

Threats, risks, opportunities, fears

The threat of CBRN incidents at high visibility events (HVE) continues to be a concern to the emergency services and contingency planners. HVEs are significant in that they effectively serve to concentrate potential targets into well-defined, well-publicised zones. In effect, holding a HVE does the terrorist's target selection and timing for him.

In recent years - and the same applies looking forward - HVEs have included Olympic Games, World Cups, various political events and state occasions. There has, however, been an absence of actual CBRN incidents to test the various plans and procedures that have been developed. This is a good

thing, of course, but even the most successful or catastrophic HVE provides lessons for the future. Although the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics were notoriously opaque, the rest of the world's HVEs have been instructive in this regard.

Two forms of confirmation bias have afflicted HVEs, and the first could be called the confidence peril. The lack of CBRN and hazmat incidents at HVEs means that plans, procedures, and working practices have not been challenged by the conditions they were created to address. It's a bit like having a theoretical cure for a very rare disease which no one ever catches. We don't know whether plans will work or not because they have never been stressed by actual events.

The thinking goes: it worked well last time, so let's do it again. This is patently wrong, because we don't know if the plan, procedure, technique or idea did work last time and so the capacity and capability for response go untested. Until there is a real event, we have no tried and tested solution, only the speculative medicine provided by making our exercises as challenging as possible.

The second form of confirmation bias was demonstrated at the Boston Marathon bombing incident. The authorities' call for information generated an enormous response, but some of this crowd-sourced information wrongly pointed to a missing student. Numerous snippets of information were interpreted in a subconsciously biased manner with the result that there was

*'Why are you all looking at me like that?
I'm going to be alright aren't I?'
Teamwork is a big part of HVEs.
©CBRN World*



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considerable support for the conclusion that Sunil Tripathi was a terror suspect. Future HVEs will almost certainly yield equal or larger amounts of crowd-sourced data and countermeasures as yet undetermined, will be needed to squash confirmation bias.

A topic that always comes up is interoperability among the emergency services, both in CBRN and traditional emergency response. When lost for comment after an exercise or event, you can always fall back on some observation about improving interoperability. Two key dimensions apply where interoperability is concerned, with vertical interoperability - the interaction between federal, state, and local capabilities - often the critical factor in federal nations, such as the US or Brazil. The horizontal dimension - the relationship between fire, emergency medical, police, and others - is also critical, and is a factor in the UK. The HVE planning, exercise, execution, and evaluation process has led to some serious efforts to improve this state of affairs.

Long-standing efforts to facilitate complex responses include assessment teams of various types, with membership drawn from assorted response disciplines. The US's Joint Hazard Assessment Team (JHAT) is well over 10 years old and is deeply entrenched in operating practices. The UK's rough equivalent, the Multi-Agency Incident Assessment Team (MALAT), has been used in events such as the Nato summit in Wales, even if routine use in London was discontinued. Similar teams, either formal or ad hoc, have been reasonably successful elsewhere. Where HVEs, such as some state funerals, have very short planning horizons an assessment team may be one of the few preparations that can be added to existing CBRN plans.

Much effort and expense in preparation for HVEs has gone into the development of operations centres. A well-designed and properly manned operations centre can improve interoperability and facilitate response, while poorly built centres can have the opposite effect. Gigantic operations centres can be a sinkhole for money and a drain on personnel as, clearly, no one can staff a desk in the ops centre and

perform tasks in the field as well. A particular American enthusiasm is to have multiple operations, command, coordinating and fusion centres for an HVE. One US event in 2004 had 11 overlapping centres. Sadly, this practice continues in the US. On the other hand, the command centres in Brazil are generally cited as a success story.

Other initiatives have arrived to help interoperability, including at least one with interoperability in the title. The UK's Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) is a government initiative that has been described as an attempt to enshrine the many joint working practices that evolved up to and through London 2012. Indeed, at least one JESIP presentation last year cited London 2012 as part of its *raison d'être*.

Greater London has had the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel (LESLP) for decades, which has long promulgated its major incident manual. LESLP is tasked with helping to implement JESIP within the capital, where interoperability problems have been the most complex. Such projects are not unique to the UK nor the HVE environment, however. The European commission has sponsored a wide variety of projects (CATO, ARCHIMEDES, PRACTICE come immediately to mind) that purport, in part or in whole, to improve interoperability.

