

POLITICS AND POLICING IN NORTHERN IRELAND



Remarks by Shaun Woodward
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Remarks by Sir Hugh Orde
Chief Constable
Police Service of Northern Ireland

Introduction by Richard Aborn

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CITIZENS CRIME COMMISSION
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THE MILSTEIN CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY FORUM



HOWARD P. MILSTEIN

Since 2002, the Citizens Crime Commission of New York City has presented a series of Criminal Justice Policy lectures sponsored by Edward L. and Howard P. Milstein through the Milstein Brothers Foundation. Each event features a nationally, or internationally, prominent speaker who addresses the Commission on such issues as crime, criminal justice or terrorism. The formal remarks are followed by a question-and-answer period. Each meeting is open to the media.

Attendance is limited to 150 invited guests drawn from the top ranks of the New York City business and law enforcement communities. Each lecture is printed and distributed to top business, civic and law enforcement leaders.

The Citizens Crime Commission of New York City is an independent, non-profit organization working to reduce crime and improve the criminal justice system in New York City. The Commission is supported by the business community; its board of directors is drawn from top corporate executives and members of major law firms. The Commission was established in 1978.

Howard and Edward Milstein are prominent New York bankers and real estate owners. They have a long record of working with the New York City criminal justice system to create and support innovative programs. They are also active in national crime prevention issues.

Introduction by Richard Aborn

Good afternoon and welcome to our Crime Commission Milstein Criminal Justice Policy Lecture Series. I thank you all for coming. I am going to get started because I am conscious of the time. But, on behalf of Mutual America, I encourage you to keep eating and enjoy both the wine and the food that they're so generously offering us.

I also want to thank Howard Milstein who is the sponsor of this series. Unfortunately, Howard could not join us today. He's out of the country. But, I do want to thank him as I always do. And, I, of course, it's always my great pleasure to thank Tom and Mutual America for the wonderful support that they give to the Crime Commission and have given for many, many years. And the wonderful support, frankly, they give to the peace process in Northern Ireland. We really appreciate their ongoing support.

I'd also like to welcome two special guests with us today from the UK. Sir Alan Collins is here. Sir Alan is the British Consul General here in New York. He also serves as the Director General for Trade and Investment in America. And at this moment of time, I would encourage a lot of investment in America. So, we welcome your pounds. I'd also like to welcome Al Hutchinson who is the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. Gentlemen, welcome. Thank you.

In the past year or so— in the past two years, actually— we have broadened this series to try and bring you speakers that talk about the international dimensions of counterterrorism from a law enforcement perspective. Not necessarily from a strict military perspective. But, from a law enforcement perspective. And we've had a number of interesting speakers who have addressed that issue and given us, I think, a broadly— defined perspective on how that fight is being carried out.

This is not about counterterrorism. This is about a very different issue, but a very difficult issue. But, one that has all the hallmarks of success. Success for which all of the participants across the spectrum, both in the political world on the ground, and the policing world should be very, very proud.

Our two speakers, are Shaun Woodward who is the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland amongst other duties, and Sir Hugh Orde who is the Chief Constable of the police service of Northern Ireland. Or the PSNI as you will hear it commonly referred to. As head of the Northern Ireland office, Secretary Woodward is a cabinet minister and has responsibility for policing and criminal justice, the Crown Solicitor's office and the public prosecution service.

And his office also supports the ongoing development of Northern Ireland's local political institutions. Created in 2001, the PSNI evolved from the Royal Ulster Constabulary and is the principle law enforcement agent in Northern Ireland. Chief Constable Orde has held the post as chief constable since 2002.

He manages a law force, which on a per capita basis is roughly equal in size to the NYPD. Again, on a per capita basis. And he is, in fact, presiding over a major transformation not only of that agency, but of the whole transformation from a military to civilian policing model in Northern Ireland. In the midst of doing all that, which in and of itself would be of monumental not only importance, but requires a monumental effort, he's had the marvelous success of reducing crime in each of the last six consecutive years. A record that any chief anywhere in the world would be immensely proud of.

These two gentlemen bring a unique perspective to the work that's going on in Northern Ireland. And for that reason, I am extraordinarily grateful that they are here with us today. I think there are probably few other issues in the world, locations in the world that combine the unique challenges of, if you will, diplomacy and civilian policing.

They are truly in a post-conflict situation and doing just marvelously well in heading towards the completion of that transition. It is a long process. But, it is one that has an end in sight. The progress we've seen in recent years just to keep you current on this is a product of the Good Friday Agreement that was negotiated back in 1998. That agreement established a power sharing arrangement including a devolved legislative body and executive.

