INTERVIEW WITH:
THE RT.HON. THERESA MAY, HOME SECRETARY

ANDREW MARR: The Home Secretary, Theresa May is with me and we’re going to start by talking about a very important event tomorrow; the launch of the National Crime Agency, this is a new body. It sounds from the papers today Home Secretary, rather American. It’s already being called the British FBI.

THERESA MAY: Well it’s an important new body and can I just say, Andrew, I think it’s the first time I’ve been on the programme since you’ve been back, so it’s very good to see you in your normal spot. Yes, the new National Crime Agency is designed to be a relentless crime fighting body which will relentlessly pursue organised criminals and it’s important – I mean crime is falling in this country but we can’t be complacent and particularly on organised crime, I don’t think the last government put enough focus on this but organised crime is changing. It’s getting more diverse, more international.

BOTH TOGETHER

ANDREW MARR: ... SOCA, the new body SOCA, what was wrong with the old system that you need to bring in a new body.

THERESA MAY: Well the National Crime Agency will have within it what was SOCA but it will have a number of what are called ‘commands’. It’s going to focus on a number of different areas. It’s going to have an economic crime command for the first time, that will increase our ability to deal with economic crime and fraud. It will have the organised crime command, a new border policing. We’ll be increasing our ability to deal internationally and the Child Exploitation Agency and a new national cybercrime unit. And at the core of the National Crime Agency will be intelligence. We’ll be looking at whole new range of dealing with the issues to ensure that we can relentlessly go after these organised criminals.

ANDREW MARR: It’s going to have less money than the bodies that it’s replacing would have had. Are you happy that it’s going to be well resourced.

THERESA MAY: I am happy that it’s going to be well resourced. What we’ve seen across the changes that we’ve made in policing is that it is possible to keep up that relentless fight against crime while yes, in today’s difficult circumstances, having to deal with the deficit, we have to be careful about the
budgets that are available. But the resources will be there, crucially we’ll have this new national cybercrime unit but we’re going to do some other things too. The National Crime Agency will also be looking at working at local level, in a regional level more and ensuring that it’s across government approach not just the police, because in some of these issues, we need to bring to bear the Department of Work and Pensions and various other parts of government too.

ANDREW MARR: Reading about it in today’s papers, lots of gung ho language and chaps running around with guns. Is this the Americanisation of British policing.

THERESA MAY: No it’s not. I mean it is a British approach to dealing with an issue that we face. I think it is absolutely right, the National Crime Agency will work with our local police forces. It will work internationally as well.

ANDREW MARR: It doesn’t cover Northern Ireland which is a slight oddity isn’t it.

THERESA MAY: Well there are some aspects of the work that it does that will be in Northern Ireland but not completely. But it will be working with the police service of Northern Ireland in dealing with these issues.

ANDREW MARR: Let’s turn to immigration now if we may. There are two things you said you were going to do with this Bill, basically carrots for those people who are going to come here and work very hard and sticks for those people we want to get rid of, who aren’t going to work hard and pay their taxes. What are the new carrots?

THERESA MAY: Well what we’ve been doing across the whole of our immigration system, as you know, net migration has come down by a third since the government came in to power. What we’ve been doing is trying to ensure that our visa system is a system that offers a good service to those who want to come and be here and contribute here. So we’ve opened up new routes for example for entrepreneurs, for investors, for exceptionally talented people. On the other side of it, we have been working to work out abuse of the system. What I’m going to do in the new immigration Bill is make a number of changes. We will be reducing the appeal rights, we’ll be making it easier extending the number of cases where people can be, foreign criminals example, deported first and appeal when they’re outside the UK.

ANDREW MARR: Are they going to get a fair appeal after that though? I mean they’re outside the country. I don’t quite see how they’re going to appeal fairly, if they’re already not here.

