

= Nuclear Strike ( Spooks ) =

" Nuclear Strike " is the series seven finale and 64th episode of the British espionage television series Spooks . It was originally broadcast on BBC One on 8 December 2008 . The episode was written by Neil Cross , and directed by Sam Miller . In the episode , Tiresias , the Russian equivalent of Sugarhorse , awakens a sleeper agent to detonate a nuclear suitcase bomb in central London . The Section D team use Connie James ( Gemma Jones ) , an FSB mole who helped set up Tiresias , to help them stop the bomb . However , the team find themselves targeted by an FSB kill squad , who are unaware of the bomb threat .

The idea behind the episode came from an earlier series three episode about a series of Russian weapons caches throughout the United Kingdom set up during the Cold War . Cross also felt it gratifying to kill off Connie , a character he created in the sixth series . Filming took place during the summer of 2008 , with much of it taking place in disused tunnels of the London Underground . The series seven finale was seen by six million viewers and a quarter of the television audience , a large increase of 900 @, @ 000 viewers and four share points from the previous week . Critics reacted to the episode with near universal acclaim , for being a " superb season closer , " " exciting " and " thrilling . "

= = Plot = =

In Faversham , Kent , Walter Crane ( Kevin Fuller ) receives the message " rain from heaven " in Russian from a numbers station . Upon hearing this , Crane unburies a cache . Section D , having heard " Tiresias wakes 3 pm tomorrow " the previous episode , work on what the message means . Lucas North ( Richard Armitage ) and Harry Pearce ( Peter Firth ) discover Tiresias is the Russian equivalent of Sugarhorse , but " bigger and better ; " while Sugarhorse placed pro @-@ western Russians to infiltrate its government , Tiresias does the opposite ; recruit spies to infiltrate the British Government . Ros Myers ( Hermione Norris ) believes Connie James ( Gemma Jones ) , a mole from the FSB , might know what Tiresias is planning . Ros and Lucas release Connie from custody by posing as masked Russian agents . Later , it is revealed that FSB officers have been assigned to assassinate her . FSB head Viktor Sarkisian ( Peter Sullivan ) orders a kill squad to search every MI5 safehouse , provided by Connie , to kill her and the Section D team who are harbouring her .

At the safe house " Ottawa Bravo " , Connie reveals she helped set up Tiresias over two decades ago and will give all sleeper agents and operations in exchange for safe passage to New Zealand . After listening to the numbers station broadcast , she reveals Tiresias has awakened a sleeper agent to a specific task ; detonating a nuclear suitcase bomb in central London by 3 pm . The only way to know where it would detonate is a locker at London Bridge station , which contain all Tiresias members and codes . When they start their journey however , they encounter the kill squad . They and Lucas engage in a shootout , and after evading them , the team decide to split up and regroup in Catherine Wheel Alley , while Harry returns to Thames House .

After returning , Harry warns Home Secretary Nicholas Blake ( Robert Glenister ) of the threat and tells him that if he receives a call from MI5 at 2 : 45 pm , he should order the evacuation of Parliament . Lucas , Ros and Connie regroup and head towards a London Underground station , but Lucas is wounded by a sniper ; though not seriously wounded , the kill squad could follow Lucas ' blood trail . To slow them down , Lucas sets up rudimentary traps and the three venture through empty tunnels towards the station . Later , the kill squad send in a runner to find the three ; Lucas is able to trip and kill him . Back in Thames House , Harry believes the FSB are not aware of the bomb threat , and decides to meet with Sarkisian face @-@ to @-@ face . In order to get there alive , Harry uses the emergency " handshake protocols " and reasons with Sarkisian that he would turn himself into the FSB if he stops the kill squad . Meanwhile , Lucas attempts to draw off the squad by splitting up , but at the confrontation , his gun jams and is cornered . Before he can be killed , Sarkisian calls the team off and orders them to help stop the bomb .

