

# Return to Nether -Netherland

There is always a large amount of back-slapping with any review of your own conference, so to put it in perspective here are a few comments from the feedback forms: "Well done – the best yet (probably the best done by anyone!)", "We anticipated that this would be a good event, but it exceeded our expectations and indeed was probably the best exhibition we have attended this year"; "Great event – liked the parallel streams so you can swap presentations if there is a presentation which is less interesting"; "Great event and keeps improving every year"; "I felt the conference was outstanding and truly a unique opportunity to meet folks from everywhere."

CBRNe Convergence was a four-day event this year, with a pre-conference workshop in CBRN forensics on day one, followed by an ice-breaker held in the OPCW, a two-day conference and exhibition and a final half-day exercise. The event attracted almost 400 people from 30 countries and boasted an exhibition of over 40 companies. This really was the largest CBRNE conference and exhibition in 2009.

The first day workshop was organised by the Netherlands Forensic Institute and was an introduction to CBRN forensics. As such, the Institute ran through a case that had been foiled, in the early stages, in the Netherlands but followed it through to its expected conclusion. It also

showed the delegates how to look for evidence, and assessed what it could and couldn't do in a court of law. Each table had its own forensic investigator, and this allowed the small tables to really get into the detail of the case and to learn from their own mistakes. The end of the first day saw the ice-breaker reception held in the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) central lobby – just yards away from their famous Ypres/Ieper room. Nearly 200 delegates turned up for the reception in the world's second largest multi-national organisation whose role is absolutely integral to the work all the delegates are involved in.

The second day was the start of the conference and also Europe's largest CBRNE exhibition, with a range of both new and familiar equipment. EADS Sodern, for example, was showing off its Unattended Luggage Inspection System (ULIS), a neutron interrogation system that allows a mass estimation and chemical composition of any suspect material. Not only were there the established companies such as Bruker, Smiths, Cristanini and Intelagard, but also some newer names, such as Zephyr, Medical Gas Solutions, Germfree and Lion Apparel. As well as the internal exhibition rooms there was also an outside exhibition area where Cobham and the Netherlands Institute for Public Health (RIVM) had some of the larger exhibits.

The conference was opened by our host of the evening before – Rogelio Pfirter, the Director General of the OPCW. This set much of the grand



*We are the World. The Dutch deployed their new mobile lab outside the conference center ©CBRNe World*

**CBRNe Convergence 2010, 2-5 November, Rosen Plaza, Orlando, Florida. More information on [www.icbrnevents.com](http://www.icbrnevents.com)**



Nearly 400 delegates from 30 countries attended the conference ©CBRNe World



Exhibitors ranged from the established to the novel, and across the whole CBRNe spectrum ©CBRNe World

strategic direction for the conference: how policy and doctrine are shaping the situation that the terrorists find themselves in. Following that, Dr Syed Raza, from the Defence Research and Development Establishment in India, gave his presentation on the state of research and CBRN in India. This, for some of the delegates, was a highlight of the conference and a solid reason why the conference is worth attending – a chance to see

inside another country that is facing a threat and is developing its solutions to the exclusion of international partners. After those plenary sessions the conference broke into separate streams to allow delegates to pick and choose which speaker was the most relevant to their force's needs and threat. The topics spanned from the conventional, such as decontamination, all the way through to the future threats, such as dealing

with clandestine drug labs.

As a testament to the support the conference received from the host nation, the Netherlands, presentations were made by the Ministry of Defence, the Hague Police and Fire departments, the Institute of Public Health and TNO (the Dutch "National" lab). Perhaps the apotheosis of this was the exercise on the final day, which saw more than 80 participants from the above

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departments provide a two-tiered scenario for the delegates – and also national and international news. The scenario had been trailed by videos, played during the coffee breaks, showing a terrorist losing control of his vehicle which contained an IED with a chemical payload. The first tier in the scenario was what happened when everything went right: police could secure the area, the NFI and Fire teams could do an assessment and EOD teams were able to get in there and neutralise the device. The second tier showed what happened when the device detonated on impact, spreading the contamination around and requiring major assets from support services – like the Ministry of Defence. The whole conference had been marketed as a chance to see interoperability at the highest level, the exercise proved this was not a hollow claim.

At time of print we are still getting appraisal forms in, but currently the feedback has been amazing. Eighty per cent thought the pre-event organisation was good or excellent. 93 per cent thought the same about the organisation during the event while 92 per cent gave good or excellent as their opinion of the overall conference. While the *CBRNe World* team might like to take the credit, none of the organisation would have worked as well without the help of The Conference People, and especially Sarah Winslett, and the third-day exercise would not have worked so well without the help of many individuals in RIVM, Haaglander Fire, Hague Police, the Ministry of Defence, VROM, NFI – and especially Fred from the NFI and Lieutenant Commander Jeroen Scholing of the Ministry of Defence. Our thanks go out to all of them.

As you will see the next event will be in Orlando, Florida next year, and further information will be found on [www.icbrnevents.com](http://www.icbrnevents.com) and [www.cbneworld.com](http://www.cbneworld.com).



*The exercise brought together decontamination, police, hazmat, forensic and explosive technicians ©CBRNe World*