

POLICE

Police Magazine Update

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Home Secretary says 'thanks but no thanks' when it comes to cutting numbers

Police leaders accused the Home Secretary of effectively "rewarding" officers' tireless efforts to quell rioting across the country by slashing numbers and pushing through reforms which leave morale at rock bottom.

Theresa May addressed delegates at a speech in Westminster in London today - including police chiefs - as she praised officers, many who worked round the clock during the riots, but she pressed the need for 'reform' and denied that cuts in numbers would impact on the service to the public.

When asked how the police are expected to maintain the same level of service when officers are already saying the cuts are impacting on the frontline, she told Police magazine that the same numbers can still be deployed following the spending reductions. But many police officers on the ground have sent through their experiences to the Police Federation offices, highlighting the message that the frontline is already being stretched as forces are pushed into cutting numbers.

Paul McKeever, chair of the Police Federation, said: "Police officers reward for putting their lives on the line and 230 of them being injured during the riots, working extraordinary hours and being the most flexible workforce in the country is to have their wages slashed and to lose 16,000 officers from their numbers.

"I think that there is an underlying antipathy towards police officers, on the surface the Home Secretary will support and back you but actions speak louder than words. The reality is absolutely clear - there is implicit criticism of what we do, who we are and the leadership of the service. They are using the financial argument about public finances to push through massive cuts and reforms in policing."

Debates over tactics used by the police and criticism they were not robust enough had met with police chiefs, including Tim Godwin, acting commissioner of the Met, stepping in to say officers are effectively 'damned if they do and damned if they don't' in relation to taking a hard line with rioters.

Ms May did say: "As long as you act within reason and within the law, I will never damn you for what you do."

Derek Barnett, president of the Superintendents' Association, told Police magazine that although they welcomed the support for courageous and brave officers, 'there is no denying if you take out 34,000 people from policing and reduce police pay, freeze police pay and increase pensions contributions, all those things will have a significant impact on police morale'.

He added: "In a sense they are being undervalued by the government and effectively being asked to pay for the program of police reform."