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SIII

HEADQUARTERS  
NORTHERN IRELAND,  
LISBURN,  
CO. ANTRIM.



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~~SECRET AND PERSONAL~~  
V.C.C.S.  
To See  
Please return immediately  
to P.A./G.G.S.

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15 July, 1969

*My dear C.G.S.*

I said I would write and fill in some of the gaps in our telephone conversations and also give you my early impressions of the situation here.

1. Rioting in Londonderry 12/13/14 July.

When I saw the Prime Minister and Inspector General of the RUC on the 11 July they both said they were not anticipating trouble over the week-end of 12 July. The violence in Londonderry, and especially its scale, came as a surprise to everyone and the RUC had only 60 riot police available in the City as they had deployed their other riot platoons in other towns and the city of Belfast to cover the whole Province, and they had no reserves. The police were therefore out-numbered and under pressure throughout Saturday night. Even on Sunday night when more police were available, they were still hard pressed. They can muster few reserves and if demonstrations happen simultaneously in different towns and cities they are very thin on the ground. By Sunday night they were extremely tired. Rioting on Saturday and Sunday night continued until first light. Because of this lack of reserve the Minister of Home Affairs has agreed to use some of the Special Constabulary in an anti-riot role. This in itself might be explosive as the Catholics consider the Ulster Special Constabulary to be anti-catholic and a political tool of the Unionist Party.

2. Intelligence.

The latest situation is another example of the almost complete ineffectiveness of police special branch intelligence which is hampering all planning. No assessment has yet been made of future potential trouble, especially in the Londonderry area, and the best the Special Branch can do is to make a guess that there may be a further 48 hours of rioting. It seems likely that the hooligans who have staged the latest riots are working to some plan, although it is clearly not the Civil Rights plan.

3. RUC.

The lack of a sound system of staff work and the correct collation of intelligence in the RUC headquarters is very much in evidence. The IG tends to play most problems off the cuff and there is a lack of system in the methods of command. It is a sad picture, which could have serious effects if we ever reach the

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critical moment when the Army has to come in and the RUC and Army have to function very closely together on the ground.

The present situation is reminiscent of Cyprus in 1955 before you came out and fills me with gloom.

4. Deployment of Troops.

It took much longer than I expected for the reinforcing company of 2 QUEENS to reach SEA EAGLE on Saturday night mainly because of the distances involved. We decided therefore to strengthen our force in the Londonderry area, which was obviously going to be the place of greatest potential trouble, in order to cut down our reaction time. We are now better balanced and have the PWO complete in that area.

We asked for three Wessex helicopters to be positioned at Ballykelly in order to increase our mobility over these long distances and also to lift troops, if required, across the river at Derry should anything go wrong with the only bridge.

5. Respirators and Anti-riot Ammunition.

As soon as it became likely on Sunday that the Minister for Home Affairs would ask the Home Office for permission to use anti-riot agents, we sent up to Londonderry to be held in SEA EAGLE 150 respirators, 50 grenades and 100 cartridges. These were issued to the RUC for training, after we had got your agreement.

Training of police in the use of this equipment started on Monday morning and we should be able to complete it this week providing the Home Office will allow the RUC to retain the equipment.

6. Key Points/Release of 1 PWO.

The early release of 1 PWO depended on the situation being quiet over the 12th July. I feel it would be wrong to release them now even though we might be able to hand over our KP commitment to the Ulster Special Constabulary. As there is a large Orange demonstration planned in Londonderry on the 12th August which might create more serious trouble than the 12th July, I wish to retain the PWO until after this date, and we have signalled you today suggesting that they do not move back until the week beginning 18th August. As they are now deployed in the Londonderry area I think it is essential to keep them there so that they should get to know the geography and can fully liaise with the Royal Ulster Constabulary in that area. I feel until the situation becomes clearer we must retain a force level of three battalions.

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Last night, Monday, was a little quieter but the situation remains explosive.

I have just returned from a visit to Londonderry where I have seen the RN, the RAF and the PWO. All are in good order.

*Yours ever*

*Tan*

General Sir Geoffrey Baker,  
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