

SECURITY DIALOGUE

Account of the UK–NL Security Dialogue

Learning from the legacy of the London Olympics

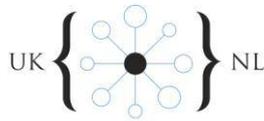
“Whatever happened, the biggest show on earth *had to go on ...*”

On 6 March, over a hundred security sector experts from the UK and the Netherlands came together to pool their knowledge at the UK-Netherlands Security Dialogue. The group consisted of policy-makers, operators and representatives from business and industry and knowledge institutions. The Security Dialogue was an initiative of The Hague Security Delta, the British Embassy and the Hague city council, and focused on the preparation and roll-out of security for the 2012 London Olympics. Chris Allison of the Metropolitan Police, who was National Security Coordinator for the 2012 Summer Olympics and Paralympics, told the conference: “One thing was certain: whatever happened, the biggest show on earth *had to go on ...*”

Rob de Wijk, Director of The Hague Security Delta, the growing network of businesses, government bodies and research institutes active in the security sector, opened the proceedings by re-emphasising the sector’s importance: “HSD is committed to innovative security solutions and economic development in a region which is home to a multiplicity of institutions working in the sphere of peace and security. Over 200 international security organisations are clustered throughout the region; they in turn are linked to approximately 300 security-related companies. The sector generates up to 10,000 jobs, making it one of the biggest such clusters in the world.” Mr De Wijk then stressed the need for cooperation. “With a turnover of 1.5 billion euros, around 70% of which is generated by exports, the security sector is vital to the Dutch economy. However, we want to further strengthen our international cooperation and learn from the experiences gained in other countries.” The structural cooperation between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which was announced by Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte and British deputy prime minister Nick Clegg, ties in perfectly with this aim. “Now is the time to share knowledge and learn from each other so that we can do business based on practical expertise,” said Mr De Wijk. “A structural security dialogue is therefore vital.” With a series of crucial events planned for the Netherlands in the near future, such as the annual King’s Day celebrations, the 2014 hockey world championships and the Nuclear Security Summit in the same year, it is far from being a needless luxury.

Preventive measures

Chris Allison took up his post four-and-a-half years prior to the London Olympics. “Most of the team members remained in place throughout the entire period. Thanks to the use of protocols, clear responsibilities and testing, we always knew precisely who was responsible for what. That was one of the main factors that prevented major incidents from occurring.” He referred to the London Olympics as the ‘greatest show on earth’, and explained that the event had in fact begun much earlier than the Games themselves, with the Olympic torch relay round the British Isles. The whole operation lasted a total of 121 days. The police started with a series of preventive measures, for example by approaching potential agitators.



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“We made it clear to them that while they had a democratic right to protest, they were not entitled to rob an athlete or other runner of their moment of glory by impeding the progress of the torch. We left them in no doubt that we would do everything to stop that from happening.” Allison brought in a hierarchical gold-silver-bronze command structure, and his team even advised on the construction of the Olympic stadium and sports facilities. “We were lucky in that the Olympic Park was built from the ground up. We could therefore specify that the stadium should not be built too close to apartment blocks so that we weren’t forced to position police snipers on nearby roofs.” A total of 14,500 officers were on duty throughout the Games. “We gave them a clear mind-set. The message was that this was primarily a sporting event with a security tag, not the other way round. They kept to that mind-set superbly.”

Taken offline

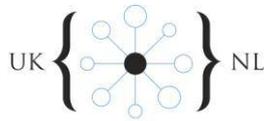
Another of Allison’s slogans was ‘prepare for the worst.’ “We worked to the second highest threat level. That may seem a bit extreme, but I assure you it wasn’t. It’s much easier to take your state of readiness down a notch or two during the event than to suddenly have to escalate capacity very quickly. That’s asking for trouble.” He also advised his Dutch counterparts not to make any innovations in the months leading up to a major event. “We built on what we knew best, on our existing equipment and infrastructure. You can’t phase in a completely new system six months ahead, as there’s a much greater risk it won’t be up to the job than the existing systems with which you’re already familiar. So any innovations in security will generally only be made once a significant event is over. Only then will you have the time for fine-tuning.” Allison’s team considered all the possible security issues that might arise. “Twelve of these potential incidents did occur, including an attempt to disrupt our energy supply via the internet just before the opening ceremony. We responded by simply taking the supply offline. In the event, no incidents took place that we hadn’t already anticipated and trained for. Fortunately.”

