

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF THE 35th MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2004 AT 2:00 PM IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Denis Bradley (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Alex Attwood
Viscount Brookeborough
Mr Sam Foster
Mr Barry Gilligan
Mr Willie Hay
Mr Tom Kelly
(1) Lord Kilclooney
Mrs Pauline McCabe
Mr Alan McFarland
Mr Eddie McGrady
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Sammy Wilson

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

(2) Mr Hugh Orde, (Chief Constable)
(2) Mr Roy Toner (ACC Corporate Development and Change Management)
(2) Mr Joe Stewart, Director of Human Resources
(2) Mr David Mercier, Head of Legal Services Branch
(2) Ms Sinead McSweeney, Head of Media and Public Relations
(2) Chief Superintendent Sheamus Hamill, Operational Support
(2) Two PSNI Officers

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Trevor Reaney (Chief Executive)
Director of Communications
Director of Community Affairs
Director of Corporate Services
Director of Policy
Three Board Officials

- (1) Part Item 2 only
(2) Item 1 and part item 2

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Mr Byrne, Mr Dougherty and Mrs Moore.

The Chairman welcomed the PSNI representatives and an observer from the Oversight Commissioner's office to the meeting.

2. PRESENTATION FROM THE CHIEF CONSTABLE ON THE FUTURE OF THE FULL-TIME RESERVE

The Chairman made an opening statement reminding Members of the background to the meeting with the Chief Constable concerning the future of the Full-Time Reserve. A copy of the Chairman's statement is attached at Annex 'A'.

The Chief Constable read a prepared statement announcing his decisions concerning the future of the Full-Time Reserve. A copy of the Chief Constable's statement is attached at Annex 'B'.

The Chairman summarised the Chief Constable's decisions regarding the Full-Time Reserve as follows:-

- Retention of 680 Full-Time Reserve officers, from the current strength of 1487 officers, on the basis of a 3 year contract to be issued on 1 April 2005
- The deployment of the 680 officers would be 430 on static security duties; 141 delivering a range of general policing services; 109 in specialist Tactical Support Groups (TSGs)
- The officers that were not being retained would be released in a phased manner over an 18 month period from the termination of their contracts.

Each Member attending the meeting was given an opportunity to question the Chief Constable in more detail. The Chief Constable and senior personnel present responded as follows:-

- The Chief Constable informed Members that he was confident that future policing resources would be sufficient to police Northern Ireland efficiently and effectively
- The terms of the severance package offered to officers was outside the remit of the Chief Constable and was a matter for Government
- The Chief Constable advised Members that the Police Federation for Northern Ireland had indicated that the severance package represented a fair settlement
- Figures in respect of costs associated with retention and disposal of the 807 officers were not currently available and that until the age / service profile of officers availing of the severance package was known, it would be difficult to give accurate estimates
- The impact of the decision would be taken into account in the Human Resource Planning Strategy
- The Chief Constable planned to meet with District Commanders on 10 September 2004 regarding the decisions. District Commanders would be tasked to ensure that there was no impact on service at the “front end” of policing, including community policing
- That in future years the PSNI would be determined to operate as effectively and as efficiently as possible through measures such as the grouping of DCUs, increased civilianisation and the introduction of new Information Technology
- Lessons would be learned from the release of regular officers under their severance package and a process would be established to control the flow of reserve officers from the Service in a measured way

- There were no plans to reduce static protection provided to stations that already had such protection as a result of this decision
- Provided the necessary statutory regulations were put in place, the start date for releasing officers was planned for April 2005
- Issues surrounding the flexibility of reserve officers to transfer to duties at different stations would be considered
- The decision had been reached on an operational basis following a security review and had not been influenced by political considerations or by Government
- Since some serving officers and the PFNI would not be satisfied with the outcome of the decision it was recognised that managing the decision internally would be as difficult as managing it externally
- The Northern Ireland Office had indicated that an amount of £16m had been made available to the Chief Constable in respect of civilianisation
- The Chief Constable indicated that the public was more likely to support the decision if delivery of the policing service on the streets was maintained to a high standard

The Board:-

- Discussed the current level of overtime worked by the PSNI
- Discussed the potential for the resumption of further activity by proscribed organisations.

