

First of all I would like to thank the excellent Serbian you for giving me the opportunity to speak today on *“Mechanisms of Improving International Police Cooperation in Combating Drug Trafficking”* I will talk about mechanisms that have been introduced in the UK which enable us to operate quickly and effectively with partner law enforcement agencies from across the world.

I will be speaking for just a few minutes on the concept of SOCA and the measures that we have implemented in the UK. I know that the UK has a unique approach to tackling the threat of organised crime and that some of the options and ideas that I talk about will not exist in other countries. I hope to promote ideas and to demonstrate that the SOCA international approach does get results and I will give concrete examples of some of those results. Drug trafficking is by its very nature a criminal business driven by greed and I would like to emphasise the importance of financial investigations running parallel with each and every drug trafficking enquiry. Our experience in the UK tells us that professional criminals often fear more about losing their assets and criminal profits than they do about a lengthy custodial sentence. I will also include a brief overview on how the success of SOCA has been built on leading to the introduction in 2012 of a new UK National Crime Agency known as the NCA.

Organised crime is entrepreneurial, agile and resilient. It does not respect regional, national or international boundaries, and often exploits the joins between jurisdictions. It ruins lives and targets the most vulnerable individuals, communities and businesses, and the public purse: and it is directly or indirectly responsible for much of the crime we see on our streets. Latest estimates show that there are around 39,000 organised criminals impacting on the UK. It is also increasingly globalised and IT-enabled. Like any business, it will exploit opportunities in the market and it prospers in ungoverned, and inadequately regulated, spaces where it corrupts businesses and governments and potentially causes fragile states to fail. This trend is accelerating exponentially with the increasing dependence of society on the internet.

A sophisticated and proactive approach is required to disrupt organised crime; this was the thinking behind the formation of SOCA in 2006. With just short of 4,000 officers operating from around 40 offices across the UK and in a similar number of countries around the world, SOCA mixes traditional law enforcement methods and innovative approaches, particularly to target the long tail of enablers on whom organised crime relies for its logistics and to launder its profits.

Tackling organised crime also requires partnership and collaboration, which again has been key to SOCA's approach. It works with its partners, across the intelligence and law enforcement community, the public, private and third sectors, including the military, at home and overseas. Indeed, if organised crime is a global phenomenon then the response to it has to take place in an international context.

Since its inception, SOCA has taken a long-term interventionist approach to disrupting organised crime, not just through traditional law enforcement tools, although putting top-end criminals behind bars remains important. Innovative tools can often be of lower cost, yet high impact to organised criminals – important given the numbers involved. They can also prevent crimes from happening in the first place.

As organised crime is a global phenomenon then the response to it has to take place in an international context. For this reason we have an international network of over 130 officers

enabling operational reach across over 120 countries. Our international work allows us to leverage efforts of partners in the UK's interests and address the problem of organised crime before it reaches the UK.

Agencies and government departments have a range of powers that in a properly planned fashion can influence criminal behaviour or use appropriate regulatory powers; this can be as an adjunct to criminal investigation, as discrete activity, or as part of a comprehensively set of tasked activities on a project base

The private sector can do much to assist in the fight against organised crime. In part they have a responsibility to actively protect themselves from vulnerability and risk, particularly from the threat of cyber crime. However, they can also do much to ensure that the enablers that organised crime use are denied or subject to appropriate reporting
By denying criminals access to funds and property, we can hit them where it hurts. For many organised criminals, this worries them more than the prospect of going to prison

We monitor criminals in SOCA's sights for life, and have tailored plans for the most serious career criminals, to prevent them from continuing their criminal activities in prison or after release. For example, we seek to apply ancillary orders on conviction as appropriate, to prevent and disrupt further criminal activity.

We are seeing the benefits of our approach in ensuring the systemic management of all SOCA's persons of interest, including:

- criminal justice success against significant 'top-end' criminals;
- evidence of the disruption of criminal groups;
- impact against the 'long tail' of organised crime; and
- More criminals within the reach of law enforcement.
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At market level, SOCA is also achieving success. We are seeing tangible impact on the UK heroin market as a result of sustained law enforcement activity. An improved intelligence picture, together with excellent cooperation with our partners along the heroin route, resulted in the interdiction of 14.7 tonnes of heroin in the course of SOCA operational activity over the past year. Heroin shortages have been reported in several parts of the UK while there have been increases in the wholesale price of heroin throughout the supply chain, making it more difficult for criminals to operate their businesses. Our strong relationship with overseas law enforcement has also contributed to the imprisonment in Turkey of a number of key figures involved in the trafficking of heroin to Europe and the UK.

Similarly, law enforcement activity has impacted on the wholesale prices of cocaine which are now at an all-time high, with one kilogram reaching prices of over £50,000. The average purity at dealer level has also fallen sharply to about 20 per cent, and by the time it reaches the end user the purity levels often range from only one to ten per cent.

Drugs seized at sea and in-country have played a vital contribution to the market effects I described earlier. For example 97% of the heroin interdicted by SOCA operational activity last year was upstream.

However, the joint effort in Afghanistan also contributes to wider HM Government aims within Afghanistan including support to building governance, stability and security within the country.

The government has committed to introduce the NCA
SOCA international will remain unchanged with the introduction of the NCA and we will continue to provide support in the region.

SOCA welcomes the NCA. It will enable us to take the response to organised crime to the next level. It presents the UK with an outstanding opportunity to achieve a further step change in its response to organised crime.

It will build on the knowledge, capabilities and skills that have been developed already, and provide more effective national tasking and coordination across the various agencies involved.

A unified and coherent data set will also make easier the identification of criminals engaged in more than one form of serious organised criminality. In short, it will ensure that more enforcement activity takes place against more organised criminals (at reduced cost), and strengthen our border policing arrangements.