

Case study



Police Service of Northern Ireland BIA Silver Command takes control

When the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) held a major Forward Control Point (FCP), as well as an emergency planning operation at Belfast International Airport (BIA), the exercise highlighted the need for substantial improvements in the Airport command facilities.

"Five hundred people took part in the multi-agency exercise in November 2004 and it was found that a fully equipped Silver Command suite at BIA could be of huge benefit to our emergency planning," explains Inspector Michael Baird. "We visited a number of airports in the UK to see the sort of facilities that were in use elsewhere, including Stansted Airport, where we were also given a presentation on the SMART equipment. We arranged for further presentations to key people within the PSNI, many of whom immediately saw the benefits of SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards."

Following several months of research and planning, the new BIA Command Centre developed in partnership with the Airport at a cost of £400,000, was opened in July 2005, providing an onsite facility for the service to manage any emergency incident with the most advanced technology available. In the event of a large-scale operation the centre will act as the main contact point for all emergency services, linking the fire, ambulance and other agencies with the service and the Airport.

"We've run a number of exercises using all the new technology including the SMART Board interactive whiteboards, and the results have been very impressive," says Inspector Baird. "All the call signs for our units and detailed maps of the area are now entered into the system, so that as an exercise progresses the Silver Commander has an accurate and up-to-date picture of what is going on. We currently have three Sympodiums™ linked to projectors at the Silver Command at BIA, as well as one of the large SMART Board interactive whiteboards at Antrim Station Silver Command. The whiteboards are also being used in the Gold Command suite and in some DCU Silver Suites, and we've tested a satellite link to Belfast City Airport via the SMART Board interactive whiteboard."

Challenge

To manage emergencies more effectively at Belfast International Airport (BIA) through technology and create effective, reliable links between the police force command centres.

SMART solution

The installation of SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards as an integral part of both the emergency planning and operational facilities at the BIA Command Centre.

Result

Very impressive results in training exercises and on the ground activities enabling the force to maintain its reputation as a world leader in public order policing.

Soon after the Command Centre opened it became clear that the new Silver Command suite facilities could also play an important part in policing one of the most difficult operations facing any police organisation in the UK – the Northern Ireland Parades.

While the continuing peace process and greater community involvement have helped to improve the situation in recent years, the tensions between different sections of the community can create a complex and rapidly changing policing environment.

The experience and expertise of the PSNI in handling such events has established the service as a world leader in public order policing, whose advice is sought by other forces and law enforcement agencies in the UK and beyond.

One of the main Parades within the Antrim DCU takes place every year on 12 July and with the new Silver Command suite opened just days before, the event provided a good test of how effective the new facilities would be. Inspector Baird believes the introduction of SMART Board interactive whiteboards into the policing operation for the Parades resulted in some major benefits. "We used the technology in 2005 for the two major Parades in Antrim DCU with fantastic success," says Inspector Baird. "I've been a fan of the SMART Board interactive whiteboards since I first saw them demonstrated, but even I've been surprised at just how much difference they have made to policing the Parades."

The new technology is now an integral part of both the emergency planning and operational facilities at BIA, but Inspector Baird believes there are more benefits to be gained in the future. "I think this is just the tip of the iceberg. Eventually I can see the SMART Board interactive whiteboards being linked to other facilities at BIA such as the Rendezvous Point and the FCP, as well as the Friends and Relatives Reception Centre and the Survivors Reception Centre. This would allow for joint briefings for all the agencies involved in an operation and for the Silver Commander to view up-to-date pen pictures of each location at any point during an incident. That may be a year or so away, but I think the success we are having with the system at the moment means that it's definitely likely to happen."

Inspector Baird is also confident that all officers will be comfortable operating the SMART Board interactive whiteboards: "If you can use a computer, you can use one of the Boards – they are that simple. It's exactly the same approach and if I can get to grips with them then anyone can."

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Inspector Michael Baird, The Police Service of Northern Ireland.

About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is both the industry pioneer and global education market segment leader in easy-to-use interactive whiteboards and other group collaboration tools. The award-winning SMART Board interactive whiteboard is the most widely installed interactive whiteboard in the world.

Many school jurisdictions have standardised on the product, which is used to provide interactive learning opportunities and enhance student achievement in more than 450,000 classrooms spanning every U.S. state, every Canadian province, every Local Authority in the UK and in more than 100 countries worldwide. SMART products also include interactive pen displays, interactive digital signage, wireless slates and software. Using SMART products, groups can access and share the information they need to meet, teach, train and present. SMART's education customers include New York City Board of Education (U.S.), Oxford University (UK), Kobe City Board of Education (Japan), Barrier Public School (Australia), University of Ottawa (Canada), United World College (Singapore), Stephen-Hawking-Schule Neckargemuend (Germany), Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (U.S.) and Harvard University (U.S.).

SMART is a private company founded in 1987. Employing more than 900 people, SMART is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, with assembly facilities in Ottawa, and offices in Bonn, Tokyo, China, New York City and Washington, DC. SMART has been issued and maintains a broad portfolio of patents with numerous U.S., Canadian and other patents pending. In 1992 SMART formed a strategic alliance with Intel® Corporation that resulted in joint product development and marketing efforts, and Intel's equity ownership in the company. SMART products are sold through dealers across North America and distributors worldwide. For more information, visit www.smarttech.com.

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