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### **Retail Crime**

9. **Barbara Follett (Stevenage)**: What representations his Department has received from the British Retail Consortium about tackling crime against retailers. [57055]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Bob Ainsworth)**: We appreciate the input that the British Retail Consortium makes to tackling retail crime. We have received a number of representations from the consortium in the past year and we are in regular touch with it at both ministerial and official level.

My hon. Friend does a lot of work for and on behalf of the consortium, so she will know that the Home Office is providing £170 million for closed circuit television initiatives, £50 million for communities against drugs and £15 million in grants to retailers in deprived areas to enhance security. Other measures will inform retailers of how better to protect themselves against crime.

**Barbara Follett:** I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and for all the work that he is doing on behalf of retailers. However, given the importance of the reduction of retail crime in Government programmes for social cohesion and urban regeneration, why is the reduction in retail crime not yet one of the official police force performance indicators?

**Mr. Ainsworth:** I think that my hon. Friend knows that, after consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Police Authorities, we cut the number of performance indicators. We would be loth to add to them. I think that she also appreciates that there is a problem of under-reporting of crime in this sector, and that might undermine the value of a performance indicator. However, she is right about the importance of tackling retail crime and about its connection with social exclusion and community cohesion. I assure her that we will continue to work with the consortium to bear down on the problem.

**Mr. Mark Field (Cities of London and Westminster):** My constituency contains the west end of London, one of the largest retail areas in the UK. Retailers to whom I have spoken and Westminster city council have welcomed the idea of working in partnership with the police force so that street wardens ensure that, as far as possible, retail crime is kept to an absolute minimum. Will the Minister be looking to drive that initiative forward not only in the centre of London but in other centres that are important in terms of their retail excellence?

**Mr. Ainsworth:** We have found a Conservative in favour of street wardens, and I am quite surprised by that. We are looking at all kinds of issues and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to support those covered by the Police Reform Bill. We are also constantly talking to the British Retail Consortium about specific issues and are keeping them under review to see how we can help.

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However, there is much that retailers can do themselves, so responsibility for bearing down on retail crime does not lie all on the Government's side.

### Neighbourhood Wardens

10. **Martin Linton (Battersea):** What plans he has to give neighbourhood wardens powers to demand names and addresses and detain suspects. [57056]

**The Minister for Policing, Crime Reduction and Community Safety (Mr. John Denham):** Members of street warden schemes, such as the one being set up in Wandsworth, are already able to be given local authority enforcement powers. Subject to the wish of Parliament, we intend that the Police Reform Bill will enable limited police powers, including the right to require a name and address in respect of certain offences, to be extended to wardens and others who are part of community safety accreditation schemes.

**Martin Linton:** May I tell my right hon. Friend how much I welcome the fact that neighbourhood wardens started working in Clapham Junction last month? When I spoke to them on their first day at work, they said that they could certainly do with the additional powers proposed for community safety officers. If neighbourhood wardens catch a fly tipper red-handed and the alleged offender refuses to give a name or gives a false name, there is very little that they can do at the moment. If they witness an arrestable offence, they have to rely on the powers of citizens arrest. Would it not be better for all concerned if neighbourhood wardens had the same powers as community safety officers?

**Mr. Denham:** I understand my hon. Friend's point. Although the important power to detain with reasonable

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force that we have proposed for CSOs has currently been removed from the Police Reform Bill by the other place, it is the Government's judgment that that power should be exercised only by someone who is directly an employee of the police service rather than by someone who is an employee of a local authority. If local authorities wish to work in partnership in, for example, London with the Metropolitan police, it is open to them to provide funding for the CSOs who would be directly deployed in their local government area. I believe that the important power to detain with reasonable force should be exercised by and under the auspices of the police service, but I welcome my hon. Friend's positive comments about the impact of street wardens. They perform an important role in its own right.

**Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton and Honiton):** There is a further problem concerning the identity of suspects.

