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ITEM:-: ARMS FOR THE RUC

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY HUMPHREY ATKINS, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, MADE 2 (TWO) AUGUST 1979.

ARMS FOR THE RUC

1. THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE RUC BEING HELD SHORT OF THE WEAPONS THEY NEED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE AGAINST TERRORISM. THEY HAVE WHAT THEY NEED NOW AND WE SHALL SEE THAT THEY HAVE WHAT THEY NEED IN FUTURE.

2. AS REGARDS CERTAIN SUPPLIES FROM UNITED STATES SOURCES, WE HAVE NO INFORMATION THAT THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION HAS IMPOSED A BAN ON ANY FURTHER SUPPLIES. I UNDERSTAND THAT, IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE, THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION IS REVIEWING ITS POLICY ON ARMS SUPPLY TO THE RUC: THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL FOR THIS PURPOSE MAKE ITS VIEWS ON WHAT IS NEEDED VERY CLEAR TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AS IT HAS DONE IN THE PAST. IN PARTICULAR, WE HAVE EMPHASISED THAT THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY IS THE LEGALLY CONSTITUTED POLICE FORCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND, CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF PROTECTING ALL ITS CITIZENS, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR RELIGIOUS PERSUASION.

3. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION IS AS FOLLOWS. WHILE REAFFIRMING THE POLICY OF STRICT IMPARTIALITY IN THE COMMUNAL CONFLICT AND OF SUPPORT FOR ANY SETTLEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND TO THE BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS, THEY HAVE MADE IT EXPLICITLY CLEAR THAT THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION ''IS NOT IMPARTIAL, HOWEVER, AS BETWEEN A LEGALLY CONSTITUTED POLICE FORCE OF A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT SUCH AS THAT OF GREAT BRITAIN AND ARMED TERRORIST GROUPS SUCH AS EXIST IN NORTHERN IRELAND''. THIS HAS BEEN MADE CLEAR TO US, AND I UNDERSTAND, TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

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