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1. Mr Davies
2. PS/Secretary of State (B)

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L)

PS/Mr Butler (B&L)

PS/Mr Scott (B&L)

PS/Mr Patten (B&L)

PS/PUS (B&L)

1. PS/Sir Ewart Bell

Mr Bourn

Mr Barry

Mr Bloomfield

Mr Buxton

Mr Burns

Mr Doyne-Ditmas

Mr Whitlaw

Mr Irvine

Mr Coulson

Mr Watters

2. Mr. Corvill

SECURITY MEASURES FOR AIR TRAVELLERS BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH OFFICIALS TUESDAY 15 MAY

Ministers will be well aware that air travellers between Great Britain and Northern Ireland (and in the other direction) are subject to certain additional security measures above those which apply to passengers travelling on, for example, domestic routes within Great Britain. This background paper aims to:-

- (a) explain the structure of responsibilities for aircraft security, airport security and the protection of the travelling public;
- (b) describe the current level of security measures required for flights to Northern Ireland;
- (c) detail other security requirements which impinge on travellers to the Province.

Responsibilities

2. The responsibility for advising on appropriate measures to safeguard aircraft in flight and on the ground, (against attack and/or hijacking), rests with the Department of Transport. The DOT's Civil Aviation Policy Directorate (CAPD) maintains a

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substantial handbook setting out appropriate standards of search for passengers, baggage, cargo and so forth. It also issues advice circulars to airlines and airports on special measures to safeguard against specific threats. The CAPD deploys a number of specialist Aviation Security Advisers whose role is to maintain contact with airports, carriers and representatives of responsible Departments in other countries to ensure that standards are maintained.

3. Within the United Kingdom, the forum for applying, discussing and, if appropriate, amending security standards is the National Aviation Security Committee, which consists of representatives of the airlines, airport operators, the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA), Government Departments and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). Northern Ireland is represented on NASC by a senior official from DOE(NI).

4. Responsibility for the protection of airport buildings (and for the travelling public while in those buildings) and for the application of Department of Transport advice are matters for the airport operators. Each airport is required to maintain an airport security committee which meets at regular intervals to receive updated assessments of the threat, to review security measures and to discuss specific problems. Both Belfast International and Belfast Harbour Airports maintain committees, which are chaired by the airport operators (Northern Ireland Airports Limited and Shorts respectively). These committees include representatives of the airlines, airport users, and BALPA. The RUC and DOE(NI) also sit on the committees. NIO (through LOB), HQNI and the RAF attend as observers.

5. Until last year the Department of Transport was responsible for financing the implementation of security measures applying to passengers through the Aviation Security Fund. This was wound up in early 1983 and responsibility for funding recommended security measures at airports intended to protect aircraft and

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their passengers now lies solely with the airport operators.

6. The manner in which these distinct responsibilities are exercised varies in a way that takes account of the configuration of and pressures upon particular airports. At Belfast International Airport, for example, the measures which are taken to search passengers at the point of entry (in the entrance hall) reflect NIAL's desire to safeguard its investment in buildings and equipment. Although the search of luggage at this point also meets one of the Department of Transport's requirements (see para 9), the search imposed at the point of boarding the aircraft is required by the Department of Transport and is designed to protect the aircraft and its passengers. It is common to all UK airports. Department of Transport continue to insist on a second search since, although security generally at Belfast is much tighter than at other UK airports, there can be no assurance that a weapon or explosive device cannot be passed to an intending passenger between the first search and the departure lounge. For the present, this limits the possibility of amalgamating the 2 searches into one, carried out at a convenient and centralised point.

7. Law and Order Division, NIO, have no direct responsibility for aviation security policy or advice. LOB do, however, take a close interest in security measures as they affect travellers and have established and maintain close contacts and good relationships with Department of Transport, DOE(NI) and NIAL and keep the effect of security measures on travellers under continuous examination with a view to lowering their profile wherever possible without reducing security cover overall.

