

London bombings: aftermath and effects of 7 7



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Introduction

The 7th of July 2005 will always be remembered as an infamous date representing the day when a coordinated attack was conducted by terrorists on the public transport system of the city of London during the heavily trafficked morning rush hour period (CNN. com, 2006). The series of attacks occurred aboard three underground trains all within a minute of each other starting at 8: 50 a. m., with a fourth occurring on a bus that was traveling in Travistock Square at 9: 47 a. m. (CNN. com, 2006). That day saw a death toll of fifty-two civilians, along with the four suicide bombers, and approximately seven hundred and seventy individuals injured (BBC. co. uk, 2006). The incident was reportedly motivated by the United Kingdom's inclusion in the United States backed invasion and occupation of Iraq (Altermedia. info, 2005). The attack was highly reminiscent of the train bombings in Madrid, with both coming after Spain and the United Kingdom had reduced their troops stationed in Iraq (Dhimmi Watch, 2005).

The events preceding the attacks in London strongly suggested that a similar occurrence might happen in the United Kingdom. With the attacks taking place as the G8 Summit was being held in Scotland, the probability of an attack should have been higher on the British threat assessment scale than it was (World Socialist Web Site, 2005). In addition, London was also in the middle of celebrating the fact that it had made a successful bid for the hosting of the Olympics in 2012, thus the attacks were targeted to achieve maximum effect and exposure (Rasmussen, 2005). But, that view is open to conjecture as the target, timing and nature of the attack could have occurred in any number of possible ways, thus making the potential to suggest its

prevention as a rather moot point. The nature of terrorist attacks is their surprise and use of individuals who purportedly can fly beneath the surveillance radar of the authorities seeking to uncover them.

Subsequent information and reports have linked the bombings to Al-Qaeda (Philpott, 2005). The developments resulting from the occupation of Iraq, Al-Qaeda and global terrorism have changed the manner in which governments view, react and prepare for potential occurrences. What happened on that fateful day could have occurred in any country at any time, and that propensity is still open. This examination will look at the aftermath of the London bombings and the events that transpired as well as the larger implications and actions that it triggered. And while various plans were in place as a result of the events of 9-11, action after such an event can be subject to variables that even the most prepared plan could not make contingencies for. The following will chronicle those events as well as investigations, inquiries, changes, legislation and findings made in the aftermath from varied quarters.

The initial reports indicated that there were six explosions which was reported as a result of them occurring between stations, thus causing passengers to exit at points located to the front as well as rear of the train streaming them into two opposite directions thereby creating confusion as to the initial damage and explosion count. That development caused additional confusion for the various agencies responding to the attacks until the situation entailing three train attacks was revealed. After the initial confusion cleared it was determined that (CNN. com, 2006):

1. The first explosion took place on the eastbound Circle Line train traveling from Liverpool Street to Aldgate.
2. Explosion number two occurred on the westbound Circle Line train between Edgware Road and Paddington approximately.
3. The third explosion took place on the southbound Piccadilly Line between King's Cross Street Pancras and Russell Square

The London Underground suspended service throughout the entire network after all trains were brought into the nearest stations thus causing massive displacement for individuals throughout the city. The Tavistock Square double decker bus explosion represented the final of the explosions, where it first passed by Euston as evacuees were exiting from the underground station. It had to divert its route and the final incident occurred (Rasmussen, 2005).

The investigation into the bombings uncovered that the bombs went off as another train was passing in the opposite direction, thus leading to the conclusion that the attacks were timed for maximum effect, however for some reason the bombers did not escape (Sky News, 2005). The investigation uncovered that there were possessions found on the bombers that aided in the identification of the attackers as they were carrying identification as well as other information that subsequently led to the discovery of their factory in Leeds where the explosive devices were made (Edwards, 2005). All of the attackers carried "... return rail tickets ... and display car park tickets ..." prior to their boarding the trains (Edwards, 2005). Further evidence to supported Edwards (2005) contention, which aligns with of the statements made by Tony Blair (2005) is illustrated by the fact that

the explosive devices were contained in large sized rucksacks that could have easily been dumped, and personal effects such as drivers licences, banking cards and other items were found on their remains further supporting his theory that they were deceived by their superiors and the bombs were set to explode in advance as suicide bombers customarily remove all forms of identification and links. The importance of the discovery of the manner in which the events unfolded as well as the origin of the attackers was an outgrowth of the investigation into the affiliations of the attackers. The individuals involved were unknown to authorities by name, however they were caught by surveillance techniques that included a large sweep of activities thus relegating them to lesser status. Through re-tracing their steps based upon the receipts found on their remains it was clear that they traveled to Luton via vehicle, and then onto London by train (Campbell and Laville, 2005). They were captured on the King's Cross CCTV system at 8: 30 a. m..

