



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

27 March 2009

Freedom of Information request: 0227-09

"I would like to know whether there exists any specialized organizational unit/department/crisis response center at the FCO that deals exclusively with crisis situations, e.g. providing early warning of crises as well as crisis prevention and management.

If there exists any specialized unit I would be pleased to receive further information, e.g. date of establishment, size etc., or contact details for possible further inquiries."

Consular Crisis Group (CCG) within the FCO is responsible for managing consular crises i.e. exceptional events affecting a large number of British nationals. CCG also seeks to promote crisis management best practice within the FCO. CCG has been based in our dedicated Crisis Centre since December 2006.

CCG has 18 permanent members of staff divided into three separate teams: Planning, Operations and Stakeholder Management. The Crisis Centre allows for additional staff to work alongside those in CCG when any crisis occurs. Such staff will come from other areas across the FCO. For example, other consular staff, political desk officers and Press Office colleagues. Further staff from other Government Departments and public authorities e.g. the Ministry of Defence and UK police, may also be present in the Crisis Centre during any crisis. Working together in one location allows a joined-up response to crises.

In addition, CCG also has the ability to call on specialist teams of staff as part of any response. These staff may form:

- Our Emergency Response Team (ERT), members of which will be brought in to staff the Crisis Centre to deal with calls from members of the public concerned about family or friends who may be affected;
- Our Rapid Deployment Teams (RDT's) who will be deployed to the country concerned to provide assistance to British Nationals affected, working alongside staff from the British Embassy or High Commission at the scene;
- Our Crisis Liaison Managers, who will be deployed to work alongside organisations within the UK forming part of the Governmental response (such as a UK police force, airline office or tour operator).

Many of the crisis incidents that the FCO responds to are unpredictable. For example, the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008 and the earthquake in

China in May 2008. However, CCG coordinates a risk management process throughout the FCO's global network to prepare for potential consular crises. Events which might require additional planning include elections, major sporting events, and hurricanes/typhoons (which have different seasons in various parts of the world).

The FCO has an on-line database called LOCATE, which we encourage all British nationals travelling or living overseas to use to register details of their or their family's travel plans. If an incident occurs in any country, we are then able to access the database and use it to send messages to all those registered to give them the latest information about the crisis. This may include updates to our travel advice for that country; specific advice on what action British nationals should take to ensure their own safety; or how FCO or other staff can help. You can find LOCATE on the FCO website at www.fco.gov.uk.