

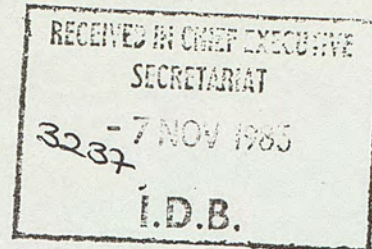
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SIR JOHN HERMON, O.B.E.
CHIEF CONSTABLE



BROOKLYN
KNOCK ROAD
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NORTHERN IRELAND BT5 6LE

3 November 1983



Dear Saxon.

I write to acknowledge your letter of 21 October which arrived towards the end of last week.

I now have your comments and will come back as soon as possible.

In particular, I note your offer to provide an IDB presence at one of our meetings and will bear this in mind.

My initial reaction is that your problems (as identified in your letter) are our requirements, but with care and goodwill I'm sure there are areas where we can be of help to IDB and their endeavours.

I will be in touch.

Yours sincerely,
John

Chief Constable

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21 October 1983

Sir John Hermon OBE
Chief Constable
RUC Headquarters
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cc Sir D. Hermon
Mr Hopkins

Dear *Jack*

It was most kind of you to spare the time to join us for lunch last Wednesday. We all felt that our discussion was most useful and you were kind enough to suggest that I might write to you putting on paper some of our concerns about the effect of visible security on potential overseas investors, and some of our suggestions about areas in which improvements might be made.

I understand that you are proposing to take the views of your internal Committee on the points I will make and we look forward to hearing their observations. Indeed, if it would be helpful I can easily arrange for an IDB presence at one of these meetings to make it more clear why we put such a high priority on a discussion of these issues.

At the outset, let me emphasise that we accept without question the need for proper security and are very much aware of the sensitive way in which the RUC does its most difficult job. However, as we told you we would like to ask for consideration of some possible improvements in the visible aspects which would help us do our job without actually constraining your own efforts.

It may be useful to outline the background to our discussion and this letter, but first let me say that we would be very pleased to take up your offer of a detailed security briefing for the Investment Mission which will be going to North America and Canada from 29 October to 12 November. I have asked Brian Musgrave who is dealing with much of the preparatory work for this Mission to speak direct to Bill Wilson at Brooklyn. I understand that we already make use of this briefing facility for journalists visiting the Province who need to be brought up-to-date on the security situation, even when their main interest is supposed to be economic. I also believe that on occasion we have used the facility for the benefit of potential investors. This has been most useful to us and we would very much like to continue to have the facility available in future.

Now, a little background to our discussion last Wednesday; during which we told you that we are concerned that the current mixture of visible security, graffiti and miscellaneous litter, has been instrumental in our failure to secure Inward Investment. I recognise that this is a contentious subject and that the normal reaction to such a statement is that those who do not accept our offers are simply making excuses.

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RUC Headquarters
Brooklyn

I raised an example of two particular companies and I would like to assure you that we are not being naive about the basis upon which these companies made their decision. Indeed, it is only because we do have hard evidence that we have felt able to raise this subject with you. The two companies concerned (both in high technology engineering - one from California and one from the middle west of the United States) were offered financial packages which on their own admission we know to have been more attractive than that of any competition. When the executives concerned came here we were really very hopeful of signing contracts and when things started to go sour both Desmond Lorimer and I involved ourselves in a very determined effort as the stakes were obviously high. Indeed, Desmond himself had already been out to California and came back convinced that we did, in fact, have a deal.

In situations where companies refuse our offer, we are dependent on their goodwill to find out why we have been turned down. Usually we are given a "easy answer" because it has become public knowledge where the company is going. Alternatively we are fobbed off with an excuse and we can recognise that it is an excuse. In these two cases, on the understanding that their identities would not be disclosed, the companies concerned told us that the reason was exactly as I have stated. Indeed, one told me, personally, that while the place continued to look like a battlefield, IDB's protestations of stability were likely to go unheeded. The other company's explanation was that it is their custom to bring customers to see their product being manufactured. One of the top managers of that company told me that he did not feel that he could bring his customers to Northern Ireland and have them see what he had seen and expect them to go away with the feeling that a factory in Northern Ireland would be reliable in its performance and deliveries. Unfortunately, for us, it makes no difference that Northern Ireland is generally more visibly acceptable than the Republic and most of the United States. The point is that just because we are Northern Ireland and we have an image which is unfair we have to "run twice as fast just to keep up", and every minute detail of our "product" must be in perfect order.