The Aftermath

In a statement released by the Rt. Hon. Paul Murphy, the MP Chairman of the United Kingdom's Intelligence and Security Committee, he commented as to whether there was any intelligence information that could have aided in the prevention of the attacks (Community Central, 2005). The official statement and position was if there had been prior suspicions or information, then the authorities would have intervened. In all probability the audacity of the attack, even after the events of September 11th in the United States and Madrid, caught authorities by surprise even though planning for the potential of such an occurrence had been undertaken. There were and are scores of

reports commenting on the probability of advance knowledge as well as one of the bombers being spotted a full year prior to the event (officialconfusion.com, 2006a). In addition to the preceding, the government is purported to have had advance knowledge that such an attack would be carried out on London's underground through information gathered by intelligence services (officialconfusion.com 2006b). In hindsight it is easy to sift through mountains of information that had been gathered and or observed and put the pieces together after the fact, but the vagueness of data, the many sources and potential endings they suggest makes foresight more difficult.

In one report, the London Metropolitan Police had contracted the private company of Visor Consultants to look into planning a simulated drill concerning the potential of multiple explosive attacks being made upon the London underground system (Chossudovsky, 2005). Interestingly enough a drill simulating such an attack was being conducted at 9: 30 that very morning with the participants having to switch in mid drill to an active status. These drills represented crisis management on the part of the London Metropolitan Police (Chossudovsky, 2005). The preceding indicates that the varied reports as documented by Officialconfusion.com (2006a&b) and other web sites in the aftermath had some validity. As the inquiry into this aspect of the London bombings represents as important an area in crisis management procedures either planned or in place prior to the attacks and hence, further investigation is warranted.

A Report to Parliament by Prime Minister Blair concerning the " Government Response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005" was presented on May 2006 (Prime <https://assignbuster.com/london-bombings-aftermath-and-effects-of-77/>

Minister's Office, 2006). The Report stated that the existence of Siddeque Khan was known to authorities, however his identity was not. It, the Report, also stated that Shazad Tanweer was also unknown by name, and that surveillance did pick him up through routine activity, however, since the activity was routine, no special significance was made. Said Report did indicate that the outcome of the 7 July attacks might have been prevented if the Security Service had come to different conclusions concerning the intelligence it gathered before the event.

Blair's Report also covered the subject of the reduction of the threat level and alert systems which was reduced from severe general to substantial (Prime Minister's Office, 2006). The Report stated that the intelligence gathered prior to and up to the event did not indicate the likelihood of such an occurrence, and that a high alert level reflects a substantial indicator which did not affect the security aspects being lowered concerning transport systems. With regard to police systems the Report recommended their merging information and operative systems to provide increased communication regarding strategic and national issues as represented by terrorism, with more information passed down to lower levels (Prime Minister's Office, 2006). The foregoing also indicated an increase in police community support officers from 6, 300 to 16, 000, with further increases through 2008 to heighten the ability to cover more intelligence areas and retrieve information. In conjunction with the preceding, the Security Service along with Special Forces units have embarked on expansion putting more regional offices in place along with increased fiscal and resource support (Prime Minister's Office, 2006). Resources from the Home Office were

increased by £30 million, with the level of increase rising to £60 million for the budget period 2007 through 2008 (Prime Minister's Office, 2006).

European Union

On a broader plane, the European Union implemented measures representing key priorities as a response to the bombings in London via the Council of the European Union's Counter Terrorism Coordinator issued a special report concerning the "Implementation of the Action Plan to Combat Terrorism" (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005). While the Report was one of a regular series issued every six months as the result of an adoption by the Council of the European Union, it made special reference to the London Bombings and that this Report contained a response to that event. The European Union, as the governing body for its member states and the center resource in implementing plans and planning of their behalf that takes into consideration past, present and future considerations, the Declaration of March 2004 to combat terrorism was set forth to be a priority for the European Union. As a direct outgrowth of the London bombing the 'Money Laundering Directive' was issued and put into action, along with the 'Directive on Enhancing Port Security' " (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005). Additionally, Europol, Frontex and Eurotrust increased their support to the national law enforcement authorities of member nations as well as increased cooperation with national governmental agencies of other non-member nations. Specifically, the Report gave priority and urgency to the London bombings and various measures as a result of it.

The vulnerability exposed by the successful terrorist attacks in London heightened the Council's sense of urgency to identify, arrest and prevent

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such occurrences. The use of the Internet as a communications medium by terrorists was highlighted, along with their ability to obtain weapons and employ non-conventional explosive devices" (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005). Such developments indicated that additional measures, techniques and strategies were needed in the face of the preceding. New directives included the information exchange program to provide criminal record data to appropriate agencies as well as the improvement of mechanisms in consort with the preceding. The directive made it mandatory that information and cooperation be exchanged between member states along with Europol and Eurojust for all pending investigations as well as prosecutions " (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005).

