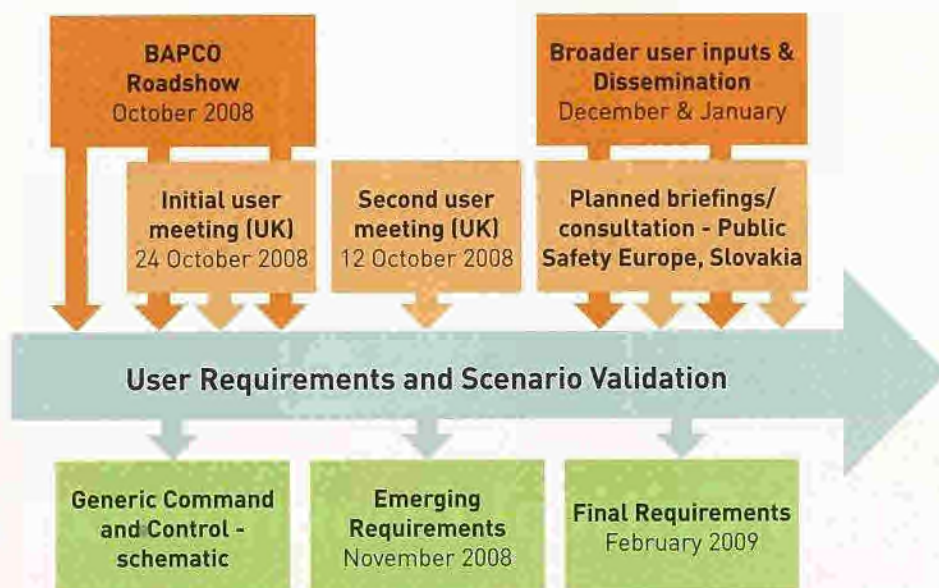


Catastrophic incidents

Much work has been carried out in the UK over the last few years to increase national communications resilience – but what would happen during truly catastrophic incidents that involved more than one country? It is this scenario that Shaun O'Neill, BAPCO European Officer, is helping to address through the EC-funded Project Secricom.

Diagrammatic representation of consultation and dissemination process to date (by Dr Ahmed Aldabbagh CEng, Senior Engineer, Communication and Network Group, Inform Command and Security Division QinetiQ).



"We realised early on that there was a risk that in defining user requirements with UK users and focussing on UK command doctrine for crisis management that the project would be perceived as having a UK bias."

Secricom started in September 2008 and it has been scheduled to run for 44 months until January 2012. Its two core objectives are to solve/mitigate crisis in communication infrastructures and to add smart functions that will make communications more effective.

The project's focus is on the provision of secure and seamless communications between emergency responders across agencies and across international borders. What's more, this is to be regardless of the different types of technologies in use by the different countries and agencies – quite a challenge.

The BAPCO Association is leading on the user aspect of the project with assistance from fire, ambulance, police and local authority personnel.

Shaun O'Neill explains that at the first Secricom meeting, the 13 partners within the project consortia agreed that to best highlight the outcomes of such a project, a demonstration exercise should ultimately be evaluated. In order for such a demonstration exercise to be created, an initial scenario had to be put together which would capture – and test – all the project's technical barriers. It is here that BAPCO Association came into its own, with O'Neill co-ordinating input from a variety of sources to create a worst-case scenario that would provide a significant challenge to the technical partners in the consortia,

while also proving relevant on a wider European stage.

"We realised early on that there was a risk that in defining user requirements with UK users and focussing on UK command doctrine for crisis management that the project would be perceived as having a UK bias," comments O'Neill. "As a result we consulted with a variety of emergency personnel from across Europe to validate the scenario. Furthermore, during our consultations we took the opportunity to disseminate the project on the Continent, and in the course of this jointly I and Mr John Stoodley from QinetiQ – the project's coordinator lead – presented on Secricom at a Public Safety Communications Europe event in Aix-en-Provence, France, in December 2008 and I have liaised with public safety experts in Slovakia."

The scenario – plausible if unlikely

O'Neill recently finished putting together what he terms a "high level scenario" that contains a further 13 subset events, or "serials" as they are being called within the project.

The devil is in the detail, and it is these 13 serials that will drive the technical requirements for Project Secricom. In other words, if a technical solution can be found that can operate within the outlined scenario, then that solution can theoretically resist pretty much