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Item D

Brief for conference 4/12/85.

Relations between the Security Forces and the

Minority Community

Speaking Note

The Minister might say that this is an area where there is a substantial expectation of progress on the part of the minority in Northern Ireland and indeed where there is a requirement for progress if the purposes of the Agreement are to be fulfilled.

Our immediate objective is to lay the basis for peace and stability in Northern Ireland. This involves at one level intensifying the campaign against terrorism and subversion and we have a specific item on our agenda directed at this goal. Through enhanced security cooperation we are seeking to limit further the operational capacity of terrorists and to increase the confidence of the unionist community in this Agreement.

We must, also, however, simultaneously begin to draw away from the terrorists the reserves of support which they have found in sections of the nationalist community and which have been a main feature of the process of alienation; in short we must make early progress and this Conference must be seen to make early progress in improving the confidence and trust of the nationalist population in the security forces.

The most difficult issue is undoubtedly the UDR. It is as well to be frank and to acknowledge that minority representatives, for reasons which they have clearly documented, have called for the disbandment of this regiment; in some quarters this is still the expectation.

Within the negotiations on the Agreement, mindful of all the aspects of this problem and particularly the role of the UDR as a reassurance in isolated unionist communities, we set ourselves a different order of priorities (viz involving a police presence at UDR check-points as well as improvements in training, in deployment, in complaints procedures etc). These were heralded in part in the communique of 15th November and of course were set out in much greater detail in the discussions during the pre-Summit stage.

The question therefore arises as to (i) the progress already being made in implementation of these measures, (ii) the visibility of such progress and (iii) the broad time-table within which the overall package of improvements is being pursued.

We might mention in illustration of our concern that we have been told of a number of occasions where the UDR would appear to have been operating without a police presence; indeed we have learned of one very serious case involving the UDR and members of the public, where the incident could undoubtedly have been avoided had an RUC officer been on-the-spot at the time (viz McCooey case brought to our attention by Seamus Mallon)

In so far as the RUC are concerned, we understand that work is in hand on the development of a code of conduct for the RUC. We would also ask, therefore, how this matter is proceeding and when the code is expected to be operative. We should press for a specific reference to the Code in paragraph 5 of the Press Statement.