It also laid the groundwork for reduced military presence, which I'm happy to tell you we'll hear about today is almost nonexistent at this point and reform of local policing. In the years since then, progress has been made on the goals of the agreement that were set out including the creation of the PSNI. The devolution process, which has had some bumps in the road, admittedly, has begun to lead to the transfer of powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly just this last year, I believe.

The devolution process is not completed. But, it's well on its way. And Secretary Woodward will be able to inform us about that. Their talks today, will be entitled Politics and Policing in Northern Ireland. And they will discuss the progress that has been made in the region, along with the role of police, because this is the Crime Commission, in both the process and under the current administration of Northern Ireland.

The sectarian violence in Northern Ireland was one of the longest running and most difficult conflicts that we've seen in a long time. And, unfortunately, there are similar conflicts around the world. But, what

I find so encouraging about what's happened in Northern Ireland is the significant progress that's been made in the face of just great adversity.

And also, frankly, in the face of many, many, many people around the world saying would never be resolved. These people have proven that it can be resolved. And I think that is an important and enduring lesson for the other conflicts that are going on. And it's certainly a very encouraging one. So, with that in mind, I'm going to welcome Secretary Woodward to the stand. Thank you so much.

Remarks by Secretary Shaun Woodward

Richard, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much indeed for asking me to be here today. It's a wonderful lunch. It's an incredible view. And I promise not to talk for more than 15 minutes, let alone 20. I think Hugh has a far better prepared speech than I do. And I'd like to give him those moments if you could find them useful, Hugh.

This is a very, very important and special time for Northern Ireland and, indeed, people across the UK and, indeed, the island of Ireland. We have seen momentous events unfold in the course of the last year. Tony Blair described May the 8th last year as a good day for optimists around the world. And I think he was absolutely right. It's been a long time coming.

But, in the end, the train has arrived. And the train now carries a power sharing executive, a new assembly and I think an incredibly vibrant, prosperous, hopeful future for people who live in Northern Ireland. Now, central in all of this has been the continued difficulties over law and order in Northern Ireland across now what might be nearly four decades.

And during that time, I have to say although we've seen huge changes in Northern Ireland, the momentous changes that have come about in policing, particularly, in the last few years, and especially under the leadership of my friend, Hugh Orde, have been truly historic and truly very important in us achieving the peace and stability that we now enjoy in Northern Ireland. I think I would be remiss if I didn't actually say to you that although Hugh is, indeed, a great friend and great colleague of mine in Northern Ireland, I share Richard's judgment that he is also one of the great police leaders not only in the UK— but, anywhere in the world.

He has helped achieve a transformation in policing, in confidence in policing, which actually makes it the police force in the UK with the highest levels of confidence anywhere within the UK. And when you think back to just a few years ago when nearly half of the population in Northern Ireland, fairly or unfairly— but, nonetheless, nearly half, because of their religion felt alienated from the forces of law and order.

And for us today to see confidence levels amongst everybody in Northern Ireland which approach in the high 80 percent numbers, you can see just what an extraordinary transformation in just a handful of years has been achieved by those men and women under Hugh's command.

Now, Hugh, of course, would be far too modest to acknowledge his own specific role in this. But, you know how important leadership can be. And I have also to say that I want to put on record my admiration for the men and women in the PSNI today. It isn't only a story that begins with the PSNI. It is a story which, again, Richard, you referred to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

And, again, let me put on record the fact that whatever problems there were with the RUC, there is no question that within the RUC were some of the bravest men and women you could possibly find. They were doing their job too. They were doing their job often in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. But, with the Good Friday Agreement and with the absolute correct decision that we needed to change the politics of Northern Ireland came the decision that we needed to change policing in Northern Ireland too.

And as a result of that, the Patten Report, the PSNI was born. And the success of the chief constable has helped transform policing in Northern Ireland, as I say, from a force which was, regrettably, not one that commanded huge confidence to one today that has the highest levels of confidence anywhere.

The PSNI is today one of the model police forces anywhere in the world. It is one of the great police forces anywhere in the world. And joined to the PSNI are the other institutions of the policing family in Northern Ireland. And that's why, Al, it's a real pleasure to see you here today. The office of the ombudsman in Northern Ireland has been, again, one of those seismic transformations that has allowed the public to have openness, confidence and transparency. But, the fact of the matter is it is precisely because of that openness and transparency that there is that level of confidence.

