

**METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE PUBLIC MEETING ON WATER CANNON
HOSTED BY MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME**

17 FEBRUARY 2014

STEPHEN GREENHALGH, DEPUTY MAYOR FOR POLICING AND CRIME: Okay. Thank you, everybody, for your patience, and I realise that we are starting some 25 minutes late, later than we had envisaged and we'll run on for a full hour, make sure we have a good discussion. So thank you for coming this evening.

Obviously, I have some duties under the Health and Safety Directive to tell you that if there is a fire alarm that sounds, please make your way and follow the signs in an orderly fashion.

The meeting is being filmed, it is being streamed live, so a lot of people will be watching from the comfort of their computer. Thanks for those of you that have come into City Hall this evening. I believe that there are journalists here who may be filming. Most of the pictures seem to be of the audience up here, but obviously this is going to be captured as well.

I would like to start with a brief presentation, the presentation largely will be given by Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley and his team, and we will take questions and answers for the most part of the next hour.

My name is Stephen Greenhalgh. For those of you who don't know me, I am the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. I have day-to-day responsibility for the Mayor's Office for Policing Crime or MOPAC, and it is MOPAC that are carrying out this public engagement.

I will talk to just this first slide which you probably can't see if I stand there.

The process for the authorisation of water cannon on the mainland - it is authorised in Northern Ireland - is that it requires the authorisation of the Home Secretary to licence water cannon. That decision has not yet been taken. The Mayor, Boris Johnson, after representations over a considerable period of time, is minded to commence the purchase of water cannon, but is very keen to hear from Londoners, and this public engagement is part of hearing from Londoners. There will also be a survey of several thousand Londoners, and at that point he will decide whether to initiate procurement of water cannon.

So that is where we are in the process, but it is important to recognise that the decision has not yet been taken. This is part of a six week engagement and we are very keen to hear from all of you this evening.

I am going to hand over to Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley who will then take you through some of these slides.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MARK ROWLEY: Thank you, Deputy Mayor. I will just introduce myself and my colleagues. My name is Mark Rowley. I am Assistant Police Commissioner. I am part of the Metropolitan Police's top team. I have a range of responsibilities, including murder, sexual offending, gangs, organised crime, and public order. I am assisted by two colleagues, Commander Peter Terry, who is a very experienced public order officer for many years in the Metropolitan Police and Chief Inspector Richard Munns who is our public order trainer.

I want to go quite quickly so I will canter through a few slides just to explain why we are having this consultation and what we think the place for water cannon is and Commander Terry will then follow on and we'll show a video to illustrate the extreme situations that we're thinking it might have a place.

So this slide illustrates how we got here. So, in August 2011 we all know the disorder that took place and there was a lot of public debate immediately after that in terms of did the police handle it well, were there different tactics and different things possible. There were two reviews then published, the Independent, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published a review in December 2011 and made a range of comments, and then we, the Metropolitan Police, published our own review which I was responsible for in February/March 2012.

Of course, there were many factors behind the riots, there were many issues the police could have done differently and we have recognised those publicly and apologised for many of those.

One of the comments made, and it is just one small part of those reports, was about water cannon.

HMIC said in December 2011 that they thought it was a tactic that had a place to deal with some of the most violent and extreme disorder in terms of being safer than other tactics, clear space and make areas safe. We came to the same conclusion in our document a couple of months later. We have now spent 2 months discussing with the Mayor's Office whether there might be a place for it, very rarely where the Home Secretary might want to licence it and whether the Mayor might want to provide the money for us to acquire it. Hence we end up with the consultation we have today.

The first point I want to make is we have no intention of changing our policing style in terms of dealing with protests and dealing with disorder. We see water cannon, unlike you are seeing in some jurisdictions around the world where it is used routinely, we see water cannon having a place in a very small number of events to deal with the most high levels of violence where normal tactics have failed.

We have looked back over about 15 years and we can only see one event every two or three years where we think it is a potentially credible and legitimate tactic and it probably would not be used in all of those. That is to give you an indication of the frequency and we'll show you some of the videos later. Our whole tactics are about engagement and trying to

police protest and disorder as calmly and sensibly as possible, but we need tactics in life threatening situations.

This is something from our public order training manual here about the size of escalating disorder and we will always try and anticipate and nip things in the bud at the point of tension and disorder before there is serious disorder.

In the independent view of the HMIC they spoke about the situations where they saw water cannons may have a place.

[Referring to the slides]

Just to illustrate that, on the right hand side those are the scenarios on the right hand side, involving petrol bombs, mass throwing of missiles, arson on buildings which puts life in danger and threats to the fire brigade or ambulance service when one of the police duties is to create a safe place. If people's lives are at risk how do we create a safe space to protect them from rioters while they do their jobs in saving life?

The first bullet there: water cannons are there to create, to exert control from a distance and try and create a safe space to hold back rioters and violent disorder from police officers who are trying to protect the public or protect people from mass destruction of property.

Without it, there is a gap in our capability. At the moment, if we need to clear significant space from rioters then the tactics we have available, which have been used, are tactics such as charges with horses, which are difficult tactics and have a danger for everyone involved; using vehicle tactics and dogs. Indeed we already do have licensed attenuating energy projectiles colloquially known as baton rounds which we have never used on the mainland. We have a range of tactics available to use force at a distance to try and create safe areas. Actually all of those tactics are more dangerous than a water cannon would be. That is one of the reasons we see there is a gap where we could do that safely.

So, as I say, we've looked around at different events and the HMIC report did as well. One of the comments of the Inspectorate of Constabulary was that after the riots of 2011 there was a dip in public confidence of the police and part of that was about the perception of the police that we didn't get a hold of the riots as quickly as we should have done. I think we agree with that. Some of that is about what tactics do we use and how do we do it. There are many factors in that, but one of them is having the right equipment to do that task.

So we've taken account through this of public opinion as we have looked at this. There are three surveys we are aware of from 2010 to 2012 done by different independent organisations, and those give between about two thirds and 90 per cent of the public, depending where it was done, broadly supportive of the police having water cannon as a tactic to use in extreme disorder. Interestingly, one of the surveys said 25 per cent, a quarter, of the public said they thought the police already had them and indeed they had already used them. So that is fascinating, the public think it is a tactic that is reasonable.

All right. If we just, the last point I will make before I hand over to my colleague - what is the criteria for use? There has been a lot of nonsense in the media since we started this consultation about this being something we would use in dealing with routine protest. That is not the intention. If you look at those criteria there, which are based on the national policy at the moment which is what is worked to in Northern Ireland, the words there are really clear: Serious public disorder where there is potential for loss of life, serious injury, or widespread destruction.

FROM THE FLOOR: Isn't that what water cannons actually do? (Applause).

AC MARK ROWLEY: That is not a low threshold. That is a very high threshold where you are trying to protect people from serious danger.

FROM THE FLOOR: You mean causing us danger?

