

Dissecting the unexpected

Three months after Norwegian Anders Brevik killed eight people after detonating a car bomb in central Oslo and shooting dead 69 others on the nearby Island of Utøya, Norwegian Police Service Superintendent Tom Luka made his way to Sydney to talk about lessons learned from the incident.



The Australian Bomb Data Centre's (ABDC) 20th Annual Conference last November provided Superintendent Luka with his first international audience to highlight the shortcomings stemming from the 'lone wolf' terrorist incident.

The timing of events in Norway meant that the technical and tactical details of the attack were fresh and ready for discussion. And that has been the essential element of the symposium over its two decade history: discuss information on major bombing incidents and ensure that the findings are quickly disseminated to the law enforcement community.

Headed by ABDC Director Phil Winter, the conference is widely

regarded as one of the most comprehensive and forward-looking bomb discussion forums on the international stage, bringing together Australian and international law enforcement, and the defence, security and intelligence communities.

"We are seeing this conference become a key regional and domestic networking opportunity for various stakeholders looking into how we prevent and understand the nature of bombing incidents – whether they be bomb technicians or policy makers," Mr Winter said.

From 2 to 4 November, attendees from 16 countries including Brunei, Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway,



01: Forensic examination of the Brevik crime scenes in Oslo and Utøya was carried out by personnel recruited from almost every police district in Norway. **02:** Australian Bomb Data Centre Director Phil Winter and Australian Ambassador for Counter Terrorism Bill Patterson presented Pakistani conference delegates with a bomb incident deployment kit at the conference.

Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States gathered to share knowledge and experiences of the counter terrorism environment.

A major focus for the ABDC is to provide relevant and up-to-date explosive technical intelligence, and through the conference, create a forum for the exchange of this information. The contributions from state and territory police provide an Australian perspective to the program, with the international community also sharing their experiences on the unlawful use of explosives.

Three key conference themes were centred around Australian policies and responses to terrorism and the explosives threat, the international explosives environment and opportunities for improving responses to improvised explosive device (IED) situations.

In addition to the Oslo presentation, delegates were also briefed on emergent terrorist threat groups in Somalia and Yemen, and the use of IEDs by Canadian outlaw motorcycle gangs.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police discussed terrorism in Pakistan, the history of suicide attacks and the technical specifications of the types of IEDs used in such attacks. A number of Australian Defence Force speakers also discussed IED threats in Afghanistan.



Delegates also had the opportunity to meet and share information with colleagues across a range of police, military, intelligence, scientific and associated government agencies.

Speaking to a closed group of more than 250 experts, Superintendent Luka detailed the technical and chemical component of the explosives that Anders Brevik packed inside a delivery van in Oslo, and the forensic investigations and data gathered during a bomb reconstruction exercise. The rented farm where Brevik constructed the explosive devices was also presented in detail.

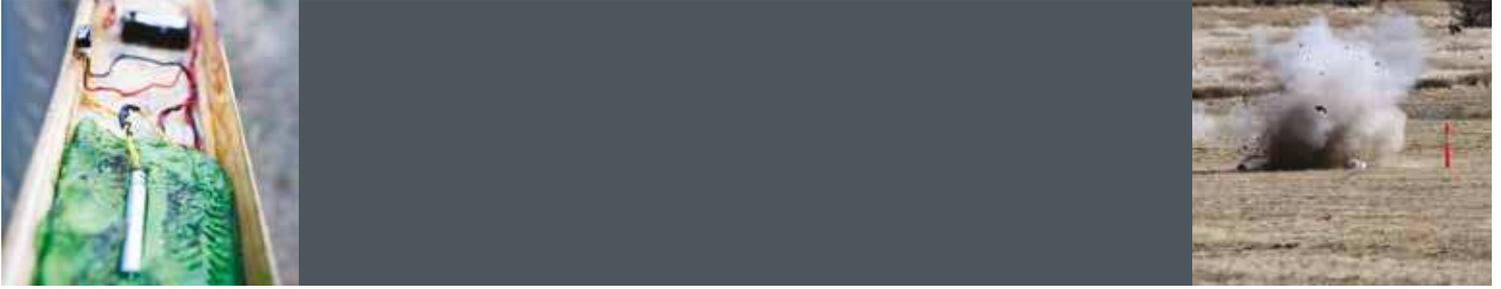
Superintendent Luka discussed the ongoing issues arising from

the incident, including the state of readiness of the Norwegian police for similar incidents, how to improve information flow between bomb data centre partners, regulating bomb components, and promoting the need for information sharing at top management levels.

"It must be said that the case is very special and far from anything that anyone in the Norwegian police ever expected," Superintendent Luka said.

"The attacks presented a big challenge for the Norwegian police

03: As part of an ongoing commitment to research and education, the Australian Bomb Data Centre conducts regular 'Power of Explosives' demonstrations in Canberra.



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– professionally because of our lack of experience with attacks of this magnitude, but also in the matter of resources and our state of readiness.

“The threat level in Norway has always been assessed as low, and our bomb incidents have until now been linked to gang wars and a few cases related to left and right wing extremism.”

The fact that the perpetrator turned out to be a home-grown terrorist from one of the wealthy parts of Oslo was another disturbing fact confronting Norwegian police since the events of July 22.

Through other keynote speakers, delegates gained significant insight into the February 2010 Enfield Bombing in South Australia, in which two people were killed. The South Australia Police Forensic Response Section detailed, among other facts, the components of the unique explosive device used in the incident. The crime was believed to be related to an ongoing rivalry between two criminal gangs and involved a pipe bomb enhanced with shrapnel.

In a similar vein, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Bomb Data Centre representative Jean Yves Vermette spoke of Canadian outlaw motorcycle gangs and their use of IEDs in recent decades, allowing the audience to draw useful comparisons between Canadian and Australian similarities in their use by criminal elements.

Also presenting was AFP National Team Leader, Bomb Appraisal Operations, Brett Sampson, who spoke on the AFP capability for its ‘first response’ role at Australia’s major airports and designated critical infrastructure. He outlined the history of the BAO program and the future direction and intent to combine and consolidate the AFP’s tactical teams into one new ‘Specialist Response Group’.

Strong attendance by the United States included delegates from the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the United States Army, Department of Homeland Security and the Institute of Forensics. Presentations covered a wide array of topics, including the IED threat in the Asia Pacific region and the forensic flow of evidence including levels of exploitation and intelligence sharing.

The conference also included trade displays involving 15 industry-related companies, which allowed delegates to extend their experience of the technical program into the practical arena

of operational and bomb response technologies associated with dealing with terrorist events.

Overwhelming positive feedback from conference delegates highlighted the importance of the event and its invaluable networking opportunities for domestic and international organisations operating in this global environment.

With planning for the 2012 event already underway, Mr Winter said that this year’s conference had ticked a number of important boxes for the AFP.

“We were very impressed to have received such high quality presentations – whether it be the update from the Norwegian Police on the recent Oslo incident, or the equally impressive presentation from the South Australian Police on the use of IEDs by outlaw motorcycle gangs,” he said.

For the 2012 conference – scheduled for 5 to 7 December in Sydney – he is already seeking new material and presentations from state and territory jurisdictions, and more input from the scientific and academic community to highlight the importance of research into IED developments and response measures.