

Exercise Powerhouse Report

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Introduction

The emergency services in Greater Manchester have worked together over a number of years to develop a comprehensive response to a significant terrorist related event, particularly where Operation Plato is declared. Despite this, the GMFRS internal structured debrief held following the 22nd May 2017 Manchester Arena attack raised the following:

Better inter-agency liaison between GMFRS and other services is needed, current procedures need to be reviewed.

It was widely acknowledged that issues with communication between the emergency services during this incident resulted in a lack of full situational awareness and joint understanding of risk.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, an interim communication protocol was established using the **OS** Airwave channel, in order to communicate risk critical information in the early stages of the incident. This will initially be between the three emergency service controls but subsequently include key resources whilst en-route to the incident.

Scope

Exercise Powerhouse took place on 20th November 2017 at 20:00 and involved input from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS). A multi-agency planning team was established to develop the exercise and involved representation from the aforementioned agencies plus North West Fire Control (NWFC).

The exercise was mostly based on a 'No Notice' ethos where NWFC operators and other participants were given little if any pre warning. **Operationally Sensitive**

Operationally Sensitive which was a similar situation to that encountered on the night of the arena attack. From the GMFRS perspective the exercise involved a combination of both live and notional mobilisations. The initial plan was to physically mobilise the relevant officers and the Specialist Response Team (SRT), however, the decision was taken not to involve the SRT due to the ongoing national sensitivities concerning the Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA) capability.

The exercise concluded once required multi-agency resources were successfully co-located and established at a nominated Forward Command Post (FCP). Due to the fact that a number of exercises involving the actual joint deployment of resources into the warm zone have taken place previously, this element did not form any part of this exercise.

This exercise was also a test of arrangements and procedural changes put in place in the immediate aftermath of the Arena attack.

An internal debrief took place on 14th December 2017 and the outcomes and recommendations are detailed in this report. **Appendix 2** details the recommendations.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the exercise was to test the initial response of the three emergency services to a major terrorist incident and the communication and joint understanding of risk critical information.

The objectives of the exercise were:

- Correct use of the **OS** Airwave channel between the three emergency service control rooms until successful co-location at scene is confirmed.
- Declaration of Op PLATO by GMP and communication of this information to North West Fire Control (NWFC) and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) Control in a timely manner.
- Mobilisation of appropriate resources by GMP, NWFC and NWAS Control centres.
- Communication and joint understanding of risk critical information between the three blue light service relevant command teams mobilised.
- Timely attendance of resources at the nominated FCP.
- Full physical check of FCP for potential secondary devices.
- Successful co-location of Commanders and briefing of teams at the FCP.

Scenario

The scenario involved three separate scenes that were introduced on a progressive but dynamic format in order to test the communication of risk critical information.

The full timeline of events and expected actions from the GMFRS perspective are attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.

In essence the scenario involved the following:

- Initial call received by NWFC stating that an explosion and resulting fire has occurred at the **I&S** Hotel, **I&S** Manchester. Multiple casualties are reported.
- Subsequent reports of gunfire at the **I&S** Hotel.
- GMP declares Op PLATO and communicates to the other emergency services on the **OS** channel.
- Reports of initial attackers mounting a motorcycle and leaving the scene.
- After subsequent checks by GMP Armed Response officers, the **I&S** Hotel is declared a Cold Zone.
- Subsequent reports of large explosion and gunfire at **Irrelevant & Sensitive**
- RVP at **Irrelevant & Sensitive** declared by GMP.
- Reports of suspicious vehicle and details communicated by GMP.
- GMP communicate that RVP at **Irrelevant & Sensitive** is now compromised and new RVP at **Irrelevant & Sensitive** is identified.
- GMP reports that **Irrelevant & Sensitive**
Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

The officers taking part in the exercise were:

Name	Role
GM Pete Lamb	Duty NILO
GM Jon Crawley	GM/NILO
GM Carlos Meakin	NILO
GM Lee Coleman	Duty GM
AM Ben Levy	Duty APO
ACFO Tony Hunter	Duty PO

Officers in GMFRS exercise control were:

GM John Fletcher

SM Andy Berry

AM Billy Myers

Nicola Barnes

Janine Carden provided Ex Con at NWFC

Learning Outcomes

Following the Arena attack a number of changes had been made to mobilising procedures. These are considered as part of the following learning outcomes.

1. As stated above this exercise involved a combination of physical and notional mobilisations. This caused considerable problems for the NWFC operators as they had to read through the Action Cards and manually record notional actions and assets used. It would be much quicker and easier to physically mobilise all required assets as this is done automatically as part of the mobilising system.

Recommendation 1: For future exercises of this nature, allow NWFC to practically mobilise the assets. This will be a realistic and timely test of procedures in NWFC.

2. The initial call stated that there had been an explosion at the **I&S** Hotel. The Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA) for this incident type now includes a Group Manager (GM), therefore as nearest GM to the incident (GM Crawley) was mobilised by NWFC.

Shortly afterwards Op PLATO was declared by GMP. This subsequently required NILOs and the SRT to mobilise to the nominated RVP. On the night there was NILOs available on the rota, unfortunately all of these were GMs and with GM Lamb

trailing the co-ordinator role,

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An incident of this nature will be extremely resource intensive for officers with the NILO skill set. As a bare minimum ^{os}x NILOs will be required to fulfil the mobilising criteria.

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Recommendation 2: Consider the introduction of Resilience contracts for officers with specific skills to support the incident requirements on a more structured and resilient basis.

3. The use of the ^{OS} channel was a great improvement for the passage of risk critical information and general situational awareness; however, there were a number of occasions where GMP had to repeatedly ask NWFC for clarification that they had received the information. As the exercise progressed it was clear that in the majority of circumstances the NILO Co-ordinator would have been the best person to engage in conversation with the partner agencies.

In addition, it seemed to be 'one way traffic' with the police as the main communicator and NWFC and NWSAS on receive. It is acknowledged that GMP may be the primary agency for gathering/disseminating information, however, it should not be forgotten that both NWFC and NWSAS Control may be in possession of information that would be risk critical to other agencies.

Recommendation 3: The role of the NILO Co-ordinator to take up a more active role in the communication chain with other agencies. This is not to say that NWFC should not interject too at appropriate times.

4. Due to the availability of ^{OS} NILOs on the night it was determined that the Duty NILO (GM Lamb) would remain static and undertake the role of NILO Co-ordinator whilst the other ^{OS} NILOs responded to the scene. The purpose of this was to enable GM Lamb to monitor all radio traffic and available information and intelligence in order to have a good understanding of the situational awareness and relay this to the officers en-route. This required GM Lamb to simultaneously monitor 2 x Airwave radios (the first radio allocated to the ^{OS} channel and second radio allocated to the relevant North West Ops Channel) which appliances would be using. Although it was still difficult to take in all critical information emanating from a fast moving incident, it was felt that this added significant value and reduced the burden on the officers driving to the event.

Discussion has taken place regarding the merits of establishing the Co-ordinator role as a priority i.e. if ^{os}x NILOs are available mobilise one to the scene (nearest NILO) and allocate the Co-ordinator role to the ^{OS} NILO. The ^{OS} NILO to be deployed to the scene in this instance would be resourced using R2D. The rationale for this is to ensure an immediate attendance to the scene and co-ordination of risk