



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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IRA ceasefire.

Prepared for Taoiseach's
anti with SoS Mayhew,
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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Monitoring the Ceasefire

Background Note

Dr.

1. Ten weeks into the IRA ceasefire, the response by the security forces remains sluggish. Certain minimal softenings in the security force posture were announced a week after the ceasefire (e.g. change by the Army from helmets to berets), and further measures were announced following subsequent statements by PM Major (e.g. the reopening of cross border roads, and reductions in visible troop levels on the streets in Derry city, Omagh and Strabane).
2. In the main, however, the rate of British response has been grudging and minimalist. The British side, for their part, have stated that changes take place in line with threat assessments, on the basis that the ceasefire is "reversible", and have emphasised the operational independence of local RUC and military commanders. In stark contradiction of this, however, a British official (Legge) told us on 4 November that changes in force levels would be linked with progress in the exploratory dialogue with Sinn Féin. Legge said that it was necessary to keep "inducements in reserve" because it would not be possible to meet Sinn Féin demands in other areas. Continued high force levels on the streets, and more particularly a tendency to concentrate attention on known Sinn Féin/Republican activists, notably in South Armagh, East Tyrone and West Belfast, have the potential to complicate the peace process.
3. The measures taken to date by the security forces were summarised in a speech by the RUC Chief Constable on 10 November, as follows:
 - "a significant reduction in the amount of military patrol support for the RUC, which is a continuing

process". (Comment: while troops on the streets have been drawn down in Derry City, Omagh and Strabane, and while there have been reports of a draw-down in Co. Derry, the perception in parts of West Belfast (the Lower Falls in particular), and South Armagh does not support this assertion. Moreover, we have had continued reports of unaccompanied military patrols in West Belfast. While Nationalist sources, Sinn Féin included, observe that in Tyrone the Army are more in the background than they were, there is a strong and pervasive concern about the behaviour of elements of the RUC, notably the heavily armed Divisional Mobile Support Units (DMSUs). We have received a number of complaints, primarily but not only from Sinn Féin, about DMSU activities and harassment, focussed on traditionally Republican areas e.g. Cappagh and the Cookstown area in Co. Tyrone;

- "the removal of a number of security barriers" throughout Northern Ireland. (Comment: clearly, the removal of barriers at entries to town centres (i.e. designed to deter bombers) is a reflection of the reality of the ceasefire. However, Unionist politicians have tended to conflate this with the quite separate issue of Belfast peaceline closures (e.g. the Lanark Way barrier between the Shankhill and the Lower Falls, which exists to guard against sectarian incursions, stone throwing etc). The RUC have opened several of these peaceline barriers without, it is claimed by the SDLP among others, adequate local consultation);

- "the removal from routine street patrolling of heavier military vehicles". (Comment: this is largely seen as a cosmetic gesture in areas such as West Belfast, and is by no means uniform in

application);

- military change from helmets to berets and reduction of so-called "top cover" from Army vehicles. (Comment: This was essentially a preliminary measure announced within a week of the IRA ceasefire. However, the application is by no means uniform and instances have been reported to us where the announced changes still do not apply, particularly in West Belfast);
- a "large change" in the coverage, profile and height level of military helicopters". (Comment: we continue to receive reports, from SDLP sources, of helicopters hovering over West Belfast);
- "the removal of RUC flak jackets". (Comment: this measure, while clearly significant in terms of RUC perceptions of the level of threat, has not had any significant effect on Nationalist perceptions of security force posture);
- "the reopening of cross border roads". (Comment: This is a major issue, and the British Prime Minister's announcement of 21 October elicited positive responses from the SDLP and Sinn Féin. However, the three year time frame referred to by the British side has dissipated some of this positive response).

Action taken through the Secretariat

4. We have emphasised to the British side our unhappiness at the inadequate briefing and lack of information on the response by the security forces to the ceasefire (in some cases we have learnt of changes of posture from our own contacts and from the newspapers), the slow pace of response by the security forces and the failure of the

British side to engage adequately on specific cases raised through the Secretariat on foot of material originating from Sinn Féin, despite the fact that we filter this material. The British side have sought to argue that the complaints raised are of "dubious quality", that we are somehow marching to a Sinn Féin drum, and that we cannot be trusted not to pass on confidential information to Sinn Féin. The NIO state also that they are often unable to obtain details from the RUC or military commanders. For example, at a recent meeting in the Secretariat, the British side professed to be unable to say what the reduction in the level of Army patrolling since the ceasefire had been. However, the British side unintentionally admitted to us earlier this week that they had been able to obtain for a Unionist politician (Roy Beggs) assurances on the intentions of the Army in relation to a reported change in troop levels.

Policing

5. Public debate on the acceptability and reform of the RUC and the future shape of policing has developed in recent weeks. There are essentially four main strands to this debate:
 - the view of the SDLP. Seamus Mallon has argued for the subdivision of policing in Northern Ireland into four regional forces, civilianised and dedicated to community policing. Other SDLP spokesmen have pushed for substantial reforms of the RUC;
 - the attitude of Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin have restated the unacceptability of the RUC in Republican areas and their refusal to accept that the RUC can be reformed e.g. at a Conference on Policing in West Belfast on 5 November. They do not appear to have evolved any very developed thoughts on how to

approach interim policing problems (which are urgent, in view of the growing crime and drugs problem in Republican areas since the ceasefire) and remain publicly unwilling to condemn punishment beatings (which have, however, declined in number in recent weeks). Sinn Féin are particularly opposed to the RUC's current PR offensive aimed at presenting support for the police as an integral element of building the peace;

- the attitude of the Police Authority. The new Police Authority, who have strained relations with the Chief Constable, have attempted to engender debate and organised (somewhat maladroitly) a closed seminar of invited guests at Queen's on 4 November. Apparently the seminar yielded criticism of the RUC but no new insights. The Police Authority have raised the question of religious imbalance within the force with the Chief Constable, to the irritation of the latter. On the other hand, we and Northern Nationalists would tend to see analysis purely in terms of religious imbalance as an overly simplistic one which ignores the prior questions of the ethos and acceptability of the police in a divided society;

- the Chief Constable has been defensive of the RUC's record and, with the support of the Secretary of State, has signalled that the RUC will stay essentially as it is, will be subject to a certain degree of reform and will in due course be downsized and equipped to cope with a non-paramilitary security situation.

Anglo-Irish Division
11 November, 1994