Military support often comes up in the context of HVEs, in both good and bad ways. Some military capabilities, such as the National Guard civil support teams (CST), are well suited for helping out at HVEs and have a long track record of doing so. You can drop a CST on its head into an HVE and it should know what to do. But on occasion, the military is the resource of last resort. It gets called in at the 11th hour, for both specialised and general support purposes. A classic example was the last-minute use of over 3,000 UK military personnel for security roles at London 2012, in lieu of non-existent G4S contractors and subcontractors.

In specialised CBRN roles, the gap between military CBRN response and civil emergency CBRN response has narrowed in many countries but not disappeared. Sometimes the civil sector

planners retain badly distorted views of what capabilities the military can bring to bear and the timelines involved in employing military support. The differential exists in every country which has held major HVEs.

London 2012's experience shows that military capabilities in existence at the beginning of a lengthy planning process may not be there a few years later. The solution is to understand what military capabilities are available from the beginning and to continue to evaluate them over the course of a long planning process. In some countries, militaries have been held at arm's length from the civil planning processes, but this is counterproductive if you suspect you are going to need them. It is very useful to include appropriate military staff officers in the HVE planning process from the beginning, even if that's just as observers.

It is essential to consider the role of the private sector in protecting HVEs. There are several important aspects to this, all of which have become evident in recent years, and the first is the role of private sector staff - security guards, building managers, facility engineers, event stewards, first aiders, etc - in supporting HVEs.

A large percentage of HVEs take place on private property, and there are both general and CBRN-specific concerns here. Prevention of CBRN terrorism must rest on a bed of good physical security and anti-terrorism measures, which, in turn, are partly dependent on the presence of well trained private security personnel and venue staff performing their jobs properly.

When G4S failed to provide enough trained staff at London 2012, the military filled the breach at the last minute. This particular episode highlighted the fact that even where arrangements have been made with an established contractor, it does not necessarily mean that the required services will be provided. Hopefully such episodes are rare, but this experience shows that there will be insufficient CBRN resilience and security if the overall resilience and security posture are inadequate.

Private sector partners generally have poorer CBRN preparedness than the emergency services. Occasionally, there

may be surprising pockets of CBRN competence in private security companies, but this is the exception rather than the norm. CBRN resilience in the private security sector is underdeveloped, and if HVEs are going to rely on private security staff, then CBRN preparedness needs to improve. Likewise, if emergency plans require venue staff to act in emergency situations, their survivability under adverse conditions must be considered.

Not only does the private sector supply personnel for HVEs, equipment is also needed, yet many in the emergency services sector do not understand the CBRN industry's supply chain. The way this works is that the manufacturers keep small stocks of equipment in store, but only produce larger quantities to order. This means that the lead time for equipment is often many months. It is too late to place an order 10 days before a HVE as some of the agencies that support these events have discovered the hard way. In situations where complex defence goods need to be licensed for export, lead times can be many months.

Resilience and continuity are also important in HVE planning and this is yet another area in which the event planner may need to look to the private sector. Many HVE plans have lacked depth, redundancy, and back-up capability. Some critical capabilities have only been 'one deep' and some plans have been riddled with single points of failure. A decent private sector business continuity planner would have fits over some of the planning of recent years. Not all news is bad, however. During London 2012 there was the unfortunate incident wherein the Metropolitan police command centre in Lambeth had to be abandoned due to an ingress of sewage. Reportedly, transfer of command functions to a backup facility in Hendon was executed quickly and without incident, and the show went on.

While all the above themes apply more or less universally, it is important to consider the particular problems of Brazil. The country looms large in the HVE business these days, because of the 2014 World Cup and next year's Olympic Games. The Brazilians in several tiers of government have made a substantial

effort. Much has been done to improve CBRN capability and to deal with structural and interoperability problems arising from the country's federal system.