Important to the preceding is the access to databases under the Schengen Information System which is to be made fully operational by 2007. Present implementations included the Visa Information System and its consolidation to permit faster detection, information, investigation and prevention by virtue of cross data access and matching " (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005). A direct implementation coming out of the London bombings was the adoption of biometric identifiers for residence permits along with national identity cards. The implementation of enhanced measures for security regarding explosives, equipment to make bombs and firearms was also put into place (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005). Heightened training for police departments in terrorism, and Customs protocols were also adopted. The areas of Port security along with Airport security were increased through the adding of additional

screening measures, new technologies in equipment as well as increased personnel and surveillance systems.

Risk management measures were also upgraded through enhanced Civil Protection Mechanisms, along with crisis management techniques to provide guidance in pre attack, in the event of their occurrence, preparedness and post attack response " (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005). The London bombings resulted in the Council putting forth a plan to devise crisis coordination as a result of a special adoption of the Council made on 13 July 2005. The foregoing entailed increased information sharing in emergencies and in particular, terrorist attacks when such involves more than one member state, with such measures to be in place by June 2006 " (European Union Counter Terrorism Coordinator, 2005).

The importance of the foregoing is the increased funding, inter agency cooperation and information sharing for all European Union member states as well as national governments not a part of the EU.

Governmental Agencies in the United Kingdom

The events of 7 July 2005 involved the following agencies and departments, the Metropolitan Police Service, London Fire Brigade, City of London Police, London Underground, London Ambulance Service and the Gold Coordinating Group, MI5 as well as outside intelligence reports. MI5 represents one of the more important agencies in the preceding list and maintains a web site for reference by the general public. It provides information on response levels and threats, however no update on measures either directly taken or in progress as a result of the 7 July bombings is available on their web site (MI5,

2006). Equally important is the Ministry of Defence which maintains a web site as well. It as well did not and does not contain any relevant information concerning departmental updates in the aftermath of the bombings (UK Ministry of Defence, 2006). The same search was conducted for The Secret Intelligence Service (2006) that yielded the like results. The preceding is understandable in that disseminating internal information regarding the conduct of affairs in relationship to measures in place or being put into place, does not represent an intelligent option. Internal measures and developments on the part of governmental agencies are secretive areas, thus new plans and activities represent aspects that are unavailable to the public.

Public sentiment and anxiety in the United Kingdom over the 7 July bombings represent an area of intense concern within the country for all of its citizens. The aftermath of this event resulted in the country developing "... stronger counter terrorism measures ... as represented by legislation (Lawson, 2005). As the attacks were carried out by homegrown terrorists, the difficulty in preventive measures has increased dramatically as the identification means take in individuals already inside the country's borders.

The response by the Emergency Medical Service represents a major component plan that worked from the standpoint of crisis management. With a wounded total in excess of 700 people, the importance of getting medical personnel to the sites, performing emergency services and transporting them to hospitals, coordinating which location was a major undertaking. The London Ambulance Service deployed vehicles throughout the four sites and had to respond accordingly to the level of the incident as developments

became known (Heightman, 2005). A situation of this type calls for on the spot reactions, decision making and judgment.

As part of emergency preparedness, the London Ambulance Service had researched various plans scenarios to respond to such incidents as a result of the events of September 11th in the United States, briefings with government officials and the threat of such a disaster occurring in London as a result of the country's participation in Iraq and the train attack in Madrid some sixteen months prior. The personnel total exceeded 250 emergency staff, supplemented by a contingency of volunteers who responded to the situation, with approximately 100 ambulances used to transfer injured individuals to various medical facilities (Heightman, 2005). The total or injured exceeded the London Ambulance Service capacity, so under the contingency plans developed, it called in aid from Bedfordshire, Kent, Essex, Herefordshire and Surrey as well as St. John Ambulance and the British Red Cross (Heightman, 2005).

Per the crisis management operational plan the vehicles were staged at locations that had been planned in advance where a large contingent of vehicles could have easy access and departure. Local managers arrived at these locations to coordinated activities and schedule departures as well as points to ferry the injured to as well as aiding in making determinations of whom to carry out first and whom to treat on the scene (Heightman, 2005). In total, the London Ambulance Service oversaw the treatment of 645 individuals, of which 45 represented critical and serious injuries such as burns, amputations, fractured limbs and blast burns, with an additional 300 treated on scene and 300 ferried to various hospitals (Heightman, 2005).

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Working in conjunction with the London Metropolitan Police the entire operation was seamless and one of the bright spots in a day of disaster.

