

June 2, 2009

RAISING THE STANDARD AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME

Scotland's leading crime fighting agency is to have its staff numbers boosted by more than 25 per cent over the next two years as part of a major new drive against serious organised crime.

The £4 million Scottish Government funding package over the next 2 years spearheads a raft of initiatives launched by Scotland's Serious Organised Crime Taskforce today which include:

- providing 80 new posts at the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA) over the next two years,
- this includes more covert officers, e-crime specialists, and financial investigators;
- the creation of a Scottish Intelligence and Co-ordination Unit to permanently 'map' organised crime and enhance law enforcement operations against them;
- within that provide Scotland's first dedicated expert resources to build the intelligence picture to support complex fraud and human trafficking investigation, and;
- the publication of Scotland's first multi-agency strategy to ensure that law enforcement, businesses, public bodies and communities work together to defeat organised crime.

The Taskforce today also published details of the ground-breaking 'mapping' initiative which, led by the SCDEA in partnership with Scottish police forces and other partners has developed the clearest ever picture of the scale and threat of serious organised crime in Scotland.

This shows that:

- 367 serious organised crime groups involving over 4,000 individuals are operating across the country;
- no police force area of the country is immune from the threat, with the 'top 20' networks impacting on the 8 Force areas to some extent;
- over half the groups are involved in multiple types of crime, with 9 out of 10 involved in drug crime, and;
- over half the groups have access to firearms.

Speaking at the launch of the strategy and mapping information, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

"Serious organised crime hurts our country in terms of public safety, the economy, and jobs. We need a co-ordinated approach to ensure the whole country stands up against it – on the streets, within our communities, in civic society, and in the wider economy.

"For the first time we now have a national strategy to tackle serious organised crime that goes beyond law enforcement. We also have a detailed map of the reach and extent of serious organised crime in Scotland.

"We know more about who they are, who they work with and what they are doing. Put simply, we are on to them and we will use that intelligence against them.

"We are committed to boosting Scotland's capacity to respond to this threat. That's why I can announce today that new money will be allocated to SCDEA to boost our capacity and capability to

meet emerging threats from serious organised crime – including e-crime, human trafficking and complex fraud.

“Organised criminals don’t care about our country – only their own influence and greed. Theirs is the flag of convenience – not the Saltire. Today, symbolically and practically, we join together to raise our standard against them.”

Director General of the SCDEA Gordon Meldrum added:

“My objective has always been to ensure that we don’t just chase organised criminals, we get ahead of them. In pursuit of this goal, knowledge is power. Today, thanks to the ground-breaking work of our mapping initiative, the balance of power has shifted a little in our favour. Our collective knowledge on the scale and threat of serious organised crime in Scotland is greater than ever, and we are now putting that to use in the protection of the public.

“Let me be clear, the information and intelligence we have pulled together in partnership with the eight Scottish Forces and other partners is no ‘ivory tower’ exercise. We have already used this broader picture to initiate new activity against specific groups and individuals.

“Now, with the support from the national Taskforce, this mapping initiative will become a permanent feature of a new central intelligence and co-ordination hub for Scottish policing. That, together with the substantial increase in expert resources announced for the SCDEA, will allow us to deploy more of the right people with the right skills to turn insight into action.”