Al's predecessor, Nuala, was not always the easiest person for a chief constable to work with. And I say that as an observer of these things. But, the fact of the matter is her determination, her independence, her strength of character and, dare I say it, Al, because she was a woman too in this role—brought a level of change and difference and a new level of trust and confidence too.

And I think is, again, one of the reasons why we have such an outstanding level of confidence in policing and all the institutions of policing in Northern Ireland today. Now, Richard, you rightly observed how, really, much of this can all be dated back to the Good Friday Agreement. And I'm asked to talk a bit about politics and policing in Northern Ireland today. And, again, perhaps I should say at the beginning that I think that however good a friend Hugh may be, the fact of the matter is that it is incredibly important that the chief constable of

Northern Ireland has absolute and total independence from the politics of Northern Ireland.

That's how it should be. It is absolutely vital that that wall is maintained. We may talk a lot together. We may share a lot together. But, the fact of the matter is operational independence of the police in Northern Ireland is, again, one of the reasons I believe that we have been so successful in transforming confidence by everyone in every community in Northern Ireland.

Now, this time last year, we were preparing for a new assembly, for elections in Northern Ireland, and for a power sharing executive.

On May the 8th, last year, we saw the almost impossible to imagine, the highly improbable. Ian Paisley, First Minister, Martin McGuinness, Deputy First Minister sharing those offices together in Northern Ireland. You all saw the pictures beamed around the world. Some of you may have met them when they came over here at the end of last year.

For people in Northern Ireland, it was, and indeed, for some, remains almost unimaginable that two men that perhaps personally as well as certainly as the organizations they have represented and continue to represent— for those two factions, which had been at war with each other, almost, for so many decades— to be reconciled to the point whereby they could share office, physically share an office, work together, laugh together.

As you know, they've become known as the Chuckle Brothers. And justifiably so. It's a real working relationship of two men who for however many decades of hatred there have been, have given way to great affection and a great working partnership. And that has meant in the last year that there has been a level of leadership combined from those two men in Northern Ireland, again, unseen— for many decades, arguably ever, in the history of Northern Ireland.

Now, the first part that we restored last May in Northern Ireland— so called State One of Devolution was to ensure that politicians elected in Northern Ireland would control how they would spend money given by the British government on education, on health, on transport and those things that actually are the things that you, I, your families, my family in the evenings actually talk about.

What's the state of our health service? What's the state of our schools? What's the state of our roads? So, these are normal things. And these are now being handled by people elected in Northern Ireland. That is real devolution. And that is underway and Paisley and McGuinness have led this change, and led it incredibly successfully.

But, there is one bit we have still to do. And that is the devolution,

the handing back of power from me, as the British Secretary of State, with responsibility as you pointed out, Richard, for law and order, for policing and criminal justice. Now, this is not an easy issue. If you think, for example, about the history of violence in Northern Ireland, if you think about the alienation of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, if you think about the history of the RUC whether fair or unfair— this is a very, very difficult issue for the Catholic community.

But, again, it's highly symptomatic that the changes brought about by the Patten Report, and by the PSNI had already, even before devolution last year, gone a long, long way to allowing the police force of Northern Ireland to be accepted by the communities. But, significantly, last year even though devolution of policing hasn't yet happened, we actually saw Sinn Féin join the policing board.

That body which oversees policing in Northern Ireland. It was historic. An organization which had deliberately refused to accept policing from a British police force suddenly was accepting the PSNI and joining the oversight body that actually has responsibility for overseeing the PSNI.

With that, we saw elected Sinn Féin counselors joining district policing partnerships at the end of last year. And perhaps, nothing more significant than when a young man called Paul Quinn was murdered at the end of last year, when he was lured across the border and when a number of criminals— we don't know how many. But, we do know that they set about him with crowbars and iron bars. They broke every bone in this kid's body, and he died.

Some people said there may be low level involvement— from former or even existing IRA members in that. But the interesting thing was that the first person out of the gate to condemn it, to define it as criminal, to demand that the people who did it should be arrested and brought to trial and face trial or go to prison for their crime was the Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness.

That is the marker of how far policing and confidence in policing and confidence in the institutions of policing and confidence in this chief constable have come in the last few years in Northern Ireland. So, whilst I do not take anything for granted in Northern Ireland, I do believe that soon we will see that devolution completed. This week, some of you may know a report was produced by Jeffrey Donaldson, a member of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) who serves in the executive of the Northern Ireland Executive today— produced the so called Donaldson Report for the Assembly on Policing.