The problems of graffiti and general rubbish is something that I believe everybody can make a community effort to tackle. The problem of visible security is, of course, much more difficult. However, I list below some of the points which we discussed, in the hopes that between us we may be able to find a way to make some progress.

The problems start at Gate 49 in Heathrow airport, though similar problems do exist at each GB airport which serves as an entry point to Northern Ireland; East Midlands, Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham have all been cited as instances where the security and search arrangements (particularly the body search) are off-putting to say the least.

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I am aware that you have no responsibility for these matters which come under the jurisdiction of the relevant Chief Constable for the area in which the airport is situated, and I am also aware that employment in Northern Ireland is no concern of his. I would, however, be most grateful for any advice you could give on how best we might approach the job of registering our concern in a way in which it is likely to have some effect.

Closer to home there is the problem of the security checkpoint a mile or so short of Aldergrove which, to the first time visitor, appears intimidating although, of course, it is in reality there to check cars going to the airport rather than coming from it. I appreciate that security may dictate the need for such a checkpoint but I wonder whether there could be some thought given to the cosmetic and aesthetic aspects to make it appear somewhat less menacing. You will recall from our conversation that we are concerned not with people who know the situation but with people who come to Northern Ireland already conditioned to expect something approaching war.

Having passed the checkpoint at the airport the next impression given to the visitor is by the security hut outside his hotel. Quite apart from the need, we would question the efficiency of these huts. Is there really a need for visitors to go through search procedure every time they wish to enter their hotel, particularly in a dingy shack? This is certainly in no way reassuring to a visitor and one cannot help wondering how effective it is in preventing attacks on the property, particularly when the diminure of those who man the huts is in many cases, to say the least, lax. I am of course aware of the compensation scheme requirements, but I would be grateful for any suggestions that you have to alleviate this difficulty and you should be aware that we have already discussed this with hotels own organisation.

The visitor will undoubtedly wish to see the capital city of the Province and the first thing that strikes him are the security gates in Belfast. I know that the opinion among traders in the City Centre differs as to their desirability and obviously their necessity is something which only you can judge, but I am concerned about the appearance of what outsiders have called "the ring of steel" round the heart of our major city shopping area. If they are in fact necessary, there may be a way of reducing the visibility of these obstacles without reducing their effectiveness.

As the visitor travels around the Province he is liable to be stopped by random security checks on the roads and while these are always carried out with impeccable politeness, they reinforce the image already gained from the other points that I have mentioned. It may be that notification of visits with itineraries could help to alleviate this problem, and it may be that this is more easy to deal with than the very overt presence of armoured police Land Rovers at the side of the main road from Dublin to Belfast in Newry.

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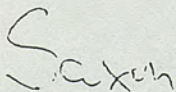
There are also a number of other small examples such as arrangements at the entrance to shops and offices. However, these are relatively minor and if we could make some progress on those things which I have outlined as being major concerns, it would be very helpful.

May I say once again that we do fully understand and appreciate the very difficult job which you and your men have to do. To put things in perspective, I am sure that they will also understand the effect on morale of IDB executives in the field, struggling against ever increasing international competition when it appears highly probable that it has been simply the appearance of the Province which has lost us a not inconsiderable number of jobs.

The sad fact is that although Northern Ireland indisputably looks better than the Republic and most parts of the United States, just because of the unfair image with which we are plagued, it is necessary for us to "run twice as fast just to keep up". We are all absolutely convinced of the quality of the product which we have to offer and I do hope you and your people will wish to join us in making sure that that product is offered without blemishes.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely



SAXON TATE
Chief Executive