Current Requirements

8. The United Kingdom takes its responsibility to guard against aircraft hi-jacking or attacks seriously, and in general, applies more stringent security standards to international travellers than do most other countries. Passengers are, with very few

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exceptions, screened at the point of boarding and hand baggage is searched (normally by X-ray). However, hold baggage is not normally searched but steps are taken to ensure that passengers checking-in hold baggage do, unless there are valid reasons, travel on the same flight.

9. The Department of Transport has also advised that additional standards should be applied on routes to and from Northern Ireland. This reflects a comprehensive assessment of the extra risk of attack on planes travelling to and from the Province (and it is worth noting that a device was placed on a British Airways Trident in July 1974). BALPA has also argued forcefully for extra security on these flights. At present the measures include:-

- a. a hand search of hold baggage. In certain circumstances and under certain conditions, X-ray equipment may be used;
- b. a hand search of passengers at the point of boarding, with a selection of 20% of passengers being further checked with an explosive vapour detector;
- c. a limitation on the size of cabin baggage (limited to a sum of its length, breadth and height of 40"), a restriction to one item of such baggage and a hand search of cabin baggage at the point of boarding;
- d. certain other measures relating to the searching of cargo. These do not impinge directly on passengers.

Lowering the intrusiveness of security - some recent changes

10. The measures currently in force, although clearly still significantly enhanced in comparison to those in force on other domestic flights have been slightly relaxed recently. Before 1982, for instance, cabin baggage was not allowed at all on flights to and from Northern Ireland. It has also been possible to bring all airlines to agree to 'overnight' their crews in Belfast and to

withdraw early Government advice against parking of aircraft overnight. Objections in the mid-1970s by BALPA to the loading of foodstuffs and drink onto NI flights were withdrawn and in-flight catering is once again an established feature on flights between NI and GB. Last, 'Rapiscan' X-Ray equipment has just been introduced at Aldergrove for luggage searching.

Current sources of complaint

11. Law and Order Division's experience is that the majority of the travelling public accept the need for extra security arrangements as a necessary safeguard against terrorist activity. But from time to time certain of the existing measures do give rise to difficulty. The first problem arises largely for female passengers over remaining hand baggage restrictions. The present allowance counts a handbag as cabin baggage - so if a briefcase is being carried as well one or other item has to go into the hold, or else the handbag has to be contained in the briefcase. This awkwardness does seem to give rise to ill-tempered argument and complaint, occasionally.

12. The Department of Transport are, fortunately, alive to the fact that the additional precautions have an adverse effect on the perception of would-be investors, and also show a welcome concern to lessen the impact of security requirements on travellers. The Department and LOB have had useful exchanges in recent weeks on possible areas in which changes might be possible without a diminution in standards, and the Department have shown themselves capable of flexibility in responding to developments - they have, for instance, agreed to allow Belfast International Airport to introduce Rapiscan X-ray equipment to search hold baggage and have been able to amend their advice to lift the requirement for such baggage to be withheld from the passenger after search. The Department of Transport are similarly well seized of the hand baggage problem and have indicated a strong willingness to bring allowances up to normal standards in a timescale that takes full account of the need to reassure the interests involved (such as

BALPA). The intention is to work steadily through the NASC system.

13. A second aspect of security which causes considerable annoyance to regular travellers between Northern Ireland and Great Britain to airports other than Heathrow is the requirement to complete landing and embarkation cards which are scrutinised on arrival at or before departure from the GB airport. LOB are well aware of IDB's concern that the use of these cards can tend to project a poor image of Northern Ireland to potential investors in the Province and that their existence can detract from the IDB's efforts to project Northern Ireland as a location worth investing in.

14. Landing and embarkation cards on flights between Great Britain and Northern Ireland are issued under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They form a part of the security controls available to the police for use at ports and airports and it is for the Chief Officer of Police in each area concerned to decide whether, in the light of local circumstances, it is appropriate to use them - this is the reason for the differences in practice as between Heathrow and other mainland airports. Chief Officers of police are, of course, not subject to political pressure in deciding whether or not to use the cards. The police forces which do use them recognise their limitations but claim to continue to find them useful.