Ros and Connie find the locker with the bomber 's name and location , Grosvenor Square . An FSB sniper kills Crane , and at Connie 's request , the bomb is sent to her , as she is the only person with

the expertise to disarm it . Connie defuses the bomb , but by doing so a secondary countdown is initiated . She removes the nuclear material , but the bomb will still detonate . In her last words , Connie admits that she set up Lucas in Moscow eight years ago , which resulted in his imprisonment . Lucas and Ros then run to safety as the bomb detonates , killing Connie . With disaster averted , Lucas calls Harry , but receives no answer . In the end , it is revealed Sarkisian has him locked up in the boot of his car .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The episode was written by Neil Cross . Before he started writing Cross did not know Connie was the mole from the previous episode , so he included it to help with the storyline . The character was originally intended to be killed by the end of the last episode , but Cross kept her alive until the end of the finale . He wanted her killed off at this episode , as he was the one who created Connie in the sixth series , and felt it gratifying to kill off a character he created . In writing the plot , Cross was inspired by the Rupert Walters script for " Frequently Asked Questions " from the third series , which revealed a series of weapons caches throughout the United Kingdom set up by the Russians during the Cold War ; Cross wanted to use that as a way to introduce the nuclear suitcase bomb . The bombs design from the episode was based from actual designs , but invented its failsafes .

The producers also intended to tease the audience that after the brutal killing of Ben Kaplan ( Alex Lanipekun ) from the previous episode , they would think that things could not get worse for the team , until the nuclear threat in the finale . The scene where the team breaks Connie out was intended to show the audience that the protagonists are willing to go to extreme measures to stop serious threats . Cross wanted to make it a very pure Spooks episode by setting up the entire plot in one scene , and then include a chase throughout London between FSB officers and the main characters . Cross enjoyed creating the FSB team featured in the episode , especially as he created them as a Russian version of the Spooks protagonists , but also make their base much more lit with windows . The bomb defusal scene was originally set at a graveyard , but the producers decided it would be best to set it underground . Though it took several rewrites , the script remained " fundamentally the same " throughout the writing process .

The part where Connie asks for safe passage to New Zealand was a " sly personal reference " to Cross , as the writer himself resides in the country . In one scene , Lucas can be seen breaking into a car and getting his hands on various items that would be useful to help set up traps against the FSB officers . Throughout the episode 's development , the items kept changing . There were also staff discussions about what they could get away with in terms of the protagonists killing FSB officers . The most prominent discussions included Harry strangling one officer with his necktie , and Lucas shooting another in the head in cold blood despite being unarmed and subdued .

= = = Casting = = =

Kevin Fuller was cast as Walter Crane , the man with the bomb . The character did not say a word throughout the entirety of the episode , yet had such a strong presence , which the producers felt was unique for a guest star in the series . Fuller did " a lot of getting into the part , " director Sam Miller felt that Fuller was one of the most influential actors he ever worked with . Elsewhere , Peter Sullivan , who plays Sarkisian , never spoke Russian before . Since most of his dialogue would be in Russian , Sullivan was trained how to speak it phonetically before he would play the part .

= = = Filming = = =

The episode was filmed sometime during Summer 2008 . Miller wanted to style the filming as if the cameras are following the team like in a documentary . The first day was spent in the " Ottawa

Bravo " safe house set , where Connie reveals the threat . Throughout the shoot , Gemma Jones had hip problems . Concerned , the producers set up a body double on hand . However , Jones insisted she could do everything herself , and in the end the double was not used . During the first shootout scene in the episode , Miller wanted to make the sequence as real as possible by having the camera film as if it was under attack . Richard Armitage recalled the shootout sequence ; " There was a shoot @-@ out in the final episode where I surprised myself about the amount of rounds I could pull off and how quickly . It 's a weird thing . I 'm not a violent person but when you put a gun in somebody 's hands something strange happens . It 's like a little animal comes out of you that wants to fire the gun again . "

Filming did face some disruptions . The sequence where Lucas breaks into a car for some supplies was filmed at a street near Hyde Park . On one end of the street was an event in the park , while on the other end a wedding took place . Elsewhere , Fuller carried a mock @-@ suitcase bomb to film in Grosvenor Square . However , because the American Embassy is situated next to the square , shortly after Fuller and the filming crew arrived , they found themselves surrounded by five armed American security officers who believed Fuller was about to commit an attack . Fortunately , location manager Patrick Stuart was able to " sweet @-@ talk " the American officials , and they were allowed to film in the area .

