



Metin Enver, Editor

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Silent night?

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The logo for the Police Federation, featuring a stylized profile of a person's head in a circle next to the text 'POLICE Federation'.

Let's hope there are not too many domestics after Christmas lunch this year because research conducted by the Police Federation reveals just how thin the thin blue line really is. Many 24/7 response units throughout England and Wales are all too often falling below minimum safety levels or being staffed by the most inexperienced officers.

The research clearly shows the government's objective of neighbourhood policing teams in every borough by 2008 is putting intolerable pressure on already overworked response teams, leaving officers and the public in danger.

But fear not, just as my worry started to escalate, with chief officers increasingly opting to recruit CSOs at the expense of sworn officers, it dawned on me that this is all part of a master plan by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

If we cut down on crime then we won't need large numbers of sworn officers or fully crewed response units.

This week Howard Roberts, the deputy chief constable of Nottinghamshire Police, and vice-chairman of ACPO's drugs committee, said that heroin should be prescribed to drug addicts to curb crime.

So, that's what was meant by tough on the causes of crime was it? Of course, such a simple solution. Why didn't we think of this years ago? Just think how we could cut down on burglaries if people would only see sense and leave their doors open or hand over their prized possessions. And we could drastically cut down on vehicle thefts if manufacturers simply handed them out to any would be car thief.

Coupled with the news that Scotland Yard is now compiling a list of future serious offenders, based on profiles and psychological analysis, then maybe fears of a depleted 24/7 emergency response service will be short lived.

But the reality is that none of these ideas will be appreciated by the thousands of people who, over the festive period, will need urgent assistance, dial 999 and expect a quick and satisfactory response. This research suggests that despite the best efforts of every one of the 24/7 response officers, with many starting shifts with a mounting backlog of calls, this Christmas is likely to be anything but a silent night.