Last week, in Exeter court, there was a case involving a paedophile who had served a custodial sentence, then, on the expiry of his licence period, changed his name by deed poll and reoffended. That caused huge problems to the police in identifying him as a suspect for the second crime that he committed. Will the Minister ensure that that loophole is closed, so that paedophiles who have served sentences cannot change their names by deed poll?

**Mr. Denham:** The hon. Lady raises a very important matter. I have not read the details of the case, but it is not immediately obvious why fingerprinting and other evidence would not have identified the individual. It is essential that something as simple as a deed poll change of name should not be used to evade the proper powers of the law or of the police. If the hon. Lady would like to give me the details of the case, I shall look into it as a matter of urgency.

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#### India/Pakistan

**3.31 pm**

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Jack Straw):** With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the situation in India and Pakistan.

Intense diplomatic efforts and decisions made in recent days by the Governments of India and Pakistan give grounds for some optimism, and tensions have eased a little. None the less, with 1 million men under arms on either side of the line of control in a high state of readiness, the risks of a conflict remain significant. As both countries are in possession of nuclear weapons, the potential consequences for the region and for the wider world are devastating.

Let me give some brief background, then set out the action that has been taken by Her Majesty's Government, working particularly with the Government of the United States.

The territory of Kashmir has been the subject of dispute since independence in 1947. Three major wars have been fought between India and Pakistan in 1948 to 1949, 1965 and 1971 and in 1999 there was a particularly bloody battle in Kargil on the Indian side of the line of control. The people of Kashmir have been caught in the middle of that, at a cost of tens of thousands of lives and even more people displaced. There has long been serious concern in the international community about the human rights deficit in Jammu and Kashmir and about the conduct of some elections there.

During the last decade or so, the character of the conflict has changed as a result of the incursion of armed militants across the line of control into India from the Pakistani side. A number of terrorist organisations including Laskhar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Harakat Mujahideen, each of which I proscribed when I was Home Secretary have been at the forefront of violent activity in the region. India has long charged that such terrorism has had the covert support of successive Pakistani Governments and, in particular, of the main intelligence agency in Pakistan, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate ISID. Her Majesty's Government accept that there is a clear link between the ISID and those groups.

Towards the end of last year, India suffered two serious terrorist outrages. On 1 October, more than 40 people died in an assault on the state assembly in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir. On 13 December, the Indian Parliament building in New Delhi was attacked, leaving 14 people dead. In response to intensive diplomatic pressure, including the visit to the region by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, President Musharraf delivered a speech on 12 January in which he pledged:

"No organisation will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir".

From early May, when the heavy winter snows began to melt, there was nevertheless an increase in terrorist activity in Jammu and Kashmir and a rise in levels of infiltration across the line of control. That renewed violence included an attack on 14 May on a passenger bus and residential quarters of the Indian army base at Kaluchak, killing 34 people, mainly women and children. A week later, the prominent moderate Kashmiri politician, Abdul Ghani Lone,

was assassinated.

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The dispute between India and Pakistan is at root a bilateral matter which can only be resolved by direct dialogue between the parties. But it is a dispute with potent international implications, both because of the potential scale of any military action, including the possible use of nuclear weapons, and because, post-11 September, new imperatives have been imposed on all member states by United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 to take effective action to counter terrorism.

Since last autumn and particularly since the resurgence of violence in recent weeks, the conflict has been high on the international community's agenda. There has been intensive diplomatic activity from the United States and the United Kingdom Governments, Russia, China, other European Union and G8 countries and, of course, from countries in the region. As part of this co-ordinated diplomatic effort, I visited Pakistan and India on 28 and 29 May. I had discussions in Pakistan with President Musharraf and Foreign Minister Sattar, and in India with Prime Minister Vajpayee, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, Home Minister Advani, Defence Minister George Fernandes and the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi.

In Islamabad, I underlined to President Musharraf the need for Pakistan to take visible, decisive and verifiable steps to seal the line of control; to stop supplies to militant groups; to help restrain the violent activities of those groups; and to close the militant training camps on Pakistan's side of the line of control.

