



Press Information

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Burglary protection: Total commitment / Range of measures required / Rise in apartment break-ins as European problem / Difficult investigative work / Important security engineering often lacking / Expert welcomes government funding / Great pressure to act in new builds / Expand financial incentives or prescribe minimum standards / Raise awareness and inform

Retrofitting is good – prevention is better

Berlin/Leinfelden-Echterdingen – (rp) A large number of social forces, and not just the police, are required to successfully combat apartment break-ins. These include politicians, the state, business and naturally also home and apartment owners. This was the view of Reinhold Hepp, from the Stiftung Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention (DFK - German Crime Prevention Forum), at the 11th International Roto Trade Press Day. In Berlin, in mid-November 2016, the Director of the Crime Division also stipulated that only a wide-ranging commitment will lead to the goal. This ranges from financial investor incentives through to a continuous public relations effort, which raises public awareness and provides comprehensive information.

The rising apartment break-in trend over the past few years is fundamentally a European problem. By contrast, recorded crimes, such as robberies and violent crimes as well as vehicle thefts are falling overall in the 28 EU member states. The situation is completely different for apartment break-ins: for 2012, the official statistics show a jump of 14% compared to 2007. This corresponds to the finding across a range of offences of cross-border gang crime, which is responsible as well for burglars' growing professionalism.

According to Hepp, for the apartment break-in phenomenon, the police's investigative work in some cases is very difficult due to the extremely scant trail of evidence. This is also reflected in the national clearance



rate of about 15%. In this respect, repression and criminal prosecution impact opportunities are limited.

This makes consistent prevention consulting and support even more important. Even today, about 42% of cases are unsuccessful attempted break-ins. Appropriate apartment security engineering is a key reason for this. However, Criminological Research Institute (KFN) surveys had shown that only one in every four households had appropriate security. As a result, all participating and responsible parties must focus on eliminating this deficit.

“Don’t spare security at any cost”

Initiatives are required for both existing as well as new buildings, stressed Hepp. He approved of the current government financial incentives, such as the KfW funding. The high demand, especially for the grant variant, confirms the acceptance of the programme, which supports security engineering retrofitting, either as an individual measure or in combination with age-appropriate refurbishments or energy-efficient redevelopments. In order to expand its reach, it is logical to reduce the minimum total investment amount requirements.

But, genuine prevention must start in new builds. The intended volume of 350,000 to 400,000 new apartments per year alone shows that there is a “great pressure to act” with regard to preventive burglary protection. The cost-effective construction primacy must not lead to “sparing extremely important security at any cost”. The failure to consider new builds further increases the risk that retrofitting funding will develop into a “bottomless pit”. This will then ultimately be more expensive overall.

Hepp sees two strategic approaches for the adequate fitting of new build security engineering. Firstly, the KfW funding could be extended accordingly. The first step could be a concentration on multi-family houses and particularly high-risk zones, such as building and apartment entrances as well as ground floor windows. Secondly, the expert



indicated the alternative of establishing minimum building law security standards. Great success was achieved with them in the Netherlands: Thanks to this the number of successful apartment break-ins has fallen dramatically.

Irrespective of this, the aim must also be to continuously raise public and specialists' awareness in equal measure. By way of example, the speaker named the independent "K-Einbruch" communication initiative in which the police is implementing a range of information activities together with business, association, municipality and government facility partners. The final appeal to the around 70 journalists from out-of-town attending the Roto Trade Press Day: "The media also or in particular play a key role in providing objective and effective burglary protection information."

Caption

A large number of social forces, and not just the police, are required to stop the negative trend in apartment break-ins. These include politicians, the state, business and naturally also home and apartment owners, explained Reinhold Hepp, from the Stiftung Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention (DFK), at the 11th International Roto Trade Press Day. In Berlin, the Director of the Crime Division also threw his support behind minimum new build security engineering standards.

Photo: Roto / police headquarters Stuttgart **Reinhold_Hepp.jpg**

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