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PHOTOGRAPHY: EDGER BOURNE/... By Gavin M. ...

in, Greatford, Kent, a small community is found apart from ...



It looks like a typical small English town, complete with a high street, local shops and a takeaway pizza restaurant. But nobody lives here, and the place is constantly devastated by riots and violence. Welcome to the Metropolitan Police Service Specialist Training Centre in Greenwood, Kent – a replica of a UK community where police officers train to deal with public disorder and terrorism.

The Met comes here to rehearse critical scenarios: police officers in riot gear learn to manage angry mobs by crowd-tuning in; other colleagues who get hit with bricks and petrol bombs. Churned marks on the walls of the buildings testify to the authenticity of the high-revolve drills that groups of senior officers undergo every few weeks. "It could be the industrial part of any British city," says Edger Bourne, who photographed the entire riot town. "But sometimes it just looks a bit like a grown-up playground."

RESTRAINT ORDER

The 38-hectare centre was built in 2003 by Cubis Design Solutions, a private defense contractor that specializes in the design and construction of training facilities. "The various tracks and façades are used to create a simulated public disorder scenario, where officers can be trained to deal with a variety of public-order situations in a safe environment," says Mat



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BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The center's structures vary in their degrees of detail: some buildings are more developed, with rooms and doors; others are empty facades. But in general, the team that designed the center created an environment that reflects the range of possible settings in which the Met might operate. This includes

a pub, a nightclub, a sports stadium – even a Tube station with train. There's also a trucked-up aircraft, to simulate hijacking scenarios. Chris Evans, Cubis's regional director, explains that the training facilities' designers sometimes look to Hollywood for advice: "greater realism." "There have been instances where we have worked with personnel from the cinema industry," he says.



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CASINO CONTROL

The streetscape is used to train medical specialists and police who may be called to oversee peaceful protests. There are stables for ten horses so that mounted units can be trained to disperse crowds. Drills can be lengthy, explains James Bowring, a photojournalist who's covered a training session last year. "The public-order exercises last for as long as it takes," he says. "It could be 30 minutes, it could be two hours."