In my meetings in Delhi with Prime Minister Vajpayee and Jaswant Singh, I stressed that as Pakistan had demonstrated that it was taking the necessary steps to clamp down on terrorism, India should respond positively. A number of possible steps to reduce tension were discussed with both sides. I also underlined to the Indian Government once again the need for them to take steps to improve the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir and to ensure free, fair and inclusive elections in Jammu and Kashmir this autumn.

Before my visit, Commissioner Patten of the EU visited the region and held discussions with both sides. Last week at a regional conference in Almaty, both Russian President Putin and Chinese President Jiang Zemin met separately with President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has spoken at length to both sides, and to Presidents Bush and Putin, about the situation.

Following my trip, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage visited both countries last week. Mr. Armitage was given a categorical undertaking by President Musharraf that sealing the line of control would be "permanent". The Government of India described that as a "step forward" and said that they would respond "appropriately and positively." Separately, the US and UK Governments have assessed that there appears to have been a significant reduction in incursions across the line of control since towards the end of May.

I am pleased to tell the House that when I spoke this morning to my Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, he told me that India was announcing today that restrictions on overflights from Pakistan over India were to be lifted, and that the name of the next Indian high commissioner to Pakistan was being made public. I also understand that the western and eastern Indian fleets are returning to port.

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We have, therefore, seen both sides take first steps in the right direction, but the position is still precarious. Terrorism is still a threat and the situation will continue for some time to require the engagement of the international community. Like my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Putin, President Bush has made it clear that he intends to remain personally involved. I should like to express my thanks and appreciation to US Secretary of State Colin Powell and his deputy Richard Armitage for their indefatigable work in trying to help to resolve the crisis.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will be visiting India and Pakistan this week. The international efforts against terrorism and the Kashmir crisis will be an important agenda item for the meeting of G8 Foreign Ministers in Whistler, western Canada, which I shall be attending later this week. Fellow EU Foreign Ministers are discussing the matter today.

The present crisis has, of course, had direct consequences for many UK citizens and their families. The UK has up to 3 million citizens who are of south Asian origin. As Secretary of State, I have to balance our wider foreign policy interests with my direct duty of care for all UK citizens in the region and for all British Government staff and their families, whether UK based or locally engaged. In response to specific terrorists threats, I decided on 22 May to reduce

the level of staffing at British Government posts in Pakistan. At the same time, our travel advice was amended to advise against all but essential travel to Pakistan. As the House was about to rise, there was no opportunity for me to make a statement. I wrote to all colleagues in this House and the other place to set out the changes that had been made and set out in a separate letter what we are seeking to do on the issue of Kashmir.

As tensions increased between the two countries, I announced during the recess, on 31 May, a drawdown of less essential British staff and their families from all posts in Pakistan and from New Delhi and Mumbai in India, and also issued new travel advice for India. Last Wednesday, 5 June, I announced further strengthening of our travel advice in respect of both countries.

We have been working hard to keep the south Asian communities here properly informed of what we are doing and to understand and respond to their anxieties. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary therefore met representatives of those communities on 29 May to listen to their concerns. As soon as I returned from the sub-continent on 30 May, I held similar meetings, including some with a number of colleagues from this House, to explain what I had been doing in New Delhi and Islamabad.

As every hon. Member knows, our high commissions in New Delhi and Islamabad are among the busiest visa and consular operations in the world. Throughout this difficult period, we have maintained a service in India, albeit at a reduced level. Visa and consular operations in Pakistan had to be temporarily suspended, but I am pleased to tell the House that a limited service resumed last Thursday, 6 June.

Notwithstanding the more hopeful signs, the situation in the region remains dangerous. The problems between India and Pakistan cannot satisfactorily be resolved by military means. That would only lead to more suffering

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and potentially have devastating consequences for everyone. Working with our international partners, particularly the United States, our diplomatic efforts are there to encourage both sides to take the necessary steps to end terrorism, reduce tensions and enter into effective dialogue. Only then can we hope to break the cycle of crises and secure a permanent peaceful settlement to the issue of Kashmir.

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