

Olympics Minister plays down London security concerns

Matt Cutler

UK Olympics Minister Hugh Robertson has rubbished suggestions that the widespread riots in London this week have increased doubts about security provisions for the 2012 Games.

Robertson attempted to reassure the leaders of 200 National Olympic Committees at a reception last night after London endured a devastating third night of rioting in various boroughs of the capital city on Monday evening. In China, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported that "the image of London (has been) severely damaged, with people sceptical and worried about the public security situation during the London Olympics", and reports across the globe have highlighted security questions surrounding the Games in the wake of the violence.

With all police leave cancelled and officers drafted into London from other parts of the country in an effort to contain further incidents, England's friendly football match against the Netherlands at Wembley Stadium in North London, scheduled for this evening, has been called off. However, Robertson told the Press Association that those doubting whether security arrangements for the London Olympics will be adequate were "very, very wrong".

"The Olympic security plan is incredibly detailed, with an intelligence-led plan and risk-based modelling," said Robertson. "Public order is one of the risks modelled and though we will need to see what comes out of the events of the last few days this is a risk that we have planned for and catered for. We have a commitment to deliver a safe and secure Games and we will do so. All the evidence shows this trouble is low-level criminality driven by messages on social networks and not some new, emerging security threat."

The top two police officers at London's Metropolitan Police resigned recently in the wake of a phone-hacking scandal, but the Government has insisted that security preparations for the Games have not been jeopardised. The International Olympic Committee pledged its support for London's security preparations for the Games, with a spokesman saying: "Security at the Olympic Games is a top priority for the IOC. It is, however, directly handled by the local authorities, as they know best what is appropriate and proportionate. We are confident they will do a good job in this domain."

Last night's beach volleyball test event at Horse Guards Parade in London (pictured) was brought forward by 90 minutes to ensure it finished before dark. Other test events took place over the weekend while the Surrey Cycle Classic, a dress rehearsal for the cycling road race, and the marathon swimming event at Hyde Park, are scheduled to take place this weekend.

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