Case Study: Central Casualty Bureau (CCB)

The Central Casualty Bureau is a multi force operations room that is mobilised to deal with major disasters in the UK and overseas. They collate information from a variety of sources and despatch teams of investigators where necessary. They are made up of Call Handlers, Investigators, Family Liaison Officers, Victim Identification Teams and Foreign and Commonwealth office staff.

The Challenge:

I was asked to look at the Casualty Bureau and specifically the Disaster Victim Identification Teams (DVI) to see if I could assist in any way. I arranged to meet with two of the team leaders and I went through the fact finding mission with them to understand the nature of their work and the processes they use to achieve the mission. Having spent time with them it became clear that they had no technologies that facilitate the work they do and relied on locally procured equipment to carry out their roles effectively whilst overseas. I scheduled a meeting with the CCB managers, the DVI team leaders and the Business Change manager from the C3i. I put together a presentation that ran the scenario of a plane crash in a remote region of Australia and the processes our teams would follow if they were despatched. I then introduced them to the concept of a 'Go Bag' and showed them my own one. This is a rucksack (goes in the overhead bin on an aircraft) that contains the following: a powerful laptop, a scanner, a portable rechargeable printer, a digital camera (capable of video), a web-cam and headset, spare printer cartridges, assorted network and telephone adapters, power adapters and my GSM / GPRS data enabled mobile. I told them there was everything in the bag, which was small and light, to set up a mobile office.

The Solution:

- Following the meeting three Go Bags were procured and set up, each of which had bespoke user guides as well as help numbers and supplies inventory.
- I also deployed a central server at the CCB HQ in Hendon with Modems and Broadband connectivity.

Proof of Concept:

I was asked to give an end-to-end proof of concept demonstration, and as luck would have it there was a disaster contingency exercise scheduled to happen at London City Airport. We made our way to the airport to find a multi-agency scenario taking place, the simulation involved a hard aircraft landing with multiple casualties. We were immediately taken airside and witnessed the fire brigade putting out a burning fuselage, whilst the ambulance and police were setting up a triage centre. I took photographs and wrote a quick report then uploaded this to the CCB managers. We followed a group of casualties from the airport to Newham General Hospital where I collected sample data, again transmitting these via my mobile data connection direct to Hendon.
During the debrief the DVI teams and Managers thanked me for providing them with the complete solution they were looking for, the Go Bags went above and beyond their expectations.

Further requirements and Deployments:

The three bags are kept in a permanent state of readiness by the CCB managers. I was asked to assemble a further two bags that went to Athens prior to the Olympic Games, these were delivered on time and successfully deployed for the duration of the event.

That December the bags were tested to the limit, when the Tsunami struck Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia. The teams were deployed successfully and the bags performed their duty enabling them to have a forward command office, however there was a problem with communications and the data was passed back to the UK via the local embassies (this was due to local government restrictions). I received an email from one of the team managers thanking me for providing them with a solution to their problem. The last piece of the puzzle was to reduce their paper work, this was not in my remit as we didn't have the budget. Interpol provide an electronic version of the forms they complete while deployed at major disasters, this has subsequently been purchased and deployed on a corporate platform. The Go Bags were last deployed during the London Bombings of 7/7 and were augmented by the use of the corporate mobile solutions. This is a solution that I am proud to have been involved in. The equipment, documentation and maintenance of which is now part of the Central Communications Command OCU as delivered by C3i.