In the immediate aftermath of the bombings the government's COBRA crisis management team, along with the Joint Terrorism Analysis Center swung into action which combines MI5 and MI6, domestic and foreign intelligence, Government Communications Headquarters and the police together to coordinate response, investigation and management of the situation (Philpott, 2005). The entire operation went global in hours, pulling in intelligence and research from the United States, United Nations, The European Union, and other countries to review briefings, documents, surveillance and other materials. The inter-agency team London Resilience that was put into operation after September 11th, coordinated emergency services, health, fire, transport, utilities and business under its umbrella (London Resilience, 2006). London Resilience ' Strategic Emergency Plan' represents a blueprint designed for the effective handling of crisis situations in London as a collaborative effort.

The London Metropolitan Police were also prepared for the situation, as stated by Ian Blair, Commissioner, " This is the biggest crime scene in England's history ... a situation for which we have planned and prepared ..." (Philpott, 2005). Critical in the immediate investigation of the incident where the 400, 000 CCTV cameras throughout London that helped to identify the bombers at King's Cross when they arrived. (Wikipedia, 2006). It recorded them splitting up and talking, and the investigation team spotted the four bombers on Monday through matching their images with documents found at the explosions (Philpott, 2005). The CCTV system was designed and
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developed as a result of the 1985 IRA bombings, and the trial program was so successful that it was expanded (Wikipedia, 2006). As one of the most sophisticated CCTV systems in the world, the United Kingdom has one camera for every 14 individuals when home, business, and governmental systems are added together (Wikipedia, 2006).

The events of 7 July has resulted in all major cities increasing their security efforts with respect to subway bombings, however, the measure of scanning all backpacks, pocketbooks, suitcases and other carry one items is not only impractical, but impossible. Thus, in the aftermath the underground system in the United Kingdom is safer, but still vulnerable, much less so than prior to the incident, but vulnerable nevertheless. In London a major impediment to more security measures on top of the additional personnel which has been put into place is fiscal. The present budget does not allow for security officer patrolling enough trains, as well as having at least one officer per station to eye scan passengers (Philpott, 2005). Funds to provide added cameras, hardening of tunnels, fences, radiation detection and intrusion systems, control and command tools for security and track monitoring along with rolling stock have been estimated at £1 billion (Philpott, 2005).

All in all, the emergency services, police, MI5, intelligence arms and government responded favorably to the largest incident in the country's history, save for World War II. The planning, preparations, and coordination that the government put into place after September 11th helped to quickly identify the bombers, although the evidence strongly suggests that they were sacrificed in the process by devices that were timed to go off quicker than they were led to believe thus capturing them in the explosions as well

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(BBC News, 2005). The fact they were carrying their personal identification, bank cards, and the parking ticket points to their belief that they were deceived by their superiors (Edwards, 2005).

Conclusion

The surprise nature of the bombings could not have been forecast, even in the face of the advance knowledge of the Madrid train attack, as to location, date and timing. Pre terrorist planning by the Metropolitan Police, London Ambulance Service, Fire Brigade and other governmental agencies has not been identified as being sub-standard or negligent. In a Report made to Parliament concerning the “ Government Response to the Intelligence and Security Committee’s Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005”, a full briefing of all of the salient facets were covered. The Security Service did pick up Shazad Tanweer and Siddeque Khan, but their name identities were unknown and they were not identified as significant participants at that time. Said Report made a number of important recommendations regarding the merging of police systems along with increasing police community support officers to heighten departmental capabilities in the future which were enacted. Additionally allocation increases for the police budget were immediately granted.

The blasts also prompted the Council of the European Union to adopt a number of measures concerning intra country intelligence and cooperation protocols. The Declaration of March 2004 to combat terrorism was set forth to be a priority for the European Union. Money laundering,, enhanced Port and Airport security measures were increased and various agencies were provided with directives to devise increased security and cooperation

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methods and measures. The Council Report also increased Civil Protection Mechanisms, crisis management and pre attack preparedness. The London Ambulance Service performed admirably in response to the attack handling in excess of 600 patients and coordinating the activities of a number of regional ambulances services and volunteer units to effectively ferry the injured to hospitals. Their performance lessened the loss of life and was a bright spot in an otherwise dreadful historic day.

Internal security measures and inter agency cooperation has been enhanced in the aftermath of the attacks to better coordinate activities in the pre terrorist phase through investigation, detainment and arrest. The system has prevented two such occurrences and continues to seek ways to improve upon their operational standards. Thanks to the 400, 000 police CCTV cameras in operation in the target area, visual identification was made in short order, resulting in arrests as well as the discovery of the factory where the devices were made.

The lessons learned from the 7 July attacks represented severe and costly teachings that the country as well as European Union and the United states have taken to heart. It again provided evidence regarding the need to be ever vigilant in techniques, surveillance and preemptive action to prevent occurrences of this type in the future. The loss of life by civilians represents an unacceptable price in a battle of idealism that encompasses the quest of a small group, Al-Qaeda, to impose its will on nations.

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