

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Date: **10 June 1999** **No. of pages including cover: 5**

For: **HQ** **From:** **Belfast**
For: **Colm O Floinn** **From:** **Gerard Keown**

Subj **Meeting on Security Incidents, 10 June 1999**

1. Susan Scholefield called to the Secretariat today to provide us with a further up-date on the response by the security forces to recent attacks on nationalists/Catholics. She was accompanied by John Fisher and Jackie McGimpsey from the British side of the Secretariat. Present on our side were Val O'Donnell and the undersigned.

2. Scholefield handed us a detailed breakdown of the numbers of arrests, persons charged and casualties resulting from paramilitary attacks since 1 July 1998 (copy attached). These figures were being provided in confidence for our information, and we were asked to treat them accordingly. We gave her that assurance. (We were asked to note that attribution of community allegiance were less accurate after 1 April 1999.)

3. Scholefield said that the figures illustrated an increasing success by the security forces in tackling the recent phenomenon of sectarian attacks. The British army continued to be deployed in support of the RUC in areas where the Chief Constable judged this to be necessary (Belfast, Antrim, S. Armagh, Portadown, Magherafelt). There had been a number of recent arrests, finds in Larne and Lurgan, and Scholefield was hopeful that there would be further good news. However, reflecting normalisation commitments, army patrol levels were as low now as they have been since the Good Friday Agreement.

4. We asked whether patrolling levels had increased in different parts of Northern Ireland, and whether only the RIR was being used. Scholefield said there would, inevitably, be a concentration in the Portadown area over the coming weeks, which

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would place a strain on the security forces. She said we could also expect to see troops return from Britain over the summer if a resolution were not reached in the Blair talks. The RIR were used for patrol only in areas where they were ordinarily operational, As such. The 8th RIR, for example, were patrolling in the Antrim area. However, the Welsh Fusileers and the RAF Regiment were providing this service in other areas of the North where the RIR were not based.

5. O'Donnell asked about the murder of Mrs O'Neill in Portadown. Scholefield said that the decision to target Mrs O'Neill, a 'soft target', may have been in response to the greater security force activity in the area. This was possibly also the case with the pipe bomb attack on a Ballymena primary school. There was currently an increased level of patrolling and surveillance in the Portadown-Lurgan-Armagh area. The police response to the murder had been swift: eight arrests had been made but, regrettably, all had been released without charge. However, the RUC remained 'on the job.'

6. O'Donnell asked whether the eight could be re-arrested if new evidence were to emerge. Scholefield said this would depend on a number of factors. She believed individual dissident loyalists were behind the O'Neill murder and other attacks. This made it harder for the police to compile information and get good intelligence on those involved. While she had come across references to the Hoods Defenders Force, she said she was not familiar with the Hoods Reaction Force, which had reportedly claimed responsibility for the O'Neill murder.

7. We asked her about action by the security forces to prevent further attacks in Portadown, and in particular the safety of those living on Craigwell Avenue. Scholefield said there had been, for approximately a month, static patrols (3 armoured land rovers) 24 hours a day at the following community interfaces in the town: at Drumcree church, Corcrain Bridge and at the junction of Park Road and Garvaghy Road. Scholefield said they had been positioned to protect both communities. The patrol at Corcrain Bridge provided protection for people living on Craigwell Avenue.

8. O'Donnell asked about the number of arrests which had been made recently in connection with loyalist attacks. Scholefield said five people had been arrested, but was able to give details of only four (Thomas Gilmore, Samuel McBratney, J.K. Doran, Thomas Jefferson), and we asked for clarification on the fifth. In response to queries about possible further arrests in the near future, Scholefield said she was

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unable to say, or to assess the importance of individual figures already charged. However, there was a feeling that inroads had been made into dissident loyalist activity, and said 'this was not the end of the story by any means.'

9. O'Donnell asked about the pipe bomb attack on a Catholic primary school in Ballymena, and other recent attacks. Could Scholefield confirm that the device had been more sophisticated than previous ones? Scholefield was unable to comment on this, and said that, as far as she was aware, no grouping had claimed responsible for the attack. Scholefield said that there had been two arrests in relation to a find in Antrim the previous week, but that both had been released without charge. O'Donnell asked about the petrol letterbomb attack in Larne which, we understood, had been addressed to a loyalist figure, and a find in Antrim, both yesterday. Again, Scholefield said the police were investigating the matter, but could give no further details.

10. O'Donnell asked Scholefield if there was a timescale for the Secretary of State's review on the state of the ceasefires. Scholefield said she could not say when the Secretary of State would give her judgment as to whether the paramilitary groups were maintaining a complete and unequivocal ceasefire. The Chief Constable had briefed Dr Mowlem on Tuesday, and his advice was currently being considered. She understood that the judgment would be given 'shortly', and emphasised the legal requirement on the Secretary of State under the NI Sentences Act to keep the ceasefires under review.

11. It was agreed to meet again in a fortnight's time to review developments, and a provisional date of 24 June was set.

Gerard Keown
10 June 1999

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SECURITY SITUATION STATISTICS

Number of persons arrested

	01.07.98 - 07.06.99		01.01.99 - 07.06.99		01.05.99 - 07.06.99	
	LOY	REP	LOY	REP	LOY	REP
Sec. 14 PTA	300	106	116	50	31	1
Other legislation	412	116	92	35	27	17
Total	712	222	208	85	58	18

Number of persons charged

	01.07.98 - 07.06.99		01.01.99 - 07.06.99		01.05.99 - 07.06.99	
	LOY	REP	LOY	REP	LOY	REP
Murder	4	-	-	-	-	-
Attempted Murder	3	1	-	-	-	-
Firearms	34	22	18	17	-	1
Explosives	11	3	3	1	2	1
Armed Robbery	20	11	11	5	1	3
Other	272	59	53	19	22	8
Total	344	96	85	42	25	13

Casualties as a result of paramilitary style attacks

	01.07.98 - 07.06.99		01.01.99 - 07.06.99		01.05.99 - 07.06.99	
	LOY	REP	LOY	REP	LOY	REP
Shootings	36	25	19	16	5	4
Assaults	99	51	50	25	8	2
Total	135	76	69	41	13	6

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	01.07.98 - 07.06.99		01.01.99 - 07.06.99		01.05.99 - 07.06.99	
	LOY	REP	LOY	REP	LOY	REP
Deaths	8	31	3	1	1	-
Shooting incidents	80	45	25	26	6	6
Bombing incidents	109	11	43	-	13	-

	01.07.98 - 07.06.99	01.01.99 - 07.06.99	01.05.99 - 07.06.99
Petrol bombing attacks	819	178	62

NB:

Attribution up to 31.3.99 has been confirmed. Attribution after 1.4.99 is subject to adjustment.

The 'Other' category in the charges relates to all types of public order offences, along with membership, hijacking, withholding information, etc.

Petrol bombing attacks are **not** included in 'bombing incidents'.

Petrol bombing attacks are difficult to attribute as most occur during public order situations where the protagonists may be exchanging petrol bombs.

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