Biggest impact

The UK authorities prepared for incidents as wide-ranging as terrorist attacks, criminal activities (such as ticket fraud) and public demonstrations. Allison was allocated a budget of 600 million pounds to maintain a high level of security. He spent it on minimising those risks that could have had the biggest impact. “We looked very pragmatically at the risks we’d identified, considered how likely they were to occur and what their potential impact might be. We asked ourselves if we could mitigate them using our existing infrastructure or whether we needed to make additional investments.” Communication with the countries taking part, and with the general public about the risks *they* could help to minimise, was also key, according to Allison. So was exhaustive testing and training. “There’s an inclination to cut back on the endless rehearsals, but I compare it to dancing. If you want to get it absolutely right on the dance floor, you naturally want to know who you’ll be dancing with, and how. You’re not going to wait until the last minute to find out.”

Reputation on the line

Mr Allison’s talk was followed by numerous breakout sessions, some of which explored the points he had made in more detail. Cor Kostense, global security officer at Heineken,



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discussed the security measures that had been taken at the Holland Heineken House during the London Olympics. “We worked closely with the UK authorities. *Enjoy responsibly* is our company slogan. Given our reputation, we couldn’t risk any incidents occurring.” For the first time ever, the Holland Heineken House therefore introduced a ticketing system based on a predicted number of visitors. Another session dealt with cyber intelligence, monitoring and the impact of social media. “It would be downright irresponsible not to analyse the likely impact of this in advance,” was how one of the delegates summarised it. She argued that the key issue was how to link a social media strategy with actions on the ground. Ida Haisma, Director of Innovation Safety and Security Research, came up with some innovative security strategies and maintained that the civil defence infrastructure could learn a lot from the military. Cristijn Sarvaas, Director of the virtual training agency VSTEP, illustrated a series of 3D-simulation models which security personnel could use to simulate real life situations. “This is known as serious gaming, and it’s a cheaper and more efficient alternative to practical exercises,” he explained. The meeting ended with a summing up by Rob de Wijk, who concluded that the Security Dialogue should be continued. “It’s been a useful and fruitful exchange.” Mr De Wijk then drew attention to a number of innovation centres for security and civil protection which were being established under the auspices of The Hague Security Delta. “Like us, knowledge-sharing is their motto. And like us, they are fully committed to innovative security solutions.”

Embedding security

The approach taken by the authorities in London yielded many lessons and methodologies for those planning major events involving high security risks. Andrew Amery, Head of Security Coordination, and Stephen Thomas, Head of Olympic Planning, British Transport Police, discussed the planning and roll-out of the security approach to the London Olympics. Their method was based on an integrated strategy in which security was embedded in the overall event planning rather than being placed alongside or over it. The two men explained that it was important when staging major events to keep on planning, testing and exercising throughout the entire process, at all levels of security. Amery: “It was crucial for our security teams to train continuously to maintain our preparedness and flexibility and to learn to communicate effectively with the various stakeholders and the public.”

Nuclear Security Summit

Some 50 or more heads of government and representatives of international organisations are expected to attend the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague next year. With this on the horizon, Aart Jan Smits, Chairman of the HTSM Security Roadmap team, stressed the importance of a positive dialogue between public and private stakeholders in relation to operational capacity and the need for security services. “During the forthcoming period, the HSD cluster will be actively offering the Dutch authorities its knowledge and experience in the interests of this global conference,” he said.