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AN APPRECIATION ON THE LIKELY ACTION TO BE
TO BE ADOPTED BY LOYALIST STRIKERS DURING
THE THREATENED STRIKE 2 MAY 77 AND SUBSEQUENT MILITARY
INTERVENTION

For: Comd MACM HQ NI
By: Lt Col P B EVANS RCT
At: Moscow Camp, Belfast On: 1 May 1977

REVIEW OF THE SITUATION

1. A general strike has been threatened for midnight on Monday 2 May 1977 for political ends by extreme right wing elements of the protestant Loyalist faction in Northern Ireland.
2. It is not clear at this time (011500 May) whether this strike will in fact take place or how well it will be supported by the working population of the province. On statements made to date it is apparent that it does not have total support at present. It is possible that feelings could harden in support or against and thus the situation is extremely delicate.
3. If the strike does take place and becomes effective then fuel supplies to essential industrial users, hospitals, old peoples homes, sources of food production, Government and Military agencies could be jeopardised to the point where the Northern Ireland office may decide that Military intervention is necessary.

AIM

4. To assist Government Agencies in Northern Ireland to maintain essential liquid fuel supplies within the Province.

FACTORS

5. POLITICAL CLIMATE

a. The leaders of the advocates of strike action have manouvered themselves into a situation in which they dare not back down in case they lose political credence in the future. Their demands however are such that they cannot be implemented assuming the Government were willing to give in in the time frame left before the strike deadline. Neither are they prepared to accept any form of promise of future action or intent as being sufficient to warrant calling off their threat of strike action.

Deduction: There is little chance of a negotiated settlement before the strike deadline

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6. WORKERS VIEWPOINT

a. Many workers do not support the call for strike action, some feel they are being forced into a politically motivated strike, and are therefore against it.

b. Many workers have expressed a desire to management to continue working; this particularly so in the BP refinery and in the Calor Kosangas Depot, Sydenham.

Deduction: It is quite possible that the strike will either never be fully mounted or will soon peter out for lack of support providing the workers are not antagonised or provoked by undue, or, in their eyes, "provocative" Military intervention. It is possible they may go back to work after a show of strength has been made. No precipitate Military intervention should be undertaken.

7. INTIMIDATION

a. It is possible that workers may be intimidated by the following means:-

- (1) Personal visits to houses by canvassers or by the use of leaflets sent to them.
- (2) Barricades to prevent them leaving housing estates for work.
- (3) Blocking of road routes to work.
- (4) Pickets at work entrances.
- (5) Threats made whilst at work by other workers.

Deduction: Intimidation could be a main factor in the success or partial success of strike action. The security forces must endeavour to prevent it but are unlikely to be completely successful. To avoid confrontation with pickets manned by workers, security forces must treat them with caution and a RUC presence is desirable.

8. ATTITUDE OF MANAGEMENT

This helpful at present but could be adversely affected by any Military action which is harassing in nature or which has violent overtones e.g. personal searches or undue rough handling when installations are seized.

Deduction: The Security Forces must be extremely careful in their handling of the seizure of both installations and plant which are considered essential to the operation of fuel delivery systems. Management if they were to be warned of an impending action beforehand have indicated a willingness to try to persuade workers to cooperate in an orderly handover to the Military. If the seizure occurred at some unusual time when management were not normally present then some warning would be essential if management help was required at this critical moment.

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9. SABOTAGE OF EQUIPMENT

a. Senior Management of the Refinery and oil terminals are of the opinion that in general workers are unlikely to cause expensive or irreparable damage to plant, vehs or installations as once the strike was settled their future livelihood depended on its being capable of operation again. It is considered quite likely that they would endeavour to cause delays in the use of the equipment and particularly the tankers by removal of small essential items of the vehicle equipment (keys, rotor arm, electrical leads, fan belts etc.) The Leyland agent for commercial spares is Charles Hurst Ltd of Ravenhill Road, a firm in the heart of the Loyalist area and one which might refuse to deal with the Military in a strike situation.

Deduction: a. Apart from one or two irresponsible hotheads the average worker is considered unlikely to seriously damage his equipment but may delay its use for periods up to 72 hours by removing or breaking minor items on assemblies.

b. If this assumption is correct then there is no need to carry out a preemptive seizure of installations to prevent sabotage whilst workers are still operating either fully or partially.

10. MILITARY RESOURCES AVAILABLE

a. Approximately 100 HGV 1.

b. Allowing at least one driver escort per vehicle then some 100 vehicles can be manned with the total Military force available.

c. The Military does not have the manpower to occupy and take over depots other than those at Pennyburn and Sydenham.

d. There are no specialists capable of running a refinery

Deductions:

a. The size of the vehicle fleet that can be operated daily is limited to a maximum of 100 vehs because of drivers.

b. The Military cannot refine fuel but can only use existing stocks within the refinery and terminals. These are estimated as being sufficient for up to 40 days when used on essential supplies only.

11. TYPES OF TANKER

a. The majority of tankers in use are large bulk delivery tankers of up to 32 ton capacity. Most are articulated vehicles and thus require HGV 1 drivers. There are some medium and small tankers held mainly by the Authorised Fuel Distributors. Some of these have extra long hoses to enable them to deliver to awkward locations.