AC MARK ROWLEY: Protect people from serious danger. Can we take the questions later, please? Protect people from serious danger. There are a range of different ways that water cannon are used around the world, most of which is not how we would use them in this country. The model that we would use is the model that is being used in Northern Ireland where they have been used tens of times in recent years and there have been no reported injuries from those cases. Clearly, any use of force, any use of force has a risk. It is our duty to minimise that and minimise the threat from it, but as I say, we would use it in situations where there is real risk of loss of life, serious injury and widespread destruction.

We thought it would be helpful, rather than theoretical debate about what that means, we have picked up four videos from events over the last 15 years which illustrate the sort of violent disorder that we think it would be an appropriate tactic in to protect the public, and protect people from destruction, widespread destruction of property and also protect police officers.

So my colleague Commander Terry will play those videos and talk through the scenarios. I would stress that those videos - it does not mean it would have been used in every one of those situations. We are simply making the point that is the level of violence where legally we think it is a reasonable and legitimate thing to do to consider using it in those situations. There is, as I say, 7 or 8 situations over the last 15 years where we think that is possible, and of course on the day it would be a particular decision as to whether it got used in any one of those individually.

COMMANDER TERRY: Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Peter Terry, I am a commander with the Met Police and the role I occupy is I run the operations portfolio in the Met Police, I run command and control and have responsibility for the policing of events and public order in the Metropolitan Police Service.

The videos that you are about to see are extreme. They are extreme for a reason. They are extreme for the reason that we would not use water cannon unless we reached an extreme set of circumstances. I am not saying that in any of these circumstances we would have used water cannon, but had it been an option it would have been something that would have been considered. In some of the circumstances, we would have been using less force

than we are actually using within these circumstances. If you could play the first one. It comes from the carnival against capitalism on June the 18th 1999.

(Applause)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am one of those officers in that alleyway and what is being thrown at those officers are building bricks. A wall was taken down from College Green and those bricks are going in at the rate of 150 a minute when we counted them. A considerable number of those officers, myself included, were injured in that demonstration on that day.

We wanted to use horses in that alleyway, Ladies and Gentlemen. We could not because of the sheer amount of debris and broken bricks on the floor of that alleyway. Those people there are intent on causing serious injury to police officers and had those police officers not held their ground they would have caused serious damage to property and endangered life.

FROM THE FLOOR: They are only throwing bricks at police officers, not the members of the public.

CMDR TERRY: I accept that they are only throwing bricks at police officers and not members of the public. However, one and a half hours before that I was taking the same group of people out of buildings where they were beating members of the public up and attacking people indiscriminately. Ladies and Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentlemen, can I just progress this because what I am going to do is talk about the use of water cannon. I want to talk about...

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Can we look at the videos. There is plenty of time to make your points.

CMDR TERRY: The question would be would we use water cannon or what purpose would water cannon be used for in that circumstance?

Water cannon cannot and would not be used unless there is a legitimate end game or strategic intention to achieve. What would the end game or strategic intention be of this particular circumstance? To create distance between those police officers and those people who are throwing bricks, throwing bricks to cause serious injury.

FROM THE FLOOR: We now know the police were involved in planning that protest. Can't the police just move away? (Applause).

CMDR TERRY: Ladies and Gentlemen, what we now look at is a static target of what people wanted to achieve. As a police officer, I took an oath to preserve the peace. As a police officer, I am required to uphold the law. The Vienna Convention requires us to protect diplomatic premises. On this occasion we were protecting people from the Israeli Embassy who wanted ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Fantastic.

FROM THE FLOOR: Water cannon would have made that better, yes?

CMDR TERRY: Ladies and Gentlemen, in those circumstances, there, you have police officers in direct contact with demonstrators and force is being used by both sides. When force is used in such close contact injuries, and serious injuries, can occur. You can see - I will explain what the legitimate purpose of water cannon would be. If you remember a moment ago I explained there has to be a strategic intent to use that water cannon in those circumstances.

In those circumstances, if the decision had been made to use water cannon those would have been brought down Kensington Palace Gardens and would have been used to create distance between the police officers and the people who are using the violence against those police officers. You can see as well as I can see, static barriers being thrown at police officers in that crowd when they are carrying out what they are required to do by law under the Vienna Convention.

FROM THE FLOOR: Change the law then!

CMDR TERRY: All right, Ladies and Gentlemen, what you are about to see now, Ladies and Gentlemen, what ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Half a million people protested at the student demo and there were 200 people who were violent and officers were involved in that.

CMDR TERRY: Ladies and Gentlemen, what you are able to see now. (Applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: Austerity measures and about 200 people protested you are going to have to deal, I am sorry, with the insane things going on with the world with a small number of pissed off people. Using a water cannon is complete bullshit. Half a million people protested peacefully. Half a million. (Applause).

CMDR TERRY: What I am about to show, Ladies and Gentlemen, is that horses when used against crowds can be more of an indiscriminate use of force ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Why are you using horses?

CMDR TERRY: They can be a more indiscriminate use of force than can water cannon.

FROM THE FLOOR: These people are trying to get out.

FROM THE FLOOR: If you let them go there would not have been those scenes.

FROM THE FLOOR: You are kettling the people.

FROM THE FLOOR: It's cruel to the horses as well.

CMDR TERRY: Ladies and Gentlemen ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Tell us how a water cannon could have helped?

CMDR TERRY: Right. If I can explain, Ladies and Gentlemen.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: There is plenty of opportunity for you to voice your opinions. Can we just listen to Commander Terry. There is one more video, then we'll take comments and questions after that, but please allow him to speak.

CMDR TERRY: The next video I am about to show you is taken from the seventh August on Tottenham High Road.

FROM THE FLOOR: You did not explain why the water cannon was not used.

CMDR TERRY: I was trying to but this gentleman would not let me speak. I will explain that situation, the legitimate purpose there would be to keep a distance between the police officers and the protesters, therefore we would not use horses which are a far more indiscriminate tactic than a use of force. I am going to come to questions at the end. We will take questions but I want to move on to the next video and then we can move on to questions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on this particular night in Tottenham premises were burning.

FROM THE FLOOR: That was a response to the police killing a person.

CMDR TERRY: Ladies and Gentlemen, when ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Stop doing that and forget about this water cannon.

CMDR TERRY: When premises ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Stop stopping and searching black kids. (Applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: Go for the causes.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Can we just present the last video and then we will come to the point when we'll take questions and answers.

FROM THE FLOOR: That started the riot. (Applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: See the video of you beating up a little girl. Let's see that video.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: This is important that we are able to present the videos and then come to an ordered discussion. At the moment we are not able to have the kind of dialogue where anybody can get anything out of this meeting other than a wall of noise. I don't think that is the point of having a public engagement of this kind. Shouting about it does not enable us to have any kind of dialogue. Can we allow Commander Terry to present the last video, please?