Five days of filming were spent at the London Underground tunnels . Filming took place on actual tube tunnels , albeit disused ones . As the crew were scouting the disused Aldwych tunnels , they found the ex @-@ Northern line 1972 stock train stabled in the tunnel for maintenance , training , and filming purposes . When Sam Miller called Cross about the development , the writer included it as a last minute addition to the script , and the sequence was shot the next day . As a way to scare the audience , Cross included a homeless woman living in the train . The filming crew present disliked filming the Underground sequences because while filmed during the summer , it became hot locations to work in . The crew were prohibited from bringing food or drink into the tunnels , as it would attract rats . Furthermore , break times had to be longer than usual because it would take a while for a crew member to leave the tunnels , have a break and then return . The FSB base was filmed in the London Docklands , near the ExCeL London .

= = Cultural references = =

Though the series in general does not note many cultural references , Neil Cross decided to include some into this particular episode . The phrases " rain from heaven " and " it is twice blest " from the numbers station was taken from " The Quality of Mercy " speech from the William Shakespeare play The Merchant of Venice . The speech begins ; " The quality of mercy is not strain'd , it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven . Upon the place beneath : it is twice blest ; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes ... " Later in the episode , Lucas tells Connie about Bridget Driscoll , the first person in the United Kingdom to be run over and killed by a car , which , while big news back in her time , becomes forgotten over time and is now only " a single moment , " much like Connie 's contributions to her country during the Cold War . When Jo asks Malcolm to evacuate his mother , he explains she is busy watching A Place in the Sun , a television programme about Britons buying property abroad , followed by Countdown , a game show on Channel 4 .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

The episode was originally broadcast on BBC One , during the 9 pm to 10 pm time slot on Monday , 8 December 2008 . However , it was held back to 10 : 40 pm in Northern Ireland , and did not broadcast in Scotland on the day all together . The finale attracted 6 million viewers on its original broadcast , earning a 25 % audience share . Ratings were up by 900 @, @ 000 viewers and four share points from the previous episode which aired against I 'm a Celebrity , Get , Me Out of Here ! on ITV1 . On the next week , the Spooks finale beat Taggart on ITV1 in the same time slot . " Nuclear Strike " ended being the ninth most seen broadcast on BBC One , and the 24th most seen broadcast overall the week it aired .

The episode attracted near universal acclaim . The Spooks producers regard " Nuclear Strike " as one of their favourites in the series . Sam Wollaston of The Guardian reacted positively to the episode , stating " it 's nice to see MI5 locking horns with the Russians again . Maybe the Spooks people just got bored with Islamic terrorism , so they did what they had to do : they restarted the cold war . A bold move , but an admirable one . " Gerard O 'Donovan of The Daily Telegraph placed the episode as a " critic 's choice , " calling it a " superb season closer , " and " all terrifically exciting . " O 'Donovan also said of the episode 's settings ; " the streets and Underground tunnels of London have rarely been used to such climactic effect ? with great performances from everyone involved . " He also complimented it for setting up a " great cliffhanger ending that will leave fans absolutely gagging for the next series . "

Andrew Billen of The Times however , felt the finale was " not [ a ] very exciting episode , " and " conducted with a minimum of acting . " Mof Gimmers of TV Scoop praised the episode , saying " Neil Cross knows a thing or two about ratcheting up the tension , and in the finale of the seventh series of Spooks he used both of them . And then , from somewhere , he found a third thing . And a fourth , " and " pressure piled on pressure relentlessly throughout this brilliant finale as each new success only led to the next , even bigger problem . " Gimmers called the chase sequence in the episode " one of the most thrilling traditional chase sequences ever seen on British TV , " the interplay between the characters " was handled expertly , " and ended with " already I can 't wait for the next series ! "