

# FAIL TO PREPARE...

## PREPARE TO FAIL

BY JOHN SMITH

Reports from open sources show that intelligence agencies throughout the world have identified the desire of many terrorist organizations to develop viable chemical, biological or radiological capabilities.

Those tracking international terrorism have seen a trend towards multiple attacks against soft targets with the intention to inflict maximum casualties among the populace. Authorities who still adopt the 'it will never happen here' mentality need to carefully consider their position and realize that the softest target available is the target that thinks it will never be subjected to a terrorist incident.

This should awaken us to the realism that we all have major sporting stadiums, shopping malls and iconic sights within our immediate area, wherever we reside in the world. Add to the equation the desire to use chemicals, biological agents or radiological sources in such an attack and it is not hard to see why authorities must take steps now to prepare for the emergency response, decontamination and recovery phases of such an attack.

The recent Anthrax related incidents and accidental deaths in Scotland, New York, Danbury, London, Washington and Florida, resulted in prolonged activities by the authorities at each location in relation to sampling and monitoring, decontamination and recovery. Each incident had a substantial impact on the local community in relation to prolonged disruption and the need to

reassure them about any possible impact on them, not to mention the extensive financial implications.

It is therefore not hard to see why the use of chemicals, biological agents or radiological sources would be of particular interest to a terrorist organization as it would have an immediate and prolonged impact on fear levels, could result in mass casualties and a loss of confidence in the authorities.

While from a bomb disposal/bomb



*A village hall, sealed while vaporized decontamination is deployed*

technician's point of view the detonation of a small device with an attachment containing a chemical or biological threat may not be the most effective way to disseminate a chemical or agent, it should not be discounted. The mere fact that it was present, or that even a small amount was not consumed by the explosion and was spread around the area, would have a negative effect. However the presence of a radiological source (dirty bomb) would undoubtedly achieve the terrorist aim should the device activate. In both cases it is entirely possible that the operation to render safe the device may in fact result

in the bomb disposal/bomb technician achieving the terrorist's aim for them.

In such circumstances all of the specialist equipment used in the operation will in all likelihood be contaminated and out of commission, which could result in a severe reduction in your local or national capability to respond to additional threats until either the equipment is decontaminated or replaced. The questions then arise as to whether the equipment can be decontaminated or not, how long would it take, would the

cost of decontamination be prohibitive (should we just buy new equipment), who can do the decontamination? Alternatively we can purchase new equipment but what will we do with the contaminated equipment we already have, is new specialist equipment readily available to purchase off the shelf, how much will that cost, if there have been multiple attacks can we replace several pieces of specialist equipment simultaneously, how long will

it take to arrive?

In order to help to prepare the United Kingdom for a Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) terrorist attack, and assist with the decontamination and recovery phase in the aftermath of such an attack, the UK Government Decontamination Service (GDS) was formed. The GDS has both an Operational and Scientific capability.

The GDS has formed a 'Framework of Specialist Suppliers' from the private sector who can be called upon on



*Low level radiological contaminated waste from the Litvinenko case*



*Anthrax contaminated house in Scotland*

a 24/7 basis to respond to a terrorist CBRN incident. The expertise of each of these companies who work daily in the Chemical, Biological or Nuclear Industries, together with their specialist equipment and personnel can be quickly deployed to an incident to assist the responsible authority in the decontamination and recovery phase of the incident. The GDS have negotiated fees with each company in the Framework ahead of any incident and they would each work with the Recovery Co-Ordination Group, which would be formed to manage the decontamination and recovery phase of the operation.

In order to test the capability and capacity of each of the companies on the Framework the GDS have commissioned a number of Case Studies, based around realistic terrorist scenarios, to test their methodology and working practices and identify 'best practice and lessons learned' to improve the overall response ahead of a real incident.

The GDS are also on Local, Regional and National CBRN Resilience and Planning Groups



*Police in PPE*

to ensure there is standardization in the response to a CBRN incident throughout the United Kingdom and report back to Central Government on any capability gaps identified.

The GDS are also mandated to assist local authorities if incidents are beyond their capability and as well, as the Anthrax death in Scotland mentioned above, the GDS and their Framework Companies have also been deployed to a number of chemical and radiological incidents, including the decontamination following the death of Alexander Litvinenko in London.

So on the theme of failing to prepare: As IAB-TI members have you taken steps to develop tactics to safely disrupt such a device, enter a contaminated scene, have appropriate PPE available, seize contaminated exhibits, arrest contaminated suspects, dispose of contaminated materials, identify credible decontamination companies or identify a supply chain to replace specialist equipment?

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