ANDREW MARR:  
Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe is Britain’s most senior police officer. He’s in charge of the Metropolitan Police, but he has certain national responsibilities too. Most importantly, it’s his job to protect our streets against terrorist attack, so we can guess what keeps him awake at night with the level threat now officially classed as ‘severe’. Sir Bernard is with me now. Good morning, Sir Bernard.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE  
Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:  
What does ‘severe’ in practical terms mean?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE  
Well what it actually means is that a separate organisation called JATAC, which are part of the security service, has made an objective assessment that in fact the threat changed and it means that there’s an immediate threat, sorry there’s a severe threat,
but not that there’s a chance of an immediate attack. So we’ve all got to take … be aware of that and do something about it.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Now there was the dreadful Lee Rigby attack we remember of course. Is that the kind of thing that you’re most worried about – individuals with machetes and wild eyes leaping into a shopping centre, lone wolf attacks - rather than the big bombs we had before?

**SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE**
We’ve got to be aware of all of it. I think we’ve certainly seen over the last few months a growing concern about exactly the type of attack you just described. It doesn’t take an awful lot of organising, it doesn’t take too many people to conspire together, there’s no great complexity to it, so what that means is that we have a very short time to interdict, to actually intervene and make sure that these people don’t get away with it. So that is causing real pressure on us in terms of resources and in terms of judgement making, which is a very difficult thing for all the people involved.

**ANDREW MARR:**
How many plots do you think you’ve foiled so far?

**SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE**
Well we’ve said on average over the last few years it’s been about one a year, but this year alone we think four or five. And over the last few months again, you’ll have seen in the press …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yes.

**SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE**
… we’ve made some significant arrests and have all been followed by charges for which we’re reassured, which means that we think we’re obviously convincing the Crown Prosecution Service that we have a substantial case. Those will be heard in the courts in time. But certainly we’ve seen a change to the momentum. I’ve said in the
past that we’ve seen a change to the drumbeat, we’ve seen a change to the frequency and the seriousness of the types of plots that we’re looking at.

ANDREW MARR:
We’ve seen people being bloodied in Syria and in Iraq – some very extreme examples of beheadings and so forth. Is that the kind of thing that we can fear on the streets of Britain?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well what we’ve said about Syria and Iraq is that, first of all, we’ve already talked publicly about over five hundred people we know have gone there.

ANDREW MARR:
Yuh.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Some have come back. Now that’s on top of the people we’re worried about in this country already, so we have to acknowledge that difference and make sure that we change the way we react and make sure that those people when they return well first of all we’re concerned. They’re going to be militarised, they will have a complex web of people that they know, and of course they will have learnt tactics that they may want to use here.

ANDREW MARR:
Now you said of course that the police can’t do it all themselves. What are the rest of us supposed to do? How are we supposed to react when the threat is severe?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well first of all is not to go over the top. This week we’re going to set out …

ANDREW MARR:
Keep calm.
SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well it’s keep calm but be aware. So what we’re saying this week is we’re having a week of every day trying to explain in different areas where we want people to be more alert and more vigilant. So we’ll talk about crowded places, we’ll talk about transport hubs, we’ll talk about the fact that we’re trying to cut off money from terrorists, so if people have got charity boxes around that they actually …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Be very careful where the money’s going.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Yeah where’s this money going? Are those charity boxes actually going to the charity or are they going to someone else? We want to cut off the tools that terrorists use, where they’re going to get access to weapons. These are some very important things. And of course finally we really want to prevent people becoming radicalised who actually think that there’s a possibility of getting involved in terrorism, so each day we will talk about what people can do to help themselves. And finally just to say that if the public, the businesses and the police work together with security services, that’s an incredibly powerful team, but we have to include them in that. And what we’ve done over these last few months …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) So you see …

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
(over) … I’ve wanted to be more open.

ANDREW MARR:
You see something suspicious or somebody suspicious – dob them in is the first thing?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well I don’t use the word ‘dob in’. I know that’s a very … you know it’s just a colloquial term. My point is as a member of the public, we want to keep each other
safe …

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah, absolutely.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
… and if you look right throughout this country – 60 million people working together will notice difference. They will notice when something’s unusual, they’ll notice a change in behavior of a young person perhaps who’s thinking to go to Syria, well tell the police. The best time to stop these young people becoming radicalised is before they go. We’ve got people who are trained and other charities who will try and stop these kids going abroad and then ending up in a war zone where they might get killed, they certainly will disrupt their life for the rest of their life. Surely it’s better we stop that. And families are doing that now and we’re encouraging more and more to do it.

ANDREW MARR:
Are the police well enough plugged in to those kind of communities? You’ve said in the past that mass immigration has made the police’s job much harder.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well I think we are plugged into the community. It’s quite a challenge because if you look in London, for example, 8.5 million people, 32,000 cops – it’s a lot, but it’s not anywhere near 8.5 million people. But we have got some good local neighbourhood officers who are out there working with all different members of the community and people do tell us things. So I think that we’ve got our best chance of dealing with this by locally based community policing.

