



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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cc Mr Nally /MR
Mr Pellagher
H-1 Kenton

CODED MESSAGE	
IMMEDIATE URGENT	
CONFIDENTIAL	
DATE 1/6/85	TIME 1715
INITIALS	

E-A DUBLIN
F-A1 LDN

C130
1 JUNE 1989

TO HQ FROM LONDON
FOR D. O'DONOVAN FROM O'ROURKE
/////

Mr Keenan
✓ 2/6

DURING LUNCH TO-DAY WITH SIR JOHN BLELLOCH I PUT TO HIM STORNGLY OUR VIEWS AS SET OUT IN TELEXES C502 AND C305, AND INFORMED HIM OF TAOISEACH'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT AND INSTRUCTIONS. HE UNDERTOOK TO PASS ON WHAT I HAD SAID: HE ASSURED ME THAT SEC/STATE WOULD GIVE FULL CONSIDERATION TO REPRESENTATIONS WHICH HE EXPECTED WERE BEING MADE IN SECRETARIAT TO-DAY. I MADE A PARTICULAR POINT OF LACK OF CONSULTATION AND OF INSENSITIVE TIMING, IMMEDIATELY AFTER REVIEW CONFERENCE AND DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

BLELLOCH SREPLIED ON LINES ALREADY PUT TO US, EMPHASISING THAT THERE IS NO INTENTION TO ALTER DEPLOYMENT AND ARGUING THAT ON OPERATIONAL GROUNDS IT WOULD BE WRONG TO DEPRIVE UDR OF THIS OPTION WHEN THEY MAY INADVERTENTLY FIND THEMSELVES UNDER ATTACK. IN RESPONSE TO POINTS MADE TO HIM ON PARTICULAR CONFIDENCE PROBLEM VIS-A-VIS UDR HE ARGUED THAT REGIMENT IS NOW BETTER OFFICERED THAN BEFORE AND HAS RECENTLY INTERVENED SUCCESSFULLY AGAINST LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES. HE ALSO SAID THAT PERCEPTIONS/ ATTITUDES ON NATIONALIST SIDE (AS ON THER SIDES) SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS IMMUTABLE.
/////

1395

MOM FOR CORRECTION

CORRECTION
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N.B.
Mr Jh. Vignun has delivered yesterday's message. It has been passed to Mr King who is currently on leave at his home in England.

SECOND PARAGRAPH SHOULD READ BLELLOCH REPLIED (FIRST LINE)

4TH LINE (SECOND PARA) SHOULD READ 'UNDER ATTACK'

SECOND LAST LINE SHOULD READ 'AS ON OTHER SIDES'

END

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TELEX

31 May 1989

IMMEDIATE/CONFIDENTIAL

TO A-I SECRETARIAT FROM HQ

FOR OHUIGINN FROM O'DONOVAN

1. THANK YOU FOR 502C TO A/SEC GALLAGHER WHICH HAS BEEN PASSED TO ME IN HIS ABSENCE TODAY. WE REGARD THE DECISION TO ISSUE PLASTIC BULLET ROUNDS TO THE UDR AS UNACCEPTABLE.
2. WE AGREE STRONGLY WITH THE VIEWS YOU HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED AND WOULD ADD THE FOLLOWING.
3. WE ARE SURPRISED THAT GIVEN THE EXTREME POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF THIS MATTER, IT WAS NOT BROACHED WITH US BEFORE A DECISION WAS TAKEN; AND WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT TRAINING OF THE UDR IN THE USE OF PBRS AT THIS TIME AND THE ISSUE OF THEM TO SELECTED UNITS WITHIN TWO WEEKS MAY BECOME A MATTER OF CONTROVERSY DURING THE COURSE OF OUR GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THIS IS ALL THE MORE LIKELY GIVEN RECENT CONTROVERSIAL INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE USE OF PBRS IN BELFAST. YOUR TELEX HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE TAOISEACH WHO HAS PERSONALLY INSTRUCTED THAT YOU REQUEST A DEFERMENT OF ANY ACTION BY THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES. THE TAOISEACH MAY WISH TO TAKE THE MATTER FURTHER AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL.
4. THE ISSUE OF PBRS TO THE UDR IMPLIES THE APPALLING PROSPECT OF THE UDR BEING DRAWN INTO SITUATIONS OF CIVIL DISORDER. WE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED FOR SOME TIME ABOUT DEPLOYMENT OF THE UDR IN AND AROUND CATHOLIC AREAS, NOTABLY IN BELFAST. THE EVIDENCE COMING TO US - WHICH THE PBR DECISION TENDS TO CONFIRM - SUGGESTS A DELIBERATE POLICY DECISION TO MOVE THE UDR GRADUALLY INTO AREAS OF POTENTIAL CONFRONTATION WITH NATIONALISTS. IN THIS REGARD, PLEASE SEE THE SECRETARIAT'S TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH THE UDR COMMANDER, BRIGADIER RITCHIE, ON "NEWSBREAK", RADIO ULSTER, 30 APRIL, IN WHICH

