

By LCpl Weir and LCpl Prossor, 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (EOD&S)

Army Reserve Support to Military Assistance to Civilian Authority (MACA) Taskings

101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (EOD&S) is unique in that it's the only Volunteer Reserve Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Regiment in the British Army. Recently volunteers from the unit have undertaken several live search tasks including the assurance of several high-profile political events including the G7 Summit in St Mawgan, Cornwall, and the Conservative Party's Annual Conference in Liverpool. LCpl Weir and LCpl Prossor of 221 Field Squadron (EOD&S) detail their experiences of these MACA tasks below.

G7 Summit, St Mawgan

One of the largest venue searches undertaken in recent memory, there was a long search window allocated to the event but this still proved to be a challenging task with three large venues to assure as safe and strict deadlines to adhere to before Cornwall hosted the G7 Summit with eyes all around the globe watching.

The G7 Summit itself took place over the weekend of Friday 11 to Sunday 13 June 21 so we deployed down to RAF St Mawgan on Saturday 5 June 21 with a small team in advance to conduct some pre-search activity and seals around the venues. We were based out of RAF St Mawgan for the duration of the task, which was about an hour's drive from St Ives, where the majority of venues were located and half an hour from the Eden Project, another site that VIPs were due to visit over the course of the weekend summit.

The two main venues in St Ives, where the bulk of the G7 delegates were staying and where the Summit events were taking place, were Tregenna Castle and the Carbis Bay Hotel.

The first of these, and our first venue to search, was Tregenna Castle, a Grade II listed building built in the 1700s, that sits on a 72-acre estate with 99 bedrooms and more than 50 self-catering apartments across 14 different "lodges".

This was where President Biden and his team would be staying so a key part of our work at the event was to search all 14 of these lodges and seal them until the American Embassy and Secret Service could take possession of them. This involved an extensive rummage search through homes that had only recently been vacated by the families who normally lived there. The searching seemed endless!



LCpl Prossor (Left) and LCpl Weir (Right) sat on the "main stage" for the G7 Summit where President Biden and Prime Minister Johnson would later sit and discuss international policy.

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But this is where we really started to demonstrate our worth; After we had completed our initial swabbing for Explosive Particle Detection (EPD), we were able to jump in as two extra rummage pairs which really sped up the process, especially when you consider the large number of tasks that needed to be conducted as part of this work, including scanning and sealing fire extinguishers and escorting technicians around site; All very labour-intensive work.

This process was repeated at the second venue, the elaborate and expensive Carbis Bay Hotel down on the beach where the actual G7 summit would take place and the Prime Minister and other protected persons would be staying. The same would be completed at the Eden Project, where an event was to be held with the Queen in attendance and where a similar level of assurance was required.

The overall operation was led by Devon & Cornwall Police, with a lot of pressure on their own manpower and search teams. However, one of the reasons St Ives was chosen was the ease with which it could be shut down to allow for such intensive security operations; It's much harder to close off large sections of major cities, and far more noticeable. In the middle of a pandemic no one really noticed that this small part of St Ives became a fortress except the people of St Ives themselves. The road at each end of the town was manned by vehicle check points and the railway station was temporarily closed. Anyone living in houses too close to any of the venues was moved out for the duration of the summit.



President Biden and Prime Minister Johnson on the “main stage” (Reuters).

Conservative Party Conference, Manchester

Op Protector was the provision of high assurance search assets to support the security operation surrounding the ruling party’s annual conference. This was a much smaller job in overall duration, however the actual venues were massive and each took five search teams 16 hours to complete. We had two venues to search, the Midland Hotel, where the Conservative conference delegates and Prime Minister were to stay, and the Manchester Conference Centre opposite, where the Conservative Party Conference took place. Just as with the G7, we were each attached to a search team along with a dog handler, initially swabbing for EPD and then assisting with the rummage search. The task took 4 days to complete whereas the G7 Summit had taken a week.

Augmenting Regular Search teams with Reservists allows for the number of Rummage Pairs to quickly and easily be uplifted based on the task requirement and, since this is something that is regularly trained at Sub Unit level, Reservists are able to provide real value to this capability. We come highly motivated and so long as the Search window is known in advance, we can commit and take time away from our civilian careers to contribute to efforts like these in support of domestic security and UK resilience. Integrating with Regular teams was a fantastic opportunity to learn some of the skills not often taught within the Reserves and it also gives the Regulars an appreciation into the utility of the Reserves. The training acquired on courses and exercises previously with 101 Engineer Regiment (EOD&S) allowed us to operate seamlessly with our MACA partners. Being able to deploy on these operations was a culmination of years of training for each of us and an incredible opportunity to put our skills in practice. It left us with a deep sense of pride and satisfaction. If the opportunity arose again, we would be the first to volunteer again!

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Throughout both tasks, up to 5 Army Reservists from 101 Engineer Regiment (EOD&S) were attached to 421 EOD and Search Squadron, 11 EOD and Search Regiment RLC. Both operations were police led, with the military providing a high assurance search capability to the operation. Each Search Team also had a Search Dog from 1 Military Working Dogs and the Operations Cell had technical support from DSTL.

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