

S E C R E T

4390
HEAD OF DIVISION
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DEFEATING TERRORISM

A. THE PROBLEM

1. Purpose of Paper

1.1 The principal aim of Government security policy is to eradicate terrorism in Northern Ireland. Terrorism is understood to be the pursuit of political objectives by means of violence and terror; but it includes also associated criminal activity, such as racketeering. This paper is predominantly concerned with strategies for ending PIRA terrorism. This is not only because PIRA is by far the most significant terrorist organisation, but also because it sets the agenda for other paramilitary organisations. (It does not follow from this that HMG is indifferent to loyalist paramilitary activity, or to terrorism from other republican groups. The Government will continue to tackle terrorism vigorously whatever its source).

1.2 The ultimate objective of security policy is, therefore, to force PIRA to end its campaign of violence. Pending the achievement of this objective, the aim is to secure a quantifiable reduction, and a continuing downward trend, in levels of violence. (Success in achieving intermediate objectives can, to some extent be measured: for example, by reference to increasing numbers of successful prosecutions, increasing finds of arms and explosives; interdiction of PIRA operations and sources of supply (including financial supply). In all these respects, success in the ROI may be as important as success in Northern Ireland.)

1.3 The purpose of this paper is, first , to describe and explain the Government's strategy for ending terrorism in Northern Ireland. To this end, it includes a description of the objectives of security policy, an assessment of the

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'threat' from terrorist organisations (most especially, PIRA), and a recognition of the wider context (geographical, social and political) in which security objectives are being pursued. It recognises also the substantial contribution which political, social and economic policies can make to the overall objective of bringing terrorism to an end.

1.4 Second, it seeks to justify current strategy, by arguing that it is only one likely to succeed in current or foreseeable circumstances. If the argument in the paper finds general acceptance, it is hoped that the paper will provide the basis for

- a common approach to combatting PIRA (and the problem of political violence) which is shared by the security forces, Government Departments (inside and outside Northern Ireland) and other agencies whose actions can affect the general environment in the province and
- a shared identification of an agenda for further action that is consistent with that common approach.

2. The Threat

2.1 PIRA's aims. The ultimate aim of PIRA's campaign of violence is expressed in political and constitutional rather than "military" terms. PIRA/Sinn Fein's ultimate aim is to achieve a 'British withdrawal' (of both troops and Government) from Ireland. As they see it, the island of Ireland could then become a single political entity with a 'democratic socialist' regime. (Inter alia, this approach conveniently ignores the wishes of the million Unionists).

2.2 But PIRA also has intermediate objectives; and these have both a political and a security dimension. Thus, PIRA seeks -

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- to demonstrate that Northern Ireland is a failed and illegitimate political entity, ungovernable by 'normal' processes;
- to provoke the security forces into action which will cause them to lose public sympathy and so compromise their 'legitimacy'; and
- in general, to discredit and destabilise both Government and every day life in the Province.

(This is not a comprehensive list of PIRA's aims. Other, more specific, intermediate objectives are listed in Annex A).

2.3 PIRA'S resources. PIRA's ability to sustain a campaign of violence in support of those objectives depends principally on three factors. These are discussed in greater detail in a companion paper. In brief, they are -

- People - PIRA still has a sufficient pool of 'volunteers', mainly, but not exclusively, drawn from the lower strata of the deprived urban Roman Catholic working class. PIRA's terrorist operations are now carried out chiefly by small self-contained cells or units. They are increasingly independent of wider Nationalist community support and correspondingly harder for the security forces to penetrate.
- Motivation. For the 'hard-core' Republican elements within PIRA, it is motivation enough for a campaign of violence that the British are still 'occupying' Ireland: the 'struggle' will go on because it is the duty of every generation of Irish Republicans to fight for their country's freedom. But for others, possibly a majority, motivation for continued violence is provided by a belief that there is a realistic prospect that

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Britain will abandon Northern Ireland and "withdraw". So long as they still believe in that prospect, and so long as they can interpret their actions as serving to keep the Republican ideal alive, they will seek the resources and the opportunity to continue the 'war'.

- Material - Weapons, explosives, and money (some of the latter coming from overseas, as well as from commercial activities of varying criminality) are all available in sufficient quantity (despite temporary shortages in particular areas or at particular times) to sustain the campaign into the foreseeable future.

A long term threat

2.4 This paper is written (twenty years since troops first appeared on the streets in Northern Ireland) on the premise that bringing PIRA terrorism to an end may be a long-term operation. Experience strongly suggests that there are no short-cuts nor realistic prospects of a quick 'military' victory. It seems more likely that the key factor in the ending of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland will be an acceptance by the PIRA/Sinn Fein leadership (which may be forced upon them by the wider nationalist community) that such violence has shown itself to be futile. At this stage, the campaign will be called off or simply peter out. The most important single influence in bringing PIRA/SF to face the fact of the futility of violence will be continuing effective work by the security forces. But security force action must be complemented and re-inforced by effective Government measures in the political, social and economic fields. Progress in these areas will help to undermine the terrorists' motivation - by destroying their expectation of ultimate victory and marginalising them within the wider nationalist community. PIRA/PSF itself recognises the importance of this wider context to the struggle; that is why some of its intermediate objectives and its strategies for achieving them are expressed in "non-security" terms.