RITCHIE MADE CLEAR THAT THE UDR HAVE BEEN OPERATING IN THE CATHOLIC SHORT STRAND AND MARKETS AREAS OF BELFAST. AS YOU RIGHTLY POINTED OUT, PUTTING THE UDR OUT FRONT IS BY FAR THE LEAST PROMISING PATH TO IMPROVING CONFIDENCE AMONG THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY.

5. I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT OUR VIEWS TO JEREMY THORP OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY TODAY. HE WAS BRIEFED ON THE MATTER AND APART FROM REPEATING THE POINTS MADE TO YOU, REMARKED THAT IN SITUATIONS WHERE THE UDR FACED MOB ATTACKS AS THEY HAD DONE RECENTLY (PRESUMABLY THE TYRONE INCIDENTS MENTIONED TO YOU) IT WAS FAR PREFERABLE THAT THEY SHOULD USE PBRs RATHER THAN LIVE AMMUNITION. I NOTED THAT THE OPERATIONAL POLICY PURSUED UNTIL NOW HAD RARELY LEFT THE UDR IN SITUATIONS WHERE THEY HAD REASON TO OPEN FIRE AND THAT A ROUGH BUT TELLING ILLUSTRATION OF THE POINT IS THAT IN THE PERIOD OF THE CURRENT TROUBLES THE UDR HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR 7 KILLINGS COMPARED TO OVER 250 KILLINGS BY THE REGULAR BRITISH ARMY.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Misc
F. 2.

Uimhir.....

Plastic Bullets/UDR

Tapiseach

Please see the attached telex.

Despite the assurance that no change in the deployment of the UDR is involved, the proposed changes would seem to imply that they will find themselves more frequently in civil disturbance or riot situations; and that they can then use plastic bullets for which training would begin in "two days time" and ammunition issued to selected units in two weeks. These changes could touch raw nerves in the North and here and would come at an extremely sensitive time.

It is suggested that the decision be deferred until the incoming Government has a chance to discuss it at a conference; and that this request be made to the British with your specific authority.

D Nally

31 May 1989

in reply

Mr. G. H. 31.5.89

Theresa's agent

with x. M. O'Donovan.

*DIFA informed He will
convey the message to
the British*

2/15

93720C ESTR EI
747282 AISECT G0502C

TO HQ FROM BELFAST
30 MAY 1989

CODED MESSAGE
IMMEDIATE URGENT
CONFIDENTIAL

DATE 30/5/89 TIME 1750
INITIALS JS

" *the Navy / 198*

the Waterhouse / the Brown

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31/5

- C D as R. of act.
- kept way to ensure I have
been 7 people
255

FOR ASST. SEC. GALLAGHER FROM O HUGINN

RE: PROPOSED ISSUE OF PLASTIC BULLET ROUNDS TO THE UDR

1. MR. AUSTIN WILSON AND MR. ERIC DALZELL OF THE NIO CAME TO THE SECRETARIAT TODAY TO BRIEF US ON A DECISION WHICH HAD BEEN TAKEN TO ISSUE PLASTIC BULLET ROUNDS TO THE UDR.