THERESA MAY: It will be fair to them. But I think what people feel is wrong is somebody being able to stay in the UK, somebody who the government thinks should be deported. Being able to stay in the UK, a foreign criminal for example and appeal and appeal again and again and while they’re doing that build up extra rights to stay here. I think it’s important that we’re able to deport first and allow people, yes, a fair right of appeal, but appeal outside the UK.
ANDREW MARR: What about, I mean there are measures to deprive people coming here of housing benefit and other rights, including the right to the NHS. Again, I don’t quite see how that works if there’s somebody who shouldn’t be here, who’s bleeding or has got an infectious disease – doctors and nurses are not going to turn them away are they.

THERESA MAY: Well of course there are emergency cases but what we want to see is that a very simple rule which is that actually people living in the UK, who’ve contributed to the NHS, they’ve contributed to the welfare system and what people get fed up about is being seen, seeing that health tourists and people coming in to the UK, using the health service or coming in to the UK and having the advantage of the benefit system when they haven’t actually contributed to that. That’s what we’re tightening up on both of those ...

ANDREW MARR: How is going to work Home Secretary because I come back to the fact, most people go in to hospital with an emergency of some kind, you know, they’re pregnant or they’ve got a disease and it’s very hard to see at the moment, doctors and nurses saying, no I’m terribly sorry, you can’t come in to the hospital. They just won’t do it I suspect, I propose to you.

THERESA MAY: Yeah, we’re looking at a number of ideas. One of them is that for people who will be here for a certain temporary period of time, that actually they pay a sum of money, so that they are contributing to the health service and then tightening up within the health service on those cases where they should be charging people for you know, some people may have to go in for an emergency, but actually the arrangements are that their country should be ...(interjection)

ANDREW MARR: Afterwards, they’ll be charged after....

THERESA MAY: ... charged afterwards and ensuring that we’re getting that so people aren’t able to access the benefits that people here in the UK have been paying for on the same sort of free basis.

ANDREW MARR: What about these £3,000 bonds that are here to ensure that people who come and then don’t return, lose some money. The Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg said to me he just stopped that happening in government, you won’t be able to go through with it.

THERESA MAY: Well, we’ve had a number of approaches to this from our coalition colleagues but what I want to see is - look at the bond system as a means of preventing overstaying. Most of the people who are here illegally will be people who came here on an illegal visa and then stayed on. The bond is something that would enable us, if somebody does stay on, to, you know, they would lose that money and we hope that would deter over-staying. But we’re not talking about a blanket approach to everybody who applies to come to the UK. We’re talking about a small number of people .... (interjection)
ANDREW MARR: So you can negotiate do you think Nick Clegg on this subject and come to an agreement with him about watering down the proposal a bit in a way it allows the Liberal Democrats to allow it through.

THERESA MAY: Well, what I want to see is a system that is ... (interjection)

ANDREW MARR: ... like in a coalition ...

BOTH TOGETHER

THERESA MAY: What I want to see is a system that is going to ensure that we deter overstayers. This is not about enabling more people to come here. This is about ensuring that people who come here are not going to overstay their visas and what I’m clear about is that if the system isn’t going to do that, then it’s lost its purpose so the bond system must deter overstayers.

ANDREW MARR: Right. Nigel Farage was raising the subject, not surprisingly of the Romanian and Bulgarian influx as he sees it, coming. Is there anything you can do to, we’ve delayed it for a few years but now it’s going to happen next year. If like other come that will blow out of the water all your statistics on immigration won’t it?

THERESA MAY: Well what we’re doing in relation to Romanian and Bulgarians who may come here after the transitional controls are lifted, but more generally, is exactly the sort of issues that we’ve just been talking about. So we are looking at reducing what I call the pull factors, the factors that might lead somebody to want to come here. So that we are tightening up on the benefit system, so looking at the qualifications, the criteria for somebody to actually have access to benefits .... (interjection)

ANDREW MARR: Mr Farage says that London is in the grip of a Romanian crime wave. Do you think that’s exaggerated or scare mongering.

THERESA MAY: Well we’ve been doing some work, our UK Visas section has been doing some work with the Metropolitan police in recent months and over the last 18 months, something like a thousand foreign criminals, just over a thousand foreign criminals have been deported, removed, as a result of the work which has been a closer integration between the Metropolitan police and UK Visas and we’re now extending that over the country. About a third of the population of London are foreign nationals and about a third of the crime is committed by foreign nationals. But we’re taking greater powers to be able to remove people from the country.

