

Security Minister's speech on security and crime after Brexit

Good morning, a big thank you to Dean and Policy Exchange for putting together what I am sure will be a fascinating event.

It is a chance to talk about something that is close to all of our hearts and should be close to the forefront of our minds in terms of the security of our country at every level. When we talk about security we often focus on counter-terrorism and the challenges we see that are particularly brought to the forefront when we see tragedies as we have done in Grays last week.

We have to think about what more we can do to be ready for the challenge and pressures of serious and organised crime and how that affects us every single day, particularly in a fast changing environment as the technology is changing and allowing to criminals to attack us in terms of fraud and cyber-crime.

I would argue that we here in the UK have been trailblazing in technological, operational progress when it comes to how we protect our citizens, for a very long time.

From Operation Mincemeat and cracking the enigma code in WW2 to the Global Coalition against Daesh, we in the UK can proudly say we have shown the world that we have a first-class global security capability. That's something we should be proud of, but we should also be ready to challenge ourselves about what's next, and how we continue to make sure that we are world leading in protecting our citizens.

We cannot be complacent. I have the honour to every day have the ability to work with our security services to see what they do. I am determined to make it my mission to keep the UK at the forefront of keeping our citizens safe. I am very clear about the amazing work our agencies, like the NCA and all our law enforcement agencies, do in that regard.

And so what does Brexit mean for this? Against all the odds and what many said wasn't possible, the Prime Minister has gone to Europe and secured a fresh deal, and secured one that managed to pass second reading in the House of Commons. One that delivers on the result of the referendum. One that delivers an opportunity for UK security.

This morning I am going to outline my vision for the future security of the UK. This has 3 key messages that I would like to share: we will be international, we will be on the cutting-edge, and we will be clear that we want to hit criminals where it hurts.

We will be international.

Terrorists and criminals know no boundaries. We had that brought into clear perspective with the tragedy in Grays just last week. Although we are leaving

the EU, we are not leaving Europe, and we will continue to work closely with our partners there, focusing our efforts where there is genuine mutual benefit, seeking deeper, more effective relationships.

We will harness the UK's role as a leader in this area to pursue an ambitious and close security relationship with the EU. Brexit gives us the chance to develop an even stronger and closer global relationship with our partners as well. Brexit creates an opportunity to look beyond our traditional methods and to take a global approach to security.

To do this we need to go further in investing in our international relationships, such as with our partners in 5 Eyes, with Interpol, and with countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Pakistan and India, to name but a few. Just this month I laid in Parliament our new data access agreement with the USA, a global first that will allow us to target child exploitation and terrorism online. It will help us ensure that there is no safe place for those that seek to do us harm.

Our approach to organised crime and counter-terrorism is world-class. We will continue to project UK influence, through capacity building work in areas such as Anti-Corruption, and collaborative action with overseas partners to tackle international illicit financial flows, to ensure global prosperity and the protection of UK assets.

We will also collaborate to combat terrorism and organised crime as a global problem. Our counter-terror CONTEST strategy is the basis for the UN's global doctrine and we will carry on supporting activity to combat terrorist groups of any ideology that threaten our way of life.

We will be cutting-edge, because the threat we face is increasingly sophisticated, and with technological change, fast moving.

Organised crime gangs, paedophiles, terrorists and hostile states all use technology to conduct their crimes and to hide from justice. But we must not let them. We have set up cyber-crime units in each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales and announced 30 million pounds to bolster law enforcement capabilities to tackle child abuse offenders who operate on the dark web.

We mustn't be afraid to call out changes that are coming that can threaten the safety of people as well. We want technology itself to be part of the solution. We want to work with industry to reduce the availability of terrorist and child abuse content online.

There is just too much ease with which that kind of material can currently go online, and the speed of which we're able to deal with that is not as good as it can be. We want to work with industry to make sure that goes faster and better. To make sure we are clear about the risks of things like the encryption work that Facebook are talking about moving to. The fact that it could mean that we see what is effectively now restricted to the dark web, coming into the open web. That's not in their interest and it's certainly not in any national interest. But that collaboration work pays dividends.

Earlier this month the Metropolitan Police set up an innovative project with Facebook to train algorithms to identify and remove live streaming of terrorist content. We cannot allow the online world to become a safe haven for terrorists or sex offenders.

Vital to this is the continued engagement of companies such as Facebook on issues such as end to end encryption is that fact that we can work together and find a way through, and we must. Things like end to end encryption would be hugely detrimental to the work of our law enforcement, and to the safety and security of our citizens.

Last week I announced our new drone strategy, another global first. Drone technology provides enormous opportunities for leisure and industry. But it also provides new opportunities to criminal organisations and terrorists. Our strategy is about minimising the threat from malicious use of drones and to strike a balance that allows us to ensure we can reap the fullest rewards of incorporating drone technology into society.

To launch this strategy I visited QinetiQ in Farnborough and saw another example of the UK's technological expertise in the security field. In a way that can be good for our economy and economic opportunities. We've got to make sure that we've got the regulatory framework right, and get the balance right between economic opportunity and keeping people safe.

And finally, making sure we are unashamedly hitting criminals where it hurts, because toughening up our criminal justice system has to go beyond prison sentences.

These criminal organisations are businesses. They are criminal businesses, but they are businesses, and the finance matters to them. We must stop weapons and drugs from reaching our streets and ensure that criminals cannot become rich from their ill-gotten gains.

In the past couple of months Border Force and NCA investigations have led to 2 record seizures of heroin and firearms being smuggled across our border. We have stopped these from reaching our streets and prevented the horrific crimes that they enable.

And in the last year we have seized 217 million pounds from criminals, using this money to compensate victims and fund further law enforcement. This is an increase of 22% on last year and reflects fantastic work across government to ensure that crime does not pay.

Underpinning all of this is the brilliant work of the National Crime Agency, and I'm delighted that Lynne Owens, Director General of the NCA, is here today. Yesterday I visited the NCA to announce the launch of the Serious and Organised Crime review. This will be an ambitious review to consider how we turbo charge our efforts in this field. I am delighted that Sir Craig Mackey, QPM, has agreed to lead this. His wide experience in the world of law enforcement is the perfect foundation to address these challenges.

The review will build on the Strategy that we published a year ago, looking

at the system, and the laws and powers and governance structures that we have in place. To be able to inform us not just how we preserve what we have, but how we are ready to change and meet the challenges of the future. So we continue to have and go further in having a world class law enforcement system.

In particular the review must focus on criminal activity that is on the rise – such as fraud and county lines, as well as important issues such as immigration crime as illustrated by the tragic incident in Essex last week. And we will consider how we position ourselves to close the gaps that give space for such criminal activity to take place. We will draw on good ideas from other countries and suggest how those ideas can be adapted to work in a uniquely UK context.

Craig will propose what long term investments might be needed to carry us into the second half of the 21st century with the right capabilities, skills and structures to leave no space for serious and organised criminals to operate. This will feedback ahead of the Spending Review next year and we will ensure that we have the resources to support innovative solutions.

We are the only party committed to cracking down on crime. Successive Conservative Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries have made that a priority, and we should be proud of that fact. Criminals must not be allowed to enjoy the profits from their offending at the expense of law-abiding citizens. They need to be clear that this is a country that they should be fearful of trying to operate in.

It is our responsibility to keep the UK safe and to strike fear into those that would do us harm at any level. I take the weight of that responsibility very seriously.

We as a government will continue to take it seriously, and we want to make sure that we are ready to deal with those challenges.

To meet them, match them and move beyond them, over the next few years.