

Fifty thousand people had come to the Suffolk Air Show on the east coast of England. But only one of them was there to commit murder.

It was the end of August, the last week of the summer holiday. The schools were closed and whole families had taken advantage of the fine weather to arrive at the old airbase, less than a mile from the sea. They had strolled around vintage planes from the First and Second World Wars: single-seat biplanes parked next to Spitfires and Hurricanes. That morning, the Red Arrows had put on a dazzling display, twisting and criss-crossing each other in the sky before swooping down, trailing plumes of red, white and blue. There had been fly-pasts by the Tornado GR4, the two-seat attack aircraft that had been used in Iraq and Libya and by the Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter, one of the most sophisticated and – at one hundred million pounds – one of the most expensive aircrafts in the world. The grounds were packed with simulator rides,

motorbike displays, drones, face-painting and fair-ground stalls. Everyone was having a good time.

As with every public event in the UK, an extensive, almost invisible security net had been put in place. It was impossible to stop and search all the cars but CCTV cameras recorded every arrival and every number plate was instantly checked. People might notice police and even a few sniffer dogs moving among them. These were a common sight. But they would be unaware of the plain-clothes policemen, many of them with concealed weapons, mingling with the crowd. In fact the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) had met in their offices close to the Houses of Parliament just a few days before and had agreed that the threat level at the Suffolk Air Show would remain at MODERATE. They weren't expecting any trouble.

And so nobody paid very much attention to the woman who arrived just after three o'clock. She had driven into the car park in a Ford Transit van which, according to the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system, belonged to the St John Ambulance service. This is the country's leading first-aid charity and, indeed, the woman was dressed in the green and black uniform of a local volunteer. She was carrying a nylon bag marked with a white cross which, if opened, would reveal medicine and bandages.

She was short and round-shouldered with dark red hair that had been cut so badly that it stuck

