

UN PEACEKEEPER'S DAY SPEECH: 22ND MAY 2013

Your excellences', ladies and gentlemen.

I am grateful to the United Nations Association of the UK, and its prestigious Westminster branch for inviting me here to address this conference. I am honoured to be here on a day that marks the contribution made by all of those involved in international peacekeeping, and this year, a day that highlights and celebrates the role of women and the role of the police in the pursuit of international peace.

I am fortunate to have experienced the work of dedicated police men and women in the peace keeping operations I have been associated with and, if you'll permit me, I shall say something about those operations and about the challenges that face the police in peace keeping, and also some observations on future demands on, and the costs of, police resources in this short presentation.

It is a significant personal anniversary for me because just over 10 years ago, in the space of only a few short months, I went from being an assistant chief constable in a UK domestic police force, and contemplating the likely request

for UK police to be made available for duty in Iraq, to then being appointed and deployed to Baghdad as the Chief Police Advisor for Iraq.

This was to be the start of a decade long journey through the intricacies, frustrations and rewards of seeking to provide justice through policing in international peacekeeping operations, and which subsequently included assignments to Darfur, and other parts of Africa, Afghanistan, and most recently, to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In Iraq I was presented with what was both a dream job description - to establish a police service to support a democratic Iraq - and also a quite daunting challenge. With the presence of over 100,000 coalition military, the majority of whom had been part of the war fighting effort, and with only a handful of international civilian police from Europe, America and Asia in the country, to influence the military towards a transition to civilian rule at every level was going to be tough, and to establish a democratic police to rise, phoenix like from the ashes of the Saddam regime's authority, required not only reform of the police itself, but also that of the Interior ministry, and the whole of the justice system in which they all operated. As former US president Dwight Eisenhower succinctly put it, "Though force can protect in emergency, only justice, fairness, consideration and cooperation can finally lead men to the

dawn of eternal peace.”. Such qualities were not abundant in the men who were emerging in the post Saddam authorities of Iraq.

So, within a few weeks of arriving in Iraq I had selected and had started mentoring a new police chief for Baghdad. He would be the first to admit that he had few of the qualities and experience necessary for such a major undertaking, but he was an honest man who was respected by the many different factions that were emerging from within the police and Interior ministry.

We both felt the voracity of the violence directed at the new ‘foreign’ authority, and those associated with it, particularly the police, as efforts to thwart the Coalition’s intentions gathered momentum.

As the various elements of the ‘opposition’ became more organised, the violence became more intense, with grenade, mortar and car bomb attacks aimed at any individuals or institution that could be deemed to be part of the new Authority. The limitations of the police became apparent as it was revealed that under the Saddam regime, major political crimes, bombings and other important issues like this had not been handled by the police, who were at the bottom of the security hierarchy, but rather by one of the other arms of the overlapping security apparatus that now no longer formally existed. Very

few police were trained in complex investigations and certainly none had the skills, background or training to be senior investigators to lead the inquiries into such events.

The ability of the police to respond to the bombing and assassination outrages was fragmented and often inadequate, and the few international police who were present were stretched to be able to help address this in the short term – but there was growing confidence expressed by many senior and junior Iraqi police officers, who found themselves suddenly thrust into the front line of all major criminal activity, as the only credible Iraqi response.

The training and mentoring of the police chief also had many gaps to fill. He had demands placed on him and his meagre staff that would have tested the most competent of capital city police chiefs around the world. Also, because of the dynamic conditions, his learning programme had to be conducted essentially, ‘on the job’, with real life situations providing the backcloth for his learning.

The most significant of these, sadly, was the bombing of the UN HQ at the Canal hotel in Baghdad on the 19th August 2003, in which the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative, Serge De Mello, lost his life along with 20 of his UN colleagues. At this scene, in searing heat, with understandable

confusion, and with antagonistic postures towards Iraqis from the coalition military, the police chief and I were faced with a dual challenge. The first, of conducting a real investigation that would have international ramifications not only for the UN but also for the future shape of Iraq and for the participation of the whole donor community, and the second, in parallel, the undertaking of a training exercise so that the scene could provide every learning opportunity for the police and its future competence. So, from securing forensic and physical evidence, to conducting the search for and interviewing of witnesses, to the managing of rescue and body recovery activities, and to the protection of the scene from further attack or disruption, with the help of a handful of international advisors, the Iraqi police remained stoic, accommodating, and willing to learn, despite them also being viewed with suspicion and distrust.

