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LVF.

Secure Fax: 686

25 June 1998 **No of pages including this one: 4**

To: HQ
For: C O Floinn

From: Belfast
From: V O'Donnell

Subj: Briefing in Secretariat on 25 June from John Steele and Stephen Leach
LVF threat assessment

The Joint Secretary said that we had received a report in Dublin[1], from a source that we would regard as sufficiently close to the LVF to be regarded seriously, to the effect that the LVF were far from quiescent at present, contrary to other indications. In essence the report suggested that the LVF were spoiling for a fight; they were planning terrorist actions in the South, including targeting tourist centres; they may have "a safe house" in North Dublin; they had threatened Harold Gracey (Orange Order, Portadown) in the event of no parade down Garvaghy Road this year.

While a degree of scepticism had developed as a result of similar reports on LVF threats in the past, Dublin had asked us to obtain an assessment from the British side of this report, in view of the degree of reliability placed on the source on this occasion. On a particular aspect, would the LVF have access to commercial explosives?

As the British side were aware, the LVF had made threats against Irish Government officials working in Maryfield, which had been taken seriously. We had sought and received assessments of LVF capability from the British side previously in the context of these threats, which we had found reassuring.

The British response (mainly from Stephen Leach) was on the following lines:

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[1] Eamon McKee's confidential report of his meeting with Chris Anderson on 10 June, 1998 in Dublin. (Not identified specifically at meeting).

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- The LVF remained a very nasty organisation as the murders at Poyntz Pass and other atrocities demonstrated.

- The gulf between threat rhetoric from the LVF and capacity to carry it through remains.

- It was notable that all murders committed by the LVF had been committed at close quarters.

- The LVF have never demonstrated that they have access to large stocks of bomb-making materials, or that they have developed a bomb-making capability. But in the past they have come into the possession of explosives by transfer from other Loyalist groups. This is not happening at present, but that could change in the light of the outcome of the Drumcree parade this year.

- There are other pressures on the LVF that are occupying them at present. These include:

  - Manoeuvres to secure early release for LVF prisoners.

  - Efforts to have the application of Rule 23 of Prison Rules (in-cell confinement for 23 hours a day) lifted from LVF prisoners in the Maze.

- Drumcree may be a severe test of LVF intentions. Depending on developments regarding the parade, the LVF may plan attacks on nationalists, on the security forces, and in the South. But there is no specific intelligence of LVF intentions vis-a-vis Drumcree at this stage.

- The LVF ceasefire is still regarded as tactical, despite their nomination of Pastor K McClinton as interlocutor with the Decommissioning Commission. The present ceasefire is no guarantee against LVF attacks in conjunction with Drumcree.

- The LVF don't appear to be attracting any more dissidents from other Loyalist groups, but this may simply reflect the consequences of the prisoner release

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provisions, and related legal proposals, following the Good Friday Agreement.

- On numbers, the British indicated that total LVF support may be limited to a few dozen in the Portadown region, and a handful in Belfast. The cadre within the LVF prepared to kill, would be less again.

- They discounted the suggestion that the LVF may have a "safe house" in North Dublin, or anywhere else in the South.

Summary

Overall, the picture given was that the LVF threat remains primarily a local one. It is a relatively unstable and therefore unpredictable organisation. It would like to strike further afield but would appear to lack the capability at present. They have other serious pressures to resolve at present. Nonetheless, as John Steele put it: "I would be very worried if I were a GAA man drinking regularly in the same pub in Portadown".

Other Security matters

1. **UDA**

We asked for a view on the possible impact on the UDA of a failure by the UDP to gain a seat at the Assembly Elections.

John Steele indicated serious concern at this prospect. The UDA had been more volatile than the UVF during the Multi-Party Talks. It was a great pity that the UDP and PUP hadn't managed to merge. Tensions remained in places between the UDA and UVF. Leach felt that the UDA reaction to such an eventuality might depend largely on how the Republican ceasefire holds and how matters progress under the new Assembly.

