



policebeat

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'I was only doing my job'



**Officer wounded in
gun attack**

**Officer to receive
Gallantry medal**

EDITORIAL

Reality check 2017

Our front cover has two striking photographs. The first is of the filling station in Belfast where terrorists tried to murder an Officer. The second features Sergeant Mark Wright who sustained dreadful knife injuries as he was 'just doing his job' in Lurgan in 2012.

The news that Mark is to receive the Queen's Gallantry Medal came the week after his colleague in north Belfast underwent lengthy surgery for two serious wounds to his right arm.

What ties both incidents is the word 'commitment'. The wounded Community Officer who works out of Tennant Street was serving people in a fractured community. The young Officer was well known and keen to make his 'patch' a better and safer place.

In Lurgan, Mark and colleagues answered a call for help and were confronted by a man wielding two knives. Fearing for a mother and two children in the house, Mark displayed great courage by disarming and arresting the attacker, but not before he himself was slashed on the face and head.

Mark has made a full recovery. The Officer who was the target of the murder bid on the Crumlin Road faces a long road back to full fitness.

These two images serve as a reality check for all Officers and those in Command as we go into what will be another difficult and uncertain year for policing in Northern Ireland.

Normal policing – that is, the Northern Ireland interpretation of normal – will be maintained, but only just. Officers will work tirelessly to meet community expectations and prevent a Service implosion. Under-staffed and under-resourced, the onus is firmly on the Government to see to it that Officers have everything they need to do the job and on the Chief Constable to acknowledge the pressures his officers are under and make the case for adequate funding provision.

Unfortunately, we have a devolved system of Government that isn't working and is experiencing political paralysis. The snap Assembly Election called over the Renewable Heat Initiative scandal failed to deliver a 'route map' out of the controversy. We have no Ministers and no Executive.

In their absence, crucial budget decisions will be taken by senior Civil Servants. There is less in the kitty, which means cutbacks. Once again, the PSNI is being regarded a 'low hanging fruit'.

This Federation harbours fears that millions more will be shaved off the PSNI allocation. It may not look like much when viewed as a small single digit percentage decrease, but when you consider that 1% equates to almost £7 million, it's not difficult to imagine how any financial 'surgery' will inevitably lead to an undermining of the Service.

Our well-founded suspicions lead us to believe we will see an erosion in numerical strength and operational resilience. The Chief Constable believes 6,963 is the minimum requirement. Twenty-seven Officers are leaving every month - 324 this year alone - and that number is set to increase as Officers exercise their retirement entitlements.

Planned recruitment is not keeping pace with such a serious reduction, which means that we are walking headlong into a dire situation where numbers are likely to be significantly less than the minimum required.

The Chief Constable argues that he has sufficient to do the job. This Federation disagrees.

Our two images on the front cover should give the Government pause for thought. Only they can stop the decline. Only they can prevent the Service from being holed below the waterline.

Wounded Officer now recovering at home