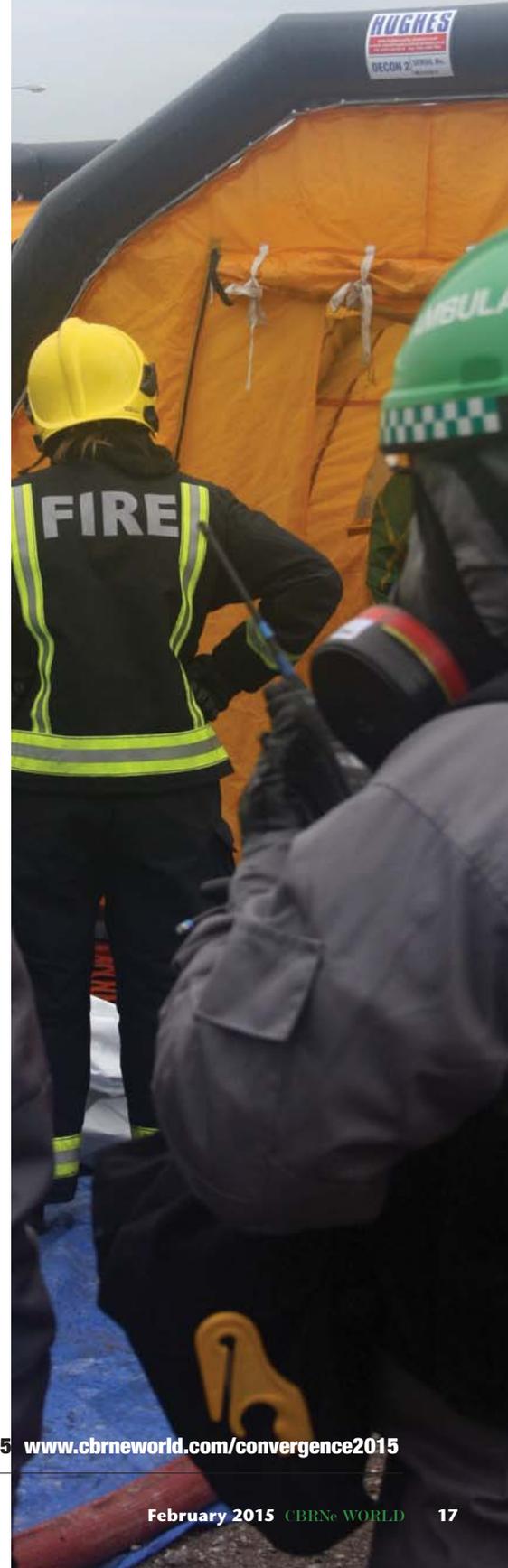
As Brazil has a negligible CBRN industrial base, goods and services have had to be imported, and the stampede has affected every corner of the global CBRN industry. Companies in this sector have encountered something that is best described as the Brazil factor. Few in the industry really want to go on record about their World Cup experiences for fear of dampening their business prospects for the 2016 Olympic Games, but most have had unflattering things to say, ranging from mild moans to cries of indignant outrage.

There has been a panoply of issues including crime, export licensing, labour strife, customs delays, shipping problems, petty and grand scale corruption, import duties, and a fragmented emergency services market. Some have refused to play, citing the difficulty in complying with strict US and UK anti bribery laws. Others have opened local offices in Brazil to expedite business or have bought their local distributors.

From the perspective of selling CBRN goods and services into the Brazilian market, it is fair to say that this is a challenging place to work. But problems aside, the Brazilian HVE experience is an interesting case study in how the rest of the world can help raise the level of preparedness for a country that was not in the highest tier of CBRN readiness at the beginning of the cycle.

Industry needs to keep the Brazil factor in perspective and realise that it could be an awful lot worse. Upcoming HVEs will undoubtedly be held in environments that are even more challenging. Brazil is, after all, somewhere near the mid-point of any hypothetical league table of challenging business environments. Although Kiev's bid for the 2024 Summer Olympics is probably now on hold for obvious reasons, Baku, Azerbaijan, is considering a bid and Almaty, Kazakhstan has thrown its hat into the ring for the 2022 Winter Olympics. Rumours of a Nairobi 2028 bid have circulated. Compliance officers in various security sector companies may already be weeping at the prospects.

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