And what that recognized— were all the various things that they were now ready to take onboard and deal with. The critical factor is we

still don't have a date for this to happen. But, in a speech that Minister Donaldson gave yesterday, significantly, he said that it would be soon. And I take him at his word, and I take all of the politicians in the Assembly at their word on this. It is going to happen soon.

But, like everything that's happened in Northern Ireland, to get to this stage from the Good Friday Agreement, the reconstitution of the Assembly, the Executive, itself, the shared future— none of this at the end of the day is about a science. It's about leadership.

And it does matter therefore that the leaders of this assembly, the leaders of this executive show the leadership to complete the job. Now, this job I believe will be completed some time in the course of this year. The actual moment for this is yet to be decided.

And undoubtedly, we will see a stalling but only a stalling of this while the DUP resolve the issue of who will lead the party when Dr. Paisley stands down at the end of May. There is no question in my mind though that this is not a change of direction.

There is no question in my mind that the legacy established by the Reverend Paisley, when having spent a life time, eighty years of saying no and never, who last year said yes, that that legacy can not be undone. It can only be built on. And whoever has the privilege to succeed Dr. Paisley and become first minister. And in all probability, that is likely to be Peter Robinson. But that's a matter for the DUP. That's an issue they have to resolve in the coming weeks.

I believe that Peter Robinson will also show the leadership and build on the legacy of Dr. Paisley within the unionist community. And what that will mean is that we will see sooner rather than later, in months and not years, the acceptance of policing and criminal justice being passed from me and the British government in Westminster into the hands of those locally elected politicians in Northern Ireland.

And that's going to be a really great day. Because if you watched and remembered in some of your cases only from history books the unraveling of Northern Ireland in the 1960's and early 1970's, this is the very reverse. As Northern Ireland descended into violence in the late Sixties and Seventies, in the Nineties and early part of this millennium, it has ascended from that place to law and order to peace and to prosperity.

Now, I want to close by saying to you a huge thank you. You in America have been extraordinary partners in bringing all of this about. This organization, people in this organization in this building have been inordinately important in enabling this to happen.

We've often spoken about the enabling environment to bring about peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland. The roles have been played

by the British government, the Irish government, but equally America deserves in every part a fair share of that credit.

And all of you here today deserve our thanks for allowing us to see in Northern Ireland, in the streets of Belfast today a transformed situation. The military gone. The army went last year after 38 years. They leave Hugh alone there now, just with his police officers to do what police should do, which is to look after law and order.

They don't need a military presence or military help to do it. But we couldn't have come this far without America. And we couldn't have come this far without you. And I know some people will tell me, but there are nearly forty million Irish Americans living here. And of course you have a self interest.

Well, I don't take that for granted at all. People can have plenty of self interest, but it doesn't mean to say they do anything about it. But you did. You gave us your commitment. You gave us your support.

You gave people who were in trouble the comfort of knowing that you would support them in difficulty and you would bring them through. And you have brought them through. And what we see on the streets of Belfast today is in no small part thanks to you and everybody here.

So when I look at the prospects for the rest of this year, when I look at the prospects that I think we will see investment coming from America, which perhaps until now has been more philanthropy than investment, I can truly tell you that what you may be about to do in America in the investment conference in May of this year and in the projects Americans may now involve themselves with in Northern Ireland is no longer philanthropy. It's good investment.

And the best thing we can do in Northern Ireland is to complete the evolution for you. Because why should you invest in Northern Ireland if the politicians can't agree on law and order themselves? So, it's time for the politicians in Northern Ireland to take law and order for themselves.

It's time for the politicians in Northern Ireland to complete the de-volution. It's time for me to hand that power back. And as soon as the politicians in Northern Ireland now ask for it, we're ready to do it. Thank you very much.

Remarks by Sir Hugh Orde

Thank you very much. And thank you for the opportunity to say a few words to you on policing in Northern Ireland. A bit of *deja vu*. I remember one of my first visits to America was just after I took over the police service in Northern Ireland. I actually spoke in this room to about two hundred people on my vision for where we were going to take the police organization.

So it's rather nice and nostalgic to be back speaking to a group of people who are equally interested in the world in which I live. I think the first point I'd like to say is that Northern Ireland is still changing. And I do think the changes over those last five years have been substantial, real and indeed significant.

It is a place that's different. I don't know how many of you have recently visited Northern Ireland, but it's a place that's far more optimistic and confident with itself. There's a sense of moving forward together as described by the secretary of state. And there is without doubt more economic investment.

