

This... is London

9/11. I don't know any region that has integrated command and control to the extent that London has, and that is also a legacy of a 30-year IRA bombing campaign and we recognise that we still have the highest threat in the country."

An advantage of LESLP is its clarity and longevity; while not designed for CBRN incidents, it has outlined the roles of the emergency services in response to a major incident for 30 years and CBRN has become an adjunct of that. The police's main role is securing the cordon and forensic and evidential recovery. While the cordon will be staffed by normal officers, the Metropolitan Police has a dedicated CBRN unit within its TSG (Territorial Support Group). The TSG has been established for 20 years, but its CBRN capability is relatively new. This is a dedicated team, free from other duties that are on call 24/7. Chief Inspector Peter Withers, the CBRN lead within the Metropolitan Police, explained further, "In November 2005 the Multi Agency Initial Assessment Team (MAIAT) a 12-month pilot programme ended and the dedicated CBRN team within the Metropolitan Police (Met), who had a capability to deal with CBRN incidents, was started. They are 24/7 and have a team of four officers who are on a callout basis and directed to incidents by either the information room or SO15. We have taken the lead in relation to managing these incidents; there is an ongoing development of a national product, developed out of the Police National CBRN Centre in Ryton, and they are at an early stage but link in with us regularly about the expertise that we can offer – because we have been doing it longer than they have. Within the Met there are structural changes on the ownership of different business groups, but the dedicated CBRN group will remain within the TSG for the foreseeable future."

Inspector Sue Wright, DCU within the CBRN Unit, explained the role of the specialist unit further. "We wouldn't want any support [from non-specialised police officers] in the hot zone. We want the team to go in and say, 'This is CBRN', and come out. Forget getting contaminated people out of there and getting them sorted, that is not our job



A place of greater safety. As opposed to other cities London's strength is its interoperability ©DoD

– they are there to confirm it, while others can do the cordon, secure the scene and get casualties out. After that we have people who will go in and do the search; that won't be the TSG, as the TSG response is an initial one. The evidence-gathering might well take anything up to a week, and that skill is different than the ones you need for entering the hot zone."

This is a different response from first responders, whose first job is to get people out and safe. The CBRN unit would quickly be swamped in this task and the desire is to keep it pure. "Emergency workers are of the persuasion that when they see this sort of disaster, like 7/7, they will rush in and help," said Inspector Wright. "I am not sure we could stop them. Once we start seeing people coming out in distress then I hope that we would get the call. The TSG works in central London all the time, so we will hopefully get them there in 30 minutes – depending on traffic. They go straight into the scene and detect what has been released – that is their role, nothing else. That tells us what we need to do – whether people need decontaminating or medical countermeasures – so they are dedicated solely to go in and identify

it. It may just be a fire with some nasty substances – they will then be supported by the other agencies that will start following their roles.

"Once they come out of the incident they need to be prepared to deploy again, as historically there has been more than one attack. Calls will go through the roof and they will need to be able to respond. They may try and assist the rest of the TSG but they need to be available to do other calls and deal with them or disregard them as appropriate."

Yet they are not the only agency to be equipped with detection, identification and monitoring (DIM) equipment and be involved in analysis. "The London Fire Brigade (LFB) role is much the same as in a hazmat incident: search-and-rescue for the people who might be affected, provide decon for the public via our mass decon units, decon for our fire fighters and we also have a role in the decon of police officers in contaminated CR1s. We don't do infrastructure or buildings and we carry out the search-and-rescue role in the hot zone," said AC Dobson.

Traditionally, any hazmat incident required specialist DIM equipment that was operated by the Fire Service, yet

the Police incursion into this, for CBRN, would seem to have eclipsed the Fire role. Assistant Commissioner Dobson disagreed, "The Police won't take the role away from us, but their capability is improving all the time; ours has also increased steadily since 9/11. We were always looking at CBRN ever since Ex Trump Card [in June 2000] and we have followed two routes – the government's New Dimensions programme and the London Resilience programme which have enhanced our capability. We have two DIM vehicles with dedicated crew, which shortens our response time – we have full-time crews on those, a team of 28 people for a 24/7 capability. We have also added a DIM capability to our fire and rescue units, and we have also got two scientific support units which provide an analytical capability at the site.