ANDREW MARR:
Have you got enough people? Have you got enough money?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well we always want more and of course public service at the moment is going through big challenges. We’re talking to the government at the moment particularly in the area of counter-terrorism to see how we can invest more in that and we hope to
hear something over the next few weeks.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And what about laws? We’ve heard about this change in the law – moving towards the original data act, the Data Protection Act. It’s a halfway house David Davis said, a stepping stone. Is this change on IP addresses going to help you in real terms?

**SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE**
Well, first of all, I think we’ve all got to rise to the challenge, whether it be the police, government, everybody’s got to rise to this big new challenge, so we’ve got to adapt. I’m not going to speak specifically about a particular piece of intelligence – sorry particular piece of statute – but what I will say is this. Our joint task has got to be to prevent people going abroad to get involved in acts of terrorism, to try and monitor their return, and (should they return) either to charge them with offences should they have committed them or to monitor them in this country. Now one of the things that we’ve talked about publicly… and I’ve talked about publicly is trying to improve our monitoring on the internet and through telephones. Now we’ve got to work together on that. The particular details of that I think is for politicians and parliament to debate and come at the right solution, but we must have that coverage.

**ANDREW MARR:**
But it’s going in the right direction at the moment so far as you can tell?

**SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE**
I believe so. I mean there’s no doubt that it’s difficult. I mean, first of all, complexity. The internet is changing, all these communication providers changing, and of course you’ve got the post-Snowden effect. You’ve got the fact that people have started to mistrust the state and to worry about their privacy. I understand that. My job is obviously to help keep people safe. To get that balance between security and privacy is parliament’s job. All I can do is make the case for why we need to maintain security.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Can I turn to another area which has caused a lot of concern recently – these terrible,
terrible stories about MPs and other senior figures being involved in the molestation and even possibly the murder of young boys in London, albeit decades ago. Now there’s a lot of worry that there has been a cover-up going on, that previous police operations – particularly Operation Orchid, which did a huge amount of work on paedophiles in London – has been put to one side and that paperwork is no longer available. Can you explain to us what’s going on now and what you’re doing about it?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well, first of all, taking it seriously. We’ve got about forty detectives at the moment looking into these relatively new claims and there are a series of claims over quite a long period of time and not all of them are linked, although in the public’s imagination they may be in that it’s child abuse. We’ve now had more recently this discussion or these claims about murder and of course that makes it even more serious. It’s already serious.

ANDREW MARR:
With MPs at the time involved.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Yes. So you’ve got the extra complication of people in power and was there a cover-up? Now I’m determined that we will get to the bottom of this, so we’re talking to the witnesses and all the people who’ve got information. I think everybody will understand that this long after the event it can be quite hard to get to the bottom of some of the claims and the complaints. We will do, but it can take a little longer than people might expect.

ANDREW MARR:
Do the original files, so far as you know, still exist?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Some do, but we’re having a real challenge with that, frankly. First of all is I don’t know whether the BBC, certainly government finds, is that you have to rely on the index. And if the index is wrong, you can’t find it, or you look in the wrong box. I mean some of these operations, we’ve had 3,000 boxes to go through. So it’s a real
challenge, but we will do it. And I think the other thing is …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Do you think things should be …

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
(over) Can I just mention one other thing, Andrew, which I think is really important?

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Sorry … yeah.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Is that people often say well if you haven’t got their file, you cannot investigate. That’s not true. You have to look, as a journalist would, what’s the indirect evidence, what can people tell us, what corroborates each other. And we will get to the bottom of this and we are treating it seriously.

ANDREW MARR:
Lord Tebbit, sitting where you’re sitting now more or less, said to me a few weeks ago that he thought there’s a good chance there had been an establishment cover-up. What’s your view?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
I think it would be really silly for me to speculate. I think someone in his position – and he’s entitled to his view - is able to speculate, but if I said well you know there was a cover-up or there wasn’t, somebody would say well where’s your open mind. As an investigator, we have to go with an open mind. If people make that allegation, we will, I will, take it seriously, but I can assure you there’ll be no corrupt while I’m here.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay well thank you very much for that. One other issue which has been causing a lot of comment, which is that there have been various journalists whose only offence was to investigate police corruption or corporate corruption and they themselves have
been investigated and files kept on them. Why did that happen?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Well I think we need to get to the bottom of some of these claims. I mean some journalists are worried about the fact that their names appear on certain database. From what I see, we’ve probably shot ourselves in the foot a bit by some of the information we’ve put into the public domain. We were asked to look for how many times a journalist appears on this database. Not quite the same as saying that they were the subject of our inquiries. But we’ve said that we will work together with all the various commissioners who look at this and we’ll get to the bottom of it. Certainly I don’t believe there’s been an intention to target the journalists for being journalists and, therefore, stop them investigating things, but there’s no doubt at times that their names will come into some of our inquiries.

ANDREW MARR:
But if there are files on them, they should be able to see those files and indeed have them destroyed, shouldn’t they?

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
Unless they’re a criminal …

ANDREW MARR:
Unless they’re criminals.

SIR BERNARD HOGAN-HOWE
… in which case they deserve no better protection than you or I.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright. Sir Bernard, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

INTERVIEW ENDS