A decade ago we composed a tradecraft series which focused on development of the improvised explosive device or IED for short. I learned a great deal from two ‘operatives’ who were adversaries in the so-called Troubles in Northern Ireland. One was engaged in bomb building, the other charged to stop such happenings. What surprised me was the cunning used to construct menacing and destructive objects from ordinary devices. In the 1970s these essentially mechanical bombs were detonated in various ways; from timers using simple items such as candles, to more sophisticated bombs reliant on dissolving acids. And of course, there was the well tried and tested cable wire and push variants. By the early 1980s the bombmakers were adapting new emerging technologies.

Fast forward a decade, the types of IEDs currently being built are reflective of an ever-changing world that is totally reliant on technology and ‘chips’. And they have a ‘trigger’ friend which has replaced the cable and candle - the cell phone. No longer does a bomber need to be present or in the immediate vicinity to detonate a device - they simply require a signal. Little surprise therefore that at the gates of many sensitive areas, security details have the technology at hand to jam cell phone signals.

But what of the here and now and immediate future? One major concern is the increasing use of suicide bombers by terror groups around the world. Combine this with adapted technology and explosives, the security services (in all environments) have a problem.

In this edition of Eye Spy we look at how ISIS/Daesh bombmakers are trying to outflank the intelligence world. There exists around eight hours of disturbing raw film footage which was found on the person of an ISIS terrorist trying to reach Europe. The material was never intended to be uploaded to the Internet for global consumption, but for a selected number of people who could utilise the product. The ISIS hierarchy in the Raqqa factory where the film was shot hoped the bombers would carry out attacks in their own countries.
Amongst the video footage there is sufficient information to suggest the terror group has the means to bring down airliners. Not just by secreting bombs on board via operatives working at an airport food supply company; a customs officials who momentarily chooses to focus elsewhere or a baggage handler who inserts an extra ‘item’ in the luggage. ISIS has managed to customise and alter the internal mechanism of an air-to-air missile which can be fired from the surface (SAM). And after overrunning many of Syria’s airbases in the past three years, the group is hardly short of a missile or two. It was one reason an ISIS cell in the Sinai Desert claimed the terror group had shot down Metrojet 9268 in November 2015. Of course it was a bomb - but the group on the ground did not know this - but they were knowledgeable about the covert SAM work.

Another recent event which occurred in the first week of February is evidence of the IED-technology offensive. Here a passenger was blown out of a Daallo airliner after a device was smuggled on board an Airbus A321 at Mogadishu Airport in Somalia. Investigators are still probing the event, but it seems likely the bomb had been secreted in a laptop computer - or even a wheelchair.

Stopping ISIS/Daesh operatives before they engage in terrorism is now a priority: it is being discussed at every level of government in most advanced nations. Some of the countermeasures already introduced are explored in the edition. However, I fear a number, including the reintroduction of border control checks, may be too late. Undoubtedly hundreds of characters have slipped into Europe (and elsewhere) with genuine refugees who have fled the wars which have engulfed massive regions in Syria and Iraq.

Just as worrying are the growing number of ISIS followers who have never visited the Syrian/Iraq theatre but describe themselves as ‘foot soldiers’. The damage such people can cause was evidenced in the quiet Californian town of San Bernardino in early December - just as our 100th edition went to press. San Bernardino residents Tashfeen Malik and her husband Syed Farook, calmly, and for no apparent reason, despatched 14 people - some colleagues and friends. When this happened ISIS celebrated and called for similar ‘adventures’.

One intelligence element that is increasingly important to the security services in this respect is HUMINT (human intelligence.

Eye Spy 101 sees the start of a two-part tradecraft feature which explores HUMINT uses and its fragilities.

Predicting ‘horizon threats’ are the lifeblood of analysts who work in this specialist field, thus I’m happy to report we have a splendid overview carefully constructed using the thoughts, contacts and data from our Editorial team. Not to be missed!

On a much lighter note, on 8 February NSA Director Admiral Michael Rogers met with his GCHQ counterpart Robert Hannigan at the former home of Britain’s codebreakers - Bletchley Park. Delegates celebrated the 75th anniversary of the UK-USA special relationship which began after the arrival of a handful of US signals specialists in 1941.

Bletchley Park is of course situated in the county of Buckinghamshire, appropriate therefore that Eye Spy 101 carries a fascinating feature on the many interesting spies and intelligence people who have connections to the area.

Enjoy this brief overview and thank you for your continued support in 2016.
It was the most predictable verdict heard in a London court for years - two Russian intelligence officers played a central role in the assassination of former FSB officer and MI6 agent, Lt. Colonel Alexander Litvinenko, 43, in November 2006 and President Putin and his most senior spy chief probably knew it was going to happen.

Eye Spy editorial summarises this lengthy and most disturbing case and reveals the true winner in the assassination of ‘Agent Carter’. Plus a look at how the case is being portrayed in Russia using hitherto little known MI6 case files on the dark arts.
NO MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
Agent-runner and international operations specialist becomes 12th Director of Israel’s spy organisation. A look at a number of fascinating appointments in the intelligence world.

ISIS/DAESH COUNTERMEASURES
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER
A look at a range of new countermeasures being introduced to thwart ISIS terrorists in Europe and beyond.
Eye Spy invited intelligence analysts and researchers from agencies around the world to provide a narrative on those countries and regions which will become the focus of intelligence collection and concern in the coming year.
Two-year bugging operation targeted senior officials in country’s biggest post-1989 political scandal. Eye Spy provides background and implications...
A major two part Tradecraft feature begins on the most important element of Intelligence collection - HUMINT its uses and limits.
2016 is a significant year for it marks the official centenary of the creation of MI5 and MI6 and also sees the 70th anniversary of the founding of GCHQ, which developed from the wartime Government Code and Cipher School (GC&CS), based at Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire...
Evidence links terrorist cell to other known and suspected ISIS followers in UK and Europe - a look at how the 13 November Paris attack investigation is progressing

Eye Spy examines the work of some extraordinary people whose research influenced a number of leading intelligence figures. This in turn led to the introduction of strange, but feasible programmes into various elements of Intelligence collection and use...
A spate of organised, lone wolf and small cell terror attacks around the world in January, suggests 2016 will be a difficult year for those in intelligence charged with countermeasures...
EYES OF OTHERS

Eye Spy looks at the latest batch of NSA-GCHQ files released into the public domain by American intelligence contractor Edward Snowden.
MAJOR OVERVIEW OF THE LATEST BREAKING STORIES

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UNDERCOVER BOOK RELEASES
THE LATEST INTELLIGENCE AND ESPIONAGE BOOKS
The Insider’s Guide to 500 Spy Sites in London provides visitors to the UK’s capital with a unique opportunity to journey to places that are forever embedded in the city’s fantastic spylore. Also included are many forgotten sites where spies from around the world have conducted their own secret war with MI5 and MI6.

Service headquarters, covert hiding places, secret front companies, agent training locations, mail opening centres, underground venues, safe houses, dead letter drop sites and the darker side of this fascinating ‘cloak and dagger’ world are explored, including assassination and murder most strange.

There’s also a splendid candid commentary about the history of Britain’s Secret Service from its inception in 1909 to the present day.

This informative work produced by the editorial team of Eye Spy Intelligence Magazine reveals London’s enduring liaison with the world of espionage. An illuminated history of secret spy games, tradecraft and treachery hosted by one of the greatest cities in the world... indeed, the spy capital of the world!
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