

Violent Crime Surge in London Amid Significant Cuts to Police Budgets



London, April 17 (RHC)-- Britain is in the grip of a sudden surge in violent crime, Britain's largest police force has warned, adding that years of budget cuts may at least be partially responsible.

Following years of decline in gun and knife crime, the Metropolitan Police, also known as Met Scotland Yard, reported a leap in recorded offenses in the capital, with gun crime rising by 42 percent in the last 12 months and knife crime up by 24 percent. Police say the crime pattern in London is being replicated around the country.

In January, the then Commissioner of the Met, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, said the "warning lights are flashing" after official figures showed that violent crime was on the increase nationally. The disclosures will reignite the debate over resources following warnings from a string of senior figures over the impacts of further budget squeezes on forces. They also come weeks after watchdogs issued a stark warning over the "potentially perilous" state of British policing.

As the figures were released, officers raised the alarm over a shift in knife crime which has seen the proportion of youngsters carrying blades who are affiliated with gangs fall from around a third to

approximately a quarter.

Assistant Commissioner Martin Hewitt said: “Young people carrying knives are doing so for a variety of reasons including status, criminality and self-protection but only around a quarter are affiliated with gangs.”

“There is a phenomenon of people feeling that you need to carry a knife to be safe. There is a lot greater sense that ‘I need this to protect myself.’ The problem comes when you then get a confrontation.”

The Metropolitan Police has launched investigations into three separate fatal stabbings in the capital since the start of the week. However, Hewitt still insisted that London is “one of the safest global cities in the world.” He said: “Similar to the rest of England and Wales, crime rates in London are rising, but many of these are still at a much lower level than five years ago and are against the backdrop of significant reductions in resources.”

The force has closed dozens of police stations and lost hundreds of staff as it made savings totaling hundreds of millions of pounds since 2010, although officer numbers have remained broadly steady at around 31,000.

Deputy London Mayor for Policing Sophie Linden told reporters: “These figures are deeply disturbing, and a stark reminder of the enormous pressure our police are under every day as they work so tirelessly to protect us.”

Meanwhile, an official report published by HM Inspector of Constabulary yesterday said the Met’s approach to dealing with serious and organized crime was “not as effective as it could be.”

Assistant Commissioner Martin Hewitt, the Met officer responsible for territorial policing, said: “We are concerned about the rise of gun crime and rise of knife crime offences committed by young people and the changing nature of the offenders.

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