AMBER RUDD, HOME SECRETARY

AM: Amber Rudd, welcome. A lot of people watching this, and remembering what has happened this week, will think after Manchester there has to be a step change, a completely different attitude to security in this country. Do you agree with them?

AR: I believe the information we can gather and the steps we can take to improve this country’s security, but be in no doubt, this is something that this country has been prepared for. The threat level has been at severe now since 2014 which is an attack is highly likely. We’ve invested in our intelligence services, we’ve invested in counter terrorism, we’ve made sure that we put the tools in place.

AM: Well you cut the armed police.

AR: Actually there will be as many armed police by the end of this year as there have ever been, so we are stepping that up all the time. This hasn’t come out of the blue, very sadly. This is something that we’re prepared for, we’ve been rehearsing for and one other thing I would like to just say is that the reason why the handling of this terrible atrocity was done so well in Manchester by the emergency services, which I’d like to thank, and by everybody involved, by the people who volunteered, is because we had rehearsed for it.

AM: Let’s turn, if I may – before we get onto the main bit of the interview to the latest, as it were, you’ve downgraded the threat level one point and we hear that a large part of the group around this terrorist have been apprehended and taken. Does that mean that some of the group are still out there?
AR: Potentially. I mean it’s an ongoing operation. There are 11 people in custody. There is - the operation is still at, really at full tilt in a way and so until the operation is complete we can’t be entirely sure that it’s closed.

AM: Now clearly, as you said, the security services do a great job and all the rest of it. Nonetheless there are questions that must be asked. Can I ask you how many times the security services were tipped off about Salman Abedi before he attacked?

AR: Well it’s not for me to be drawn in on what the intelligence services did or didn’t know, particularly at this stage, Andrew.

AM: Well the trouble is we do know some stuff about this.

AR: We do, but the fact is this is an ongoing operation. The fact that you’ve already asked me are there other people that are going to be potentially pursued. That is because the strong relationship between the intelligence services and the counter terrorism policing. Of course people will want to look afterwards to see whether there are signals that could have been learnt, how could we do this better. But can I also point out that since 2013 they have foiled 18 separate plots. They do a good job. We’re not frightened though of learning lessons and improving.

AM: I don’t want in any way to diminish what they do. Nevertheless what we do know is that Salman Abedi was identified as a dangerous man by friends and family, his community doing exactly what we asked them to do. They phoned the terror hotline five years ago and then again last year. We know that the Imam in his local mosque used the prevent strategy again to get in touch and say this guy is out of control, he’s dangerous and apparently nothing happened. Can I ask you directly, was Salman Abedi on a surveillance list?
ANDREW MARR SHOW, AMBER RUDD, HOME SECRETARY

AR: I don’t know those details that you’ve just set out to me because the intelligence services are still collecting information about him and about the people around him. But I wouldn’t rush to conclusions, as you seem to be, that they’ve somehow missed something.

AM: I’m simply saying that people had phoned the terror hotline, as they’re told to do.

AR: As they should do, as they should do, and you know the reason we put in place the terror hotline, the reason we put in place the prevent strategy is because we recognise the scale of the problem. What this reminds us, if we needed reminding, is the scale of the problem that we have. The enemy that we have, Daesh, that is trying to weaponise the young people in our society. We have put in place measures to make sure we can protect us, but we have been at severe, as I said, for a number of years which is a threat an attack is highly likely. But we will look to see what else we can do, which is why the Prime Minister has announced actually in our Manifesto before this event that there would be a Commission for Extremism, to see what else can we do to root out extremism, to put legislation in place if we need to make sure we take action to stop extremism taking root in our society.

AM: I guess the problem with the Manifesto is that it now reads a bit like, inevitably, a pre-Manchester manifesto. You’re going down for Commissions, there’s lots of perhapses and maybes and pushing things forward and talking and so forth. It doesn’t necessarily have the urgency that a lot of people feel is necessary after the Manchester attack.

AR: This government has always felt that urgency. That’s why we’ve been putting additional money, additional resources and that’s why also I mean it is significant that the Commission for
Extremism that is in the Manifesto was put in before Manchester. We know we need to do more. We recognise the scale of the threat and that’s one of the actions we’re taking.

AM: Across the country how many serious potential Jihadis are we worried about?