The number of cranes on the skyline of Belfast is always a good indicator. I think that's very positive for our part of the world. And the political developments, well, frankly, five years ago when I was speaking in this room, I think I may have been asked the question, did I see Sinn Féin on the policing board. I would have said no.

The answer is, they're on the policing board. They've been there for some time. And that's the right place for them to be. It's also right to say that policing has to remain apolitical. And it's quite difficult when every policing decision has a political consequence.

But I think we have walked that fine line — sometimes razor sharp. And managed to deliver effective policing while some politicians deal with the fallout of some of the events we've had indeed to deal with.

I think that's quite a good thing and it's quite a healthy place to be. And as a result, I do think we have a situation where our major political parties are without doubt, without question signed up to policing and the criminal justice system.

That is not to say that every person on the streets of Belfast, Derry, think where we are is necessarily a good place to be. I think there's more work, more work to do because there's definitely unfinished business.

If I were to ask the question why— why are we quite as far forward as we are, well, I think the police service can claim some of the credit. No doubt about that. It is our work that has created the conditions that

have allowed many to actually make the progress in the political world.

I'm absolutely clear that if we had not demonstrated to every community in Northern Ireland that we were determined to deliver an effective and a professional service, we would not be where we are today. That's not just my own bizarre theory. Many people who historically would not have talked certainly to me, yet alone my office's, are telling me that it's the good news stories at the front end.

And one thing I learned very early on in Northern Ireland, it's a very small place. What happens, people tell me where I am every day of the week. I know where I am every day of the week surprisingly, but they like to tell me they've seen me or they've heard where I was.

It's a very small place. And it's the good news stories of officers just going the extra mile, the extra yard to make the difference in a community where historically they didn't have that opportunity. That gets around that community very, very quickly.

And there are many stories. And I won't bore you with them, but it's just around solid effective policing. Police officers proving they are determined to protect people, regardless of where they live and regardless of their background.

We've not just accepted change in our organization. I think we have embraced it. And if you look at the Patten Report indeed, Al Hutchinson before he became the police ombudsman was the oversight commissioner that held us to account for managing the Patten changes.

About ninety percent of those changes are now delivered. That is to say, of 175 recommendations, the vast majority are signed off. And that was a huge task and a huge change process. Patten of course was some time ago. And no organization can ever stand still.

Patten was a moment in time. Change continues to be necessary. We're now moving perhaps into the next stage of that. But we do have, and we have established on the back of Patten a very open and a very transparent police service.

It is scrutinized. The secretary of state referred to it. I am without doubt in my judgment and many others the most accountable police service in the world. And I think that has also contributed to the high satisfaction rate of our communities. The 84 percent figure. Not my figure. An independent survey across Northern Ireland.

And also another figure which is quite interesting. Ninety percent of people in Northern Ireland feel safe in their own neighborhoods. They think the rest of Northern Ireland is far more violent and dangerous than their bit. That's not surprising. It's what they read in the papers.

But in their experience of their community, they feel safe ninety percent of the time. Crime is, as Richard kindly pointed out, at a six year low, down to about twelve percent this year alone. Criminal damage is down eighteen percent. Violent crime is down twelve percent. Robbery down 32 percent.

Five years ago, I was describing a place that had the highest level of transit robberies in the whole of the United Kingdom. We now don't even feature on the scale; it is indeed so low by working with the business community.

So, crime has shown a downward trend. And our job is to keep that trend going. The secretary of state pointed out, it is a very safe place if I was thinking of investing anywhere in the world.

In terms of why has that happened? Well, I think from our organizational—our own—my own organization's perspective, I think again we can claim some of the success. We have reorganized. We're reorganizing again. I'm reducing my number of operational police commanders from 29 to eight, to give them far bigger pieces of business, far more command of far more people, to deliver an effective service.

Our prime operations group which again did not exist six years ago is now firmly established as 1,200 officers and staff who focus on all the intelligence matters, all of the serious and organized crime, all the management of intelligence. And indeed, all the terrorist offenses.

So we now have real experts who cover the whole of Northern Ireland to deal with the most serious of offenses. In my view, that's one of the most significant changes I think we achieved. And we did it in about twelve months from when I took over.

We have professionalized major investigation. Now, we can not clearly claim all the credit as a police organization. I think other things have happened which have contributed. And we can reflect on that to some extent.

I think ever increasing partnership. More communities are engaging with us to work together. Police officers and communities are working together to tackle and deal with local crime issues. We have—our district policing partnerships are very important to Patten recommendation. Local accountability, local community leaders, elected and non-elected, holding my district commander to account every month in public is a very powerful way of focusing police activity at the front end in the areas where our communities want us to act.