The Chief Constable and PSNI personnel left the meeting.

A Member indicated his intention to propose a motion seeking the Board to express its concern at the Chief Constable's decision. During discussion of this proposal, Members expressed differing views and the Chairman indicated his intention to vote in support of the Chief Constable's decision and his reasons for doing so, if this proved necessary.

Following further discussion, a motion was duly proposed and seconded that:

“the Board expresses its concern at the loss of 800 police officers at a time when the Chief Constable admits that Northern Ireland still faces a threat from seven paramilitary groups, all of which are operational in acts of terror and crime. We regret the loss of employment which this review will cause. We believe that this decision will further undermine the confidence of the public in the police at a time when there is a widespread perception that there is a shortage of police on the ground. We are concerned at the lack of clarity on the implications of the implementation of this review”.

Following a show of hands, the motion was lost by 7 votes to 8.

The meeting closed.

(Meeting closed 4:00 pm).

Secretariat

September 2004

CHAIRMAN

STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

POLICING BOARD MEETING – 9 SEPTEMBER 2004

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S PLANS IN RESPECT OF THE FULL TIME RESERVE

Let me begin this special meeting of the Board by welcoming the Chief Constable and his team. Before handing over to the Chief Constable, who I believe has a short presentation to make to us in respect of how he plans to handle the future of the Full Time Reserve, I would like to take a few moments to put the issue we are about to consider in context, an issue which it should be acknowledged is a contentious one. I believe it is important that I do this for the benefit of Members, and our police service colleagues, and also for the benefit of those who will read the record of this meeting. Representations have been made to the Board about the retention of the Full Time Reserve, representations from individual members of the public and from various DPPs.

In coming to the Board today I would remind the Chief Constable of the agreements laid out in the policing plan and of his statutory duty as laid out in section 21 of the 2003 Police Act, namely that

“the Chief Constable shall have regard to the policing plan in discharging his functions”

One of the key objectives in our policing plan for 2004/2007 is improving organizational effectiveness through maximizing the number of officers available for duty within District Commands. The target that we set for the police service was

“to fully implement the agreed Human Resource Planning Strategy within agreed timescales...”

In respect of the Full Time Reserve let me go back to the beginning.

The Patten report recommended [Recommendation 103] that “the future police service should not include a Full Time Reserve”. Patten went on to say that this decision in no way reflected on the “calibre and commitment of the reservists”, but rather it was to do with the structuring and, importantly, resourcing of the police service.

I believe that all Board members would support this view on the calibre and commitment of Full Time Reserve officers. We all know of excellent Full Time Reserve officers carrying out critical roles in District Command Units. It is with this in mind that we share the Patten vision that the Full Time Reserve officers should be encouraged to apply to join the regular officers.

The Board also believes that the service given by the Full Time Reserve officers should be recognized and that a package which covers financial as well as practical considerations should be put together. We recognize that, through the negotiations with the Police Federation, and indeed the efforts of the Policing Board, this has now been achieved. Members will today have received a copy of the details of the final package.

Since the establishment of the Board, Members have been anxious to ensure that the resources available to PSNI are used as effectively as possible. Not only does this help the Board fulfil its statutory duty of holding the service to account for the delivery of an effective and efficient police service but ultimately it sets the delivery of frontline policing within District Command Units at the core of all our work. And this is how it should be; this is what the public, DPPs and the many bodies that we engage with tell us they want and need from the PSNI.

In the absence of a Human Resource Planning Strategy it was difficult for the Board to make sense of all the many interlinking resource issues, one of which is the Full Time Reserve. To assist, the PSNI developed, and agreed with the Board, towards the end of 2002, a Human Resource Planning Strategy.