CMDR TERRY: What I am trying to show you is that buildings were burning, people's lives were at risk. The Metropolitan Police Service have a responsibility in law to preserve life. Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, what happened on this High Road that night and how the water cannon could be used, I want you to see the car on fire. I want you to see the car on fire, and people preventing the Metropolitan Police Service from doing their job ... you can see premises catching on fire there, Ladies and Gentlemen, but the officers cannot make it safe for the fire brigade to work in because they cannot progress past this group of people who are using extreme levels of violence to prevent them from getting there. Therefore, people in that situation are preventing and could be risking other people's lives. The water cannon would have allowed us to create a safe working environment for the fire brigade. There would have been less people, the people of Tottenham who suffered the mass losses, the businesses of Tottenham who suffered the losses and the people whose lives were put at risk on that particular evening.

FROM THE FLOOR: It is not true. The only building you protected was the police station. You let Tottenham burn. You don't give a shit about Tottenham. (Applause).

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Okay. We've got about another 40 minutes or so of questions and answers. Before that, I would like Joanne McCartney, who is chair of the Police and Crime Committee, going through a series of meetings, collecting views, perhaps, Joanne, you can summarise where you are with your investigations.

JOANNE MCCARTNEY: I will be brief so that you have a chance to ask questions. The Police and Crime Committee is a cross-party committee of the London Assembly, and it is our job to hold the Mayor to account. In doing that, we have a duty to investigate anything we think is important to policing and crime reduction in London. As part of our duties we chose to look at water cannon when the announcement was made because we believe it is a significant departure in how London is policed.

We held three meetings to look at water cannon, including one with the Mayor, and we have looked at the Met's case and no doubt we have asked questions that many of you want to ask this evening.

Informed by those discussions, last week members of all four parties on the London Assembly, that is 20 out of 25 members, supported a motion during our budget process telling the Mayor not to spend money on water cannon.

(Applause)

We did not think a good enough case had been made to rush through spending public money on this. We are here tonight and there are members of the police and crime committee here and we have certain questions that we want to see if the Met answer tonight about some of our concerns. We want to hear more about why this decision needs to be rushed through before the summer, especially when there is no specific intelligence of disorder.

We think the Met needs to be clearer about when water cannon would be used. I have noticed the video footage we have seen tonight, but I think we are disappointed we keep

hearing about the riots in 2011 when it has been shown that water cannon would probably not have been suitable.

(Applause).

Indeed, only two weeks ago when the Mayor was asked about the riots he said in relation to Tottenham that suppose we were to re-run Tottenham, we would not be talking about water cannon. So I don't know what I have just seen behind me. Those supporting the case at our Committee told us that actually deploying them once an event had started was a waste of time and actually need to be deployed well in advance of any disorder.

We also believe that there are questions about how decisions to deploy would be taken. The Mayor and the Met seem to have different views. The Met believes it is a purely operational policing matter. The Mayor has said to our Committee that he believes he should be consulted and I quote him he said not just on the circumstances of which it could be used and whether it could be used in any particular circumstances. In giving evidence to us the Mayor said of the 3 scenarios that the Met had put forward where it could possibly have been used he would not have been happy using water cannon, and one of them was the student protest where the Mayor said it would have been counter-productive. So we need more reassurance on this. We are interested in what you think and we will feed your comments through to our report which will be published next week. (Applause)

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Well, thank you, Joanne, for reflecting the views of Assembly members. We are now going to throw the discussion open to the members of the audience. We have a Palantypist who is going to try and make sure we get an accurate record of what everybody says. I would ask everybody to speak clearly and we will take questions I think in groups of 3.

QUESTION 1: I probably won't need it because I think I can probably speak loud enough that everyone can hear me. My name is Michael Preston. I am a photo journalist. In 2009, I was photographing as a member of the Press the demonstration in the City of London, and it is interesting I think that having lived in London for 20 years, time and time again I don't think the police get why riots happen. I think it is really sad and I think it is partly to do with the fact that I think most of the senior officers don't actually live in the areas where riots grow and begin.

I think the problem is that happy people don't riot. It is as simple as that. If you are happy you are not going to go out on the street and have a riot. Having watched the demo in 2009 where my arm was broken in 2 places by a police officer who ran towards me and when I showed him my press card and I said I am press he said I don't care and get back and hit me anyway and broke my arm and I did sue through the NUJ and I won.

(Applause).

My main question is this. Personally, I don't have an axe to grind against the police. I think the police do a really difficult job. The problem is as a citizen of the City I want there to be someone out there who stops bad people from doing bad stuff. I have got no issue

with that at all. I have actually got, hang on, I have actually got friends and relatives who are in the police force, so I know that they are in there to do good stuff. The problem is the police are being used to mop up the errors that the state is making.

(Applause).

The problem is happy people don't riot. It is as simple as that. When you look at the kind of things that led to Tottenham, which are, the fact is, if I am walking down the streets it is unlikely I will be stopped and searched. I'm white, am middle-aged, you know, the whole load of reasons I will not be stopped. If you look at the facts that black kids are going to get stopped you can't do that year after year after year and not have tension. To get back to the 2009 thing because that is the point I want to make. In 2009 when I got my arm broken there were coppers running towards us with batons and there was blood all over the place. I was photographing that day and I thought I was going to see someone die in front of me because it was that violent and that unrestrained. My question is: as a news gatherer how are you going to differentiate with your water cannon between me as a legitimate member of the press holding a press card, doing a job, trying to cover the demonstration, whatever I feel about it, rightly or wrongly, I suspend my personal views when I am working as a journalist because I am there as an objective news gatherer. When your water cannon is wheeled out for the seven minutes I think it is that you have got to throw water at people, how are you going to differentiate between me, as a legitimate news gatherer, and all the other protesters.

Just as a last thing as well: one of the major things I saw in 2009 that caused tension in the City of London where I was photographing it was nothing to do with the police and nothing to do with protesters innately. What it was to do with was kettling. Time and time again this is used as a tactic and time and time again I have covered demonstrations and I have seen it and every single time you put a group of people, whether police officers, demonstrators, you put a group of people in a very tight constrained situation and you restrict their freedom and the pressure rises and inevitably that leads to some people losing it. Don't want that situation? Don't have that situation.

(Applause)

The £200,000 you are going to plan to spend on these 3 water cannons, if you don't want those things to happen, spend the money on making a better society with happy people who have no reason to riot because they are happy. (Applause)

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Two more questions. Anyone from this side of the room? Yes.

QUESTION 2: My name is Ben. I am from the network for police monitoring. Hello. I am Ben from the network of police monitoring.

It kind of touches on the question we just heard there. You showed us an example from the student demonstrations earlier. Now, current academic research on crowd dynamics has rejected the idea that previously rational individuals can descend into kind of collective, irrational and anti-social behaviour that is inconsistent with their values. Considering the use of water cannon tends to treat crowds in a fairly indiscriminate manner. Might its use,

much like kettling containment, instead unite previously disparate groups in opposition to such treatment, instead kind of escalating the situation and acting as a self-fulfilling prophecy creating mass disorder itself. (Applause).

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: We will take one more question.

FROM THE FLOOR: Are you not going to answer it?

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: No. We are going to answer in threes.