"We mobilise our scientific support teams to any confirmed hazardous material calls," he continued, "no matter what the cause, and they will be

on the scene. They have a range of analytical pieces of equipment to analyse what they are seeing. The unit is staffed by fire fighters to get up the equipment, but the analysis is done by contracted scientific advisors that are available 24/7 and they come onto a unit which has already been set and the advisors take over and analyse any samples that have been collected by fire fighters in gas-tight suits. Our sampling procedures have all been authenticated by the Met so that they can be used in any criminal prosecution. It may be that we have a number of incidents; it may well be that the police haven't deployed their scientific capability because it is 'not' CBRN and in those cases we take the lead role for identification. But it is also there for the multi-agency drive that we have in London; we all know that our resources are finite so the more we have all go that is interoperable the better off London is."

The London Ambulance Service response to a CBRN event is evolving,

and now includes the Hazardous Area Response Team (Hart) programme (of which we hope to report in future issues) but the fundamentals will remain unchanged. "The London Ambulance Service role is the clinical management of anyone who has been affected. Be that through the provision of Basic Life Support or through administration of medical countermeasures such as atropine: we are the lead agency for the clinical management of casualties," said Steve Waspe.

Traditionally the ambulance personnel did not enter the hot zone and had all casualties brought to them – with the advent of Hart, however this has changed. Hart has solved two problems, the time lag between an individual being affected and receiving medical help and fire officers (trained to a lesser level than ambulance staff) needing to triage patients whose life-threatening symptoms might not be as apparent as they would be in other major disasters.



This looks like a bottle of water. *FirstDefender* tells you if it's not.

Instant identification of unknown liquids through sealed containers.

FirstDefender instantly identifies unknown liquids and solids—including liquid explosives—through sealed glass or plastic bottles. Self-contained, rugged, light-weight and easy to use, it requires no calibration or consumables and can identify unknown substances within 30 seconds.

- Extensive library of liquid explosives and other dangerous materials
- Point-and-shoot identification through sealed glass and plastic containers
- Identifies pure substances and mixture components
- Accurate, reliable and instantaneous results
- Handheld, lightweight, rugged and waterproof
- Does not touch or consume sample
- 24/7 technical and reachback support



Ahura Scientific, Inc.

sales@ahurascientific.com • +1 978.657.5555

www.ahurascientific.com

This... is London



The Fire Brigade will produce emergency mass decon if needed as well as its larger assets © LFB

Assistant Commissioner Ron Dobson gave the London Fire Brigade perspective, "We train people in "Steps 1, 2, 3" which is the first thing they do to recognise that there are other issues. For chem we are relying on some visual signs and symptoms. You are right that these might be masked by other signs and medical symptoms, so we are very reliant on the initial training of the crews to notice anything different. To enhance that we have the London Ambulance Hart teams and we are working closely with that pilot project. So we will be able to get medical practitioners into the hot zone with us and to say that there is an agent at work. Fire-fighters are trained to pick up symptoms that might be unusual, and we saw that at 7/7 where a lot of the people affected had all the symptoms of a non-conventional attack – and on every occasion the comment by the incident commander was that they were aware of the potential of chemical involvement and were looking for signs of CBRN. I am proud of them, because until that day comes you never know whether the training will work. It is difficult as we don't train them to be medical staff, but we make sure that they look for things that are out of place for what they think they are attending – so far that claim has worked."

While Police and Fire are well equipped with DIM equipment the Ambulance Service do not have anything approaching the same level of capability. Steve Waspe suggested that the regular training of the staff mitigated any potential problems, "The role of ambulance staff is not to analyse the substance. Their job is to treat the resulting illnesses. Therefore the

London Ambulance Service relies on the fire and police services to deal with that aspect of the response, freeing up the paramedics and emergency medical technicians to look after the clinical needs of the casualties. In the same way as the London Fire Brigade and Metropolitan Police Service, the best we can do for unprotected responders is give staff the best possible awareness, before they go on the road, of what they might be dealing with – and part of that is the identification of signs and symptoms. Steps 1, 2, 3, which was developed by all the London emergency services, are part of that same awareness programme – if there are three people down from an unknown cause, you don't go near them – you assess from afar. You can debate the morals and ethics of that as much as you like but, at the end of the day, our primary concern has to be to our staff so standing off supports the utilitarian approach of doing the greatest good for the greatest number"

There are acknowledged areas where improvement is needed, principally in the areas of bio detection and warning and reporting. "Bio is a problem," said Chief Inspector Withers, "We have the Tetracore reader at the moment which was approved by the Home Office, and we are looking at the new Home Office list and we are involved in the Home Office trials and we will look at anything they have approved. But it is all about policing. What do we know? What have we heard? Is it Mr Blair or Mrs Bloggs that has received something? We're lucky with bio that it is all medical countermeasures, so if we are not happy we keep them under observation until we are. We take everyone's name and

address; send it off to Porton Down and then it becomes a health problem. Even though we can't detect it immediately we'll need something in 24 hours to make sure we can start the medication."