In that strategy, which covered issues such as

- Restructuring
- Redeployment
- Severance
- Sickness
- Security deployments
- Civilianisation
- Part-time reserve etc etc

an agreement was reached on the way forward for handling the future of the Full-time reserve.

While the strategy, in its entirety, was a critical management tool for both the service and the Board, the decisions that were reached on the Full Time Reserve were done within a context of recognizing the anxiety being experienced by Full Time Reserve officers, and their families, about the uncertainty of their future.

The Board was keen to alleviate that uncertainty.

So what was decided in the Human Resource Planning Strategy in respect of the Full Time Reserve was that:

“Subject to no further deterioration of the security situation and the continued success of the recruitment campaign for police trainees, the Full Time Reserve will continue up until 31 March 2005”

Specific actions were then detailed to help reach that point, which include:

- Redeploying all Full Time Reserve officers to security related duties
- Targeting the poor sickness levels within the Full Time Reserve ranks
- Renewing all Full Time Reserve contracts so that they have a common end date of 31 March 2005 and
- Finally that subject to a review of the prevailing security environment, arrangements will be made to phase out the remaining officers over an 18 month period, commencing from 1 April 2005.

I think it is important to remind ourselves at this juncture what the prevailing security situation was. It was that which existed during the summer of 2002 and is described in the Human Resource Planning Strategy.

One final aspect of the context is the financial implications of whatever agreement is reached on the Full Time Reserve. I would ask Members to bear in mind the overall budgetary provision for PSNI and the outcome of the SR2004 bidding process which will become known within the next month or so.

This is the context of our discussion today.

We recognize that the Chief Constable is the best person to assess the security situation and to gauge the operational needs of the service. For our part, we will want to know today

- The likely impact of the Chief Constable's decision on the delivery of an effective and efficient police service; and
- The likely impact on the delivery of the targets in the policing plan.

In respect of the latter I would congratulate the Chief Constable and his officers on the achievements that have been made in meeting the crime targets in the policing plan. We do not want to see that excellent progress being eroded.

I have acknowledged at the outset that this is a contentious issue but I would like members to keep these points in focus, particularly our critical role in ensuring that the Chief Constable's decision will not have an adverse impact on the delivery of the policing service in Northern Ireland and that we are reassured of that.

With that Chief Constable I will hand over to you to make your presentation and I would ask Members to keep their questions to the end.

Thank you Chief Constable.

Annex B

Statement of Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to Northern Ireland Policing Board regarding the Future of the Full Time Reserve 9th September 2004

Introduction

This decision has been one of the most challenging and difficult I have had to make over the past two years. It is made against a backdrop of decreasing crime and in improving security situation. It is made against a background of substantial reform and implementation of the Patten Report, and it is made with the knowledge that all police officers, support staff and the wider police family will be affected in one way or another by my decision. It has not been an easy task but I am clear that we now have a decision that I can stand over.

I am well aware that the decision which I and my Senior Management Team have made together and which I am here to communicate to the Board will give rise to much comment and debate.

I know that all political parties have a view on this issue – and I have had meetings with most of them. I know that this decision will play in the political world. However, I want to say strongly, that this is not a political decision. It is a policing decision. It is a decision based on an assessment of how we can deliver an effective frontline service in the environment in which we have to police that also acknowledges the strategic vision described in the Patten Report. It is an operational decision that

takes the current security situation fully into account and I accept responsibility for it.

Background

I want just briefly to sketch the background to our meeting today. In late 2002, and in the context of the overall Human Resource Planning Strategy, the Board agreed to recommend to the Secretary of State that Full Time Reserve Contracts be retained until at least 31 March 2005.

It was agreed that the future of the Full Time Reserve beyond that date would be reviewed in light of the prevailing security environment and the success of our recruitment competition. I undertook to return to the Board in September 2004 to outline my assessment of the security situation and my decision regarding the Full Time Reserve is based on that assessment. Our recruitment process, as you know, is working extremely well and we have no difficulty in meeting our annual target figures.