2. MR. WILSON SAID THAT IN CONVEYING THIS INFORMATION HE WANTED TO EMPHASISE A NUMBER OF POINTS:

- ?
- (A) IT DID NOT IMPLY ANY CHANGE IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE UDR: THEY WERE BEING TRAINED IN THE USE OF AND ISSUED WITH PBRs AS AN UNLETHAL OPTION TO BE USED IN FUTURE UNFORESEEN CONTINGENCIES. WE WERE INFORMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME 6 INSTANCES IN TYRONE WHERE THE UDR HAD BECOME EMBROILED IN RIOT SITUATIONS. ON ONE OCCASION THEY HAD DISCHARGED A WEAPON, ON ANOTHER LOST A SIGNIFICANT ITEM OF EQUIPMENT AND IN OTHER CASES EXTRICATED THEMSELVES BY RUNNING AWAY.
 - (B) THERE WAS NO CHANGE IN THE POLICY OF NOT DEPLOYING THE UDR IN RIOT-CONTROL SITUATIONS.
 - (C) THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT GOVERNING THE USE OF PBRs BY THE UDR WOULD BE THE SAME AS THOSE AT PRESENT IN FORCE.
 - (D) THE QUESTION WOULD BE REVIEWED IN ONE YEAR'S TIME.
 - (E) THERE WOULD BE NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT AS THIS WOULD, THE BRITISH OFFICIALS SAID, GIVE THE QUESTION UNDUE SIGNIFICANCE AND WOULD PROBABLY ATTRACT A HOSTILE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN. THE WEAPONS WOULD NOT BE VISIBLE IN THE UDR KIT. TRAINING WOULD BEGIN IN 2 DAYS TIME AND THERE WOULD BE AN ISSUE TO SELECTED UNITS IN 2 WEEKS TIME. THERE WAS AN IMPLICATION THAT THE TIMING RELATED TO THE FORTHCOMING MARCHING SEASON.

3. WE THANKED THE BRITISH SIDE FOR THEIR BRIEFING ON THIS PROPOSAL, WHICH COMBINED TWO ISSUES BOTH OF EXTREME POLITICAL SENSITIVITY.

4. AS REGARDS PBRs WE SAID IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO RECALL SOME FACTS. IN RECENT YEARS PBRs HAD KILLED SOME THIRTEEN PEOPLE (SIX OF WHOM WERE CHILDREN) AND HAD INJURED ABOUT 330. THEY WERE USED IN NORTHERN IRELAND UNDER GUIDELINES WHICH DIFFERED FROM THOSE IN BRITAIN IN TERMS OF THE CRITERIA FOR THEIR USE - BROADLY TO PREVENT DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY IN BRITAIN, CONSISTENT MERELY WITH THE USE OF MINIMUM FORCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: IN THIS REGARD I RECALLED THE DOUBTS EXPRESSED BY LORD SCARMAN WHETHER A WEAPON WHICH INFLICTED SUCH DAMAGE AT MORE THAN POINT BLANK RANGE COULD IN FACT BE COMPATIBLE WITH THE DOCTRINE OF MINIMUM FORCE. SECONDLY, THE LEVEL OF AUTHORISATION IN BRITAIN WAS VERY SENIOR, IN NORTHERN IRELAND IT WAS AT CONSTABLE OR OPERATIVE LEVEL. THIRDLY, THEIR USE IN BRITAIN REQUIRED PRIOR WARNING. IN NORTHERN IRELAND A WARNING WAS GIVEN MERELY WHERE PRACTICABLE. IT WAS THEREFORE AN AREA WHERE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC WAS SERIOUSLY WEAKER IN NORTHERN IRELAND THAN IN BRITAIN. WHILE THESE GUIDELINES WERE OF IMPORTANCE THERE WAS THE FURTHER FACTOR THAT EVEN THE EXISTING GUIDELINES WERE NOT BEING OBSERVED IN PRACTICE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GUIDELINES ABOUT AIMING AT THE LOWER PART OF THE BODY AND AT NOT LESS THAN 20 METRES WERE NOT OBSERVED IN MANY CASES WHERE INJURIES WERE TO THE UPPER BODY AT SHORT RANGE OR POINT BLANK. THIS WAS THE CASE OF THE MCNALLY AND DOHERTY INCIDENTS ON FRIDAY EVENING. OUR POSITION REMAINED THAT A LESS POTENTIALLY LETHAL ALTERNATIVE SHOULD BE FOUND TO PBRs GENERALLY. FAILING OR PENDING THAT, IT WAS NECESSARY BOTH ON HUMANITARIAN AND POLITICAL GROUNDS TO EXERCISE THE UTMOST CAUTION IN THEIR USE. INSTEAD THERE WAS NOW A WIDESPREAD BELIEF IN THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY THAT THEY WERE BEING USED AS A WEAPON OF FIRST RATHER THAN LAST RESORT. IT SHOULD BE UNNECESSARY TO REMIND THE BRITISH SIDE OF THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THESE INJURIES AS SEEN ON T.V. THERE WAS A GROUP IN EXISTENCE WHICH WAS WELL ABLE TO EXPLOIT PUBLIC EMOTIONS IN THIS AREA AND WAS ALREADY PUBLICLY URGING THE IRISH GOVERNMENT TO TAKE A CASE TO STRASBOURG. IT WAS WELL TO REMEMBER THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THIS CASE. A FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER HAD BEEN OBLIGED TO RAISE THE ISSUE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN 1984. WE WERE GLAD OF THE PRESENT DISCUSSION AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REQUEST THEM IN THE MOST FORMAL AND URGENT WAY TO TAKE STOCK OF THE PRESENT PRACTICE IN REGARD TO PBRs GENERALLY. THERE FOLLOWED SOME DISCUSSION OF THE DOHERTY AND MCNALLY CASES WHICH HAD OCCURRED OVER THE WEEKEND. MR. WILSON SAID THAT THE FACTS WERE NOT KNOWN. WE SAID THAT THE VERY SERIOUS INJURIES WERE FACTS NOT IN DISPUTE, AND MADE THE DISCUSSION OF THIS ISSUE ALL THE MORE NECESSARY.

