



A BAPCO record?

The South West BAPCO Conference held at Police Training Centre in Hamble was very much a “back to basics” affair with talks focusing on large issues and major concerns of the BAPCO organisation. One talk even prompted 25 minutes of debate – a possible BAPCO record.

Deputy Chief Constable Ian Readhead: What is BAPCO?

The incumbent president elect of BAPCO, Deputy Chief Constable Ian Readhead, explained the history and necessity of the BAPCO organisation. He opened by telling a story about when he explained, in court, what the police force was like when he joined in the 70s. This was a time before radios and taped interviews and when an officer had to receive beat information by being at a telephone box at a certain time on his shift to receive information from his station chief. The judge stopped him and said, “you are describing something like Life On Mars. No-one in this court can imagine a police officer now doing this.” Ian told this story to emphasis how much policing has changed, especially with regards technology.

Ian explained that his force, Hampshire, has over six terabytes of data on storage – three times more than the largest library in the world, the Library of Congress in Washington. This rise in data over the last few years has made the role of BAPCO even more important in bringing together the users of this technology and the companies that provide it. The rising need for cross-bearer terminals is something that BAPCO will play a leading role in, as it brings together expertise from leading technology companies and decisions makers in the public service who can outline what they need from such devices. Ian added that BAPCO is an organisation run by people alongside their main job and this underlines the dedications, commitment and importance of the organisation.

Dominic Robertson, Airwave: Now and in the future

Dominic Robertson explained some of Airwave’s background and the possibilities for the future. Starting with some statistics Dominic outlined that Airwave has 230,000 users, 300 customer organisations and 3,500 base stations as well as a resilient architecture to cover any

potential problems. The Airwave network is now in place across the entirety of UK emergency services and can help officers carry out PNC checks in seven seconds as well as providing guaranteed communications at periods of high traffic. Both planned and unplanned events, such as the G8 Summit in Scotland, or the London 7/7 attacks have shown Airwave can cope with high demands placed on its service and it is a definite benefit to the emergency services.

The future for Airwave, Dominic explained, is to work on incorporating the transmission of data alongside voice, as mobile data terminals become standard pieces of kit. The interoperability of Airwave means that increasing the data capacity of the network would be of great benefit to emergency organisations. Furthermore, he highlighted the recent announcement of an Acceleration Package from the NPIA to help forces increase their take-up of devices that work on the Airwave network. With the Airwave contract worth £3.1bn and scheduled to end in 2015 it is important that it is extended as far as possible.

The question and answer session at the end of Dominic’s talk turned into a long debate that covered several interesting topics.

The first topic was how the Airwave contract is reviewed. Nick Deyes from the NPIA (who manage this contract), explained that the contract had a “value for money” test built in so that it’s cost could be challenged and either decreased or extra technology could be added on for lower costs. Ian Readhead added that while Airwave had helped improve communications for police officers there were still a high number of devices not being used.

From here the debate moved on to the dangers of relying on technology too much and that the idea of “keep it simple” needed to be remembered to ensure technology didn’t lead purely because it was there. However, as others commented, among them Ian Readhead, many officers now come to see one of the requirements of being a police officer was to have access to top of the range technology



Exhibitors at the event were:

Advalus, Cyfas Systems, Innogistic, HTK, Voice Recorders, SunGard Public Sector, Arqiva, APD Communications.

Dominic Robertson, who has been with Airwave for two years, said the future of Airwave was to work on incorporating data transmission alongside voice.

to help them do their jobs better. It was then suggested by another delegate that potential future recruits may well base their decision to apply to the police on what technology they would have access to.

This led onto an interesting debate about the pros and cons of giving officers unlimited access to the Internet at work: while social networking site Facebook is useful for vetting people on the internet the trouble is officers have had to be disciplined after using the site to "show-off" about their jobs, when they should be on patrol.

This debate about officers misusing technology also touched on the fact many were still using their radios for "meaningless chatter" and that this was taking up unnecessary space on the Airwave network. The highly engaging debate carried on well into the time allotted for Peter Prater's talk but, as Chair for the day, he said it was better to let the assembled members debate. He even thought the 25 minutes or so of discussion could be "a BAPCO record". It was certainly an interesting part of the day that underlined the importance of the regional meeting – as Ian Readhead had said in his earlier talk.

Phil Pimlott, South Central Ambulance, Divisional Director of Hampshire NHS Trust: Past, present, future

After lunch it was the turn of the Ambulance Service to explain about their role and how they are moving forward. The resizing of Ambulance Trusts has seen it decrease from 37 services to 11, and this has help improve the efficiency within the system. Phil explained that where as before there were 49 different types of ambulance in operation there is now a far more standardised system to ensure vehicles can be sent across forces without the need to retrain drivers and paramedics in their use.

Furthermore the ambulance services' call handling processes have undergone a redevelopment within the implementation of "Call Connect". This system is designed to give all call centres a level playing field with regards the managing of call and response times. Eight minutes is the allowed average time to respond to a "Class A" call (ie life threatening), so it is important performances are measured from the same time, and Call Connect ensures this.

Phil then explained about Drive Zone Data. This is a system that ensures an ambulance is always within six minutes of a location in its patrol zone. This data is mapped by GPS and can helped alert a driver if they move to far. Additionally Phil added that around 60 per cent of cases that are taken to A+E don't require hospital treatment but that when an ambulance turns up they expect to be taken. To counter this many forces deploy Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs), which are modified estate cars, that can not only attend an event faster than an ambulance but help relieve the burden on hospitals by being able to deal with a problem at the scene.

Phil said the next stage in the development of the call handling process was to improve the transmission of data from the call centre to the drivers in the ambulances. Currently it can sometimes take up to four minutes for data to be sent through to paramedics and this can sometimes be too slow. Ideally technology will be adapted to allow data to be sent instantaneously. Currently there are four trusts using TETRA and it is hoped the rest will be online by



December 2009. Lastly by increasing the data capability in ambulances paramedics would be able to work on their training portfolios while sitting in the ambulance waiting for a call, by being able to access email and online forms.

Steve Kemsley, Olympic Security Directorate: The challenges ahead

The final talk of the day was a fascinating look at the planning that is currently taking place for the management of security at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Steve Kemsley spoke about the multi-agency Olympic Security Directorate's role to provide a safe and secure games but without influencing the look and feel of the event. The Directorate has been set up to bring together experience and expertise from partners in the emergency services, Government departments and other police forces. The sheer size of the games underlines the task facing them: over nine million tickets are expected to be sold.

Steve added areas that become training homes to certain teams, such as the Israelis, would need to ensure they have the necessary security to deal with it. Their respective Local Authorities will need to ensure coordination with their local police, prior to guaranteeing any safety requirements. Not only this but with Notting Hill Carnival, the Queens diamond jubilee celebrations, the start of the Premiership football season, and Wimbledon, it will be a very busy time for police and emergency services to secure the summer of 2012. Despite this it must be "business as usual" and day-to-day policing must remain at the same levels.

The IT management of the games runs on a strict basis, imposed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which means that after 2009 there is an "IT lockdown" on Games-specific IT, and no new systems can be implemented for the running of the games. This is done to ensure new systems that are not fully tested do not fail at a critical time. This means that despite the games being four years away, there is actually only around a year to ensure all systems are implemented and assigned for the management of the in-venue security of the games.

Steve underlined though that despite the huge pressure and work that was to be done the Olympics is an event owned by the IOC and it is the job of the Olympic Security Directorate to ensure that while the event is safe and secure, their presence doesn't affect its look and feel.