Our focus in terms of our style of police, another major Patten recommendation around community policing. That is not a soft option. If one looks at the current threats, you know, we're discussing with some

colleagues here the international terrorist threat, I think you deal with it two ways.

And while this may not be around international terrorism, I think there's a link between community policing, solid community policing and how we stop the next 7/7 in London, for example, is by having the confidence of communities who can tell us or tell their local officer who they know because they've seen him or her the last year, two years in that community making a difference. That someone is just began to behave differently. Someone's become radicalized. Someone's been away on holiday to the Middle East and has come back and is talking a different way.

These are the people who will give us the local intelligence which we can feed into our national structures. Absolutely essential. So it's not a soft option. It's around protecting communities at every level of policing, from the most serious to indeed the most routine.

I touched on Patten. It's been quite a bit of hard work. We could have actually ticked every box in the Patten Report without actually achieving an awful lot of change. It was far more difficult and complicated than simply saying we've signed these off.

It was about a change—a change in style. It was a change in culture. It was a fundamental change, root and branch, in how we did our business. That's why I think I'm so proud of what my officers have achieved.

They embraced this in its totality, rather than simply ticking boxes. I'll just touch on a few of the recommendations. Because A, I touched on them five years ago. And B, they're quite interesting. We recruit on fifty/fifty. Very important. We recruit—fifty percent of my new officers are Catholic in terms of the law. Fifty percent are termed non-Catholic. I think I'm still trying to work out which side I come from.

But it is a very important recommendation. On the 1st of February this year, 24 percent of my force were drawn from a Catholic community. That's up from eight percent when I took over.

We're well on the way to meet the target, because Patten set a set of parameters of thirty percent Catholic officers by 2010 when of course Patten reaches its end game. An interesting knock on from Patten was the fact that we now recruit far more women than we ever did before.

Again, in 2001, only fourteen percent of my organization was female. Now, the figure sits at 22 percent which is the national average in the United Kingdom. And it will by 2010 be close to thirty percent. Just under half of new officers currently who join policing are women.

A number of recommendations that were important for me from Patten. One was around how we now share resources. We train each

other. We share people. I have officers going down there for three or four months. Commissioner Murphy sends officers to me.

One of the more basic ones was a phone line between my office and Commissioner Murphy's office. So, if I need a secure conversation, I can pick up the phone and I will get Commissioner Murphy on the other end or vice versa.

That works about ninety percent of the time. It's the most sophisticated telecommunications and secure telephone system we have currently on the shore nationally, which is why the other ten percent of the time, it's my mother ringing me on that phone. I'm not sure how she's achieved it, but it seems to work.

But we do have excellent officers. And I think that's a very important part of the process. Policing is a career of first choice. Well, every time I advertise for 220 new officers, I get seven and a half thousand applications. Eighty thousand applications to join in the last six years.

Of those, 38 percent consistently have come from a Catholic community and about 37 percent from women. They come from all communities. They come from all backgrounds. The average age of a new officer is thirty joining my service. Very experienced people, drawn from all sorts of different professions before they even join us. As ninety percent of policing is about talking and understanding and relating to people, very important in transferable skills.

Some of those people have made very courageous choices. It was not easy five years ago to join policing from certain parts of Northern Ireland. But people have done it. They have joined it. Their families have suffered from— as a result. And families still suffer.

In fact, we had to move a family only last week simply because their son had joined my police service. So they are very courageous people who are very determined to deliver a service to their communities.

There is some unfinished business. Dissident republican terrorism has not gone away. And currently causes us huge concerns. They are small in number. They are determined to wreck everything that's been achieved. Not just by policing, but by Northern Ireland in general.

They behave rather like an anchor stuck in the sand. They want to wreck what's been achieved. They have no credibility. They are isolated and they're basically criminal in the sense that they're out to commit criminal acts for themselves, but using terrorist tactics from the past.

But they are extremely dangerous. In recent months, you may or may not be aware of it, they attempted to murder two of my officers off duty, one in Duncannon, one in Derry.

And that's another unique feature of policing in Northern Ireland. If you're an NYPD officer, when you go home off duty, you are in far less danger than when you are on duty. If you're a police officer, the threat goes up because they've been targeted when they're at home or when they're off duty or when they're driving to and from work.

We could have had two murders, two police officers, two police funerals just before Christmas. And one asks the question, what would the impact be on policing had that been successful? We are determined to deal with them. Robust professional policing continues. We will deal with them within the criminal justice system and with great cooperation, from the community.

