

= The Tip @-@ Off =

" The Tip @-@ Off " is the third episode of series seven of the British espionage television series Spooks , and the 59th episode overall . It was originally broadcast on digital channel BBC Three on 28 October 2008 , and repeated on frontline channel BBC One on 3 November . The episode was written by Russell Lewis ; with additional writing by Ben Richards ; and directed by Peter Hoar . In the episode , Ben Kaplan (Alex Lanipekun) goes undercover to infiltrate an Al @-@ Qaeda cell in London during a dry run before an expected attack . However , it later becomes apparent the terrorists are going to attack during the dry run .

Actor Alex Lanipekun believed the episode became a sort of " coming of age " for his character , as he had to deal with issues dealing with undercover operations including not to get close to a terrorist . The episode introduces the " Sugarhorse " story arc , which continues through to the series finale . In making the scene where Lucas North was waterboarded , Richard Armitage who portrays him was subjected to the actual torture to ensure the scene 's authenticity . It was seen by over five million viewers after its original broadcast , and was given generally positive reviews . However , it received criticism for featuring the waterboarding scene .

= = Plot = =

Chief of Section D Ros Myers (Hermione Norris) introduces Lucas North (Richard Armitage) to one of Adam Carter 's assets , Pakistani intelligence officer Marlin (Emilio Doorgasingh) . Marlin has information about a planned attack by Al @-@ Qaeda ; a cell intends to create Internet chatter , followed by a dry run , after which they will commence a series of suicide attacks . The ringleader behind this is Nadif Abdelrashid (Ariyon Bakare) who was previously responsible for similar attacks in Turkey and Somalia . Ben Kaplan is in his first undercover operation disguised as a recent convert to Islam and becomes part of the cell . As part of his cover , Ben shares a flat with Jawad (Tariq Jordan) , another member . However , over the course of the operation Ben becomes close to Jawad , which Ben 's handler Lucas advises against , as Jawad is not an innocent .

When Malcolm Wynn @-@ Jones (Hugh Simon) discovers the chatter , Ben relays to the team that the dry run will commence the following day . On the day , Ben finds that Abdelrashid intends to carry out the attack ahead of schedule and during the dry run after Ben , Jawad , and two other men are given bombs . Ben relays this message to Lucas . Ros dispatches CO19 to apprehend Abdelrashid in his office , who intends to remote detonate the bombs . Another CO19 squad , as well as Lucas and Jo Portman (Miranda Raison) follow the cell members to a street market , which they will use to maximise civilian casualties . Ben admits he is MI5 to Jawad , who runs in panic and attempts to manually detonate his bomb ; this results in getting gunned down by CO19 officers , much to Ben 's dismay . After stopping another two bombs , Jawad 's mobile phone rings , revealing Abdelrashid is not the " Mr. Big " ; it is Marlin . He remote detonates the last bomb , killing the terrorist and the two CO19 officers holding him .

Although one bomb did detonate , Harry Pearce (Peter Firth) views the operation a success , as the other three did not , and no civilians were killed . Ben tells Lucas he was right about Jawad ; he chose to become a bomber over seeing his family . Lucas receives a call from Marlin , who asks to meet with him . During the confrontation , Marlin admits he was forced to become Mr. Big when terrorists kidnapped his family . Now knowing he has failed , he commits suicide .

In a subplot , rainwater falls onto Lucas 's face , which triggers a flashback where he was tortured by FSB interrogators during his eight @-@ year imprisonment in Russia . The interrogators question him on " Sugarhorse . " Lucas relays this to Harry , who claims not knowing what Sugarhorse is . However , he later visits a retired spycatcher Bernard Qualtrough (Richard Johnson) believing there is high level mole within MI5 . He only reveals that Sugarhorse is MI5 's " best kept secret " that only five people , including Richard Dolby (Robert East) , the Director General , and himself , know the details of . Harry later returns to Qualtrough 's bookstore to find out who the mole might be , starting by looking into Dolby 's file .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Russell Lewis , with additional writing by Ben Richards . Ben Kaplan became the central character of the episode . Actor Alex Lanipekin , who portrays Ben , stated that " The Tip @-@ Off " was a " kind of a coming of age " for the character , dealing with his first undercover operation . Lanipekin expanded :

The episode also introduces a story @-@ arc , about Sugarhorse , that would be resolved by the end of the seventh series . Hermione Norris describes Sugarhorse as " a group of spies who were brought together after the ending of the cold war to infiltrate , at the highest level , all forms of Russian intelligence so that if a nuclear power ever came into being and was at the hands of the Russian people , MI5 and MI6 could infiltrate it and stop it . " The cast read the brief on Sugarhorse , but were then told to shred it in order to maintain its secrecy from fans .

In a flashback sequence of the episode , Lucas is subjected to waterboarding , a method of torture . In order to ensure the authenticity of the sequence , Armitage was subjected to the actual torture . He agreed to perform the sequence after he was convinced by consultants from the FSB and CIA . Armitage was only waterboarded for a short time , and was filmed in slow motion to make it appear as if he was on for longer . Kudos film and television , the production company behind Spooks , had to follow several health and safety provisions from an advisor to ensure the sequence strictly adheres to the advice . The advisor and a medic were present during filming . The ambient temperature of the room was raised to make Armitage as comfortable as possible . However , after the sequence was shot , Armitage changed his opinion entirely , stating ; " I only lasted five to ten seconds , and the sound of my voice crying out to stop isn 't me acting . "

= = Broadcast and reception = =

The episode was originally broadcast on the digital channel BBC Three from 11 pm on Tuesday , 28 October 2008 , after the broadcast of the second episode on BBC One . The episode would later be repeated on BBC One on Monday , 3 November 2008 during the 9 pm to 10 pm time slot , except in Northern Ireland , where it was withheld until 10 : 35 pm . There is no ratings data available for the BBC Three broadcast . On the BBC One broadcast , the episode was seen by 5 @.@ 2 million viewers , an improvement of 140 @,@ 000 from the previous episode , with a 21 @.@ 6 per cent audience share , winning its time slot against the return of detective series Taggart on ITV1 , and other terrestrial channels . According to the Broadcasters ' Audience Research Board , the episode received final viewing figures of 5 @.@ 59 million , making the episode the 17th most seen broadcast on BBC One , and 32nd in overall television the week it was shown .

Mof Gimmers of TV Scoop was positive towards the episode , calling it " a tense week for Section D " and added " our guys did a pretty good job . " Gimmers also thought Ben " did well on his first undercover mission too , didn 't you think ? Apart from verging on sympathy for the young brainwashed bombers . Still , he 's young . He 'll get over it . " On Ros ' role in the episode , Gimmers said " I don 't think I 'll ever be able to say I 'm " warming " to such an ice queen as Ros , but I will admit to a growing admiration . " Scott Matthewman of The Stage stated " the seventh series of the spy show continues apace , " and praised the episode for " the superb performance of Hermione Norris as Ros Myers , fast becoming the twisted moral centre of the show . Both she and Peter Firth 's Harry Pearce get some great dialogue every week , so it 's a shame that the rest of the cast aren 't afforded the same luxury . "

The Guardian columnist Zoe Williams criticised the actual waterboarding in the torture scene , saying " it 's really unpleasant , [Armitage] concurred . ' I only lasted five to 10 seconds , and the sound of my voice crying out to stop isn 't me acting . ' Pal , that 's nice that you 're not showing off but this is all wrong and despicable : it 's like locking yourself and 10 friends into a loo on a commuter train , to see what it would be like on the train to Auschwitz . If you can make it stop whenever you like , you 're learning nothing and kicking people in the face while you 're at it . "