With regard to the Full Time Reserve, the starting point for this decision is the Patten Report. The position of the Full Time Reserve was determined by Patten Recommendation 103 which said that the future police service should not include a Full Time Reserve.

In line with the undertaking which I gave the board in 2002 I have carried out a substantial security review together with an assessment of the roles and functions of the Full Time Reserve officers. It is worth noting that in October 2002 the strength of the Full Time Reserve was 1,895. That has now reduced by 308 to 1,487 currently serving Full Time Reserve officers (627 static security duties, 751 security and other duties, 109 TSGs).

Decision Making Process

As you are all aware, I met with my Senior Management Team all day on Tuesday, 7 September and we held further meetings yesterday and this morning. It may be useful to say something around the structure of that meeting.

At the start of the day we considered the security review which was supported by a presentation from Crime Operations. My Legal Adviser then dealt with a number of legal issues ranging from obligations under both Human Rights and Health and Safety legislation to employment and contractual arrangements. The Director of Finance and Support Services presented the costs and financial implications arising from different alternatives. While it was important that we heard this latter information, it was not our primary consideration and did not influence our decision.

Following on from that, the Senior Management Team considered the submissions from both the Superintendents Association and the Police Federation of Northern Ireland. Let me say that I am very grateful to the staff associations for those submissions.

As a team we then turned to addressing the main roles and functions of the Reserve. We broke this down into three main tasks.

The first task was to consider the static security commitments faced by the organisation and the need, in the context of the security review, to continue with these functions – involving a decision around 627 Full Time Reserve officers. Secondly, we looked at the 751 or so FTR officers who are currently delivering a wide range of policing services alongside their Regular colleagues. Lastly, we considered the role of the Full Time Reserve (109) who currently serve in Tactical Support Groups, or TSGs as they are commonly known, and the security commitments which the TSGs fulfill.

As a Senior Management Team we debated all the issues at considerable length with our clear focus at all times being on the security situation, our duty to protect communities, and our duty of care towards our own officers and staff.

The security review

I mentioned earlier the security review on which we drew heavily in reaching our conclusions around the Full Time Reserve. At the outset we were mindful that no other policing organisation of which I am aware has to deal with the potential threat from seven armed and capable paramilitary groups.

[PIRA, RIRA, CIRA, UDA, UVF, LVF, INLA]

The security review focused on:

1. The threat posed by individual terrorist groups
2. Attitudes towards policing
3. Terrorist activity – community control
4. Organised crime and racketeering
5. Terrorist Groups – future intentions

Under each of those headings the key findings were as follows:

The threat posed by individual terrorist groups Terrorist activity is still ongoing albeit the general level of activity shows a downward trend over the period 2000-2004. Dissident republican groups remain the most significant threat to policing. There is every indication that they will maintain attacks on police patrols and stations.

The threat is not, however, evenly distributed – some areas face ongoing daily security challenges to policing while other districts face a more normal security environment. Due to the efforts of security forces North and South of the border, these groups have been seriously disrupted and many are in prison.

Dissident republicans have been responsible for a total of 114 terrorist incidents since January 2003 – including bombings, shootings, assaults, hijackings and other violent crime. During this period there were some 24 attacks planned/carried out against the military and police while intelligence would indicate more than 200 general security threats against security forces.

Since January 2003, PIRA has been involved in over 70 violent incidents and the INLA has been responsible for at least 20 violent incidents in the last 18 months.

All the loyalist groups – UDA, UVF, LVF - have been responsible for in excess of 160 violent incidents since January 2003. The regular feuding between loyalists has implications for police resources, especially TSGs.

For example, during the loyalist feud in May 2004, within the space of 13 days, the following incidents occurred: one murder; two shooting incidents; seven Improvised Explosive Device attacks and one attempted abduction. During the period a number of 'death threats' were issued and police recovered a quantity of explosives and firearms.

