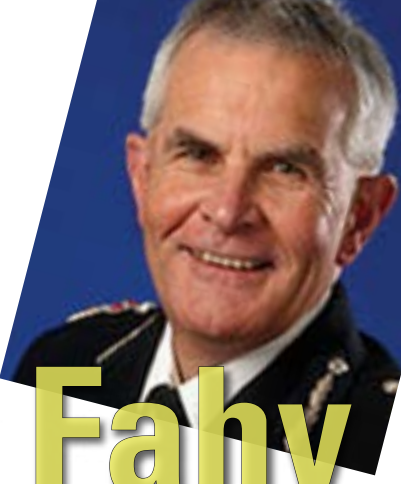


15 minutes with Sir Peter Fahy

Chief Constable of the Greater Manchester Police



By Keith W. Strandberg

In an effort to supply an international perspective, *Law Enforcement Technology* contributor Keith W. Strandberg recently spoke with Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Vice President Sir Peter Fahy, who is also Chief Constable of the Greater Manchester (Great Britain) Police.

Fahy addresses the challenges of policing in a down economy and coordinating crime-fighting efforts with other countries. He also shares his strategy for what works—a strong community presence to keep the peace.

LET: What is the role of the ACPO today?

PF: We have 43 police forces in England and Wales. The chief constables (of

these forces) got together and formed this association. We meet regularly to agree on national policy and communicate with the public. Most of the work is to coordinate best policies; we want to produce one policy rather than 43 different ones.

We feel there are too many police forces, and they range from 30,000 to 80 officers. The British have never wanted a national police force; it would have too much power. It goes way back to the barons rebelling to the power of the king.

LET: How are things going?

PF: I think [we have] the same challenges that you are facing in the United States. The number one issue is the economic situation—the reduction in budgets and the realization that it won't be getting much better. Other agencies are also

facing big budget challenges. Operationally, we are seeing a continued reduction in crime, which is surprising. We thought that in a recession, crime would go up. That hasn't been the case here; crime continues to go down. Even the brightest criminologists are struggling with the reasons why. Some of the goods that used to be stolen, such as electronics, are no longer so expensive; and the motor vehicle manufacturers are making it harder to steal new vehicles. I hope this means that society is getting more civilized.

LET: What is your latest success?

PF: For us, there are two things. Neighborhood policing is a success; this has increased the confidence of com-

munities in police in general, which has allowed us to involve more local agencies. At the other end, there is the work we do on serious and organized crime. We are concentrating on the main offenders and the main families, working with other agencies. For us, it's about sharing information and blurring the boundaries...at a local level—the local council, housing departments, health services and others.

We are focussing on demand reduction and problem solving. If we have to reduce our budget, we have to reduce our workload as well. When you look at it day to day, there is a huge amount of expense on issues like filling in referral forms, partnership meetings, and case reviews, which are poorly coordinated at a local level. There is a big opportunity here in everyday policing, focusing on how we can reduce our demand and be effective against long-standing problems.



Helicopters and four-wheel-drive SUVs are sometimes used in U.K. policing operations.

LET: How easy is it to work across borders with police from other countries?

PF: On the whole, it is very difficult. When we have to work internationally, we work through our Serious and Organized Crime Agency. This can be frustrating, and some cases don't get dealt with as quickly; this is down to the legal procedures. Often they don't take into account the use of the Internet and social media. When something is hosted in other parts of the world, when we need material from Facebook and other companies based in the U.S., it goes through a long, drawn-out process which doesn't take into account investigation needs.

LET: Do local police forces receive terrorism training?

PF: Overall, terrorism doesn't, at the moment, concern local officers. We

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tell them where they need to go to get more information. On the other hand, because of great travel and free movement between the United Kingdom and Europe, terrorism is becoming more and more of an issue. We are having to make our staff more aware of issues of immigration.

People do have free movement from the European Union. A passport would be checked, but once they are here, they have the right of residence.

When it comes to issues of checking out true identities and past offending behavior, we run into problems. There is no European database. We have only just now created a national database for capturing and sharing information.

We have come up with the structure of the Counter Terrorism Network [with] centers based in five forces; we have one here in Manchester, which has specialist units. We do have a fairly good structure where we can



Community policing is proving successful in the United Kingdom. Although budgets remain a challenge across the board, Fahy says law enforcement is seeing a continued reduction in crime.

make a good connection between international, national and local level police quickly. We think this setup is very important to keep that link.

Our officers are trained to a particular level [insofar as] gathering intelligence and [knowing] what to look out for; in higher risk areas, they receive more train-



Police forces in the United Kingdom are required to maintain a strategic capability (for example organized crime or firearms) so they might offer specialized help at critical times.

ing. A particular rural force might not see the need to train in terrorism, but on the whole, the forces have held onto the national standards.

LET: What about general training?

PF: When we develop national policy, we have a national training program behind that. If you want to be a firearms officer or a counter terrorism officer, there is a system of accreditation. We have done a lot of work to achieve national standards and this has been accepted by all the forces.

Our government has issued the strategic policing requirement [that] forces have to maintain a strategic capability—major public disorder, national emergencies, organized crime, firearms, terrorism. It says that you have to play your part in times of national need.

LET: What is the biggest issue facing U.K. police forces?

PF: The key issue for us is around workforce reform. Most of our budget is spent on people and we are

facing real challenges. Maintaining the morale of our staff when there are changes to pensions and a pay freeze is a major challenge. Everything we do requires a higher level of expertise; it's about recognizing that we have to change our pay system to recognize expertise rather than rank.

Many thanks to Sir Peter Fahy for taking the time to talk with LET. Look for more law enforcement personalities in coming issues. ■

Keith W. Strandberg is an American freelance writer and award-winning screenwriter/producer of feature films living in Switzerland. He was a former contributing editor for LET more than a decade ago and is happy to be back writing for the magazine.



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