

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION REPORT ON THE EVENTS OF 22 JULY 2011

A terrorist attack hit Norway on Friday 22 July 2011, killing 77 persons, and injuring many others. Government headquarters and other important institutions were struck. The police and many collaborating parties put in tremendous efforts to neutralise the threat, save lives, contain damage, help evacuees and their family/friends, and to ensure that information reached the general public.

According to police guidelines, management of all major incidents needs to be evaluated, and considerable time and effort has been devoted to evaluation of the police response to the events of 22 July. The Central Evaluation Commission has received local evaluation reports from police entities subordinate to the National Police Directorate, from the Directorate itself and from some of the police's collaborating parties. The police response has been evaluated according to selected criteria.

Effective emergency management is contingent on teamwork, and on unambiguous distribution of roles among the various top echelons within each field of responsibility. The Commission has concentrated on the duties of the police.

In evaluations the emphasis is on learning. The Commission has therefore sought to highlight aspects that leave room for improvement as well as aspects that functioned well and should be retained. It has concentrated on lessons to be learnt by the Police Service at a national level, and assumes that local issues will be looked into at the local level. This summary does not contain a full list of lessons to be learnt, which are accounted for in chapters 4–9 of the report. The Commission is aware of the fact that the police have already taken measures, or are in the process of doing so, within various areas.

Notification by red alert

If an emergency is to be dealt with effectively, the police need an effective alert system. The Commission finds that the red alert system failed on 22 July 2011. The police's current alert system is not user friendly; nor is it effective, efficient or robust. The Commission holds that the system needs to be reviewed and improved.

Situation reporting

Situation reports are delivered in order to provide recipients with prompt, important and to-the-point information, either before an incident or in the form of continuous updates during an incident. Reporting is required between each level of the national emergency preparedness

apparatus and also between the various departments. This, we know from experience, is very demanding, and so it was on 22 July.

The Commission finds that Part I of the Police Emergency Preparedness System (PEPS) provides adequate guidelines for situation reporting. However, the evaluation has also revealed variations as to whether or not guidelines have been incorporated into local plans (PEPS III). What also varies is whether courses or exercises have been held, and whether measures have been taken, to improve situation reporting skills.

The Commission holds that the situation reporting template was used, by and large, although the quality of the contents was uneven. On the whole, and contrary to the intentions expressed in the plans, situation reports were not fully exploited as summaries for the incident management (IM) staff. The use of liaisons to complement situation reports was considered useful.

The Commission recommends that the police take steps to improve situation reporting skills. Such steps should in particular focus on: verifying information; making sure the information is relevant for the superior level; highlighting information that is fresh since the previous situation report.

Organisation, direction and coordination

During the past decade, our society has become increasingly preoccupied with civil protection and vulnerability. Many police districts, specialist police agencies, and the National Police Directorate, have found that the general public's expectations exceed, by far, what is actually within the police's capacity. PEPS I and PEPS II provide a satisfactory shared framework for police response. The Commission has found that many districts had not updated their local emergency preparedness plans (PEPS III).

The Commission finds that the National Police Directorate, when exercising its powers of direction by the so-called directive dialogue with the heads of the various police entities, needs to clarify with its dialogue partners what police emergency preparedness will involve, and the scale of it. Compliance with the resulting expectations should ideally be reflected in performance indicators for reporting and control.

Faced with an emergency of the magnitude we saw on 22 July, a small police district's capacity to carry out its duties effectively will differ widely from that of a large district. None of the involved districts were staffed to handle this kind of emergency without considerable reinforcement.

The police were faced with a number of dilemmas, which they had to resolve while they were under a great strain in an urgent situation about which they often lacked adequate information.

The Commission sees a need to consider introducing requirements as to minimum police staffing and skills.

The Commission has noted that the police themselves report that they tend to be too restrictive about fully mobilising in critical situations. The Commission believes that district-to-district support should be developed further. Police districts need to know what kind of help they may expect during an emergency.

The need for a general alert system to mobilise personnel across police districts during a major incident or emergency, needs to be assessed. Such a system must also keep track of received and provided resources. When a district receives support from other districts, it has no ICT system to keep track of staff and skills.

The police did not have the capacity to answer all incoming calls on the emergency line (112). This caused frustration and anguish among many people.

Internal police communication also ran up against a capacity problem. As a result, officers found there were message queues on the communications system. Neighbouring districts employ different communications systems (the modern emergency communications system versus the old analogue communications system). The consequences of this were felt. The Commission emphasises the need to take this lesson into account in the implementation of the new nation-wide emergency communications system.

The Commission finds that several IT and communications systems should be thoroughly revamped so as to be able to support effective emergency management.

On the whole, the police were rapidly able to call in incident management (IM) staffs in mid-holiday. However, many of those appointed to serve on an IM staff had not been designated or trained for IM staff work in advance. The result of inadequate logging was that we have insufficient documentation about assessments and decisions that were made. Several police districts have reported a lack of experience in using the Police Operational System (PO). The Commission recommends that the police provide more training, coursing, and exercising in IM staff work, and that police plans provide for continuous availability of personnel for IM staffs. District-to-district support should also be considered to reinforce staff functions.