Attitudes towards policing Dissident Republican Groups reject the current policing arrangements. In addition to political opposition, they are engaged in an active campaign of intimidation, violence and threats. More than 50 attacks against DPPs/PB have occurred since January 2003.

Since 2002, 176 police officers have had to move house under the SPED arrangements as a result of the terrorist threats so we have by no means yet reached a world where police can live in confidence of not being targeted by paramilitary groups.

Terrorist activity – community control

All paramilitary groups engage in assaults and shootings against those alleged to be involved in 'anti-social' behaviour or other activity that attracts 'disapproval'. Republican groups carried out 471 attacks between January 2000 and July 2004. Loyalist groups carried out 896 attacks during the same period. Of the total 1,368 attacks, 723 were shootings.

In the period January – July 2004 there have been almost 2,500 'public order' incidents (these include contentious parades, petrol bombings, hijackings and general street disorder).

Historically, loyalist and republican groups have been involved in major disturbances, often involving considerable violence directed towards police and members of the public – particularly in interface areas. Since October 2002, there has been less civil disorder.

Prisons remain a major issue for all paramilitary groups. In the period 2000-2004 there were a total of 37 attacks on prison officers and prison establishments.

Dissident republican groups carried out five attacks – all directed against prison establishments. Loyalist groups carried out no attacks on prison property – but were responsible for 32 attacks against the homes and vehicles of serving, or retired, prison officers. At least half of these attacks involved bombs and/or the discharge of a firearm.

Organised Crime and Racketeering All paramilitary groups are engaged in serious and organised crime. It is not known how much of this activity is for 'personal gain' and how much funds the various terrorist infrastructures – but it is clear that overall criminal profits run into millions of pounds per annum. The Organised Crime Task Force 2004 Threat Assessment has identified the key role played by paramilitary organisations in serious and organised crime.

The assessment highlighted that:

- Paramilitary groups are very heavily involved in organised Intellectual
- Property Crime – valued at around £152 million per annum in lost business to the legitimate trade.
- Republican groups are heavily involved in oils fraud.
- 70% of reported incidents of extortion in 2003 were attributable to
- loyalist paramilitaries.
- 70% of republican groups and 60% of loyalist groups are involved in the
- illegal tobacco trade.

Terrorist Groups – future intentions

CIRA and RIRA continue to pursue policies that include the prosecution of a violent terrorist campaign. The Provisional movement has adopted a strategy of political engagement in recent years and this approach is likely to continue. PIRA has maintained its command and control structure and capability.

All loyalist groups remain in place. Currently there are no indications that any of the major loyalist groups plan to disband or stand down. All groups are expected to continue to engage in feuding, paramilitary attacks and criminal fundraising – some

of which is likely to be 'unsanctioned'. This has implications for the resourcing of specialist units within Crime Operations and TSGs.

The Tasks

I mentioned above that having heard the security review the team then went through three tasks. I want to deal with each of those in turn.

The first task which we set ourselves was examination of our security commitments. My Senior Management Team and I concluded against the backdrop of the security review that there is not yet an enabling environment that is conducive to securing the police estate in any way other than through the presence of armed security guards with full police powers working alongside civilian guards.

Up until now the assessed need to carry out this function was a cadre of 627 Full Time Reserve Officers. We asked ourselves whether we could do this differently. There followed a thorough discussion around these considerations and following clear input from my operational ACCs, who have personally reviewed every post, it was decided that, in going forward, we could discharge this function with 430 Full Time Reserve officers, working alongside civilian guards, to be retained for a further period of three years from 1 April 2005. This decision reduces the Full Time Reserve static security requirement by 197 officers.

The second task which we set ourselves was to address the 751 Full Time Reserve Officers who are currently delivering a range of policing services alongside their Regular colleagues. This was a very difficult discussion not least because of the excellent job being done by the officers who are delivering these services. We knew that whatever decision we made would pose great challenges for our organisation in the months ahead.

Having considered the roles and responsibilities of these officers, we decided that there are alternative means of providing some of these functions and others can be subsumed into and provided by the Regular service.

