HEADLINES:

- Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Mark Rowley said there are now 35% more arrests linked to counter-terrorism than ever before and that so-called ‘Islamic State’ is trying to create a “corrupt cult”… “to attract misfits, criminals and the vulnerable”.
- A wider coalition is needed to help combat radicalisation at home.
- He also added more money is needed for resources to fight counter-terrorism, and the Met are talking to the government about this currently.

ANDREW MARR:

Now the ordeal by fire of the captured Jordanian pilot during the week was a horrifying reminder of the so-called Islamic State’s utter brutality. Hard to comprehend, but its fundamentalist ideology and desire to create a caliphate in the Middle East is proving attractive to some young people in Britain. It’s believed that hundreds have gone to fight for IS and what they might be capable of when they come back is a terrifying question. I’m joined now by the Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley of the Met who takes the lead on counter-terrorism policing. Welcome Mr Rowley.
MARK ROWLEY:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
Can we start by talking about numbers because it’s suggested that 600 or so people could have gone out and been radicalised in the IS territory in Syria and Iraq and come back here now. Is that about right?

MARK ROWLEY:
About half of them have come back.

ANDREW MARR:
About 300.

MARK ROWLEY:
So there are many people who’ve travelled, but we’ve got about 600 who are of a high degree of concern to us who’ve travelled out there. Something that illustrates the difference in the problem today is that nearly half of those people who travelled out there weren’t previously on our terrorism radar.

ANDREW MARR:
And does that mean that there are 300 people who have been radicalised, who you’re worried about, who were out there, who are now back here?

MARK ROWLEY:
It’s that sort of scale and we’re dealing with it in different ways, many investigations. You’ll have seen the sentencing this week, that awful case of the guy Koaja (ph) who’s been photographed with bags of heads in some really gruesome situations.

ANDREW MARR:
Now this is a big, big challenge for you because I’ve been told that to follow one person completely full-time takes about 40 people, so you don’t have the resources to follow 300 people. It’s a very, very big job. Do you have the resources you need as the Met?
MARK ROWLEY:
It’s about prioritisation. We have been doing a lot of work on our resources. Recently we’ve been making some changes to get more resources into some of our areas. We need to strengthen around cyber and around digital. And we’re also in conversation with government about how we could grow over the next year.

ANDREW MARR:
Boris Johnson has said in terms the Met needs more money for this.

MARK ROWLEY:
We certainly need more money and that’s what we’re discussing with government at the moment.

ANDREW MARR:
So you think you’ve got a good chance of getting an increase in your budget to cope with this serious problem?

MARK ROWLEY:
That’s what the indications are at the moment.

ANDREW MARR:
Very good. Now you were presumably, knowing that you were about to do this job, watching the events unfolding in Paris - the Charlie Hebdo killings? What were you thinking? Were you thinking that we could deal with this kind of thing if it happened in London, we’d do better or do worse, or were you just simply horrified by what happened and the speed with which it unfolded?

MARK ROWLEY:
I think we’re all horrified. We’ve been preparing for a long time for what you might call a marauding terrorist firearms attack. We saw events some time ago, didn’t we, in places like Mumbai and Nairobi? So in terms of our national firearms capability and is it strong enough, how’s it placed, how’s it organised, we’ve arranged that to be able to deal with those sorts of events and we have some well tested exercise command and control regimes working across the country on counter-terrorism operations. But
you look at an event like Paris and you see actually not everything in that we anticipated, so we’re going to have to make some refinements to our plans to improve.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Introducing you onto the sofa, I mentioned ISIS. Is ISIS and its terrorism threat in the West in some way different from what we’ve seen in the past or is it similar?

**MARK ROWLEY:**
It’s very different. We’re making 35 per cent more arrests now than we used to in counter-terrorism. It’s nearly one arrest a day. That comes out of the fact that we’re not just dealing with a classic terrorist organisation organising plots across the world. We’re dealing with a group that’s trying to create what you might call a corrupt cult of people, of followers who will act in their name. They’re trying to attract misfits, criminals and the vulnerable; and it’s those people, not part of a bigger organisation, who may act of their own volition. That’s the challenge for us – is to have good sight of them and be able to intervene with them.

**ANDREW MARR:**
I was talking to a very senior political figure just this week who said to me, “We” – as it were the political class – “are absolutely sure there’s going to be a serious attack before the election takes place.” Is that the kind of thing that you’re hearing as well?

**MARK ROWLEY:**
You will never hear me use the word ‘inevitable’. It’s my job to lead if it’s across the country from Scotland Yard and units round the country fighting against terrorism. We’re not going to be defeatist about it. We’re stepping up our activity. We’ve foiled more plots in the last six months than we’ve foiled in that sort of period of time previously and we’re disrupting people day in and day out using any power available, any criminal power to keep disrupting them and put them on the back foot.

**ANDREW MARR:**
It was clear from Prince Charles’ interview this morning that he is perplexed by why young people are being so attracted to this extremist death cult or ideology. What are your reflections given that you’re on the frontline?
MARK ROWLEY:
That’s the dynamic that worries us most of all – is the ability of ISIS to reach into communities. We’ve been making a lot of appeals to communities over the last year asking them for increasing amounts of help and we’ve seen that, we see more information coming forward, so we need a wider coalition against this threat. But there are things the police can do. For example, we’re taking down a thousand unsavoury postings from the internet every week at the moment to try and make it less easy for people who have the potential to be radicalised to be radicalised.

ANDREW MARR:
What do you say to those people who look around and say there’s armed police now absolutely everywhere and bit by bit, without a real debate, we have moved from a situation in this country where we had a largely unarmed police force to an unarmed police force and this is wrong?

MARK ROWLEY:
I don’t think that’s accurate. They are more visible at the moment. There’s a heightened terrorist threat and I think the public would probably be a little surprised if they weren’t more visible. In London we have approaching 32,000 officers. A little over 2,000 of them are armed and we’re using those as wisely as we can do to guard the areas we see as most vulnerable.

ANDREW MARR:
Well I think I’m allowed to use the word ‘terrorist’ and to say good luck. Mark Rowley, thank you very much indeed for joining us today.

MARK ROWLEY:
Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS