



‘A reflection on the current UK terror threat’

It is a sad fact of life in the UK that we have lived with terrorism for decades, in fact terrorism has existed for centuries in some cases. The UK terror threat has been raised to ‘critical’, for the first time since 2007.

That being said, we are always touched by events such as those in Manchester and a few weeks previously in Westminster. For me, it is the horror of the impact on everyday normal activities that anyone of us could engage in that resonates. Of course, our thoughts are with all those killed or injured by these events, their families, friends and loved ones; plus all our colleagues in the emergency services and other local responders from councils to charities and individuals.

The Fire and Rescue Service has, in my career and before, always responded to terrorist events. As a Station Officer (Watch Manager) myself stationed at Soho Fire Station in the middle of London I was in charge of the first Fire response to the mortar bomb attack on Downing Street and the firebomb attacks on Oxford Street in the early 1990s.

Then, as now, our Fire and Rescue colleagues, alongside Police, Ambulance, doctors, nurses, members of the public and many others are always there and always step up to respond. Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service colleagues did just that at the MEN arena, as did London Fire Brigade before them, they responded alongside and in support of Police and Ambulance personnel to great effect.

Our response has changed over the years with the changing face of terrorism, we remember that the New Dimensions project was introduced following the events of 9/11 and saw the Government invest hundreds of £millions into new equipment and training.

This kit, the policies and procedures we now see as business as usual and is used for wider resilience events such as wide area flooding, along with the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework first introduced in 2009. I am very well aware that a multi-agency response is required to resolve all these issues and I know the hard work that individuals and organisations put into testing, exercising and preparing for a response should the worse happen.

I can vividly recall the activity following the Mumbai attack and that period of time when we could not speak openly about such an event happening in the UK. But yet again the world has moved on and we openly discuss the possibility of, and response to a marauding terrorist attack with events like those in Paris and Tunisia at the forefront of our minds as emergency responders.

Many people know that the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme, now Principles, had, as one of its origins, the 7/7 attacks. We are now in a place where the emergency services have a joint decision making model, situational awareness and risk assessments. But even these policies and procedures work best when relationships are good and that is why so much fantastic work goes on across the emergency services and wider resilience organisations and communities to prepare to respond together.

In Manchester, as they did in Westminster we saw the very best of humanity as professionals and members of the public worked to help as many people as they could. Hotels, gyms and even private homes opened their doors to people to help keep them safe and reunite with their friends and families. Our first thoughts are quite rightly with the victims and their families following such devastating events, I

would also like to pay tribute to all emergency services who responded in Westminster and Manchester and to all such events in previous years and decades.

Unfortunately this is unlikely to be the last attempt to disrupt our way of life, but I know individuals and organisations across the resilience community and beyond are working tirelessly to prevent such atrocities and respond in the best possible way should the worse happen again.

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