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ASST SEC - 8 MAR 1993

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-4 MAR 1993
HEAD OF THE N.I. CIVIL SERVICE

CENT

SEC

FROM: B McCREADY
Police Division
4 March 1993

cc

- PS/Mr Mates (B&L) - B
- PS/DUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Ledzie - B
- Mr Wood - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mrs Collins - B
- Mr Maitland - B

Mr Mates

Mr Wood

to read

(83/93)

UNDER
SEC 338/3
- 8 MAR 1993
CENT SEC

- 1. Mr Lavery [DAL 4/3]
- 2. PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

NEW PLASTIC BATON ROUND SYSTEM:- LINE TO TAKE AGAINST ENQUIRY ONLY

- Further to Mrs Collins' minute of 23 February, I attach, at Annex A, the line which the RUC propose to take (and with which we agree) should they receive any enquiries from the media about their recent acquisition of 200 new baton-round weapon-systems.
- I also attach, at Annex B, the line which the NIO would propose to take in similar circumstances and which, in turn, has been agreed with the RUC.
- The Police Authority, the Home Office and the MOD are content with what we and the RUC would intend to say; they are now preparing defensive briefing for their own use along similar lines.
- Arrangements are therefore now in place which should ensure that all the agencies involved can provide a co-ordinated agreed response to any enquiries. We can take much the same approach when we come to consider the timing of the deployment of the new weapon in Northern Ireland.
- If the Secretary of State and Mr Mates are content, I should be grateful if Mr Wood would ensure that all NIO Press Officers are briefed accordingly.

Signed

B McCREADY

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ANNEX A

REPLACEMENT [BATON] GUN - INFORMATION

AGAINST ENQUIRY ONLY (AFTER CONSULTATION WITH CIO/D-CIO)

The Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army are to be equipped with a new single-shot [baton] gun. It will replace the existing [baton] guns in use with both organisations, but still fire a plastic round.

A police spokesman said a replacement was required as the existing weapons were no longer in production. The equipment was selected on an extensive research programme, involving the police and the Ministry of Defence.

All those who will use the new equipment will be fully trained, and it is not expected to enter service until this has been completed, later this year.

NOTES:

1. The usage of plastic baton rounds in Northern Ireland has declined substantially over the year (see attached table). In his last Annual Report (1991), the Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Annesley, said: "The general improvement in public order was again reflected in the infrequent use of plastic baton rounds by the security forces. There was a small increase from 257 rounds in 1990 to 323 in 1991, mostly accounted for by violence associated with the 20th anniversary of the introduction of internment. The usage, however, is still very greatly reduced compared to earlier years and again leads me to express the hope that the day will come when the firing of plastic baton rounds is no longer necessary". In 1992, the number of PBRs fired by the police and Army was 89 - the lowest since baton rounds were first used in 1970. In 1993 to date (25 February) no rounds have been fired.

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2. The use of PBRs constitutes minimum force relative to the circumstances. The rules covering their use state that [baton] guns will only be used in accordance with the principle of the minimum and reasonable amount of force necessary for the protection of life and property; the preservation of peace, and the prevention and detection of crime.

3. The replacement weapon is both lighter and more compact than the models it replaces.

* If asked, we can confirm 16 deaths have occurred allegedly as a result of baton round injuries.

1971	15,752
1972	12,766
1973	2,828
1974	2,464
1975	1,490
1976	1,743
1977	1,271
1978	1,231
1979	29,601
1980	489
1981	651
1982	1,766
1983	1,172
1984	1,797
1985	2,571
1986	3,109
1987	937
1988	257
1989	323
1990	89
1991	
1992	

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TABLE

BATON ROUNDS FIRED BY THE SECURITY FORCES BY YEAR

1970	-	238
1971	-	16,752
1972	-	23,363
1973	-	12,766
1974	-	2,828
1975	-	3,701
1976	-	3,464
1977	-	1,490
1978	-	1,743
1979	-	1,271
1980	-	1,231
1981	-	29,601
1982	-	489
1983	-	661
1984	-	1,768
1985	-	1,172
1986	-	1,787
1987	-	2,571
1988	-	3,109
1989	-	937
1990	-	257
1991	-	323
1992	-	89

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ANNEX B

REPLACEMENT PLASTIC BATON ROUND SYSTEM

DEFENSIVE: AGAINST ENQUIRY ONLY

The RUC and Army in Northern Ireland are to be equipped with new plastic baton round equipment.

The police and Army must be appropriately equipped for their difficult role of maintaining public order and defending the community and themselves from violence. Plastic baton rounds provide the security forces with a generally non-lethal option in circumstances when the only realistic alternatives are the use of live rounds, or withdrawal from an area, with resulting risk of injury and damage to property.

The existing equipment is no longer produced, and possible replacements have been carefully researched in a joint programme to select a new system. The new equipment will be deployed as soon as practicable, consistent with thorough training and other requirements.

As at present, plastic baton rounds will only be used in line with strict instructions, intended to minimise the possibility of injury.

There is no wish on the part of Government or the security forces to use force of any kind; and it is encouraging to note the decline in the use of plastic baton rounds in recent years, as the level of public disorder has reduced.

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