FROM THE FLOOR: How far back are you looking?

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: I will look further back after this lady has asked a question in the next round.

QUESTION 3: Can you hear me? Okay. I should just explain why I am here and my interest in questions of public order.

I was present at the student protest in 2010. I am a lecturer and I care about the issues. My son was also present and he was hit on the head by a police baton. He sustained bleeding to the brain. He had emergency brain surgery and the issue is still ongoing. I have never received an apology from the police. Perhaps you would like to make it now.

(Applause)

For that reason, I know that police do not make good decisions when they are policing mass protests.

FROM THE FLOOR: Here, here.

QUESTION 3: I also know from that experience that it is when the police use violent tactics that the temperature rises, that protesters feel intense loyalty towards each other, I felt that, and the whole situation is liable to move towards disorder. My son was not guilty of violent disorder. That was the decision of 12 independent jury people, and it is completely incorrect to say that on the occasion of the student protests that what was happening was violent disorder. What was happening was poor policing decisions.

FROM THE FLOOR: Here. Here. (Applause)

QUESTION 3: We have a right to protest. It is absolutely fundamental to our democracy. Protest is not the same as disorder, and I am absolutely certain that the presence of water cannon at protests would inflame the situation.

FROM THE FLOOR: Here. Here.

QUESTION 3: Water cannon themselves are aggressive and violent things. We will hear later I believe from a protester who has experienced water cannon and who has been very gravely injured by them, and I don't buy for a moment the idea that somehow the British

police can use them safely. The presence of water cannon would cause drastic injuries and it must not happen.

FROM THE FLOOR: Here. Here. (Applause)

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: So three questions around the policing tactics using containment or kettling, how you differentiate when you deploy water cannon, impact on crowd behaviour and whether water cannon would actually escalate the level of disorder rather than calm things down. So over to you, Mark.

AC MARK ROWLEY: I will pick up those to start off with, then a couple of other points about errors of the state and things, I don't think those are for me to deal with.

FROM THE FLOOR: Why not?

FROM THE FLOOR: Who is better placed than you?

AC MARK ROWLEY: It is not for me to answer to.

Firstly, in terms of ability to differentiate. That links to the last point about the difference between protest and violent disorder. I absolutely agree, there is a massive difference between protest and violent disorder. What those videos were seeking to illustrate was the scale of violence and disorder that would potentially justify using a tactic such as a water cannon where you have got mass missiles being thrown, petrol bombs being thrown, buildings alight, so there is a real risk to life, a real risk of mass destruction. It is those incidents of serious criminality and serious disorder which potentially justify its use. It should not be used routinely in policing protests.

We said very, very clearly in our consultation documents, etc, that we see water cannons being rarely seen and rarely used; and we mean that. We do not see them being put on the streets to show a force in protests which is one of the implications in some of the questions. They will be rarely seen and only brought out and potentially deployed in the sort of highly violent situations that have got completely out of hand as shown in those videos.

FROM THE FLOOR: Like the student protests, yes?

AC MARK ROWLEY: Half a million people. Many, many people walked and marched and protested perfectly properly.

FROM THE FLOOR: Why were you so violent against them? I was there. You would not let people out.

FROM THE FLOOR: Not one policeman was seriously injured. (Applause)

AC MARK ROWLEY: When you have got a small number of people using high levels of violence.

FROM THE FLOOR: The police.

FROM THE FLOOR: If you had not kettled them, they would not have used violence. They were going home.

AC MARK ROWLEY: When you have a small number of people using high levels of violence, the police officers have to be able to deal with that. One of the questions was the ability to discriminate between protesters and rioters, and that is absolutely an important point. Deployment of water cannon would have a graded deployment. It would not simply appear from nowhere and be used. There would be many warnings. It would be deployed. Lots of opportunity for people who want to leave. We would not use it in an environment where people did not have somewhere to go to remove themselves from that use of force if possible.

FROM THE FLOOR: Nonsense.

AC MARK ROWLEY: You can say nonsense, but I can tell you what the tactics are that we were trained to use and ones used in Northern Ireland where there have been no reported injuries.

FROM THE FLOOR: We are not in Northern Ireland.

FROM THE FLOOR: Shoot to kill.

FROM THE FLOOR: You would say that, wouldn't you?

AC MARK ROWLEY: We would use it ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Tell us where they would have gone? You just showed a video of people protesting where you said you would consider using ---

AC MARK ROWLEY: We would consider using it -- let me finish.

FROM THE FLOOR: There was nowhere for them to go. Can you tell us where they would have gone? Can you show us again. (Applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: Response in this room to the actions that have --

AC MARK ROWLEY: Hang on a minute.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Let Assistant Commissioner Rowley respond. Happy to take questions and comments after, but let's enable him to answer the questions that are being put. Just standing up and talking is not helpful.

AC MARK ROWLEY: When you have got a lot of missiles being thrown, that is very dangerous to officers. The deployment of it, there will be plenty of warnings. It will be seen by everybody there. Anybody who wanted to leave, there will be warnings. There will be warnings and the water cannon can be sort of deployed squirting into the ground in

front of people to start off with. Its use can slowly be escalated in a way that encourages people to leave to achieve the aim of creating a safe area and stopping the violent disorder and risk to life. It would not be deployed from the middle of nowhere and without warnings.

FROM THE FLOOR: It would make people more angry.

AC MARK ROWLEY: In terms of the point about could it escalate things. We would not deploy it routinely as a show of force. I think if it was put out as a show of force against a peaceful protest that would be entirely wrong. Yes, it could escalate, that is why we wouldn't do it. It would only be brought out in circumstances where you have the level of violence in those videos.

FROM THE FLOOR: The 2009, the video you showed, a student demonstration and you showed a number of people pushing against police lines, but the majority of people in that situation surrounding them would have been affected by water cannon should it have been used. Clearly the use of it in that situation would have created a situation where a lot of people could potentially have their behavioural change and how, you know, how would you prevent, how is it suitable in that situation is essentially my question.

AC MARK ROWLEY: You would use it in a way that gave people a chance to leave the area. You are not going to use it against people who do not want to be there. If there is a mass amount of violence you need to do it to protect officers.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: I think you make a good point about the impact on crowd behaviour and I know Commander Terry might want to make a point that.

CMDR TERRY: Yes. Ben, was it? We do a lot of work with Dr Cliff Stott formerly of Liverpool University and now at Leeds University and he has embedded a PHD student with us to study our methods and to research crowd psychology in groups. I completely understand what you are saying about the differential group psychologies that operate within major crowds and I completely understand the negative impact. That is why we contract academics in to train our senior officers so that they understand that impact and that is why we work with them, and that is why they come in and train our officers. Yes, I completely get that. In any event that I command one of the primary considerations I go for is what is the look and feel of that demonstration. Now, 99.9 per cent of demonstrations in London pass peacefully by officers in beat duty uniform. Even altering the way an officer dresses can affect the crowd dynamics and the psychology of that crowd. That is why now we use baseball caps and don't keep the helmets on all the time because we adapt our tactics.