Change the scene now to Darfur. In 2005 a contingent of police was added to the African Union Peacekeeping mission established to support the peace agreement between the Khartoum Government and the Darfur 'rebel'. The European Union had agreed to provide a mission to support the African Union police and I was invited to lead it. The police mission had no executive powers, yet, their presence in villages and Internally Displaced People camps, or as observers in courts, or in visiting victims of crime in hospitals, provided reassurance and support to vulnerable people, and won the international

police the respect of communities and the local authorities alike. Their mediation efforts often defused low level conflicts and also set standards and examples for local police to follow. And it was women police - from Africa and Europe - who showed women's groups in camps how to protect themselves and their children, by teaching simple steps for safety, security, hygiene and health, and by providing them with the reassurance that through this international police presence, their plight was not going unnoticed.

When we consider all the dynamics that are set in train when the Security Council sanctions a peace keeping mission, the deployment of an effective police contingent that will significantly contribute to the peace sought in the Security Council resolution is a tall order. In peace keeping operations, the initial deployment of a military force, which is expeditionary by nature, will have defined military tasks that are intended to establish a form of stability.

The military contingent will in most cases be organised, trained and equipped to international or regional common standards like those of NATO or the African Standby Force, which means that their formed units can work together.

The organisational structure, the tasks, and their ability to operate effectively will for the police, however, be fundamentally different.

For the most part, even when a State is prepared to assign police resources to a peace keeping mission, the police themselves are drawn from that country's domestic resources, which have been designed and developed over many years for its internal rule of law activity. Its compatibility with another State's police contribution will consequently be more coincidental than planned.

However, the demand for police in peace keeping is growing, and their contribution to restoring and maintaining order, facilitating access to justice, and development of effective rule of law measures may also mean that their presence could be in demand long after that of the military intervention.

For police then the challenges are complex. The police contingent will need to be able to understand and integrate into the local conditions but still maintain standards set by the UN and complemented by those of their home country.

They will often have to face levels of adversity and danger that are unfamiliar or even intimidating, but will nevertheless be expected to provide a core of justice and even handedness commensurate with the intentions of the

Mission. Their sensitivity to humanitarian, gender, and vulnerability conditions experienced by indigenous people must be finely tuned and incredibly

tolerant, and they must, fundamentally, manage all of these challenges with professional judgement and a proper sense of duty that reflects the essential

levels of protection of people and communities that the Mission intends. One

19th century philosopher was reputed to have been referring to the police when he rather prophetically put it, "they must be at the same time priest, soldier, father, healer and teacher". One might be forgiven for thinking that such deployments, when successful, are nothing short of miraculous.

Encouragingly, in the last decade we have witnessed growth in the preparedness of police for international duty, Australia being one of a number of countries at the forefront of creating a capacity within its Federal Police structure to address requirements for police to be deployed in peacekeeping missions. That preparedness is also found in training courses run by the UN and other authorising bodies, in programmes run within contributing countries, and with 'standby' or reserve capabilities being created in geographic and political regions. Also we have seen planning for military, police, and civilian contributions to peace support operations seek a level of integration not previously deemed necessary or important, but which is now recognised to be an essential component of a successful mission deployment.

Sometimes the police contingents have full executive power to enforce the law in mission areas, while in others they have no powers other those that their mere presence permits. One might be forgiven for thinking that the presence of police without powers in a peacekeeping mission is rather futile, but for the

most part, police officers are at heart 'peace officers'. Bound up in the fundamentals of democratic policing are the principles of protecting the vulnerable, of applying law fairly, and of policing by consent. As we found in Darfur, even without formal power, such police can favourably influence conditions in peace support missions.

But, despite those sometimes limiting conditions, today we can celebrate the fact that over 12500 police, drawn from more than 100 nations, are deployed in UN peacekeeping missions throughout the world, while many hundreds more police are deployed to other missions sanctioned by bodies like the European and the African Unions.

So in conclusion, we can be confident that the case for the inclusion of police in peace keeping missions is soundly made. We can acknowledge that a balance must be struck between the standards and numbers of police required for missions, and the realities for donor nations of providing sufficient police officers of the right calibre, without depleting their domestic law and justice capacity. We can also celebrate the important place international policing has on the political agendas of member States as demonstrated by the creation of joint police reserves or quick reaction forces.

As we mark Peacekeeping day, we acknowledge the contribution of all those police officers who have served, or who are serving in missions, and express gratitude to them and the nations who donated their police to the overall peace keeping effort.

But, we also remember the human cost, and recognize that over 3000 UN lives have been lost, several hundred of them police officers, in the pursuit of peace in the world.

I hope that you will permit me to dedicate these words to the all those who continue to be committed to peace making, peace keeping, and peace building in the world, and particularly, to the memory of one, Rob Swann, who provided me with close, personal protection during my time in Iraq but who, on a subsequent mission, lost his life while protecting others in the pursuit of peace.

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