



Editor - Amy Saunders ●●●

## Nothing travels faster than bad news

**Hybrid networks may be nothing new**, but their popularity is booming right now thanks to their versatility. By utilizing a range of terrestrial and space broadcast services to achieve connectivity, hybrid networks combine the best of all available technologies to provide a more efficient, adaptable, and cost-effective service. Hybrid broadcasting is, figuratively speaking, having your cake and eating it too, a true combination of the best of both worlds.

For this issue, I visited SIS LIVE in Milton Keynes, where Managing Director David Meynell and Commercial Director John Bozza educated me on the finer details of hybrid networks. As part of SIS LIVE's evolution from a satellite news gathering (SNG) company to a connectivity company, it has made (and continues to make) significant investments in terrestrial fibre links to complement its satellite services. Although satellite is widely acknowledged as superior for point-to-multipoint and remote location broadcasting, fibre is top dog when it comes to point-to-point broadcasting. Indeed, both technologies have their place. Meynell and Bozza asserted that, despite the lower cost and higher bandwidth of fibre, satellite will always play an integral role in many facets of the broadcast industry, including in sports, back-up and SNG.

One of the key advantages satellite has over fibre, and one that is particularly noteworthy given recent events, is in the rapid communication of essential information during times of terror attacks or war, when fibre may not be convenient or functioning in the required locations.

It was with great sadness that I watched events unfold on 22-03-2016, when three separate attacks were launched throughout Belgium's capital city, Brussels. Two bombs were detonated at the Brussels Airport, another at Maalbeek Metro Station. 32 victims and three suicide bombers died, and more than 300 others were injured, many critically so. It has been named as the deadliest act of terrorism in Belgium's history.

With a delay that must have been mere minutes, the entire world was informed of the attack. Reports came in thick and fast and updates were rapid and detailed, thanks to SNG capabilities and on-the-ground reporters. Video, imagery and other data was delivered via satellite to broadcasters' galleries and studios for processing and distribution directly to consumers, often via fibre. SIS LIVE confirmed that many of its SNG vehicles were rapidly transported to Brussels to report from the scene.

Under such circumstances, the rapid and constant broadcasting of video and imagery from areas hit by terror attacks may appear to some as unseemly or in poor taste, but there are other aspects to consider. Often the well-funded commercial broadcast sector will be able to provide a greater wealth of information than emergency or government responders, in addition to providing up-to-date news for families of the possibly-affected. Additionally, in this case, as news of the attack reached foreign governments, there was an immediate tightening of airport security at major hubs around the world, including the UK, the USA, and much of Europe. Israel reportedly halted flights from Europe for the rest of the day.

Will this latest attack put me off my planned trip to Brussels in May? Not at all – the effective response and appropriate distribution of essential information during the attack only leads me to believe that Brussels is well-placed to respond efficiently and appropriately during any catastrophic events that it may face in the future. Hybrid networks have played a key part in that, by providing unparalleled connectivity capabilities, in which satellite plays a fundamental role.



Photo courtesy of SIS LIVE ●●●