They have been immensely important because many of the attacks of course are mounted from the Republic of Ireland. One other issue which I think places as huge a challenge as policing in the past, again, the past has not gone away. And I do think that if we don't grip these issues, this issue in particular, five years of hard work could simply unravel if it is not taken very seriously.

As the police service, we established what we call the historic inquiry team. It's a unique idea in policing. It's around dealing with all the unsolved murders from the past. Over three thousand people died during that time, many never solved.

We have a team of officers who does nothing but research and look at all those issues. Look at every case in turn. Speak to the families. Family focused. And try to bring some resolution to the families who have never understood or been told much about those particular crimes.

It is a huge task and we are determined and very proud of what we are delivering as a practical contribution to taking responsibility for what happened before. As I said, 3,268 is the awful number of cases we are now looking at.

It's a truly unique structure. It is unparalleled anywhere else in the world. But when we set it up, we did not see it as the one way of dealing with the past. We saw it as part of a solution. And I am very pleased to see that at last, we now have the Eames and Bradley review, looking at other ways of dealing with the past.

Because I'm absolutely clear that until everyone, and I mean everyone comes to terms with what they did in the past, we will not be able to move on to the next stage of a far more successful and positive future.

So as we move forward, I think, you know, there will be a time of consolidation in the next year or two. The secretary of state referred to the evolution of policing and justice. I am on record giving evidence to that committee. There is no policing impediment why that couldn't actually happen tomorrow.

It's a political decision. But I can work within the new structures, as well as I can work with the structure that is retained currently by Westminster. I think it's another year that we're going to find ourselves in the middle of that political debate whether we like it or whether we don't. That is where we will happen to be.

I think it'll be challenging for me personally because as expectations continue to rise, as we get more confidence from communities, resources are continually stretched. No doubt exactly the same as Commissioner Kelly here. You know, resources are always behind the demand curve.

So we have to continue to work hard to gain the efficiencies, to maximize the front end policing response to the communities and continue to reduce crime. That of course is not just a matter for police.

And I think one of the really exciting things about Northern Ireland now is communities, interest groups are coming on board with us and understanding the collective power of fighting crime together, rather than sort of abrogating responsibility to the police service to get on with it, and working together. And I think that's what makes it such an exciting place to be. Thank you very much.

Questions & Answers

Sir Hugh Orde

and

Secretary Shaun Woodward

RICHARD ABORN: Well, that was terrific. I guess Hugh has in some way answered the current hot political question in this country which is, who will answer the red phone at three in the morning? It sounds like it'll be your mother. That'll be startling to a lot of people in this nation. Both gentlemen have agreed to take some questions. So, I would invite them from anyone who would like to start. Thank you.

Q. How has technology played a role in your work with PSNI?

A. HUGH ORDE: One of the big challenges the Royal Ulster Constabulary had was, because of the troubles, all the money was being, simply had to be spent on keeping people alive.

So, the infrastructures suffered terribly. And when I took over, I eventually— I remember five years ago, I could not e-mail my senior colleagues. And when you're covering five and a half thousand square miles of real estate, it's very difficult to talk, to communicate without that technology.

65 million pounds of investment has been put into our IT systems. So we are now— we've got the biggest roll out of IT in Europe in terms of policing. So we are really catching up very quickly. Now, resources are tight again. We're now looking again at how much further we can go and how quickly we can go.

But we have all the basic IT structures in place. Certainly in terms of the most sophisticated areas of our business intelligence handling is now fully computerized. So we are now catching up from our colleagues. And soon we should be pretty much on a par with them.

Q. We just talked about this before. But maybe you can address the issue of electronic surveillance in Northern Ireland.

A. SHAUN WOODWARD: Yes. Like anything else, one of the challenges we had when Patten came in was to convince, because of the problems of the past and the challenges many of which are now subject to public

inquiries, we had a proper system of accountability around intelligence handling and how you gather intelligence, be it through technology or be it through human source intelligence, which is absolutely vital.

The notion that any police service cannot rely on informants is fundamentally flawed. So we would operate strictly within what are now some very tight rules and regulations. The regulation of investigatory powers act. It's an awful mouthful to say. It's a lot harder to understand.

But it means there are certain accountability mechanisms in place if you want to deploy technology in support of crime fighting. But we do it, we use it all the time and we will continue to use it.

The big debate in the United Kingdom continues to be, can you use wiretap as evidence? And the Prime Minister has made some very positive statements more recently, so that I think that's moving on. I've always been a believer you can use wire tap as evidence. I've always, it would be fair to say in the UK context, I am not a lone voice. Among chief constables, it's changing.

