decides royal and VIP protection, declined enhanced security.**

What I read was written to justify a conclusion already reached, and anything written that way is advocacy dressed as analysis.

Having coordinated counter terrorism security for Royal events, I can also tell you the real work happens long before the final few seconds when someone acts.

💬 **My thanks to the Good Morning Britain team.**


## 🎯 The question we're going to answer

That request inspired this week's edition, because the confusion about what a threat assessment actually is runs far wider than one royal case.

So let me answer the question advisers ask me more than any other.

**What is a threat assessment, what is it for, and how would you judge one?**

## 🛡️ WHAT IS A THREAT ASSESSMENT?

### *And How to Judge One*

## ⚠️ The problem

Underneath that question sits a problem few care to admit.

Ask for a threat assessment and you may receive a risk assessment, or the reverse, with neither side noticing.

### Too often...

❌ The person requesting the document is unclear what they want.

❌ The person producing it is equally unclear what they are providing.

Nor is this confined to private security.

The same gap runs through law enforcement, where the discipline is rarely trained outside specialist units.

**That confusion creates a vacuum in which harm can grow unidentified and unchecked, when it could, and arguably should, have been spotted and dealt with.**

I spent my police career producing these assessments, first coordinating the security of Royal and Government events, later leading the team I built in Parliament after the murder of Jo Cox MP.

**So let me answer properly.**


## 🎯 What a threat actually is

**A threat combines two things:**

✓ **Intent**

**PLUS**

✓ **Capability**

**To be genuine, it needs both.**

If someone in Australia threatens someone in England on social media, they may have the intent, but distance removes their immediate capability.

Most who make threats never pose one.

Fred Calhoun and Stephen Weston, whose research with the US Marshals Service shaped modern threat management, called them **Howlers.**

📣 Loud.
📣 Abusive.
📣 Frightening.

They are rarely violent.

The ones who concern me are the **Hunters**, who often say nothing at all.
They:
➡️ Plan.
➡️ Prepare.
➡️ Approach.

**An assessment that counts threatening messages is measuring noise, not danger.**

## 🔍 Threat, vulnerability and risk are different things

**They are not interchangeable.**
🛡️ **Threat**
↓
🚪 **Vulnerability**
↓
⚖️ **Risk**

**Vulnerability** means the gaps a threat can exploit, and it shifts with context.

Invite a magazine into your home to photograph your art collection and you have increased your vulnerability to burglary, even if no specific threat exists.

**Risk** is what you get when the two meet, set against the harm that would follow.

These three words are used as if they mean the same thing.

**They do not.**
Nor are the documents built on them.

📄 A risk assessment weighs everything that could go wrong and what it would cost.

👤 A behavioural threat assessment examines the people whose behaviour may cause the harm.

You may need both, but a paper that muddles them will alarm you without cause or reassure you falsely.

it is helpful to understand where each element fits into an model such as the Pathway To Violence.


*Adapted with kind permission from F.S. Calhoun and S.W. Weston*

## 🚨 Its purpose: prevention, not prediction

**Nobody can reliably predict violence.**
The discipline exists to spot concerning behaviour early enough to steer it away from harm, and it has a formal name: behavioural threat assessment and

management, or BTAM.

It is a systematic, evidence-based process to identify, inquire into, assess and manage potential threats, a continuous cycle rather than a report in a drawer.

No single trade owns it.

The best work draws on:

- 🧠 Psychology
- ⚖️ Law
- 🕵️ Intelligence
- 🛡️ Protective security

...together, and that is the approach we practise at Defuse Global.