I want to come to the lady here whose son was injured. That was exactly the point I was trying to make. When police officers go toe to toe with demonstrators and are in contact with them and batons are used injuries - substantial levels of injuries - can be sustained, and the reason for showing you the video of the horse was not necessarily to say we were going to bring water cannon at that point in time. When you put horses into a crowd a horse reacts, every horse will react in a different way to the crowd, irrespective of how well

you train that horse and people can sustain serious injuries. If you look at the impact level

CMDR TERRY: When you look at the level of force you use on a crowd you have to be very mindful, that is why we hold the authority levels back for horses, and do I genuinely believe that the water cannon would cause less injuries to a crowd than a horse would? Yes, I do. We have had baton guns available for use in public order in the Metropolitan Police Service now for over ten years. We have never yet deployed them as that is a very high level of force notwithstanding it is discriminating. I just want to come to Michael. There you are.

QUESTION 1: Mr Preston.

CMDR TERRY: Mr Preston. You introduced yourself as Michael. Mr Preston.

QUESTION 1: I don't know you personally so....

CMDR TERRY: I cannot make people happy. It is not within my gift. Can I use a form of control that is more discriminating than officers running towards a crowd where people get injured? If that form of control is a water cannon then, yes, I can use that if it is authorised for use. It can be discriminating.

QUESTION 1: That was not my question.

CMDR TERRY: Yours was differentiation.

QUESTION 1: My question was: when you use a tool like a water cannon it is a very, very blunt instrument, and it does not differentiate between a peaceful protester and a violent protester. I have watched water cannon on loads of film and I have seen it used and it is used, and if you can, a really good example of the use of water cannon, you could use if you like was Alabama some years ago when there was peaceful black protesters were protesting because their society was fairly unfair and water cannon was used on those and people's bodies were blasted across the street. People had head injuries because of the pressure of water used did cause lots and lots of injuries. The water itself did not hurt them, but it was the fact that they were blasted across the street. You have not answered my question. How do you differentiate between me, a news gatherer, and violent protesters? You could equally put that as peaceful protesters and violent protesters. A water cannon is not a very precise tool.

(Applause)

CMDR TERRY: Yes, Mr Preston, I understand your concern in that respect, but there are different jurisdictions that use water cannon and use them in a completely different way. We will be basing our use of water cannon on the Northern Ireland model in a discriminating fashion, not an indiscriminating fashion for attacking crowds.

FROM THE FLOOR: Water cannons are not that precise. Believe me. They are not that clear and not that efficient. Where you can say innocent, innocent, oh he is deserving the water, not deserving water. You can't do that. (Applause).

QUESTION 1: Whilst I appreciate that you are doing your best to answer my question within the constraints of what you can say and what you can't say, because your boss is sitting there, I understand that. I understand what you are saying, but the fact is you and I both know that if you use a water cannon it is not a centimetre wide pulse of water. It is a jet that washes across a whole body of people. There are situations that you have referred to about the people, people being able to go somewhere. You said people would be able to go somewhere. I was in the City of London when the demo was being policed where my arm was broken and I saw what was going on and there was nowhere for people to go. I was not allowed to leave the kettle as a journalist. Others journalists were not allowed. I was physically attacked, other journalists were physically attacked. One of my colleagues, David Hoffman, had a shield smashed in his face, and he had 35,000 quid's worth of damage. The point is it is not a precise tool. You are adopting it as a way of dealing with people. It is not going to help you.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Sir. That will have to be the last word. I know there are a lot of people who want to ask questions and make points. We've got, obviously, you are ready to, because I think it would be good to hear from him.

INTERPRETER: Yes. Okay. So we have here. Okay. I am here together with Dietrich who comes from Germany and he was severely injured in the use of water cannon at a protest in Germany against a train station that would be built and it was not entirely a peaceful protest and he has come here to tell you a little bit of his story and so you can see the impact that the water cannon can have on some people. Because he does not speak very good English he will speak in German and I will be translating, so, yes.

DIETRICH WAGNER (VIA INTERPRETER): Okay. So his name is, my name is Dietrich Wagner. I come from Stuttgart in the south of Germany and about three and a half years ago I made a very not very pleasant experience with the water cannons.

So I received a targeted shot in my face at the demonstration that was against a new, a station that was to be newly built in Stuttgart.

So I have not only been a victim of water cannons but I have also thought about the use of water cannons and how they should be applied.

Yes. So how dangerous a water cannon is for the demonstrators, for the protesters in the street is highly dependent on how the police employs it.

Yes. So first effect it is important to take into consideration is the pressure, the water pressure, and the second thing is at least in Germany you have a lot of rules and regulations that clearly prescribe how you can use them. For example, you are not allowed to target the face of somebody and you are not allowed to target children.

Yes. Yes. So he is saying that in Germany at least we have a lot of pages, 30, 40, 50 pages of rules and regulations how to employ the water cannons, but many of the police don't know the whole detail of that. Then what happens when you are in the situation, which is like a situation of battle, then it is very difficult to follow all these rules and regulations, so

he says that this is similar to, even to the army, the police or the army, for example you can see in Egypt or in Libya, they, always the same thing happens. Yes.

You can observe how small and light our women are, fly 3, 4, 5 metres distance in the water jet. Yes. For example, people have to go to the doctor and they have broken ribs.

Yes. So you can actually see like people have broken ribs but then what happens afterwards you have to go to a trial and you have to justify for years and years and years and at least in Germany what happened is the police just said it didn't happen. (Applause).

So, yes, it was very difficult for the victims to go and really demonstrate what has happened to them, and he also wants to make clear the point that for the police it is also a difficult situation. It is a difficult situation and, yes.

FROM THE FLOOR: "It is tempting for the police to use it, once they have it."

DIETRICH WAGNER (VIA INTERPRETER): Yes. So yes. Yes. So what happened in Stuttgart at least is that before these, before this happened, before these peaceful protests were disturbed by the water cannons, the police was in high regard, was highly regarded. Police was respected, trusted the police to do their job well, but when these riots happened and then the trust level fell to zero and that's why it is, so he says, okay, maybe you cannot compare really Stuttgart with London because Stuttgart has about 600,000 inhabitants and London has millions of them, but still this is what has happened.

So, yes. Okay. Yes. So, but the principle is the same and he agrees with all of you that have mentioned the fact that water cannons can make the people even more aggressive and all the psychological potential because part of it is already because the way the vehicle looks because it reminds you of a military ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Can he explain what happened to him?

DIETRICH WAGNER (VIA INTERPRETER): Yes. Yes.

FROM THE FLOOR: What did the water do?

DIETRICH WAGNER (VIA INTERPRETER): Okay. Okay. Yes. So, yes. Okay.