15. In his recent review of the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976, Lord Jellicoe felt that there should be greater uniformity between police forces in the use of these cards and specifically recommended the extension of their use to all journeys between Great Britain and both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

16. Law and Order Division were less than enthusiastic at this suggestion and at the turn of the year persuaded the Home Office to institute a full-scale enquiry into the issue. The Home Office for their part, have set up a team headed by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors

of Constabulary, James Brownlow. Assisting him he has one Home Office civil servant and seven senior police officers. The team have already visited Northern Ireland and are presently examining procedures in Great Britain. It is hoped that their discussions with Chief Constables and Forces in Great Britain will go beyond the carding issue into wider security measures, leading to greater consistency and more realism in the light of the current threat. It is expected that the team will report later this year.

17. The third clutch of complaints arises from peculiarities of layout or of practice at specific airports in Great Britain. For example, there is occasional public comment on the extent of the police operation carried out at Gatwick Airport to protect aircraft on the ground and to prevent passengers evading security controls. On arrival at Gatwick, an aircraft is met at its stand by a police vehicle which remains in the area until take-off while passengers are kept under surveillance by uniformed police officers between the aircraft and arrival/departure lounge. Quite why the police take this action is open to question - there is certainly no Department of Transport requirement for this activity which projects a most unfortunate image. LOB and Department of Transport intend to raise the issue with the police.

18. The physical configuration at Manchester gives a rather harsh appearance of 'segregating' Northern Ireland passengers from other domestic flights. The Secretary of State has had correspondence on this from Mr Anderson. In the short term there is little that can be done about the problem. But again the DOT plan to review search methods for flights to Northern Ireland and if the results lead to changes which can be implemented through NASC then the Manchester problem could well be overcome too.

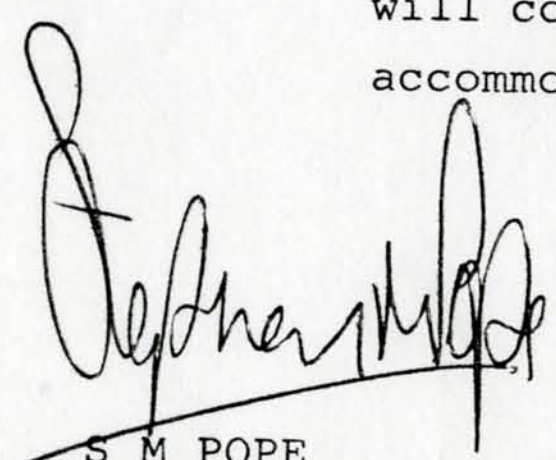
Conclusions

19. NIO, DOE(NI) and DOT are keenly aware of the need to take advantage of every opportunity to adjust security arrangements

at GB (and NI) airports so as to limit their intrusiveness and diminish the potential for generating adverse public sentiment towards commerce in the Province - whilst at the same time maintaining effective security cover overall.

20. This matter is given constant attention in detailed staffwork. Results take time to achieve but have been, and can be significant. Amongst the main features of current policy implementation in this field are:-

- (i) DOT's intention to bring hand baggage allowances on flights to and from NI up to normal standards. NIO and DOE(NI) will continue to press for this;
- (ii) a sustained effort by the NIO to exploit contacts with the Home Office and HMI to encourage a flexible, realistic and sensitive approach to the use of PTA cards by GB police for travel to and from NI;
- (iii) action by DOE and DOT to deal with the intrusiveness of a unique police operation at Gatwick. LOB is the lead Division in NIO, on this;
- (iv) continuing staff effort to bring, passenger searching (at GB airports) for flights to and from NI progressively into line with the conventional search applied to other domestic flights. Major advance is not to be expected on this in the short term. But NIO and DOE(NI) will continue to encourage such change as can be accommodated within necessary security constraints.



S M POPE
Law and Order Division

11 May 1984