## The assessor has two levers

✓ **Resolve intent**

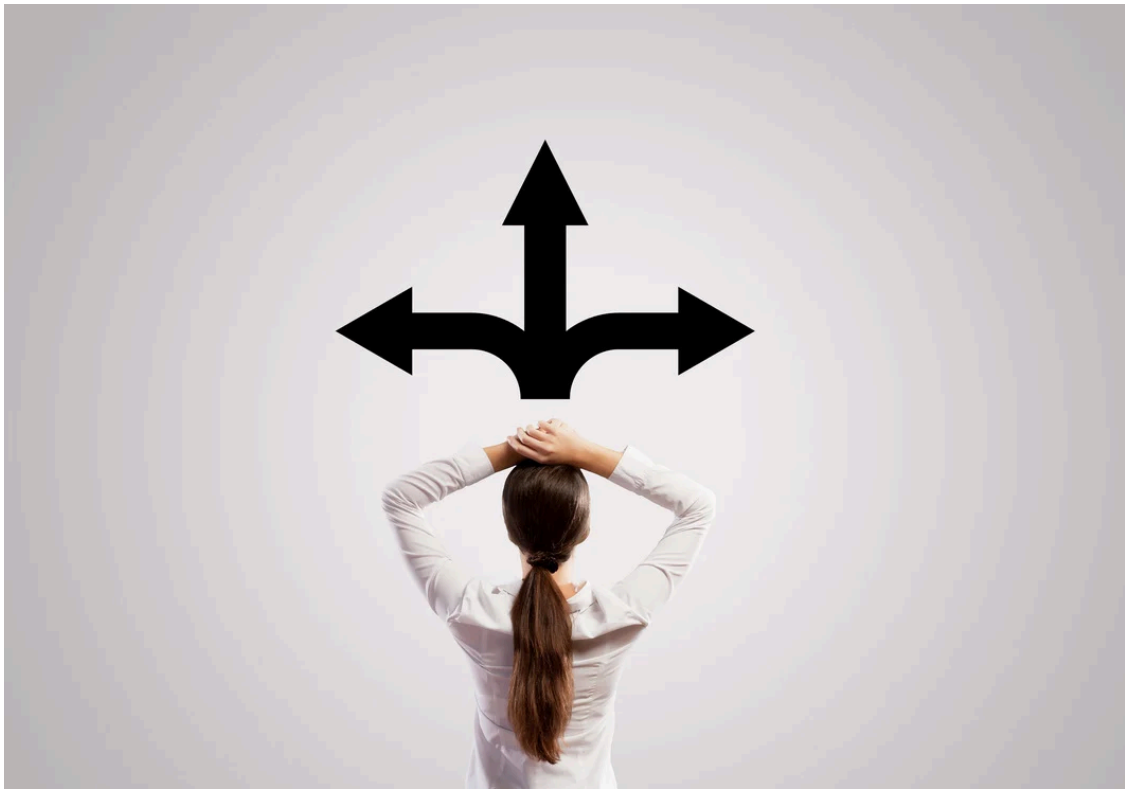
Where intent grows from a grievance, resolving it can make the threat disappear altogether, often quietly.

Sometimes that means connecting a troubled person with the support they need.

✓ **Reduce capability**

Where intent cannot be resolved, you address capability: legal action, distance, or closing the gaps in your own security.

Some of my best outcomes involved no security hardware, just careful engagement that took the heat out of a grievance before it hardened.



## 🏠 How a proper one is built

Everything starts when someone notices a change.

### 🚩 Warning signs include:

□ Shifts in how a person communicates
□ References to weapons
□ Talk of injustice or revenge
□ Approaches to a home or office
□ Knowledge of private movements that should not be public

Those best placed to spot them are rarely security staff.
They are often:

- Assistants
- House staff
- Drivers
- Advisers

The assessment itself must be structured, using recognised tools that combine published research with trained judgement.

Without them, an assessor is guessing from personal experience.

Each threat theme is examined separately, because a terrorist, a stalker and a fixated individual are different problems that share a target, and each needs a different response.

### 📅 Above all, it must be current.

People who posed a risk two years ago may have lost interest; new concerns may have appeared.

An assessment built on old material is a snapshot, and snapshots age badly.

Finally, the plan must be proportionate, drawn from the full range of options, and it must say what happens if the threat rises.

There is no point going straight to the gold standard, because if things worsen you have nowhere left to go.