Yes. Okay. So what he was saying is that actually after the end of these protests that were finished with the water cannons, few weeks later there was a new protest where there were out of 600,000 inhabitants, there were 100 people, so it would compare with London maybe 2 million that went to protest against the illegal methods that were employed by the police which were the batons, the pepper spray, the water cannons and all of that, so in the end it created much larger protests rather than solving. (Applause)

Yes. Okay. So he has been asked to share his personal experience, so what happened to him on the right eye he has a vision of 5 per cent left, and on the left he can't see anything, only like a light.

He is saying that water cannons are inherently dangerous and this danger does not come so much from the thing itself, but comes from the way it is used and the way how the police uses it in the moment.

(Applause).

Yes. So just, this was the last one, yes, so one important thing to keep in mind is the naivety of people. So even himself, before, you think, okay, you get wet, I am a young person, I am, you know, sporty, I don't mind, I can get wet. But it actually, people very often forget that this is a death danger and that is one of the reasons why he came here to London to share his experience and to make sure that, you know, to give you all an opportunity to stop this nonsense. (Applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: Why isn't Boris Johnson here to hear it!

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: That is, of course, what we have been able to do by taking, by taking your testimonial, we are taking a transcript of everything that was said, and I want to take a final round of questions, and I will take 3 questions now, and I am conscious I haven't been to the back of the audience. One question from this on the right hand side then the next 2 questions from the back of the room.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hold on a second. You have to give the floor to people of colour. You have to. Because they are the main target in this. Okay? So you have to give the floor to people of colour to speak.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: I am asking can we get the microphone to the back of the room. Next 3 questions.

QUESTION 4: Yes. Right. Hello, everyone. My question is in terms of human rights. Every single country, every single country that has deployed water cannons or put dye in the water cannons or put sort of pepper sprays or any sort of additives have had to go to court for human rights violations. Why, why does Britain, London, want to go down that route with the track history of the police being economic with the truth when things go wrong?

(Applause)

To understand what went wrong. Because the police are not very good at saying, hey, I made a mistake. Not good at that at all. So how can we be confident that this is the right way to go? It is an utter waste of money. In terms of the austerity that they alluded to in the initial report, that is the trigger. Visually, most people are thinking of the 1960s and water cannons being used on black people historically.

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes. Yes (applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: When they do things they always start with black people first and now you are seeing it here, so you really want to know what the rationale is in terms of the deaths in custody as well. Mark Duggan especially.

QUESTION 5: I want to speak to you people from the heart. Firstly, I completely support the police. Sorry, I completely support the police force in creating a peaceful world and a peaceful London. Okay? Secondly, I would like to say I feel a deep level of sorry for any injury caused to the police by people actually from the public, realise that issues are happening in this room here today, right. Now I need to tell you, okay, peace will never, ever be created by a violent action. I mean Newton's law of physics. Come on. You have to listen. You have to wake up. Surely the government's job is to serve the people, rather than defend bad decisions with water weapons, okay. How about solve the root cause of the problem. Prevent these riots by doing your job in serving the people. I feel a deep level of sorrow that humanity has come to this. Our great city, London. Okay. Our great city of London is coming to this, ah? Ask yourselves the question, as a government, as people who are making, austerity cuts to save money? What do you think is going to happen to your tourism industry when you turn the streets of London into a war zone by buying weapons? (Applause). Please wake up to what you are doing.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Third question, from the back, please.

QUESTION 6: Are you taking it from me now?

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: You are getting a microphone there.

QUESTION 6: Thank you. My name is, is this working? Can you hear me? I am one of the first people on the demonstration to seize the Stock Exchange which of course should have happened. I witnessed (applause) I witnessed 3 hours of peaceful marching when it was found that went the Stock Exchange was not possible, was not available, whereupon after 3 hours of peaceful marching around the riot police were called. I narrowly escaped being kettled myself. I was able to tell the Press and the world because it did go on YouTube that the police were behaving unlawfully, they should desist and they should support us because we are all part of the 99 per cent, and what I am going to say (applause) if the police do not use their powers for justice, instead of criminal injustice and murder, because let's not kid ourselves, anyone, if I were to be a policeman, I would swear that I could simply say to a judge: "I felt I was threatened so I shot my gun at him." So what I am going to say is this. Violent disorder is generated by police under their power to crush any sign of democracy. (Applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: Here. Here.

QUESTION 6: This government is run by millionaire war crimes, was criminals. There are illegal war criminals. One of Britain's most senior judges has confirmed that. He is now dead, Lord Tom Bingham, one of the most fine judges of the British system. I don't know how many of them are left. It is now being run by these war criminals and genocide suspects and Boris Johnson is a wife cheat and a stand-up who is laughing his way to become Prime Minister of this state, this armed police state, and he is now in charge of the police of London and he was elected despite 80 per cent of Londoners not wanting him. (Applause).

So the police have got to get their act together, know which side they are going to join because if they don't swap sides and start joining for justice for their money there is going to be absolutely unbelievable riots in London and we may get London burnt down again because water cannons won't be sufficient to put the fires out.

FROM THE FLOOR: Here. Here.

QUESTION 6: Finally, my question is this. Will the police now immediately undertake to this meeting that they will cease forthwith committing violence and thereby inciting it, and on behalf of the establishment criminals who are mugging you into deploying another potential murder weapon.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Let us, sir. Sir, allow the officers to respond. We will take some more questions after that. Can we please allow Assistant Commissioner Rowley and his team, issues around human rights and the targeting of black Londoners, whether this decision would escalate and create a war zone, and finally whether violent disorder is generated by the police. Perhaps you could respond to that, Mark.

AC MARK ROWLEY: I will pick up those points in order.

Firstly, the general point that people have made about the aim of the police has to be to prevent disorder. We absolutely agree with that point completely. We do not want to set out to create disorder. It is the job of the police to maintain the Queen's peace and that is our intention.

People have made comments about the relationship between the police and minority communities. We know they are not as good as they ought to be, and one of the things that we have done under the current Commissioner is reduced stop and search by 25 per cent. Maintaining arrests of people who are carrying weapons, but doing far less stop and search and making it more targeted against criminals and catching fewer innocent people in the wider use of the power. And reduce the disproportionality of stop and search, it was very high levels. It was 6 or 7 to one. It is now less than 2 to 1. It is going in the right direction. There is more to do. I acknowledge keeping the peace and prevention is a key part of what we do.

There has been a couple of points about our accountability if we do end up with a water cannon, using it. The water cannon will be fitted with video cameras to ensure that the usage of them will be recorded and kept so there will be no doubt how they were used and what was faced by the officers when they made decisions and used them.

That is critically important in terms of public accountability that if we are using tools like water cannons that there is no doubt about the situation they were used in. So if it was proper it is obvious and if it was improper it is obvious, and it is very important that we do that.

FROM THE FLOOR: What difference will a camera make on a water cannon?

AC MARK ROWLEY: The question I was answering was the suggestion that it would be not transparent. It will be transparent. We will have cameras on the devices that we have no doubt what was being faced when they were being used. The last point about ---

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Please, let Assistant Commissioner Rowley respond. Thank you.

