



(U) The London Bombings -- an Insider's View

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*(U) London, 7 July 2005, morning rush hour
Three near-simultaneous suicide attacks using devices in rucksacks on underground lines near Edgware Road, Aldgate and Russell Square, followed by a similar suicide attack on a bus in Tavistock Place.*

(U//FOUO) Everyone is familiar with the facts, but what was it like to be in London that day? For most of us in the Special U.S. Liaison Office London (SUSLOL), it will be a day, much like 11 September 2001, that will be permanently ingrained in our memories. Immediately after news of the attacks spread, you could see the panic in the eyes of many Londoners, including some at the embassy, who unlike most NSA'ers, have never lived through such an event.

(U//FOUO) The NAVEUR building closed, security around the embassy was tightened, and the embassy convened its first Emergency Action Committee meeting. By early evening, when we tried to find something to bring back to the embassy for dinner, the streets were eerily quiet, and even the local McDonalds and other fast food restaurants were closed. As we left for the night, London seemed to be more like a ghost town than the cosmopolitan, bustling city we all know so well.

(S) For me personally, as the newly assigned SUSLOL Chief of Operations, it was a baptism by fire. I remember experiencing near sensory overload - the horrific scenes of destruction on TV; the incessant sounds of police and first responder vehicle sirens everywhere in the city; and the constant ringing of the telephones. SUSLOL officers quickly met with other IC members at the embassy to get the latest information from British Security and police authorities. Through close cooperation and collaboration with SUSLOL representatives in Cheltenham, we were able to act as a conduit for sharing timely lead and situation awareness information between NSA and GCHQ and rest of the British Government.

(S//SI) To support the British investigations into the bombings, GCHQ quickly developed a 3-tiered strategy:

- Operations (Strongly connected to, and directly supporting, other security and police services);
- Target Discovery (Loosely connected to and supporting other security services) and
- Blue Skies work (Innovative development of techniques, tools that support the first two efforts and/or give greater insight into terrorist operations).

Because of our close partnership with GCHQ, NSA was able to quickly provide support to all aspects of GCHQ's strategy by rapidly investigating leads, developing network ties, and exchanging analysis with GCHQ counterparts. NSA has also provided deep support through technical advice on target discovery techniques and by accelerating UK access to key SIGINT development tools.

(S//SI) It has been a month since the last attempted suicide attacks and the London bombings are no longer newspaper headlines. The police and security forces have arrested several suspects, including all five individuals connected to the failed 21 July bombings. As the investigatory phase of these incidents comes to a close, NSA has begun to look at the longer-term target discovery aspects by working with GCHQ to try to answer the broader questions regarding potential links with other extremist networks, international ties, facilitation methods, and modus operandi factors. However, 7 July 2005 will be a day I will always remember.



(U//FOUO) U.S. Embassy London -- home of SUSLOL

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