In the course of this discussion my operational ACCs pointed out that a number of these officers deliver a security support function to patrols. The assessment of regional ACCs is that in order to provide security in the external policing environment there is a need to retain 141 of these Full Time Reserve officers to fulfil this broad security function.

It would be intended that they would operate under the centralised command of the regional ACCs to provide flexibility around response, based on an intelligence led threat assessment, and in support of the reduced static security commitment. The net result of our deliberation in this area will see the release of 610 Full Time Reserve Officers.

The third and final task was to consider the role of the Full Time Reserve officers (currently 109) who serve in Tactical Support Groups. In light of the particular job that TSGs do in terms of supporting the drive against the existing paramilitary groups and their organised criminal activities, together with their public order skills, we do not feel there can be any reduction in TSG strength at this stage. In particular the role of TSGs in relation to public order management is of concern to us.

As you will be aware we draw upon districts at times of high public order commitments to form PSUs. Around 30% of the officers who make up these units would be drawn from Full Time Reserve officers. With the release of the identified number of Full Time Reserve officers, the reliance on PSUs will be less – we believe this is manageable provided we can retain the current level of TSGs. We therefore considered two options for maintaining that level – the first was to draw more regular officers from DCUs and the second was to retain the current strength of Full Time Reserve posts in TSGs. We have decided on the latter. I do not intend to reduce the number of regular officers in districts in order to maintain the current level of TSG strength.

The Role and Contribution of the Full Time Reserve Since 1972, some 7,400 men and women here have made the deliberate choice to serve their fellow citizens as Full Time Reserve officers in order to make Northern Ireland a safer place for everyone.

They have done that with determination ... with dedication ...and with professionalism.

It has not been an easy task for them. They have been in the front line of policing and have faced threats, intimidation and physical danger alongside their regular colleagues.

49 serving Full Time Reserve officers were murdered by terrorists with a further five being murdered after they had left the service. Others have died on duty in the service of their local communities.

Many hundreds have been injured. Some of those injuries have been horrific, leaving a legacy of pain and permanent disability.

Throughout all of this, they have been steadfast in their courage and their commitment.

Northern Ireland simply could not have been policed over the past three decades without the Full Time Reserve. They have helped to protect property, preserve the peace and save lives. And, with regular officers, they have been involved closely in the ongoing development of policing with the community.

Their service cannot, nor should not, ever be forgotten.

At present, we have 1,487 Full Time Reservists, down from a high of 3,202 in 1990s and from a figure of 1,895 at the time of the original HR strategy.

The fact that in light of current security assessments I will be releasing just over 800 of these officers from policing is in no way a reflection on their contribution to policing, to the community and to the enormous steps forward that have been made towards a more peaceful and normal society.

I honour that contribution and so should all of the people of Northern Ireland.

Method of Release

In summary, out of the existing 1,487 Full Time Reserve Officers, I need to retain 680 officers on the basis of a three year contract to be issued from 1 April 2005. The remaining officers will be released in a phased manner across an 18 month period from the termination of their contracts. A managed release process is important to ensure levels of service delivery across the relevant time period.

The proposed basis of selection for severance has to be the subject of negotiation between the Police Service and the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. I have asked the Director of Human Resources to take this forward. While it would be inappropriate to pre-empt those discussions, it would be our desire in the interests of certainty to complete them as soon as possible. In the interests of clarity the Command team has a preference to proceed by way of volunteers for severance in the first instance and thereafter to seek to retain those who are most motivated and committed to their role. Flexibility of deployment will also feature heavily in any future consideration. We will endeavour to keep everyone properly advised as matters progress.

Delivery of Policing in Northern Ireland Patten [Recommendation 105] said that the approximate size of the police service should be 7,500 regular officers. In two month's time that target should be reached. (This number includes an average of 270 officers in training). A breakdown of that total number would include 4,342 serving in District Command Units with a further 1,282 officers actively involved in the investigation of serious crime (following implementation of Blakely, Crompton, & Stevens.) and 943 officers in Operational Command Units at regional level.

