



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY  
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT**

***Committee Report***

**Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 7 JULY 2008**

**Subject : EXERCISE 'NORTHERN SENTINEL'**

***Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer***

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 'Recent terrorist activity, both national and international, has shown, in a most dramatic way, the challenges posed. The attacks in London and more recently in Glasgow, have had a profound effect on the United Kingdom as a whole – not least in terms of the methods used and the developing strategies designed to prevent, of mitigate, future incidents.'

*Extract from Chief Constable's Foreword for Northern Sentinel*

- 1.2 Through previous reports to the Civil Contingencies Committee, Members will be aware of the considerable efforts made by Emergency Services, the Local Authorities and other responders within Tyne and Wear and across the North East in the development of local and regional Counter Terrorism measures. An important part of this process is the training and exercising of officers who have designated roles and responsibilities in major incident planning and in responding to terrorist incidents.
- 1.3 Tyne and Wear Local Authorities have been very enthusiastic participants in nationally led counter terrorism initiatives. Reports have been submitted to this committee previously on Exercise Magpie, which when held in September 2004, hosted by Newcastle City Council, which was the largest scale Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) exercise held outside of London. This was followed by Exercise 'Black Cat' held in March 2007 which looked into the recovery from a radiological incident. During the recovery phase of the incident, Sunderland City Council led on the Strategic Co-ordination Group and facilitated multi agency recovery at both Strategic and Tactical levels.
- 1.4 The latest nationally developed exercise was held in Gateshead on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March was Exercise 'Northern Sentinel'. The two day event was organised and facilitated by Northumbria Police.

**2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Northern Sentinel is part of a national programme of Home Office led New Salesman Counter Terrorist Exercises. The exercise is designed to show how the Police and their partners respond to a terrorist incident within the local area. 'New Salesman' exercises are held over a two day period. Day

1 focussed on the Police response to a given scenario. Day 2 focussed on the multi-agency response to the same scenario.

2.2 The aim of the Exercise was to exercise and discuss the emergency response to a terrorist related incident in the Northumbria Police area.

2.3 The Exercise objectives, as outlined in the 'Northern Sentinel' Handbook, were:

- To afford officers of the rank of Chief Inspector and above, the opportunity of becoming familiar with the contingency plans for dealing with a terrorist incident
- To ensure there is a clear understanding of the roles of the Government Departments, the Security Services and the Military in the event of such an incident
- To create an awareness of the scale of operational requirements and the range of resources available, to bring such an incident to a peaceful solution
- To engage other agencies and partners in promoting co-operation and best practice for dealing with the 'Consequence Management' phase of such an incident.

The exercise also aimed to raise awareness of:

- Physical elements of an 'airport/aircraft' incident;
- Initial action at the report of a CBRN related suspicious incident;
- Issues affecting the community during critical incidents

### **3 SPEAKERS**

3.1 Speakers at Northern Sentinel outlined the roles and responsibilities of their respective agencies in a terrorist incident:

- Home Office – Office for Security and Counter Terrorism
- Ministry of Defence – Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)
- Metropolitan Police
- Security Service - Counter Terrorist Security Adviser
- Northumbria Police – Strategic and Tactical Command and Control structures
- Renfrewshire Council (Local Authority involvement at Glasgow Airport Incident)

### **4 EXERCISE SCENARIO**

4.1 Exercise Northern Sentinel scenario was that of a slow build, intelligence led Police anti-terrorist investigation focussing on the activities of two Newcastle International Airport staff and the multi agency response to declaration of National Security Level 'Critical'.

- 4.2 The scenario was developed throughout the day by using incoming information updates and video 'news reports' designed to highlight specific events otherwise known as 'triggers' and initiate Police response and the subsequent activation of multi-agency assistance. The scenario was designed to investigate Northumbria Police handling of a multiple site incidents, these were:
- Royal Victoria Infirmary – admission to hospital of a possible terrorist
  - Home address of suspects – a potential bomb factory
  - Greys Monument – suspect device in vehicle
  - Metro System – Identification and tracking of suspect on light rail system
  - Newcastle Airport – identified as work place of suspects, therefore possible target investigations and eventual scene of an explosion and the subsequent incident response.