AC MARK ROWLEY: The last point about escalation. I have said it a couple of times already I will say it again. We will not put them on the streets of London unless there is very, very significant disorder as we saw in those videos. We do not want to provoke anything. We don't want to change the style of how we police protests. We simply want the tools available to deal with the most violent and sustained disorder that we face on very rare occasions.

FROM THE FLOOR: How can you justify the cuts?

FROM THE FLOOR: The question is when are you going to switch sides and start protecting the people. (Applause).

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Take another, I am going to take more people. Let's take another 3 questions.

FROM THE FLOOR: Can you comment on Dietrich?

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Let us take another 3 questions. 3 more questions, please.

FROM THE FLOOR: You have not answered the questions.

FROM THE FLOOR: Answer the questions.

FROM THE FLOOR: He has come all the way from Germany. You just ignore him. Answer him.

FROM THE FLOOR: Answer the questions. (applause).

AC MARK ROWLEY: Okay. The first thing is the account from Germany is tragic and the degree of injury is awful, isn't it. Nobody can say anything else other than that.

FROM THE FLOOR: That sounds really empathetic. Really.

AC MARK ROWLEY: The challenge for me, I can't comment on the German tactics and how they do and don't use water cannon, the pressures of the devices and how they deploy them.

FROM THE FLOOR: Have you researched them?

AC MARK ROWLEY: I can't comment because that is not what I am here to do.

FROM THE FLOOR: It makes a mockery of your additional safeguards ---

AC MARK ROWLEY: So in the UK ---

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: You asked us to respond to the points raised. Let Assistant Rowley answer.

ACMARK ROWLEY: They are awful injuries. I can't comment on the exact circumstances because I don't know them. What I would say is: there is an independent scientific body that evaluates any equipment that is going to be potentially authorised by the Home Secretary for use of force by the police, whether that is about Tasers, whether it is about water cannons, there is an independent committee that it goes through.

FROM THE FLOOR: Who pays for the committee?

ACMARK ROWLEY: There is an independent committee.

FROM THE FLOOR: How independent is it?

AC MARK ROWLEY: It is very independent. It is an (laughter). It is nothing to do with the police. It is an independent committee that reports to the Home Secretary.

Now, the deployment in Northern Ireland, which is the model we will be based on because we have the same public order tactics that we train and develop across the United Kingdom, is based in Northern Ireland water cannons that are managed in terms of water pressure and deployment in line with that scientific assessment done by that committee, and the tactics that fall within that. So whilst it is awful if anyone gets injured to that extent, we are looking at the Northern Ireland model where they have no reported injuries made to them with tens of uses over many years. That is the basis we are going forward.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: I believe there is someone with a microphone who wants to ask a question. Can we take the next couple of questions, please.

QUESTION 7: Thank you very much. My name is John Howard. I represent the De Beauvoir safer neighbourhoods team in Hackney. Yes, it is me again.

We had a MOPAC meeting at Hackney on the 6th February which really and truthfully was to discuss this very same issue. There was a lot of chairs like myself who were, unlike yourselves, very anti the usage of these pieces of equipment. Now, my reason for coming here today is very simple. If you cannot manage and afford to restore 6, I think it was 60 bicycles that you took away for the usage out of Hackney for the use of the Olympics, and you promised to bring those back after the Olympics, now you are going to turn round and say you have got no money to repair or to replace those bikes to enable the police to do their job effectively and efficiently. We have some very serious crime in Hackney that can flare up at any time, as has happened in the past. Now, if you have got no money for simple things and basic things like that how can you then justify putting your hand into the public purse to take out £90,000 which is quoted on your website, or £30,000 each for these machines that you have already allocated and put aside, which then brings me on to

my second point which is are these consultations really consultations or are they just a tick box for the police?

(Applause).

Also, finally, for me to finish with: these, what I would like to know is what is the real agenda that you have for these cannons because you, it is quoted in the Evening Standard this evening that you want them for usage for the summer. What is proposed to happen in this summer and why do not we know about it. (Applause)

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: We'll take a final question, from the back.

QUESTION 8: My name is Martin Powell. I am a poet and an activist currently serving with Stop the War Coalition. I hope you do answer that gentleman, that was going to be my question is what do you know that we don't? There is a huge, huge push for this to be introduced very quickly for the summer. You mentioned the student protest. I made the point already half a million people protested peacefully during the student demonstrations. Even by the Daily Mail 200 people turned violent. If you can't police 200 people without resorting to violence I don't think you are fit to call yourself police officers.

(Applause)

I mean that with respect because that is the video that you use as justification and those are the real statistics. You have mentioned the London riots. You can pretend, if you want, that the London riots came out of a clear blue sky instead of the systemic racism that is still prevalent within the Metropolitan Police Service.

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes. Yes. (Applause)

QUESTION 8: Right. All the videos you showed us tonight are all intricately connected. You have got the anti-capitalism protest, millions of bankers stealing our money. We are a bit pissed off about it and we're the enemy. You have got the student protest, same question. Because of the bankers stealing our flipping money we're going to up your fees by 3 times. We are the enemy. You've got the riots in Tottenham, people are better placed to speak about this, 26 times more likely to be stopped by the police. They are angry. This was passed off as consumerism and people grabbing TVs.

(Applause)

It is much more than that. Until people realise that within the Metropolitan Police Service nothing is going to change. (Applause).

The final point I would like to make, unfortunately I have to leave for another event. You just said, Mark Rowley, I will quote you on something you said 10 minutes ago. "We do not want to change the way we address, the way we police situations at protests." No you don't, but we do.

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes. Yes.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Okay. So 3 questions I would like the team here to be able to answer. One is about the timing, around the summer, and some issues about, that have also been raised, Mark, perhaps ---

AC MARK ROWLEY: Yes, I will pick those up.

FROM THE FLOOR: Can you not remember: The cost?

ACMARK ROWLEY: The cost is £90,000.

FROM THE FLOOR: Write it down.

AC MARK ROWLEY: In terms of the timing there is nothing specific about the summer other than we reviewed our approach, as I said at the start, as did others in the six months that followed the disorder of 2011 and came to the conclusion now approaching 2 years ago in terms of we thought there was a place for this.

History shows that disorder is more likely in the summer and that is simply the reason we would like to have it this summer rather than next summer, and it's three years on.

There is no other reason other than that.

In terms of the spend, it is a lot of money to spend for something that you hope you will never use; I agree with you on that. However, we want to use it for those rare situations where the potential risk is enormous. So in the disorder of 2011, two people died and millions of pounds of damage and many businesses were destroyed. So we are trying to use it in a small number of situations where the impact is so enormous we think it is worth having that to hand as a rarely used and rarely seen tactic.

FROM THE FLOOR: Outrageous.

AC MARK ROWLEY: Lastly, I think I have already answered the issue in terms of the student protest. Most people protested ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Why were you so violent...

AC MARK ROWLEY: A few hundred people were intent on serious violence and we want tactics to better deal with that.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Listen, I think the police have tried to make it absolutely clear, and actually is on listening to Herr Wagner...

