Policing the Coronation

Published on 4 May 2023

Spotlight on our Police National Search Centre (PNSC) and preparation for major events

News   1 min read

Our Police National Search Centre (PNSC) is a world leader in counter terrorism search, missing person search and crime search.

Based at our Ryton site, it was set up after the Brighton bomb attack at the Conservative party conference in 1984 and has delivered specialist licensed search training since 1985.

Video Transcript

Tremendous responsibility devolves upon Scotland Yard in marshalling the enormous crowds for the coronation. In this connection, we have interviewed Sir Philip Game in conference with his chief executives. 'It's no good I'm sure asking people to read long, detailed instructions, which we can hardly understand ourselves.'

So I'm Chris Cole. I'm part of the training team at the Police National Search Centre. Within the UK and worldwide, we are seen as the best in the world at counter terrorism search, missing persons search, crime search. And we are a world-recognised leader in that. Looking at the plans now, there are some fantastic plans, but a lot of the searching was done some considerable time before the actual event.

Today, any event like this, the searching is done a little bit more in advance, but certainly a lot of it is done on the actual day of the event or in the evening before.

'What we want, I'm sure, is a map in colours showing all the arrangements, with as few written instructions as possible, and we must issue it free and as widely as we can.'

Some of the terminology that is used in the plans and stuff. The fact that each police officer was issued two-and-a-half pints for breakfast and just the sheer detail on there, considering it was 1937. The Police National Search Centre came about after the Brighton bomb in 1984 and the attack on

the Conservative Party conference and is an amalgamation or a collaboration between the original RUC – the military and the police – where we all work in collaboration and partnership to deliver specialist search training.

We are certainly the unseen, certainly in regards to major events like this. We do a lot of the searching prior to the event and rolling up to the event. But we're not only doing these kinds of searches, but crime scene searches, missing people search. But yeah, we are the unseen and often the unknown. During the event, you'll see lots of police officers lining the streets and stuff, but all our work by that time has been completed and signed off as safe and secure for the event to carry on.

It's a lifetime experience that a lot of police officers will only ever do once. Some will be very lucky to do those kind of events twice or more. But the amount of events that we do provide search activity on is fantastic. You will get to places that you would never dream of getting as a police officer, let alone a civilian.

And, you know, the events that have taken place over the last year, from the Queen's funeral to the Coronation to the Commonwealth Games, the Olympic Games a few years ago, they've all had some kind of major search element. We've got Eurovision coming up as well in Merseyside this year and other big, major events.

The preparation to search and secure state ceremonies and major events such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games begins well in advance. It continues, often unseen, up to and during the event itself. The visible police presence managing the crowds at the Coronation is the final piece of an even bigger picture.

Plans in our National Police Library archive show how much times have changed. Each officer is no longer issued with two and a half pints for breakfast as they were for King George VI's Coronation in 1937. However, the feeling of being part of history remains.

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Chris Cole, College of Policing PNSC Trainer

Tags

Counter terrorism   Operational policing   Missing persons