

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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For:	**HQ**	**From:**	**Belfast**
For:	**Secretary Gallagher**	**From:**	**Joint Secretary**

Subj: Ending of Army patrols in Belfast

1. An earlier message to Colm O Floinn on the above subject refers.

2. David Watkins has been in touch to apologise for the failure to give us advance warning of this development. He says that the original intention was for the Chief Constable to make an announcement next week (noting the ending of Army patrols as of this weekend). We would have been told of it in advance. However, Flanagan was forced to bring forward his announcement because of a threatened leak and concerns about an article which appeared in yesterday's News Letter as well as one by Ed Moloney.

3. To make a point about the operational independence of the Chief Constable, there are no plans at present for the Secretary of State to issue a statement about this development. It is expected, however, that Paul Murphy or Adam Ingram will give it a low-key welcome in a doorstep opportunity later today.

4. We have been asking the British generally about their plans for movement on the demilitarisation agenda and their intentions in relation to the promised policy statement on this subject. Our understanding in the latter respect is that Stephen Leach is revising a draft prepared in advance of Omagh. However, there is an alternative view in the NIO that, if the statement does not succeed in its purpose of inspiring nationalist confidence, it may be better to reconsider the matter and perhaps to postpone the exercise. We have pointed out that the statement is expected as part of the Agreement and that the approach should be to get its content right rather than to scrap it altogether.

5. We have requested a meeting on this general subject and arrangements are being made for David Watkins to call to the Secretariat very shortly.

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