Assistant Commissioner Dobson agreed, "For LFB, the thrust of CBRN development has to be increased training – CBRN is on the horizon, but doesn't happen every day and because of that you need to train harder for it. I want a new level of PPE as we are focused on either end of the scale – while our DIM capability is good it can be improved, particularly on the bio side.

"We have a good spectrum of equipment for chem, particularly when you merge fire and police, but bio has a lot of work needed to be done technically. Rad is robust; we have EPD and Rados 2000, and so we are quite well off for that."

The lack of a swept-up warning and reporting system and 'blue force tracker' is worrying. Perhaps it should not be, as previous cities in this series, Singapore, Washington DC and Berlin, lack it as well – but their strengths do not rely on the integration of agencies. A CBR event is always going to be dynamic, and the lust for information – from other agencies, politicians and the press – will outstrip anything seen before. The ability to know where the plume is, what assets are downwind and need to be moved, what units are being stretched and all of this in a dynamic, visual form.

Inspector Sue Wright described the current system, "At the moment that role is Porton's and we need to get in there and tell them what the substance is and then they can get to work on the meteorological side. It is

Visit us at GSA
stand 611

Could you escape
from a CBRN attack?

about us getting information to them and them doing the best possible.”

There is work underway within the Fire Service to go some way towards mitigating this problem. There is a new command unit planned and the National Firelink project will eventually allow automatic vehicle tracking. Previously the Fire Brigade have been reluctant to develop military style C4i systems because of concerns over reliability and cost and this has resulted in a far lower state of commercial maturity.

Another worry is the lack of major exercises like Trump Card, Capitol Response or Osiris II. While these could be seen as PR stunts – which is not to suggest that allaying the fears of the public is not a valuable gain – they did provide the strategic integration needed, with assets drawn from various regions. The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) stopped that and focused the development on the London boroughs instead, so more work is done on the tactical level. While this is equally valuable, it does miss the cross-borough response that a major (or even minor) incident would require. Inspector Sue Wright explained, “All the boroughs under the CCA means that they have to do it all, so each borough does multi-agency exercises. The CCA has prevented that sort of large exercise so they all do their own thing and trying to help all the boroughs is a demand on our time, but we try.”

While London is far better served in terms of equipment and trained officers than the rest of the UK, it does not have the sheer volume of equipment that some of the major US cities or the level of technological innovation that cities like Singapore have. It makes up for this with its level of integration, both inter-service and cross service. LESLP is not a new concept that has been developed for the current terrorist threat, and it has been well practised and has come out well. Equally, the dedication of the officers and determination to get this right, inspired by the fact that they are most at risk, will serve them well in any CBRN crisis. Yet I do feel that they have been let down by the lack of C4i system, because they rely on their integration for their strength. CBRN attacks are fluid events and will develop, as opposed to explosive events which tend to be static and fixed, and too much reliance has been placed on the old system of officers knowing who to call to find something out and a comprehensive understanding of what that agency's procedures are. Previously this has worked well, but a great deal of this has been due to the nature of the incident, I am not sure that this intimate system would work as well in a CBRN event. There is always a great deal of talk in the military about technology and “battlefield awareness” being a “force multiplier” and a lot of it remains only talk, but the ability for situational awareness to be layered on top of the current system would create a synergy that might well put London at the very top of the capability chart. “We should never be complacent,” said AC Dobson, “but London is well provided for in terms of CBRN equipment. Our true strength, and what London should be really proud of, is that we have a truly integrated partnership approach based upon understanding each other's capabilities and strengths.”



You can with an EH20 Escape Hood from Avon Protection.

Visit us at CBW
stand C02:52

Trusted in Hazardous Environments

For further information on the EH20 Escape Hood:

tel: +44 (0)1225 896705

protection@avon-rubber.com

www.avon-protection.com

CE 0088