## ✓ How to judge one

**Before relying on it, ask yourself:**

□ Does it define its terms, or slide between threat, vulnerability and risk?

□ Is it built on today's intelligence or last year's incidents?

□ Does it follow a recognised method?

□ Does it treat each threat separately?

□ Does it weigh a range of responses, or arrive at a single predetermined answer?

□ Does it plan for escalation?

□ Does it carry a review date?

**A document that fails those tests is an opinion with a cover page, whatever the title says.**

💡 **Why it matters**

If you are prominent, or you advise someone who is, decisions about safety, spending and how life is lived rest on this document.

**Get it wrong...**

❌ You either live behind protection you do not need...

**or**

❌ Feel safe behind analysis that never examined the threats that apply to you.

**Get it right...**

✅ A clear picture of today's risk.

✅ A sensible plan to manage it.

✅ The confidence to live and work without constant alarm.


## 📋 Take the next step

To understand what a professional assessment of your situation involves, start with a confidential conversation, or take the first practical step with our **Digital Exposure Assessment**, which reveals what a hostile actor could learn about you right now.

Book your Digital Exposure Assessment here

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## 📚 Further reading

If this edition has sparked an interest, start with the book that shaped much of the thinking behind it.

📖 **Threat Assessment and Management Strategies: Identifying the Howlers and Hunters: Frederick S. Calhoun & Stephen W. Weston**

⭐ **Why I recommend it (other than because it is one of my favourite books)**
Threat Assessment and Management Strategies: Identifying the Howlers and Hunters by Frederick S. Calhoun and Stephen W. Weston remains the definitive work on separating those who make threats from those who pose them.

The second edition adds over 100 pages of new material, new chapters and updated cases, organised into two parts:

✓ How to run a practical, effective threat management process.
✓ How Howlers and Hunters actually behave.

💬 **What I value most is its honesty.**
The authors offer their strategies as guidelines rather than prescriptions, trusting the threat manager to adapt them to each situation, and every chapter closes with a real case analysis.

It draws together two full careers in threat management, and it has earned its place on my desk rather than my shelf.

🎙️ **Fred joined me to discuss it on Episode 15 of The Defuse Podcast, listed below.**

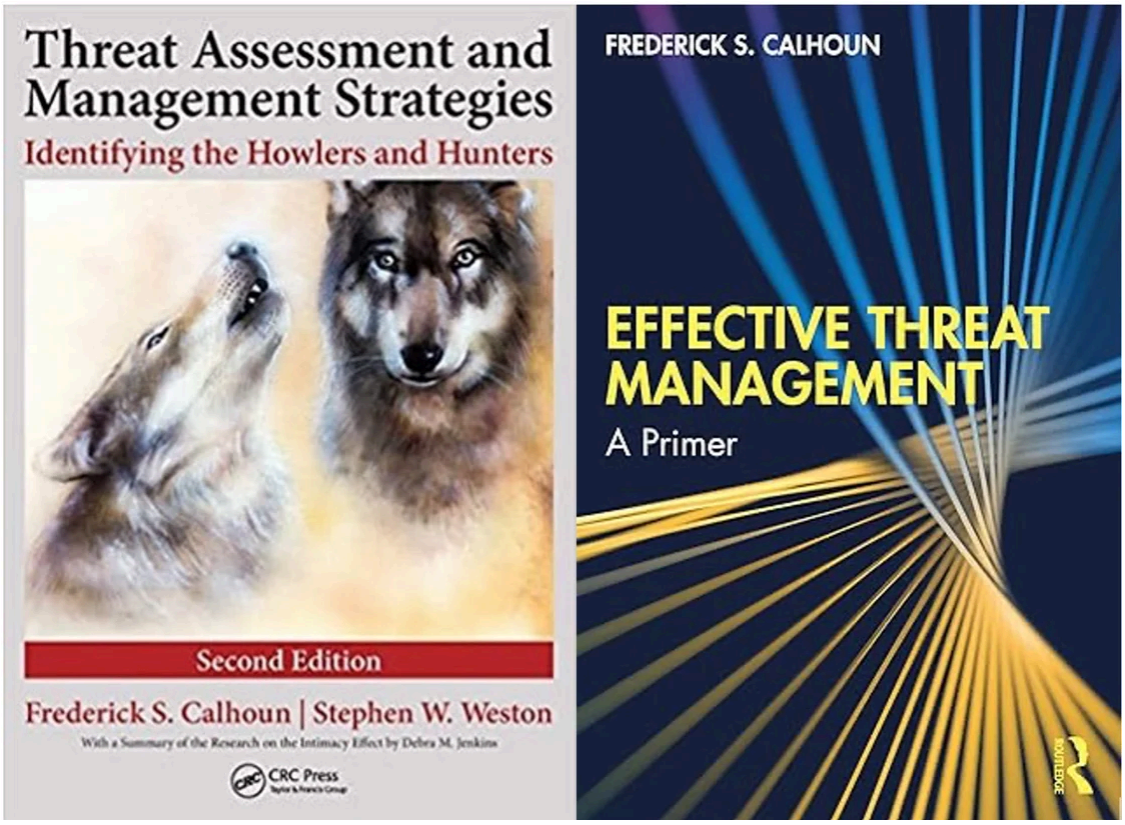
📘 **Effective Threat Management: A Primer: Frederick S. Calhoun**

