

2194

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Sec 3

Sec 4

1453/94

RECEIVED 31 OCT 1994

NB944/94

FROM: PUS
26 OCTOBER 1994

Ms Murphy

REF

- cc. PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
- PS/Sir John Wheeler (L,B&DFP) - B
- ~~PS/Mr Fell~~ - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Daniell - B
- Mr Steele o/r - B
- Mrs Collins - B
- Mr Marsh - B
- Mr Perry - B
- Mr Stephens - B

15489
25 OCT 1994

1477/10

26 OCT 1994

CENT SEC

ENTERED 1 - NOV 1994

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

*a new statement
has been made 31/10*

CONVERSATION WITH THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

I had a long discussion with the Chief Constable yesterday evening. We covered a range of topics, some of which require follow-up action as noted.

2. The key points were:

(i) statement by the Chief Constable. The Chief Constable has mentioned several times his intention to make a statement about the RUC and its future in changed circumstances. He told me that he has now pretty well settled on using the opportunity of a passing-out parade on 10 November to do this. He undertook to let me see a draft of what he intended to say in advance. To help in that, he said it would be very useful to him to take up the offer by both the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister to authorise him to report or quote from a message of support and appreciation from them for the past work of the RUC and the pledge that whatever changes take place they will not be forgotten. I have supported this idea strongly, as I think a message of reassurance and support to the RUC (and in parallel to the GOC for the British Army) is an essential part of confidence-building. The difficulty of presenting false expectations on jobs etc will have to be addressed in the text of any message. We discussed whether a mention in the Secretary of State's speech in the Northern Ireland Debate on Thursday would be apt, but concluded that whatever might be said then the distance in time between Thursday and 10 November made something more timeous preferable. I should be grateful if Police Division could consider the terms of a possible letter in conjunction with SPOB, bearing in mind the need for a parallel piece of work for the GOC;

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(ii) the Police Authority. Inevitably, we turned to various issues between the RUC and the Police Authority. The Chief Constable seemed relaxed if regretful about the approach adopted by the Police Authority towards the issue of the Fair Employment Commission Report. He told me again that he could not see his way to disclosing to the Authority a report he was required to make, confidential in nature, under a different statute to a different Authority. He had however been ready to supply information on the fair employment issue to the Police Authority. He admitted that the work on that had fallen somewhat behind because of Mr Masterson's illness, but he could not understand why without notice the Police Authority had chosen to adopt a public and hostile approach. He supposed they were seizing on an issue to have public test of strength. I said I thought the whole affair regrettable not least because it placed the Secretary of State in a potential difficulty by reason of the appeal that lay to him under the Police Act against a Police Authority requirement to disclose. We then turned in passing to the Police Authority's proposed Conference on Community Policing about which the Chief Constable said he had had no advance information whatsoever. He said it was evident that the Chairman, with support and ideas from Chris Ryder, wanted to set and lead the debate on the future of policing in Northern Ireland. He accepted they had a legitimate part to play in that, but thought there was a risk both for the RUC and for Government if they rode away with the issue. I told him that when it became apparent (as was likely at the time of the Queen's Speech) that there would not be legislation on policing in Northern Ireland in the coming Session, we would want to bring forward a number of ideas about how to take forward the debate on key policing issues in Northern Ireland, and relate that debate to changing circumstances. He said he had been thinking along similar lines and had come up with one idea which he passed on for what it was worth, namely that there should be a "non-Royal" Commission on policing in Northern Ireland, with a distinguished local Chairman and local membership, to advise Government, taking on board input from the RUC itself, the Police Authority, and political and other figures who might be moved to give evidence. He mentioned Sir George Quigley's name as a possible Chairman. Allowing for the obvious inwardness of all this, I said we were of the same mind in seeing the need for a guided and responsible debate about the future of policing in Northern Ireland. It would be a crucial issue in securing a settled future in Northern Ireland. I should be grateful if Police Division would take this on board in their consideration of the way ahead though for my part I think the concept of a series of discussion papers from Government has

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more ^{to} commend it. Finally, on the subject of the Police Authority, the Chief Constable said he looked forward with some dismay to the proposed dinner with the Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Police Authority on 31 October, given recent events. I said that whatever the doubts about it, it would be a matter for the Secretary of State. I should be grateful if the Private Secretary would consider this. For my part, I think given the Police Authority's démarche on fair employment in particular the occasion risks being artificial;

- (iii) arms deposit and destruction. I gave the Chief Constable an account of the discussions at Chequers on the arms issue. He readily promised all necessary cooperation with this new piece of work for the Chilcot/Dalton grouping. He knows of the possibility of a Loyalist announcement very shortly offering at any rate some surrender of arms and munitions;
- (iv) visit to the US/Canada. The Chief Constable told me that he intends to pay a short visit to the USA and Canada to visit the FBI and the RCMP (who have a new Commissioner) to ensure there is no falling off in their active cooperation and coverage on the counter-PIRA front;
- (v) Police Liaison Officer. Following a brief reference to the wedge-driving tactics of the Irish side of the Secretariat in relation to information from the RUC via NIO regarding incidents, I said that I thought in the changing situation the case for a Police Liaison Officer in Stormont was stronger than ever. The Chief Constable said that he was more than ready to make such an officer available in today's circumstances. He had had reservations in the past when the counter-terrorist campaign was very active since it involved highly sensitive operations which in his view Government was best distanced from. Things had changed with the ceasefire and the transition to peace was one where the free flow of information and sharing in police-making was very important. He added that because of the devolved nature of the RUC and in particular day-to-day local reactions to the ceasefires, relevant information might be held at quite low levels and away from HQ. All the more reason, we agreed, to have someone inside the NIO who could access the RUC at different levels and in different locations. I should be grateful if Mr Legge with Mr Steele and SPOB could follow that up actively - and we shall need to sweep up the Army Liaison presence at the same time.

ACTION:
MR LEGGE

Signed:

JOHN CHILCOT

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