

**E. R.**

FROM: J R HARMER  
Law and Order Division

*Has McQuaid - to see  
Miss Nicholson - Action at R plane  
Noted - thanks  
4/24/11*

*1. Mr. Hamner - to see  
2. Mr. Pollock - to see TB/F to me  
- on 5/2/88  
P. 82/88*

cc PS/Secretary of State (L) - B  
PS/Minister of State (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr McClelland, CIJB  
Mr O'Reilly, RCB  
Mrs Pritchard, POB  
Mr Harrison, HQNI  
Supt McIvor, RUC HQ

1. Mr Hewitt (signed SGH 23.11)
2. PS/Secretary of State (B) - B

#### MINISTER'S CASE 26-9-14

On 20 September the Town Clerk and Chief Executive of Ballymena Borough Council wrote to pass on a suggestion by members of the Council that the NIO should give some form of recognition, such as the provision of replacement uniforms, to the bandsmen who gave first aid to the soldiers who were injured in the bomb attack on the army bus at Ballygawley Road on 20 August. PS/Secretary of State replied on 18 October and explained that the matter was being actively considered.

The RUC have since provided a very helpful report (flag A) which vividly describes the spontaneous and selfless help given by the members of the Omagh Protestant Boys Flute Band and the Star of the Valley Flute Band, Londonderry, to the injured and dying soldiers. The report concludes by pointing out that the local police are presently considering the possibility of some form of recognition for both bands. I have recently checked on this point with RUC HQ and they explained that the local police are still deciding whether to recommend to the Chief Constable that he should present both bands with a certificate as an acknowledgement of their courageous actions.

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Inquiries of CIJB, Central Secretariat and RCB have confirmed that the NIO does not have any suitable funds to pay for replacement uniforms. However, POB have been in contact with the Police Authority (flag B) and they have indicated that should it be thought appropriate, PANI officials are prepared to ask their General Purposes Committee to consider making an ex gratia payment of £500 towards the cost of replacing the damaged uniforms.

HQNI have informed us (flag C) that shortly after the bomb attack the GOC wrote to thank both bands for their "commendable assistance". (Copies of his letters are attached (flagged D & E respectively). HQNI have now decided that it would be appropriate for the Army to present a gift to both bands. The 1st Light Infantry will therefore shortly be presenting each band with a ceremonial silver bugle and a gift of £250. They also point out that contrary to the information contained in the police report, the bands have not yet passed on the money they collected to the Comforts Fund of the 1st Light Infantry. However, they understand that the bands intend to give a fairly sizeable donation to 1st Light Infantry nearer Christmas.

Although the NIO may not be in a position to make a financial contribution, it is encouraging that the 1st Light Infantry are able to mark the actions of the bandsmen and that the RUC may also follow suit. I therefore attach a brief reply which expresses the Secretary of State's admiration for the practical help given by the bandsmen. Although the draft notes that the Army are shortly going to make presentations to the bands, RUC HQ have asked that no mention should be made of the possibility of the Chief Constable issuing a certificate to both bands.

(signed )

**J R HARMER**  
Law and Order Division

23 November 1988

DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER 26-9-14

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE .....

<u>To</u>	<u>Enclosures</u>	<u>Copies to be sent to</u>
J S McIlroy Esq BA FCIS Town Clerk and Chief Executive Ballymena Borough Council "Ardeevin" 80 Galgorm Road BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT42 1AB		

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

On 18 October I wrote to explain that active consideration was being given to the suggestion that some form of recognition should be given to the bandsmen who gave first aid to the soldiers who were injured in the bomb outrage at Ballygawley Road on 20 August.

The Secretary of State was moved by the accounts of the spontaneous and selfless help given by the members of the Omagh Protestant Boys Flute Band and the Star of the Valley Flute Band to the injured and dying soldiers. Unfortunately, the Northern Ireland Office does not

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..ave any funds available to make a gift of the sort you suggest, however worthy the cause. However, we have been informed that the Army have been considering the most appropriate way to recognise the valiant actions of the bandsmen. It is understood that they will shortly be making presentations to the bands and this news has been warmly welcomed by the Secretary of State.

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