⭐ **Ideal if you're new to behavioural threat assessment**
For those newer to the subject, Fred's Effective Threat Management: A Primer is the place to begin. ( I wrote one of the testimonials for this nook, so it must be good)

It sets out the essentials of identifying, assessing and managing potentially violent individuals in a question-and-answer format that makes finding what you need simple, with practical, field-tested guidance for settings ranging from workplaces and schools to public gatherings.

Both of the books are availablebel via your favourite book seller 😉

**If you advise prominent clients and want a working grasp of the discipline without wading through academic literature, this is the book I would hand you first.**

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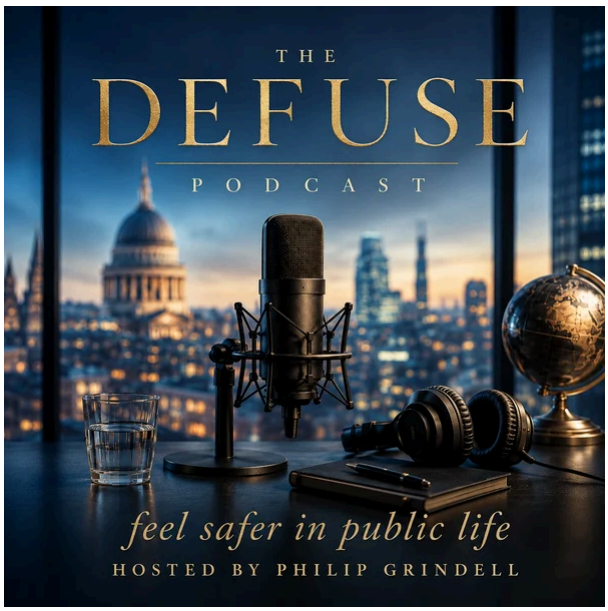
## 🎙 Further listening



For those who want to go deeper, these episodes of **The Defuse Podcast** are invaluable.

**Episode 4**

**Threat Assessment with Dr Reid Meloy**

**Episode 15**

**Hunters & Howlers & The Pathway to Intended Violence with Frederick S. Calhoun, PhD**

**Episode 20**

**Fundamentals in Behavioural Threat Management with Jameson Ritter**

**Episode 23**

**Threat Assessment and Stalking – An Expert Perspective with Gabrielle Thompson**

**Episode 27**

**Behavioural Threat Assessment, a Political and Commercial Insight with Bill Zimmerman**

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If anything in this newsletter has caused you to think, you may benefit from our help. Contact us at info@defuseglobal.com