AR: Well, the numbers have been confirmed by MI5 that they’re looking at 500 different plots. 3 thousand on a sort of top list and then 20 thousand underneath that. But that’s all different layers, different tiers, you know you might be just a question mark about one of them or something serious at the top of the top list.

AM: I suppose what I’m wondering is the question about whether Abedi was red flagged or not at some point in the last few years may simply be because there are so many plots, so many people that they have to look at. One thing you could decide to do after Manchester is a step change in the size of MI5. You could double it. You could spend money that’s being spent on Trident or something else and put it into this. Have you considered that?

AR: We won’t shy away from finding out what else we can do to keep people safe. I mean the budget has already gone up significantly, we’re recruiting 1,900 people for MI5, but you know we will look at this in a way to learn from it to make sure that we keep people safe going forward. So if there is a need for more recruitment or more security or more armed vehicles, which we’re investing in as well, we will look at doing that.

AM: And if you win this General Election and go back to the Home Office as Home Secretary will it be business as usual with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor when it comes to budgets, or are you going to say look, we need to change this completely. We need a much, much bigger budget for this?
AR: Well can I just point out, from 2015 to 2020 we agreed to uplift the budget from 11 billion to 15 billion, but we will make sure that we put the right resources in to keep people safe always.

AM: Okay, we were talking earlier on during the paper review about where Abedi had been and we know that he’s been to Libya, we think he may well have been to Syria. How many Jihadis have come back from Syria to this country do you think?

AR: We don’t know the exact number. What we do know is that in engaging with the intelligence services and with the police and with the Border Force, we make sure that they have the tools to track them and keep them out where we can.

AM: Is it possible to tell where somebody has been when they come in? Somebody comes through Heathrow, we don’t know where they have been, they might have come in from Paris or Istanbul or wherever. How can we possibly know if they’ve been to Syria?

AR: Well it’s all intelligence led and you know, we have very good intelligence services who help to collect that information to make sure that we do, you know, follow and track the right people who might be dangerous.

AM: Because the government has done thing that could help you in this regard which introduce temporary exclusion orders. How many of those have been used?

AR: Well I’m not going to give you the exact number but I can say we have started to use them.

AM: Because it was zero until very recently.
AR: It was. It is no longer zero. It is part of the toolkit that a Home Secretary has so that we can keep people safe.

AM: Can I move onto some of the other things that people have speculated you might need to look at now as a result of that. You have an entire strategy in place for trying to pick people up and identify them, but you've got rid of Labour’s control orders. Under the Labour government control orders were highly controversial, there are lots of civil liberties issues, but they seemed to be effective and they were often very well used and they included curfews and they included electronic tagging. If Abedi had been subject to that he would not have been able to commit the Manchester atrocity.

AR: The security services and the police have the tools that they need. We don’t have control orders, we have TPIMs. They’re more robust in legislation and we use them effectively. We are in constant discussion with the intelligence services and with the police to make sure that we have the right tools that they need. They have the ability to come to us, come to me as Home Secretary and for me to sign off TPIMs. We will do that where we need to.

AM: So TPIMs, for people who don’t understand what they are, they’re Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures and they can include a form of house arrest. You’ve used them only six or seven times so far.

AR: Well slightly more than that, but again I can’t give the exact number because it’s a quarterly reporting method. But it’s not for me to say how many TPIMs should be out there. It’s for me to say to the intelligence services who will keep us safe, tell me how many you need, what the evidence is and then we’ll take them forward.
ANDREW MARR SHOW, AMBER RUDD, HOME SECRETARY

AM: The reason I ask you about this Home Secretary is that Lord Carlyle, the former independent Reviewer of terror legislation said: it was a grave mistake by the coalition government to remove control orders and to produce something which he called was more dilute.

AR: Well I think that that quote may be out of date because Mr Anderson who was the Reviewer as well subsequently to him has said that they represent the mature evolution following control orders. And Max Hill, just today, who’s the Reviewer for terrorist legislation has told us that there is no more legislation needed currently. So we are constantly alert and we won’t shy away from introducing new legislation when it’s needed, but I think we have the tools in place at the moment.

AM: The last time we talked after another terrible terrorist attack in London we had a discussion about end to end encryption and there’s a lot of comment asked about what was possible and was not possible. Can I ask you directly to explain what your proposal is now?