Since late 2002 we have seen a significant reduction in sickness absence amongst regular officers and, while there is more to be done, this, in effect, means that there are now considerably more officers per day available for duty.

It needs to be borne in mind that there has been an extensive programme of civilianisation which has resulted in the deployment of 350 more civilians in the support of policing and District Command Units. Additionally, I have just been granted approval by the Northern Ireland Office to employ a further 200 civilians all of whom will be directly engaged in activities formerly conducted by police officers. All in all, my Command Team and I believe the time is now right to start releasing the Full Time Reserve.

We see this as moving on in terms of Patten and the policing commitments that have been given. We acknowledge that we can do things better; we acknowledge that we can do things smarter. We acknowledge that we need to draw greater efficiencies from our uniformed officers in terms of visibility on the streets, through reduction in bureaucracy and through improved efficiencies in technology.

HMIC Baseline assessment

I have noticed that in the past few days some people have referred to the HMIC Baseline assessment. There are a number of myths around this report and I would like to deal with them now.

In addition to policing 3,000 marches on an annual basis, the Police Service of Northern Ireland reduced crime by 10.2 per cent last year (that is 14,000 fewer victims of crime in Northern Ireland) and increased clear up rates.

It is also worth highlighting the extremely positive points of the assessment because I don't believe they have received the attention they merit. The report lists more performance strengths than areas for improvements in its findings. Volume crime performance over the last 12 months has been impressive in comparison to the national average and the service is on course to achieve its five-year crime reduction target.

There is ample evidence of operational success against level-two crime, for example drugs, cash in transit robberies and terrorism, and an impressive performance is noted in the report.

The report acknowledges the commitment of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to – and progress on – reassurance issues and policing with the community.

Concluding Remarks

I would like to conclude my statement with some reference to the next steps.

Firstly, we will now move quickly to commence discussions with the Police Federation on how we move forward into a process which gives effect to this decision. This is important because we wish to achieve certainty for individual officers and their families as soon as is feasible.

Secondly, an obvious point is that our decision will lead to a reduction in PSNI salary requirements of a sum in excess of £35 million per year. I stated clearly earlier – and it is important to say it again – that financial issues did not influence our decision. However, I now argue strongly that a percentage of that money should be re-invested in the current policing infrastructure to allow us to continue to deliver a service that everyone can be proud of because it provides policing at its best.

Thirdly, I want to emphasise that that is exactly what we do – we are determined to provide policing at its best. We are a professional, proactive, and dynamic police service that is fit for purpose, and will, in the environment which I have outlined, continue to deliver frontline services to all of the community in Northern Ireland. We are not content to deliver just enough. We strive for high standards and maintain a strong commitment to the communities we serve. We are constantly seeking ways in which we can do what we do quicker, more efficiently and more effectively.

Finally, it is absolutely vital that, in view of my team's conclusions, those individual members of the Full Time Reserve who will be leaving the service can do so with the pride and dignity and respect for their contribution which they deserve.

The members of the Full Time Reserve in the Police Service of Northern Ireland and their families will receive this announcement in a very individual and personal way. I and my command team colleagues who have had the privilege of working with them are very well aware of this fact.

Each member will have different aspirations. Some towards the end of their service may be looking forward to retirement. I understand that others with shorter service may view this decision with considerable foreboding.

We are very alert and alive to this fact and we will do our best to deal with their anxieties and concerns.

As I am sure members will appreciate, this has been an extremely difficult decision. I believe that we have reached the right conclusion based on the current security assessment.

I fully acknowledge that we are yet to benefit from a normal policing environment. That is why I have 7500 regular officers under my command, thousands more than my colleagues in England with populations of a similar size. This decision provides additional resources to counter the current threat and support my officers as they carry out their duties.

Let me finish where I began by stating again that this is a policing decision based on our assessment of policing needs on foot of a comprehensive security review.