


SOCA marks start of fragmentation of service

 The Serious and Organised Crime Agency is fundamentally changing the role of policing without proper public debate, according to the Federation.

The agency, set up to tackle serious and organised crime, was officially due to launch at the start of this month.

Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation, said that SOCA is just part of a 'creeping' change to the police service which is fragmenting policing.

The single agency will bring together the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), the National Crime Squad (NCS) and will include the immigration service and Customs and Excise.

But police officers joining the agency had to give up their status as police and will simply become SOCA officers.

Mrs Berry said: 'This is fundamentally changing policing in this country and it is happening surreptitiously, without proper public debate.'

The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act paved the way for removing the Office of Constable from police officers transferring into SOCA. However, the Federation believes it did not undergo proper parliamentary scrutiny as it was pushed through during the election wash up in May last year.

The historic status of police officers ensures political independence, as they are sworn to the Crown and not to Government. However, officers who have moved over to the agency will now be directly accountable to the Home Secretary.

Mrs Berry said: 'Although we support the creation of this

organisation to tackle serious and organised crime, I still believe the agency should be staffed by fully sworn police officers. I still do not believe it should be a separate agency from the police.'


She also highlighted concerns that level 2 crimes, cross-border crime, would still not be dealt with adequately because SOCA will focus on top-level organised crime and local forces on their own areas.

'If one of the reasons we are reducing 43 forces is so we can share intelligence more effectively, why are we here building up a new department? This means more stand alone organisations with a responsibility for policing.


'We are more likely to become overly competitive for information [between SOCA and local police forces] and not to



Jan Berry: SOCA will change historical status of officers

share it. We should be coordinating and integrating rather than setting up stand alone units.' 

City of London Police is feline fine about saving cash due to help of stray cats

 Two stray cats named after characters from the 1970s hit TV cop series *The Sweeney* have saved a force thousands of pounds.

Reagan and Carter were bought from a local cat rescue to sort out a mice problem at Snowhill Station, in the City of London, which were causing considerable damage to the building.

James Parfee, staff officer to HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, said: 'The force was spending thousands of pounds on rodent control by getting a company in to deal with the problem. This was really eating into their budget so they bought two cats, who

have now solved the mice problem.'

Mr Parfee told delegates at a conference on bureaucracy that forces across the UK that forces should not disregard seemingly trite solutions that could lead to significant efficiency savings.

As well as employing Reagan and Carter, Mr Parfee said there were numerous other examples of other forces saving thousands of pounds by changing their working practices or introducing technology.

Avon and Somerset Police saved £885,000 through better use of Airwave and Sussex Police saved £750,000 in officer time



A game of cat and mouse saves thousands

when the force introduced mobile data terminals.

Forces are required to make efficiency gains of three per cent. Half of which must be 'cashable'

gains. It is estimated that reducing bureaucracy accounts for a quarter of all efficiency savings. 