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- Inmates assault staff every two days in Scotland's jails

11 Nov 2017



A member of staff in Scotland's prisons is assaulted every two days by an inmate, new figures have revealed.

Information obtained by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed there were 190 prisoner-on-staff attacks in 2016/17.

Today, shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr is visiting HMP Kilmarnock to discuss with staff how to reduce the level of assaults, and make them safer during the course of their working day.

Scottish Prison Service statistics show, in the past three years, there have been a total of 564 assaults on workers across the country's prisons.

And while the number dropped slightly last year, the Scottish Conservatives said more action was still needed to make prison officers and guards safer.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"We know that prisons can be high-risk places for people to work.

"But it's shocking that staff are being exposed to this much danger in the course of their working day.

"They do a fantastic job, a vital job, and one in which they deserve more protection.

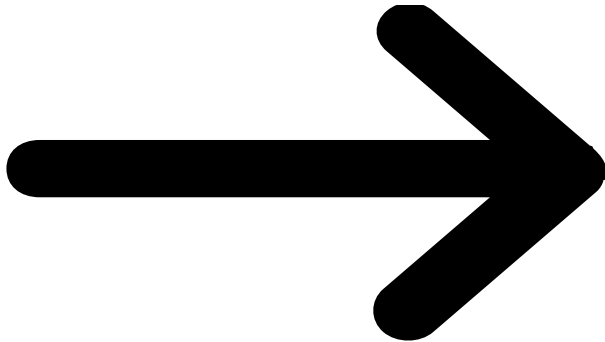
"That's something I've been raising as part of my visit to Kilmarnock today.

"Any prisoner who's attacked a member of staff needs to be dealt with severely, so they know the consequences of such action just simply won't be worth it."

Sturgeon must condemn 'embarrassing and shameful' predecessor

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10 Nov 2017



Nicola Sturgeon should put old loyalties aside and condemn her predecessor Alex Salmond's latest media stunt, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It emerged last night that Scotland's former First Minister is to host a show on controversial Russian state broadcaster RT.

The station has been criticised for being a propaganda machine for the Russian government, and even registered itself as an "agent of the Russian state".

Given its links to the Kremlin, the Scottish Conservatives have a policy not to put guests up to appear on the station.

In contrast, SNP MPs and MSPs have repeatedly featured over the years.

Now deputy leader Jackson Carlaw has called on Nicola Sturgeon to condemn the move, and finally distance herself from the man whose job she took over in 2014.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"It's clear that Alex Salmond's moral compass now points towards Vladimir Putin's corrupt regime in the Kremlin.

"It beggars belief that a man who led Scotland for seven years should be reduced to a puppet of Russia's deeply damaging propaganda unit.

"Along with most people, ordinary SNP activists will be appalled by Mr Salmond's actions.

"Hopefully Nicola Sturgeon will find the courage finally to distance herself

from the embarrassing and shameful example being set by her predecessor.

“Old loyalties should not deter the current First Minister from speaking out immediately.”

[Sturgeon pledge to double SDI staff results in just 1 new appointment](#)

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10 Nov 2017



A pledge by Nicola Sturgeon to double the number of staff working for Scottish Development International (SDI) has led to just one new appointment.

Addressing the SNP conference a year ago, the First Minister promised that “we will more than double the number of Scottish Development International staff working across Europe”.

In the same speech, Sturgeon said the SNP would ‘establish permanent trade representation in Berlin – adding to our Investment hubs in Dublin, London and Brussels’

However, new information from the Scottish Government has confirmed – more than 12 months on from the pledge – there has been just one new worker hired.

The parliamentary answer to fellow Scottish Conservative MSP Rachel Hamilton has revealed that, at the time of Ms Sturgeon’s promise, there were 35 staff working for SDI in Europe, Middle East and Africa. There are now 40, only one of which is a new post.

Ms Sturgeon’s conference pledge last October followed pressure from the Scottish Conservatives to boost the work of SDI across the world in response to the Brexit vote months before.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“Last year, Nicola Sturgeon made a very clear promise that the number of SDI staff would be doubled.

“Now, more than 12 months on from that, the organisation has succeeded in appointing just one.

“That’s woefully short of the pledge set out by the First Minister, and the SNP now has to explain why it made such a fanciful commitment.

“Brexit provides an opportunity for Scotland to stretch its legs across the globe, but the Scottish Government has done virtually nothing about this.

“Instead, it has spent all its energy on complaining from the sidelines and stoking grievance.