ANDREW MARR: What about these notorious vans that have been going around, or highly controversial vans I should say, saying basically go home. Are they going to stop – is that a pilot scheme that’s now finished or are we going to see more of those?

THERESA MAY: That was a pilot scheme. That scheme has now finished. We now need to evaluate it to see what the impact was. The purpose was to encourage those who are here illegally to go home voluntarily and obviously
there is a benefit to government if people do that. But what I’m clear about is that .... (interjection)

ANDREW MARR: It was heavily criticised for the tone. I’m just wondering whether you’ve, as it were taken that lesson and said yes, Okay, we’ve moved on from that. We don’t go back to that.

THERESA MAY: Well, what we do is evaluate and once I’ve seen the results of that evaluation, we can make a decision about the impact of those vans. I think from the public’s point of view, I think what they want to see is a government that is clearly doing everything it can to remove people from this country who have no right to be here, who are here illegally and that’s what we are doing.

ANDREW MARR: Do you think it worked so far? There’s been a lot of criticism saying these vans didn’t work anyway.

THERESA MAY: Well, I’m waiting to see the evaluation.

ANDREW MARR: Okay.

BOTH TOGETHER

THERESA MAY: I’m not going to pluck an answer off the shelf, I need to see proper work that says what was the impact of these and then we can look at that carefully and in a very considered way.

ANDREW MARR: Can I ask about terrorism now? After the appalling attack in Nairobi, there was a story in The Times, I think yesterday saying that British terrorists were involved, implicated in plots using biological and chemical weapons and were on their way over to Somalia to try to ferment that. What can you tell us about that? Is it true?

THERESA MAY: There’s a limit to what I can say about any individual cases which I know the newspapers have been naming some individuals, but what we have seen for some time now is certainly people here in the UK travelling out, a limited number of people, people travelling out to Somalia, we’re now seeing people travelling out to Syria and obviously, in those circumstances ...

(Interjection)

ANDREW MARR: And some of those people are potential terrorists?

THERESA MAY: Some of those are potential terrorists who will get training, potentially for obviously, in some cases actually engage in conflict and then potentially return to the UK. So this issue of foreign fighters as they’re normally referred to generally .... (Interjection)

ANDREW MARR: Terrorists as we call them at the BBC.

THERESA MAY: Well, these are potential terrorists but these are people who are going, particularly in relation to Syria, the foreign fighters who go to
Syria, some of whom will be of a Jihadist mindset and they will be potential terrorists.

ANDREW MARR: Are you concerned Home Secretary about the big, soft targets here? The shopping centres. I mean they are completely open. They’re basically unpatrolled and so on and it would be very, very easy to mimic the kind of ghastly attack that happened, at the Westgate Centre in Britain.

THERESA MAY: Well we, when we came in to government, we looked at this issue of potential fire arms attack. Obviously, there had been previously, in Mumbai, the firearms terrorist attack. We have increased the ability of the police to deal with those sorts of attacks, the number of armed response vehicles, the number of specially trained fire arms officers. But of course, we keep looking at these issues to make sure that we are doing all that we can to keep people safe. It’s one element of our counter-terrorism strategy – is the protect element and that is about working with the private sector to ensure that suitable protections are in place. Something the National Crime Agency will be doing in relation to organised crime as well.

ANDREW MARR: Do you think an attempt to commit this kind of outrage is likely in this country, inevitable? What?

THERESA MAY: I think that what is right is that government looks at every possibility of an attack and looks at dealing with that, at protecting the country from potential attacks. But obviously, crucially, the work that is done day in and day out by our security services, together with the police, to prevent attacks is, you know, they do a very, very good job for us.

ANDREW MARR: And we’re doing enough?

THERESA MAY: Well, we can never be complacent on these issues Andrew. We must always look to see what we, if there is something more that we should be doing.

ANDREW MARR: All right. Theresa May, Home Secretary for now, thank you very much indeed.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH THERESA MAY