2. **Official IRA**

Steele confirmed that there was no evidence of a resurgence of violence among the OIRA or any other signs of alignment by them with dissident Republicans not on

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ceasefire. This was despite a shooting incident in the Markets area of Belfast recently, attributed to the OIRA. Steele thought that the overall view in that organisation was that PIRA's action showed them to be moving in their direction.

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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BELFAST

17 June 1998

Mr Eamonn McKee
Anglo-Irish Division

Dear Eamonn,

LVF capability/threat

I refer to your E mail of yesterday in regard to the above.

We have raised the matter with the British side who will in turn pursue the issue (on the basis of the questions raised in your E mail) with John Steele and seek his assessment.

In the meantime, however, the British side sought a preliminary reaction from SPOB (most likely Jonathon Margetts who is on the decommissioning side and whose views on the issue would, it is suggested, be on the basis of information from the police), who made the following points:

- They believe that the LVF at present do not have the capacity to manufacture HME (home made explosive).

- The LVF do not have access to other explosives; they have no detonators, no "boosters" and few weapons.

- The LVF may well be "working the ceasefire" to get their prisoners out.

- If it came to decommissioning, they would have hardly any weapons to hand in. They are, however, in touch with the Decommissioning Commission.

- They are perceived as being "all mouth": no violence is expected from them, other than of a reactive nature to republican violence - and then only on their working basis of 'no claim no blame'.

The British side indicated that the Department of Justice at its meeting yesterday with the Decommissioning Commission may have received more detailed information on the exchanges which the Commission had with Pastor Kenny McClinton, acting as intermediary for the LVF.

We suggested that the preliminary assessment as above seemed extraordinarily benign given the LVF's record and the Chief Constable's own assessment of the organisation - confirmed to us at the meeting we had with him here last week - as ruthless and undisciplined "scum", readily willing and capable of killing people on the most random and casual basis. As you

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will have seen from the Joint Secretary's report (SF 608 of 9 June), Flanagan also mentioned that RUC intelligence points to LVF preparations for a violent attack of some kind in the run-up to Drumcree.

We said we looked forward to receiving the more detailed assessment being sought from John Steele

We will keep you advised.

As regards the report of the meeting with Chris Anderson, Val O' Donnell raised the matter within the Department of Justice on Friday last, asking for a threat assessment on the points raised.

Yours sincerely,

Kieran Dowling

Kieran Dowling
Counsellor

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This list passed to FCO Tues 16/7 with request for info

Potential threat represented by the LVF:

- their strength in Portadown/Lurgan compared to elsewhere (numbers, command structures, discipline, arsenal).

- their capabilities as a paramilitary organisation (sectarian assassination, targeted assassination, bomb-making and delivery).

- their capacity and intentions to operate south of the border, including Dublin.

- their capability as a force for coordinating disruption locally and across Northern Ireland.

- their overall activities and intentions vis-a-vis 5 July.

- the possibilities of ending Rule 32 at the Maze and the scope for including them in prisoner release scheme.

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16 June 1998 **IMMEDIATE**

To: Belfast **From: HQ**

For: Kieran Dowling **From: Eamonn McKee**

Subj. Note of Meeting with Chris Anderson, 11 June 1998

You will have seen the above. Grateful if you would explore with the other side, with due discretion to the source (i.e. not to name him but to invoke his obvious credentials), the potential threat represented by the LVF:

- their strength in Portadown/Lurgan compared to elsewhere (numbers, command structures, discipline, arsenal).
- their capabilities as a paramilitary organisation (sectarian assassination, targeted assassination, bomb-making and delivery).
- their capacity and intentions to operate south of the border, including Dublin.
- their capability as a force for coordinating disruption locally and across Northern Ireland.
- their overall activities and intentions vis-a-vis 5 July.
- the possibilities of ending Rule 32 at the Maze and the scope for including them in prisoner release scheme.

Grateful also if you ensure that Val has seen the report and to confirm that the D/Justice will give us their threat assessment viz the points raised in it by Anderson.

