

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0160/04
by Uma Aaltonen (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: Use in the EU institutions of sniffer dogs trained to detect explosives

The security mechanisms employed in the EU institutions have failed to detect the letter bombs sent to senior officials over the last few weeks.

No one has yet been seriously injured by these letter bombs. The question arises, however, as to whether in future officials can go on simply trusting to their luck when mail of this kind lands on their desks. Can EU staff continue to open mail without fear of being blown up?

It is astonishing that items of mail can reach officials' desks without being inspected by a real professional in this sphere - a dog trained to sniff out explosives. No x-ray machine or other technical apparatus can beat the performance and precision of a trained dog, as exemplified by the dogs used to detect bombs and mines.

I have studied this topic in detail and have been able to offer the Labrador-retriever Amanda, who was used as a mine-detector dog in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a home in her retirement. For that reason, I should like to put the following questions to the Commission:

- Who is responsible for the security systems and their operation in the EU institutions?
- Does the chain of security measures include the use of dogs trained to detect explosives?
- Does the Commission intend to expand its range of detection measures to include this method, in particular when it comes to checking items of mail?
- Can I be sure that I am just as safe in my office in Parliament as I am at home?