AR: We are making good progress with the companies who have put in place end to end encryption. Some of them are being more constructive than others, but we will continue to build on that. The area that I’m most concerned about is the internet companies who are continuing to publish the hate publications, the hate material that is contributing to radicalising people in this country. I also spoke about setting up an internet forum which we did in the UK and now the Prime Minister has announced just this week coming back from the G7 that she’s agreed to do an international forum. So we’re continuing to build on better relationships with the internet, to ask them as the experts to make those changes so that people don’t get radicalised and the terrorists don’t have somewhere to hide.
AM: Okay, the problem with end to end encryption is that the technology to achieve that, the software is out there, freely available all over the internet. You can make your own. And so if a terrorist is using whatsapp for instance and you make whatsapp give you a backdoor in they just simply can move to another messaging service and then another and another and another and another and eventually if you close them all off from end to end encryption then they can build their own. The only way that you could stop this is by banning end to end encryption completely.

AR: Well, what we're doing is challenging the people who are developing and delivering end to end encryption to work with us so that we have a way of keeping people safe. Nobody wants terrorists to have a safe place to exchange information and to be able to plot their terrible atrocities. I believe we can get them to be more successful in working with us to find a way of getting some of that information.

AM: But banning end to end encryption completely would destroy the internet as a marketplace, a place where people do their banking and purchases and stuff. It would totally devastate the internet economy in this country. Do you understand why people were so shocked when you appeared to suggest that’s what you wanted to do?

AR: But I never did suggest it, and what I have always said – no, because what I’ve always said is the internet provides and incredibly important place for people to do business. Encryption is important for banking, for everything else as you say, but we need to do better to stop terrorists being able to use it.

AM: In your interview today in the Mail on Sunday you were asked whether or not electing a Labour government would result in more people being killed by terrorists and you said, yes. Do you really stand by that?
AR: I would say look at the evidence. The evidence is that Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott and John McDonnell have all a history of not supporting terrorist legislation. Jeremy Corbyn has in fact, in 2011, boasted that he opposed all counter terrorism legislation. Andrew, it does worry me.

AM: Diane Abbott gave quite a good account then of terrorist legislation was counterproductive, badly thought through. In those cases opposing it is the right thing to do.

ARA: No. I thought she gave a very poor account of not being able to engage with banning proscribed organisations, such as the ones you suggest. We’ve banned them. We’ve banned a far right group as well. I was the first Home Secretary to ban a far right group, National Action. What I would say to Diane Abbott is I’ve changed my hairstyle a few times in 34 years as well, but I have not changed my view about how we keep the British public safe.

AM: Let’s turn to one mainstream election issue which was the embarrassing u-turn over social care. Damian Green when he was sitting in that chair, I asked him directly are you going to look again at this policy? He looked at me and said he said, ‘no.’ And then the next day you changed the policy radically, you produced a gap when there was going to be no cap. It has been an embarrassing u-turn, is it not fooling the British people, taking them for fools to pretend there hasn’t been a u-turn?

AR: No. I think that we’ve been very frank about it. I think we’ve levelled with people. The Conservative Party is a party that is very frank about these things, unlike the Labour Party.

AM: Well, really? Really?
AR: Well no I think it is, yes. I mean we have put the most important element of that social care policy – is that we’re protecting a £100,000 of people’s assets including their house and we’re making sure that they don’t have to move from their house if they’re using the equity from it while they’re either at home using social care or elsewhere.

AM: Sorry, you said as a government there wouldn’t be a cap. After the Manifesto was launched the Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt went on the radio and said, we’re getting rid of the cap. There will be no cap. Is there going to be a cap?

AR: So, well the Prime Minister has said yes, there will be a cap.

AM: So that is a big change.

AR: But we are not sure where the cap will be. What we are saying is –

AM: Ah!

AR: - we’ll have a Green Paper to make sure that we set it at the right level and we consider all the other alternatives.

AM: So it could be 200,00, it could be 300,000, all those people who are really worried about this policy when they heard it should still be worried until they know what the size of the cap is, otherwise they’ve got no protection.

AR: I think that what people should realise is that we know that people are living longer. The next decade there’s going to be another 2 million people over 75, which is great news, but we have to be frank that this is going to cost money. We have to find a way that is fair for people to pay for it. This is the best route to do it.

AM: Amber Rudd, now thank you very much indeed.