END

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c.c. Group 2

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Confidential

LVF - Approach to Drumcree

Meeting with Chris Anderson, Dublin, 10 June 1998

Chris Anderson is a former loyalist prisoner who now operates as a free-lance reporter and researcher. He has close connections to the LVF in the Portadown/Lurgan areas (producing by way of credential a photograph which he took of the LVF cease-fire announcement). A contact of Ray Bassett, Anderson asked for a meeting with us to discuss the marching season the LVF's approach, as he understood it. The following points, which should be considered in tandem with the comment at the end of this report, arose in the course of conversation:

1. The LVF, he told us, were more prepared for violent confrontation over Drumcree than they have ever been. The Garvaghy Road was seen as the last stand, another do-or-die effort for loyalism. Harold Gracie, the leader of Loyal Order Lodge No. 1 in Portadown, was under death threat if he failed to march on the Garvaghy. The LVF were prepared to mobilise the Orange Order in rural areas but would not try to involve the urban lodges - on the basis that they were not to be trusted (presumably a reference to the Orange Order's restraint in avoiding the four main contentious areas last year).

2. According to Anderson, the LVF had honed their bomb-making skills, had access to commercial explosive and had "scoped out" Dublin, Drogheda and Dundalk. They had a safe house in the north of Dublin city and would send down a gang the day before the Drumcree march to await the outcome. They would target Dublin's tourist centres. Anderson felt that he had to pass on this information to us.

3. The Government's approach was set out to him i.e. that we would continue to urge dialogue and accommodation (a reference to the need to uphold the law seemed otiose in the circumstances). We bounced around a few notions on a compromise approach. Anderson did not hold out much hope. The depth of feeling against McCionnaith was intense that the loyalists would never engage in discussions with him. Anderson's message was that people would die if the parade was rerouted. We agreed to keep in contact as developments arose.

4. The LVF, led by Mark Fulton, had regrouped after the death of Billy Wright but many of the new members were nihilistic hoods. His cousin, Garry Fulton, was a dangerous psychotic, a cold-eyed killer, in Anderson's view, akin to Robin the "jackal" Jackson. According to Anderson, Garry Fulton is the killer of Sean Lampf, the council worker shot

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dead in Portadown recently.

5. I asked whether there might be some play in the prison situation e.g. a lifting of rule 32 (the current lock-down imposed on the LVF wing because of their murder of David Keyes) and engagement on the possibility of joining the early release scheme in return for good behaviour at Drumcree. Anderson did not want to be negative about that but indicated that it would not be sufficient to avoid confrontation.

6. On the political front, Anderson said that Trimble would be elected in Upper Bann but that his vote would be severely eaten into, particularly by the Orange Order's Denis Watson. Indeed, Trimble had to be careful about his personal safety when making appearances in the constituency, Anderson said. Speculation was rife in loyalist circles about the kind of pressure that must have been put on Trimble to sign the Good Friday Agreement - such was their negative view of the Agreement. The hostility in loyalist circles to Trimble was based on the notion that he betrayed every commitment he had entered into - as a hardliner elected to leadership on the basis of Drumcree 1995 but now a co-signatory of the Agreement, on decommissioning about which nothing had been done despite the conclusion of the talks, on talks with Sinn Féin and on sharing power with them.

Comment

7. Both Mr. Bassett and myself shared the view that Anderson was not just picking up information but was in fact closer to the LVF leadership than he was prepared to admit. Decoding what he was saying and why, he may well have been acting on instruction from the LVF leadership i.e that though he presented himself as acting purely as a philanthropist, he was in fact also acting as a courier for their threats - both missions not being incompatible. The LVF have made threats before but their capacity to deliver has faltered in the past. In his light, Anderson may be a less objective and less accurate assessor of the LVF's capacity to fulfill its threats, though he would be well informed about what the LVF *wanted* to do. We will ask for a threat assessment from the British side through the Secretariat.

Eamonn McKee
Security Section
11 June 1998

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