## **5 PARTICIPATION**

### 5.1 Day 1:

- Exercise players were Police only, and made up of Chief Inspectors and above.
- Exercise observers included one representative of Senior Management Level of the Local Authorities of Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, the two Fire and Rescue Authorities and the North East Ambulance Service. The T&W EPU was also represented by two officers.

### 5.2 Day 2:

- Exercise players and observers included over twenty representatives from the five Local Authorities of Tyne and Wear with designated roles at either Strategic or Tactical levels and strong contingent from other Category 1 responders. The Chair of Northumbria Local Resilience Forum and two officers from T&W EPU also attended.

## **6 EXERCISE OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

6.1 Northern Sentinel was an extremely successful event giving a very candid insight into the response procedures of the Police and useful overviews of national partners in counter terrorism.

6.2 From a Local Authority point of view a number of issues were identified for subsequent investigation and review. A report was prepared by the T&W EPU and distributed to the Tyne and Wear Strategic Management Board (SMB - comprising representatives of each of the five Tyne and Wear Councils and the Chief Emergency Planning Officer). Issues identified for consideration following the exercise were:

- a. Local Authority representation within the Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC). There is a requirement for designated officers to attend

Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG), Recovery Working Group (RWG) and the Scientific and Technical Advice Cell (STAC).

- b. Identification of suitably trained Local Authority representation at Forward Control Point (FCP) – designated as Multi-agency Tactical Command.
- c. Impact on Local Authority Survivor Reception Centre and Rest Centre management within the Police Counter Terrorism (CT) Command and Control structure.
- d. Local Authority communication procedures within the Counter Terrorist Command structure
- e. Availability of Local Authority technical advice to the emergency services at the scene Local Authority Officer training
- f. Use of CCTV during terrorist incident
- g. Traffic management
- h. Local Authority internal arrangements following announcement of National Security 'Critical' rating being declared.
- i. Local Authority Officer training in respect of item h above

## **7 NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 The EPU - led Newcastle CBRN Site Specific Planning Group has recently delivered a draft multi-agency Tactical level plan to the Home Office for consideration. Initial feedback on the draft has been extremely positive. The work of this Group was highlighted in a previous report to this committee on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007. It is proposed that the issues identified in paragraph 6.2 above (items a – g) will be investigated as part of the ongoing work of the Group.
- 7.2 The plan, when tested and accepted by the Home Office, will be made available to other local authorities within Tyne and Wear and also across the Region. All five Tyne and Wear councils already receive regular reports on CBRN developments at the SMB meetings, and by awareness sessions prepared and conducted by the T&W EPU.
- 7.3 Items h and i (in paragraph 6.2 above) will be considered as part of working arrangements being developed by the Local Authorities and T&W EPU. Newcastle City Council will lead on this issue with support from the EPU. This was agreed by the SMB on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2008. The resulting protocols and training requirements will be submitted to the full SMB for approval.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 Exercise Northern Sentinel was a challenging and informative exercise which significantly enhanced the multi agency understanding of the Police Counter Terrorism Command and Control arrangements and the

understanding of roles and responsibilities of each of the participating agencies.

- 8.2 It was of particular benefit to the Local Authorities of Tyne and Wear who used the opportunity to evaluate both internal and multi-agency incident response procedures. Lessons learned and recommendations are currently under review. The T&W EPU provided advice and assistance to the LA at both Strategic and Tactical levels during the exercise.
- 8.3 The T&W EPU provide the Chair to the Newcastle CBRN Site Specific Planning Team and will ensure that the issues identified during Exercise Northern Sentinel are progressed.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members are asked to note this report
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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- The Northumbria Police Exercise Report was not available at the time of compiling this report. Papers relating to this report are held in the appropriate file in the EPU Offices.