“I appreciate no definitive time limit was placed on this pledge, but to have made such shocking progress in the space of a year is unacceptable.”

[More serious control room failings revealed](#)

9 Nov 2017



A series of serious failings at the heart of Police Scotland control rooms have been revealed.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Ruth Davidson pointed to hundreds of instances where the single force has deemed an incident so severe that it has been formally recorded.

The Scottish Conservative leader highlighted six specific instances – all of which have occurred in the last year – including examples of suicidal callers and domestic abuse victims.

It follows reports this week that Police Scotland failed to help a 999 caller who was later killed by her brother.

But while Nicola Sturgeon admitted there were problems, raising it at Holyrood was doing a “disservice” to the Scottish Government.

Today in the Scottish Parliament, Ruth highlighted the following examples of recent failures:

- A suicidal man who was told by call handlers to hang up
- A woman who had to phone three times to report a dead body in her property, after separate handlers missed that detail in the first two calls
- A householder who called to report that his door was being kicked in, but officers were never dispatched to investigate

The Scottish Government has been repeatedly criticised for centralising

control rooms, meaning local knowledge has been lost, and some 999 callers are forced to speak to staff hundreds of miles away.

Ministers said this move would not have an impact on the level of service.

But today, Ruth cited three specific examples from the last year, including:

- Police being sent to the wrong address while a woman was receiving threats from an ex-partner
- A man being threatened with a knife, and officers being sent to the right flat, the right street... but the wrong town
- Officers also being dispatched to an incorrect address after reports of a woman and her niece being assaulted.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“We were promised that taking control rooms out of local areas wouldn’t result in a loss of local knowledge.

“Michael Matheson promised that if performance dropped at any of these centres there would be ‘rapid intervention’.

“He made that pledge two years ago, and yet we’re still seeing hundreds of incidents.

“The SNP government has lost the confidence of the police on this matter, and needs to get a grip.”

Below are links to the six incidents raised by Ruth at First Minister’s Questions today:

Suicidal man told to hang up:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Suicidal-man-told-to-hang-up.pdf>

Two call handlers failing to record fact the caller was reporting a dead body:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Dead-body-in-house.pdf>

Call reporting a front door being kicked in:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Door-being-kicked-in.pdf>

Woman being threatened by ex-partner:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Threatening-texts-to-woman.pdf>

Man being threatened with a knife, police sent to wrong town:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Sent-to-wrong-town-over-knife-incident.pdf>

Woman who called reporting the ongoing assault of her mother and niece:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Niece-assault-wrong-town.pdf>

To see more reports, contact the Scottish Conservative press office.

[Concerns that transport police won't have employment representation](#)

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8 Nov 2017



The SNP has been criticised for failing to provide guarantees that transport police officers will have employment representation when their contracts are transferred to Police Scotland.

The single force will take on responsibility for the British Transport Police next year, after nationalist parties controversially forced the move through in the summer.

But, as it stands, no details have been provided about which union body will look after the welfare and interests of current BTP staff north of the border.

Those officers are currently represented by the BTP Federation, but those links will be severed when the move goes ahead.

But experts have said it's also unlikely the Scottish Police Federation – who help Police Scotland staff – will be able to step in.

And now committee convener, Scottish Conservative MSP Margaret Mitchell, has sought clarification from the SNP over the confusion.

It is the latest problem to beset the swallowing up of BTP duties by Police Scotland, a move which has been severely criticised by officers.

Critics have also pointed out it's the worst time for a crisis-hit single force to be taking on additional responsibilities.

Scottish Conservative Central Scotland MSP Margaret Mitchell said:

“The current situation is BTP officers who transfer won't be represented by the BTP Federation, and it remains unclear if they'll be looked after by the Scottish Police Federation.

“That's an utterly unacceptable state of affairs.

“There are clearly consequences of BTP officers being merged with Police Scotland

“One of the possible consequences could be these hard-working and vitally important staff won’t have the representation everyone is entitled to.

“Given this major change has been imposed on these officers against their will, the least they should expect is for this to be sorted out as a matter of urgency.”

To see a copy of Margaret Mitchell’s letter, visit:

http://www.parliament.scot/S5_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/20171107MMtoMinisterforTransport.pdf

The controversial move to transfer BTP officers to Police Scotland was forced through earlier this year:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40404532>

The strategy has been consistently criticised by the Scottish Conservatives:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/09/merger-of-british-transport-police-and-police-scotland-should-be-put-on-hold/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/03/btp-outlines-extraordinary-risks-of-merging-force-with-police-scotland/>