Operation Blunt
Knife-Enabled Crime

Knife Amnesty
Impact on Knife-Enabled Offences

November 2006
Introduction

**Aims and Purpose**
An evaluation of the impact of the Knife Amnesty in 2006 and other tactics employed by the MPS, upon Knife-Enabled offence levels.

**Sensitivity**
This report is "Not protectively marked" in accordance with the Government Protective Marking Scheme. It can be disseminated within the MPS, but outside the MPS requires consultation with the Operation Blunt Team.

**Definitions**
There is no Home Office or National Definition of Knife Crime.

There is a corporate definition for the MPS; the correct corporate terminology is ‘Knife-Enabled Crime’ (in line with Gun-Enabled Crime).

Knife-Enabled Crime is defined as offences of Violence Against the Person (excluding offensive weapons), Robbery, Sexual Offences and Burglary where a knife is used. Offences where a knife is used will be identified by setting the ‘BS Knife Used’ feature code in CRIS.

There is no corporate definition of ‘Knife Used’, although it is generally understood as where a knife is used to injure, threaten or intimidate.

There is no corporate definition of ‘knife’. Hence sometimes offences involving swords or machetes may have the ‘BS Knife Used’ flag set, and sometimes not.

**Scope**
Knife-Enabled Crime in the MPS area.

The impact of MPS police activity during 15-May-2006 to 9-Jul-2006 on Knife-Enabled offences in the MPS area.

**Methodology**
Data is sourced from Metstats and CRIS.

**Restrictions/Limitations**
Limited by data quality, especially the accuracy of the CRIS feature code BS-Knife Used.

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1 The MPS’s crime recording system
Operation Details

A National knife Amnesty, driven by the Home Office ran from 24-May-2006 to 30-Jun-2006 (38 days).

The MPS employed additional tactics, and ran a pan-London anti-knife operation for longer, from 15-May-2006 to 9-Jul-2006 (8-weeks or 56 days).

During the amnesty Knife Amnesty Bins were provided at many locations across London. Additional tactics included walk through metal detectors (Knife Arches), ANPR and stop and search.

Summary

It is likely (but not certain) the pan-London operation, including the knife amnesty, which ran in the MPS area from 15-May-2006 to 9-Jul-2006 produced a reduction in offence levels of approximately 219 offences, which is very approximately 1.7% of annual offence levels.

Reductions in MPS Knife-Enabled offences started 5-weeks into the operation, and then continued for approximately 8-weeks (which is 6 weeks beyond the end of the operation) before returning to pre-operation levels.

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Impact Upon Knife-Enabled Offence Levels

Figure 1 below shows daily Knife-Enabled Offences around the period of the MPS Operation.

- The Yellow line shows daily offence levels. This is very volatile and it is difficult to discern trends.
- The blue line is a 7-day moving average of the daily offence levels, enabling trends to be more easily seen.
- The straight burgundy line is the mean (average of daily Knife-Enabled offences for the period1-Feb-2006 to 14-May-2006, which was 34.8 offences per day. This period was chosen to exclude the Christmas period, which shows some evidence of a seasonal low, and New Year’s Eve, which is seasonally high.

![Graph showing daily Knife-Enabled Offences around the period of the MPS Operation. The Yellow line shows daily offence levels, the blue line is a 7-day moving average of the daily offence levels, and the straight burgundy line is the mean of daily Knife-Enabled offences for the period1-Feb-2006 to 14-May-2006.]

- No changing trends are visible in the numbers of pan-London Knife-Enabled offence levels during the first 5-weeks (37 days) of the Operation from 15May06 until approximately 20Jun06.

- From approximately 21Jun06 a small downwards trend appears, and offence levels tend to remain slightly below earlier levels until very approximately 20Aug2006, a period of over 8-weeks (61 days).

- In late Aug06, 6–weeks after the operation ends, offence levels tend to return to pre-operation values.

- The table following (Table 1) compares average daily Knife-Enabled Offence levels in the key periods.
Average daily Knife-Enabled Offences reduced from 34.9 (before the operation 1Feb06-14May06) to 31.3 during the 8 weeks low period (21Jun06-20Aug06), which is a approximately 3.6 less offences per day on average for a period of approximately 61 days, which is 219 offences less offences (a 10.3% reduction in daily offence levels). This represents very approximately a reduction of 1.7% of annual Knife-Enabled Offences.

It suggests the operation ran for 5-weeks before impacting on offence levels, when they then produced a 10.3% reduction (in average daily offences). The lowered offence levels were maintained for over 8-weeks, and in fact for 6-weeks beyond the end of the operation.

What does the period of reduced offences mean?

It is not possible with any certainty to say that the lower offence levels between 21Jun06-20Aug06 (8-weeks) were due to the pan-London operation for several reasons:

- Daily offence levels are volatile, and in comparison the reduction is not large. It may be due to chance.
- The continuing lower offence levels after the end of the operation may be due to other police activity outside of the anti-knife operation, rather than the effect of the anti-knife operation.
- No pan-London police activity could be identified affecting the period in question.
- There may have been changes in data quality during the period analysed, which would generate offence level changes.
- It is known there was an improvement in data quality, between Sep05 to Sep06, related to the accuracy of setting of the CRIS2 feature code (BS Knife Used) to identify Knife-Enabled offences. The effect of this would be to increase offences, so this is an unlikely explanation of reduced offences.
- There may have been changes in the proportion of Knife-Enabled offences reported to the police.
- It is suspected that the effect of the operation would have been to drive up (rather than down) the proportion of offences reported to the police, because of the publicity and visible police activity. This seems an unlikely explanation of reduced offence levels.
- Other factors affecting the level of offending, not related to police activity.

There were no obvious events identified which might have caused a change in offence levels for this period. However, this is a very complex area.

There is very little seasonality in Knife-Enabled offences. They tend to be higher on New Years Eve, and there is some tendency for them to be lower around Christmas. Throughout the rest of the year there is no seasonality. Seasonality is not the explanation for the 8-weeks of lower offence levels.

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2 MPS Crime Recording System
There is evidence from another operation showing a similar pattern of reducing offence levels sometime into the operation, continuing beyond the end of the operation. British Transport Police ran Operation Shield between 6-Feb-2006 and 31-Mar-2006 to tackle knife-carrying culture on the transport network. This employed walk-through metal detectors (knife arches) deployed at train stations across London during the 8-week period. The results analysis showed an INCREASE (compared to pre-operation levels) in offences during the operation (Feb06 and Mar06) and in the month following (Apr06). However in May06 offences dropped sharply, with monthly offence levels lower than those seen for at least the last 12 months. The available results analysis only covered offences to May06, so it is not known if the lowered offence levels continued beyond this. (All Operation Shield information is taken from the document ‘Operation Shield Results Analysis, British Transport Police, 2006).

The most likely explanations for the reduced offence levels are:

The effects of the MPS Operation running 15-May-2006 to 9-Jul-2006, including the National Knife Amnesty.

However, chance and the effects of other (non-police) factors cannot definitely be excluded.