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cc PSG 4/1/98
- 8 JUL 1998
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DB/8/7

FROM: MRS DOREEN BROWN
CENT SEC

DATE: 3 JULY 1998

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M. J. Connor

8/9/7

~~MR MOTHER Davidson~~

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L) - O

To see / file

Miss Imeson

EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

You should be aware

Summary

Issue: Arrangements for dealing with a possible period of civil disruption

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Timescale: For urgent consideration

Recommendation: That the Secretary of State should note the arrangements and should indicate any areas of concern

Detail

1. The Secretary of State asked for information about the emergency plans in existence to deal with a possible period of civil disruption.
2. Central Secretariat chairs an inter-departmental group whose function is to satisfy itself that functional areas are ready to deal with an emergency situation and to ensure that, during such a period, arrangements are in place to monitor the situation and to collate and disseminate information about the changing situation.

Existence of Plans

3. There is no single emergency plan for Northern Ireland, nor should there be. Action to deal with an emergency situation begins at ground level, as the response to the event. Effective plans, therefore, need to be compiled at that level. Individual bodies and areas have their own plans. From the central level, the responsibility is to see that plans exist and that they include provision for inter-agency links.
4. Each functional area has its own plan, and may even have a number of them, based on geographical areas and tailored to local circumstances. Thus, at local level, plans would exist for each Health and Social Services Trust, Housing District, Roads Division, etc. Personnel at local level are aware of the plans and ready to operate them as required. They are also aware of the appropriate contacts in the range of bodies at local level with whom they might need to co-operate. For example, if families are intimidated from their homes, there needs to be involvement not only from the Housing Executive but also from Social Services and possibly Social Security.

Monitoring and Provision of Information

5. Arrangements are in place to monitor development centrally. The NIO Operations Room opens at 8.00am on Saturday 4 July and will remain in operation for as long as the situation requires it. It will monitor the development of events and will collate and report the information to Ministers so that they can be aware of any areas of difficulty on which they might be expected to comment.
6. Central Secretariat will be present in the Operations Room, alongside SPOB and the Information Service, to receive reports from NI Departments on the situation in their range of functional areas. That information will be received twice daily and will be collated with the information on the security situation to form comprehensive situation reports for Ministers. The Central Secretariat rota for the next week is attached.

7. The collation of information from Departments should enable any areas of difficulty to be identified, for example, if there is any sign that inter-agency co-operation is proving difficult or inadequate in any particular area.
8. NI Departments have been given details of the contact numbers for the Operations Room so that they can feed in reports. Each Department has also identified officers as key central contacts, for use by the Operations Room or other Departments. That list is attached for the Secretary of State's information. More detailed contact lists have also been drawn up by DOE, and shared with other Departments, to cover the wide range of DOE's functional areas - water, housing, roads, transport, etc.

Specific Areas

9. The Secretary of State asked specifically about three areas: **energy, water, and civil service staffing**.
10. On **energy**, in the event of a walkout by power station workers, management would take over and could generate electricity, although not indefinitely. They would be dependent on the systems remaining fault free. In the past, troops could have been used to man the stations. That is no longer an option. Modern power stations are very much more sophisticated, and troops would not be competent to operate them. The positive side of the picture is that a walkout by workers would not immediately affect power supplies; the negative is that power generation could not be guaranteed indefinitely, although the latest assessment from NIE is quite optimistic.
11. So far as **water and sewage** is concerned, a major incident plan exists. In the event of a pumping station being damaged, back up pumps could keep the systems operating, although not indefinitely. Management could step in to take the place of workers as necessary, provided that they could get access to the pumping stations and controls. Power supply is, however, a key factor, particularly in sewage works.

12. Arrangements are in place to monitor the position regarding the **staffing of civil service offices**. In times of disruption, ie, when roads or offices are blockaded, staff are advised to report to the nearest civil service office. That advice could be given in the workplace if a stage was reached when a deterioration in the situation was in prospect, or could be given through the media if the situation changed substantially overnight. It would not be desirable to circulate advice on these lines yet. To do so at this stage would add to the tension and would be picked up and played publicly in the media, used to demonstrate that the Government was expecting the worst. Neither would it be feasible to give civil servants anything other than broad guidance. It would not be possible to give up-to-date and comprehensive information to staff about the blockade position in their travel to work area, given (from past experience) the way in which blockades tend to be set up, dismantled and moved to other areas rather than remaining permanently in place.

(Signed DAB)

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