FROM THE FLOOR: We don't believe him.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Just... let... What Herr Wagner sustained was as part of a policing of protest. Police officers all the way through this evening have said it is not an option, it is not a tactical option to stop people who want to protest. It is to be used in the event of extreme violence and disorder where there is a risk to life and there is a risk of

injury, serious injury. So that is the position that the police have made clear throughout the evening.

I am going to take a couple of questions. One more round, 3 more questions, and then we'll have to wrap it up because we've gone way past time. 3 more questions and that is it.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: From the back, please. 3 more questions and one from the front.

FROM THE FLOOR: You answer a question with a question.

QUESTION 9: I've just got 3 points to raise really quickly. It would be great if you could come back to this man's question and other questions you have not answered.

My name is Alastair. I have lived in London my whole life and I have been protesting in London, and every time I have gone to a protest my parents say be safe, look after yourself. It is not from the other protesters, it is from the police, and the thing about it is, is the way to make protests peaceful is to allow peaceful protesters to go? I have been in protests where people have been getting violent and the other protesters have said "stop that, that is not how we behave, we are here for a good reason". Okay. So don't scare us off by threatening us with water cannons. I have been to protests with kids. At the Israeli Embassy protest there were young people there sitting in the street doing a sort of Kumbaya kind of thing. They had managed to escape the kettle, are maybe throwing plastic bottles, and police cars were driving around, like police vans, and they were sitting in the street and it was dangerous, and I don't know if they would want to go back to another protest after they had seen that or if they even heard that that kind of behaviour was going on.

That is the kind of thing they see. The other thing is: how do we know that you are not going to change the rules in which you use it once you have got them.

(Applause).

Because that could happen at any point. The government could change, the committees could change, the Home Secretary could change. My final point is: how are we supposed to talk to countries that are undiplomatic, who have dictators, Syria before it fell, to Bahrain, to Saudi Arabia, to these other countries subduing protests if this is the message we are giving out. It's disgusting. (Applause).

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Couple more questions.

QUESTION 10: Hello. Stop the War Coalition and United Against Fascism.

The main problem here, guys, you just don't seem to get is you are asking for a really dangerous weapon and you are saying it is all right guys, trust us. Trust us. We need you to show us why we should trust you. The evidence over the last few years shows the police cannot be trusted in any situation. We cannot trust them at protests. We cannot trust

them doing stop and search. We cannot trust them in hard stops. Why should we trust you with water cannons? (Applause).

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: One more question.

QUESTION 11: Okay. I just would like to raise a few things. First of all you have said it is not about how you protests when basically, apart from the riots, every single video you have shown us is how to police a protest. That is an issue.

The other issue for me is that the person who came in to speak after the police said that Boris Johnson would not have used them in the riots. So how is that a justification for you saying you should have them?

And also, he said that in, you know, he wouldn't have used them in most of those situations. So your examples are situations where you would not have been allowed to use them.

Another issue I have is I regularly take my daughter to protests. How can I feel that she can be safe to express our diplomatic views when you have these kinds of weapons? I have been to protests that were protests against the arms trade where she has seen policemen violently dragging off an individual who was just peacefully sitting and how I have had to explain how this is allowed to happen when these are the people whose job it is to protect us, how she can trust the police to do that job.

I have been at the same protests actually where we were surrounded by police cars for standing in the road holding placards. We weren't doing anything violent. There weren't very many of us. If we can't trust you to police those small situations how can you expect us to trust you with such horrible weapons that can cause death and serious injuries as has been seen. We have here someone who has suffered from these injuries, you are telling us we can trust you to be safe with them. Germany have a lot of rules we heard. They have a lot of things they are supposed to follow before they use them and here is an example where that has not happened.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Thank you. (Applause).

I listened very carefully to what Herr Wagner said. Can I ask a question through the interpreter before the last set of questions? You said there are lots of rules for the Stuttgart police about the deployment of water cannons for the [speaking in German], they said they can't use them and deploy them on children or into the face. What I am interested in knowing is in this country the police operate under the Rule of Law, something that is well established. The Commissioner, the Commissioner and his, the Metropolitan Police Service operate under the Rule of Law. What I want to know is, my question is: based on what you have said, clearly there is a difference between the law and how that has been carried out by the Stuttgart police. Have there been any consequences for anybody in the Stuttgart police?

DIETRICH WAGNER (VIA INTERPRETER): Yes. Okay. So a few people, a few policemen have been held to account and have been punished. However, the state government of the province, the state, still tries to see this as a legal action, so they try to avoid more severe

consequences. Like in a game of chess they sacrifice a few people, but overall they try to deploy it as a legal thing and a just thing and a good thing. So basically now it looks like the last resort might be to go to the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg to ensure real justice. (Applause).

FROM THE FLOOR: More than we do in England then!

FROM THE FLOOR: Over 1,000 deaths in custody. Not one murderer in the police force has been found guilty ---

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Let us respond to the issues around trusting the Metropolitan Police Service to operate within the Rule of Law and how they would use water cannon. I think were a number of the questions were raised in the final round of questions.

AC MARK ROWLEY: Two points to pick up. One about trust and one about changing the criteria. The criteria have been used in Northern Ireland for many years and have stood as they are. We do not see them changing, and given this consultation is taking place on the basis of that set of rules I can't envisage how they would be changed. As I have said at the start, it is about using it in the most serious disorder where there is a real risk to life and or major risk to mass destruction of property. It is not about a routine deployment or use in dealing with protests.

In terms of trust, I accept the challenge that the relationship between the police and different communities in some communities it is stronger and some it is weaker. I mentioned some of the things we have been trying to do to improve the stop and search to deal with that. We know there is more to do in that respect.

I come back to, though, tonight's debate it has been good to listen to all the opinions.

FROM THE FLOOR: The gentleman from Hackney, you have ignored him.

AC MARK ROWLEY: We want to protect people from the worst excesses of violence that we have seen in a small number of situations. It is our duty to protect people's lives, it is our duty to protect people's property.

FROM THE FLOOR: We'll ask for your protection when we need it.

AC MARK ROWLEY: We have no intention whatsoever to adopt an aggressive approach to protests in the routine. This is about dealing with serious disorder.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: Okay.

FROM THE FLOOR: Lies.

FROM THE FLOOR: Answer the questions.

FROM THE FLOOR: ...about the money.

FROM THE FLOOR: You need to listen to the people in this room.

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: We are certainly listening to the people in this room. There will be a transcript of the public meeting. We will survey around 3,000 Londoners and the Mayor has set up this engagement, the Mayor has set up this engagement specifically because he wants to hear from Londoners. He is minded to ---

FROM THE FLOOR: Where is he?

STEPHEN GREENHALGH: He is minded to approve the purchase of water cannon, but I want to be clear that the final decision, the final decision to licence water cannon for use as they are in Northern Ireland on the mainland rests with the Home Secretary. We've heard this evening, we are very clear about that, that is the process, and we are also very clear that this engagement is critical before he takes his final decision.

So I thank all of you for coming here this evening. Thank you very much.