But the general view is it should be held as intelligence only. There are cases I think where it— there is justification at the most serious end of crime to introduce it as evidence to secure convictions. And I think that's— there's a lot of potential there.

Q. Are there any links between groups like Al Qaeda and the IRA?

A. HUGH ORDE: The short answer is no. I think they're very different worlds. What we do know, and what's interesting for me around, if you look at what we call international terrorism, which is quite an attractive name.

If you look at the terrorist attacks in London, they're actually domestic terrorism. These were local people who happen to have gone abroad to get trained, for example. But of course, if you look at the IRA, many of those people were trained in the Middle East themselves.

So there's no evidence of cross overs in, you know, the modern world against the old world. The one fundamental difference I think in terms of the terrorist threat we face and the terrorist threats, the domestic threat we face converse to the new terrorist threat faced by the world is then there is no knowledge or history or experience in northern Ireland of terrorists actually trying to blow themselves up as part of the plan.

There were some accidents. There were some proxy bombs, but they were never brave enough in that bizarre sense to actually do that. So, the experience of Northern Ireland is fundamentally different in that regard.

Q. Hugh has commented that from his vantage point, he could almost hand over power tomorrow. I wonder from a political standpoint what you see as the last few remaining hurdles that still need to be overcome. Besides leadership. If any.

A. SHAUN WOODWARD: Well, I think, it is about leadership. And I heard one of the DUP leaders recently talking about, this is a big emotional challenge for the unionist community. The emotional challenge being to allow power sharing to include Sinn Féin having responsibility for policing and criminal justice.

And I understand that. And the problem of course as a politician is you have to distinguish between the arguments that people arrive at through rational roots and those they arrive at through emotional roots. And you know, if you've had to deal with the history and the terrible things that terrorism has done to people in Northern Ireland, you can understand the fear and the worry that is struck in people's hearts when they think about some of these things.

And therefore, you can't approach an emotional response necessarily with a rational argument. Because if you didn't arrive at your response rationally, you aren't going to be able to unlock it with rationale.

So, it does come back to being about leadership. And that's what I meant about it not being a science. It is about those who lead the unionist community actually deciding they want to make that difference and lock it down.

And I think to touch on something that Hugh referred to in his speech about dissident activity, it's a very important distinction to make between the activities of the terrorists who were part of PIRA and the activities of those who are in organizations like RIRA and KIRA.

There were never tens of thousands of people who were actually going to be part of the provisional IRA. There were a lot of them. But the thing is, they had support in the community. The critical point about the terrorists today in Northern Ireland, those who are in RIRA, those who are in KIRA as the main examples, is they have no support in the community.

There is no group of people out there who would elect them into parliament. You know, the big shock for Mrs. Thatcher was actually seeing members of these organizations in the 1980's being elected to Westminster. They may not have taken up their seats, but it suddenly became very clear to the British government that these people had massive support in the communities.

The actions of those cowards, and I think the word is cowards, those criminals who tried to murder Hugh's officers at the end of last year. And you know, to give you one example, this is a police officer in one instance who they targeted. They followed him every day. He obviously didn't know that.

One day, he dropped his children at school. And at the traffic lights, they put the bullets into his chest. But the point is, nobody wants to hide these people. Hugh has had unprecedented levels of cooperation from the Catholic community who are actually giving material to him to help bring these people to justice.

We've got to turn those into witness statements. And you in this room know how hard that can yet be. But this is a seismic change from just a few years ago. And these people have no support. So, I think the really big thing that we hold onto here is that this is very, very different from the past. Those who want to disrupt us going into this future are a very small number of people.

There is no political community behind them. And therefore, again, for the politicians in this emotional issue they go through, they have to face a question which is this one. The longer they leave the gap now between completing the evolution and staying where we are, they give an opportunity to the really bad guys.

Once we close that gap, once we complete the evolution, we really can close these people down. And that's a question those who for emotional reasons may find themselves lacking in confidence. But the duty of a politician is not to lack confidence. The duty of a politician is to lead. And I say that it's time for these political leaders to lead.

RICHARD ABORN: That's great. And I think that's a wonderful point to close on. Thank you both very much. I think if I just can punch this up a little, I think that was really a key insight about how community support for a political process can strip away the other political support for groups that would be disruptive.

And I think that applies in a number of places in the world today. So I thank you. I thank you both very, very much. That was very interesting. Many thanks to all of you for attending. ■



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