5. WE THEN TURNED TO THE UDR ASPECT. THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH OUR FREQUENTLY REPEATED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE UDR, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY

THE PERCEPTION OF THEM IN THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY. THERE WAS SOME DEGREE OF PROBLEM WITH CONFIDENCE IN ALL BRANCHES OF THE SECURITY FORCES, BUT THIS WAS PARTICULARLY ACUTE IN THE CASE OF THE UDR. IF THE OBJECTIVE WAS TO PROMOTE CONFIDENCE GENERALLY THEY SHOULD BUILD ON THEIR STRENGTHS - THE GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT IN PERCEPTIONS OF THE RUC, IMPROVED DISCIPLINE IN CERTAIN BRITISH ARMY REGIMENTS ETC. TO PUT THE UDR INTO THE FOREFRONT WAS TO FLY IN THE FACE OF ONE OF THE SALIENT CONCERNS OF THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY AND, TO PUT IT AT ITS MILDST, TO CHOOSE BY FAR THE LEAST PROMISING PATH TO IMPROVING CONFIDENCE AMONG THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY IN GENERAL. THE ISSUE OF PBRs ON A CONTINGENCY BASIS HAD NO LOGIC OTHER THAN THAT IT WAS ENVISAGED OR PLANNED THE UDR WOULD FIND THEMSELVES IN SUCH SITUATIONS. THE TYRONE INCIDENTS SHOULD IN OUR VIEW HAVE LED THEM TO REVIEW THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE UDR TO AVOID RIOT SITUATIONS, WHICH IN GREAT MAJORITY WERE GEOGRAPHICALLY PREDICTABLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND. WE ASSUMED THAT THESE UDR PATROLS MUST HAVE BEEN UNACCOMPANIED. WE THOUGHT THEY WERE RIGHT TO ANTICIPATE THAT IF THEY ANNOUNCED THE DECISION IT WOULD CAUSE AN OUTCRY. IT WOULD HOWEVER EMERGE, SOONER OR LATER, POSSIBLY IN THE FORM OF AN EMOTIVE INCIDENT. THE NATIONALIST POPULATION WOULD SEE IT AS THE WHEEL COMING FULL CIRCLE BACK TO THE STRATEGY WHERE THE 'LOYAL' COMMUNITY AGAIN WAS USED TO POLICE THE 'DISLOYAL' ONE, WITH LOCAL OR SECTARIAN SCORES BEING SETTLED COURTESY OF BRITISH SUPPORT. WE ASKED WHETHER THE DECISION COULD BE DEFERRED UNTIL THE INCOMING GOVERNMENT HAD A CHANCE TO DISCUSS IT AT A CONFERENCE, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THIS WAS NOT AN OFFER. WE URGED AGAIN IN THE STRONGEST TERMS THAT THE BRITISH SHOULD TAKE A POLITICAL RATHER THAN A MECHANISTIC OR MILITARY VIEW OF WHAT THEY WERE DOING. THEY WERE COMBINING IN ONE ACT TWO OF THE MOST EMOTIVE ISSUES IN NATIONALIST PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECURITY FORCES AND THIS WOULD INEVITABLY CAUSE POLITICAL DAMAGE. MR. WILSON SAID THE ISSUE WOULD BE REVIEWED IN ONE YEAR AND HE HOPED THE EXPERIENCE WOULD SHOW THAT OUR CONCERNS WERE UNJUSTIFIED. WE SAID WE WOULD REPORT THE PROPOSAL TO OUR AUTHORITIES AND WOULD NO DOUBT BE REVERTING TO IT VERY SHORTLY.

ENDS
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9280

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