The liaison arrangement was effective to the extent it was used and the Commission recommends that it be retained and developed further.

The Commission finds that the Police Operational System is unsatisfactory as a police command, control and information system.

Good teamwork between the police and other emergency services is decisive during an emergency of the magnitude seen on 22 July. NGOs and volunteers provided valuable assistance. The National Police Directorate coordinated a number of meetings between the affected police districts, the Armed Forces, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Directorate for Health and Social Services. The police sent a number of requests for support to the Armed Forces. However, the Armed Forces had no standby resources to support the police during an emergency.

The Commission finds that the police officers engaged in the operation on Utøya had a clear understanding of the seriousness of the situation and planned for immediate intervention. In the opinion of the Commission, they made sound tactical assessments based on the information available to them in real-time and took into account the critical time factor. The overloading of the boat was regrettable and contributed to the delay in the crossing to Utøya.

For the police, not being able to get a clear picture of the complex situation, dealing with technological flaws and inadequate communications systems, being faced with contradictory information, continuously changing circumstances and problems causing delays – all this represented a daunting challenge.

The Commission finds that the police carried out their duties as promptly as possible under the circumstances. Their actions in the line of duty were in accordance with procedures for immediate intervention, with police obligations to provide assistance, and with the guidelines for the situation "shooting in progress".

Management of evacuees and family/friends

The Commission has interviewed a number of persons picked at random from among evacuees and family/friends. Their contribution has been important for the evaluation.

Management of evacuees and family/friends is important during an emergency. Meeting their needs presented a considerable challenge during and after the events of 22 July. Several police districts have since reported that they lacked proper plans with regard to the handling of evacuees and family/friends. Nor had they designated in advance any coordinators or contacts for next-of-kin. However, family/friends have spoken well of the support they were given by the police locally.

Centres for evacuees and family/friends were rapidly set up, though there were several weak spots with regard to organisation, staffing, skills, information and police command.

Many evacuees and family/friends were unable to reach the police through the national family hotline number, or if they did get through, received very little or no information. It was not clear who was responsible for coordinating what information could be released to callers. To begin with, there were also technical problems with the line.

The police operated with various family hotline numbers, something that caused confusion.

A number of police districts reported inadequate skills and experience in using the system for keeping track of evacuees and family/friends. Cooperation with the public health service about keeping track of casualties was challenging and caused confusion and frustration among many family members and friends.

Public relations

The National Police Directorate has invested considerable effort in building public relations skills within the Police Service and in boosting the capacity to carry on effective communication in an emergency. There are national plans and guidelines about media management and communication in an emergency. Yet, the extent to which they had been implemented and updated varied a great deal. There are hardly any plans for reinforcing the public relations function during a major incident that draws out in time.

In terms of emergency preparedness, all police districts should have professional public relations officers. Such expertise is also valuable for strategic communication devoted to crime prevention. In all cases, P5 (head of public relations on an incident management staff) must be a qualified professional, and the deputy P5 and other P5 staff officers need to be designated in advance.

Although the explosion occurred on Friday afternoon in the general staff holiday, personnel serving on the D5/P5 function were in place very quickly. In Nordre Buskerud Police District P5 also filled another function. Both police districts, Oslo and Nordre Buskerud, promptly released information to the media. Although the public relations function in Oslo responded to more than 4,000 phone calls from the media in the course of the first five days, their capacity was inadequate.

On Friday evening, Oslo Police District took over co-ordination of the media management aspect of the Utøya operation. However, the two districts did not have a shared understanding of just what this meant. Consequently, there was no management whatsoever of the media in the area of operations at Utøya until Saturday afternoon. The Commission holds that there should have been a greater emphasis on coordination and procedures for information exchange. When an

emergency hits several police districts, the National Police Directorate has to play a greater part in coordination.

Earlier on, the National Police Directorate should have reinforced Nordre Buskerud Police District with additional personnel, not just arranged for support to P5 in Oslo Police District. The police should establish cooperation between P5 functions that may be called on to help one another during major incidents and in crises (district-to-district support).

The software for publishing information on the police website www.politi.no is not very user friendly. New software is urgently needed.

Insufficient attention was devoted to public relations challenges in the restoration-of-normality phase, which seem to have been largely dealt with in an ad hoc manner, rather than on the basis of a long-term strategy.

The police did not mobilise sufficient personnel to deal with the public relations challenges.

Health and Safety

The National Police Directorate has issued national instructions and guidelines for police Health and Safety work, facilitating extensive and systematic work. The Commission has learned that local Health and Safety plans had not all been updated.

The police placed considerable emphasis on attending to the welfare of personnel that had been involved in the execution of operations and the aftermath of 22 July, in accordance with Health and Safety procedures. There was a great need for such attention. Personnel that took part in the response on site in Oslo and on Utøya, were, to a large extent, the focus of attention. Those not on site received less attention.

The Commission recommends that local Health and Safety plans be developed further. Health and Safety procedures should adequately provide for attention to the welfare of all categories of staff that are involved in the management of a major incident or emergency.