Deductions

a. When tankers are seized a mix of vehs is essential so that not only bulk deliveries can be made but the smaller more awkward deliveries may also be carried out.

b. The protection of tankers is essential but because of lack of manpower and the waste in trying to guard single tankers, a convoy system is inevitable.

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12. TYPES OF FUEL

a. The civilian population is unaware of the correct nomenclature for various liquid fuel products and requests for more of "the usual" are common. Where possible the type of fuel required must be specified when orders are accepted but often they are not known by the person ordering.

Deductions:

a. A list of all likely users and their known type of fuel requirement should be maintained ready for use in an emergency so that correct fuel types can be sent to customers.

b. With so many differing loads it is imperative that tankers with unmarked loads should be tested by the Chemical Laboratory before being used in the delivery chain.

13. TRAINING OF OPERATORS

Those who have to operate the tankers must have some instruction on the methods of operation of the pumping gear and ancillary equipment on the actual vehicle type. This is likely to be impossible before seizure of the tanker vehicles.

Deduction:

A period of at least 24 hours to conduct "teach ins" and instruction on the particular tankers to be used is considered mandatory if accidents and losses are not to occur.

14. USER STOCKS

Most users have stocked up in anticipation of the strike and are now merely "topping up." Some big users however have such a small relative storage capacity compared with their needs, that the oil companies expect they could run short after 3 days working at normal rates under strike conditions.

Deduction:

If all industries are to continue working normally then Military intervention must take place soon enough to allow for deliveries to some essential users after 72 hours.

15. METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION

The proposed method of distribution allows for a cycle of events as follows:-

Day 1 - Demand sent to DQC

Day 2 - Demand processed and bulk delivery made to DP.

Day 3 - Delivery to user from DP.

Deduction:

The time frame for a single demand is 48 hours and it follows that when the system is initially brought into operation a 48 hour buffer period is essential. This also allows for the familiarisation training mentioned in para 13 to take place concurrently.

16. TIME OF SEIZURE

If installations are taken over during the day then the workers will be present but the tankers are likely to be out around the Province. If at night, then the vehicles will be available but the expertise of the workers will not.

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COURSES OPEN TO THE WORKERS

17. COURSE 1
The workers could refuse to go on strike and remain at their jobs or merely have a one days stoppage thus negating any requirement for Military intervention whatsoever.
18. COURSE 2
A partial strike with a deliberate and successful policy of maintaining a service to all users considered essential by the government (i.e. including Military and Government users).
- Advantages - There is no requirement for Military intervention.
Disadvantages - An overall reduction in the productivity of the Province
19. COURSE 3
A partial strike as in 2 but with the deliberate exclusion of a user or users considered essential by the Government.
- Advantages - The majority of installations, plant and vehs will be kept in use by the workers, hopefully this would mean less initial work to get the system flowing smoothly when seizure took place.
Disadvantages - a. Military intervention would become inevitable.
b. Some users would have to suffer before the Military could provide a measure of support.
20. COURSE 4
A partial strike developing to a total strike.
- Advantages - The possibility of successful negotiations being conducted initially.
Disadvantages- a. Fuel stocks held by users are consumed during abortive negotiations stage.
b. Military intervention becomes inevitable.
c. A back log of deliveries builds up causing extra pressure on the initial military distribution effort.
21. COURSE 5
A total strike from the outset.
- Advantages - a. Military intervention will occur sooner than in course 4.
b. Planned operations can take place at any time.
Disadvantages- a. Military Introduction is inevitable from the beginning.
b. The industrial economy will suffer the hardest blow.

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- c. Public opinion of the working population will be against Military intervention.
- d. There will be no workers to advise or hand over any installations.
- e. The Military are committed for an indefinite period.

THE WORKERS MOST LIKELY COURSE

- 22. Present public opinion indicates that although there is considerable backing for the strike it is by no means total. Hence courses 1 and 5 are considered unlikely. Since the strike is politically motivated against the Government course 2 can be discarded.
- 23. The most likely event is therefore considered to be a partial strike which will require Military intervention. It is considered that course 3 is the most probable as it would have the best propaganda value from the Loyalist point of view.

OWN COURSE

- 24. There are only two possible courses faced by the Military. To intervene or not to intervene. The Government has stated that it will not allow essential services to come to a halt, if we accept that the workers adopt course 3 then the Military will inevitably intervene. The primary consideration must therefore be at what stage seizure of installations should take place.
- 25. From the factors discussed above it is apparent that a waiting period before intervention of longer than 24 hours after initial strike action could result in some industrial users running short of fuel. It would take a further 48 hours before the first delivery arrived with the user i.e. 72 hours in all.

The political advantages of waiting for 2 days after the strike has begun before intervening are however considerable and it is felt that they outweigh the penalties of some users running short for a day. On balance it is considered better to snatch the vehicles than to take over the installations during the day when the workers are present. If they are not prepared to assist anyway then nothing has been gained but a few vehicles could be lost through minor sabotage.

It is considered that the best course of action is therefore to take over the installations at dawn on Thur 5 May 77, assuming the strike begins at 0001 hours on 3 May 77.

RECOMMENDATION

The seizure of the installation and vehicles to take place at 0500 hours 5 May 77.

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