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3. The Wider Context

3.1 An effective counter-terrorist policy must take account of the context in which terrorists (notably PIRA) operate. HMG's policies do this. Some of the features of the wider physical and cultural environment can be exploited by PIRA to its advantage.

3.2 Geography - PIRA operates in a divided island, where it can exploit the border in support of its strategic and tactical objectives; in an archipelago which is a common travel area, thus facilitating the movement of men and material for operations in Great Britain; in a European Community where restrictions on the movements of individuals etc are being abolished, but where British forces are stationed as part of their NATO commitment (notably in the Federal Republic of Germany), thereby providing PIRA with prestige military (and civilian) targets. Publicity for such attacks boosts PIRA morale and puts further stress on servicemen and their families. There is now a high premium on securing enhanced security co-operation, with the ROI, the USA and our TREVI partners.

3.3 Society - It is a source of strength to PIRA that it operates within a divided community in Northern Ireland, with a long tradition of functional political violence. It can therefore exploit actual, perceived, or remembered Nationalist grievances. PIRA also benefits from the fact that Northern Ireland is a society in which for complex historical reasons, acceptance of the legitimacy of the state (and its institutions, eg Government Departments, the police, Army and Courts) cannot be taken for granted amongst the Nationalist community (although many Nationalists do in fact accept public service appointments), and where individual terrorists can be sustained in adversity by the Republican ideology of violence/sacrifice - by a rational acceptance of the long-term character of the struggle, and by at least psychological support from sympathisers, eg in the ROI, the USA and some left-wing politicians in GB.

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3.4 Politics - PIRA and Sinn Fein have a very close, symbiotic relationship. The tactics of the armalite and the ballot box are meant to reinforce each other. Earlier this year, Sinn Fein suffered electoral setbacks in both parts of Ireland. Nevertheless, within NI, Sinn Fein/PIRA can still count on considerable levels of support, especially within deprived working class areas of West Belfast and Londonderry. (In Northern Ireland the loss of Sinn Fein votes was mainly confined to rural areas.) In the Republic, there remains a degree of sympathy for PIRA's cause (if not its methods) although Sinn Fein itself is not a politically significant grouping. PIRA can derive some advantage in political terms from the facts that:

- the wider government of Northern Ireland is London-based, lacking local political accountability. It therefore has a continuing potential legitimacy problem (among Unionists as well as Nationalists, though in different ways);
- NI is an emotive and potentially controversial issue. This is true both domestically and internationally - most notably, in the ROI; the EC and its institutions and the USA (where Irish Americans are an influential ethnic lobby and where sympathy for Republican causes can be exploited as a source of money or weaponry). The institutional apparatus of the European Convention on Human Rights can also be used to put pressure on HMG. HMG must therefore have regard to the international implications of its NI policies. Moreover, unless there is understanding and sympathy for those policies abroad, the international security co-operation HMG needs may be less easily obtained. All of this has implications for the Government of the UK as a whole, and for its international relations.

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B. SECURITY POLICY

4. HMG's Strategy against terrorism

4.1 The dual approach - Against this background, HMG's strategy for eliminating PIRA terrorism is concerned with undermining the credibility of PIRA's political and constitutional objectives as well as with tackling directly its terrorist manifestations.

4.2 Countering PIRA's wider political aims - So long as it has direct responsibility for the government of Northern Ireland, HMG is determined to provide good government for all the people of Northern Ireland. At the same time, it is looking for ways of allowing more responsibility for Northern Ireland's affairs to be exercised locally under arrangements which can be accepted by both communities in the province. (Giving both the majority and minority communities a stake in Northern Ireland's government is likely to encourage both to join in countering terrorism). The Government is also working to improve relationships between the two communities in Northern Ireland, between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and between both and the Republic. Such policies are intrinsically right; but the more they are successful the more they will undermine potential support for PIRA/Sinn Fein within the Nationalist community.

4.3 The relationship between the Governments of London and Dublin is fundamentally important to the success of this dual strategy. Effective security cooperation with the Republic denies PIRA the tactical advantage it derives from the existence of the border. And the more there is an evident common approach between the two Governments to Northern Ireland issues, the less credibility there is for the political stance of PIRA/Sinn Fein. It is an important function of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (and in particular of the Inter-Governmental Conference) to demonstrate that this common approach does exist.

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4.4 The Government is determined that effective operational action should be taken against terrorists and that the resources available to the security forces (police and Army) should match this requirement.

4.5 Countering terrorism: the fundamental principles. An essential element in the Government's strategy is a fixed determination to deal with terrorism within the law. Security operations are police led. Army patrols whether or not they have police accompaniment are 'tasked' by RUC officers. The role of the Army is one of support for the civil power; and it so acts only when and where the security situation makes this necessary. Dealing with terrorism within the law means not only that terrorists are treated as criminals amenable to the law but also that the actions of security forces are themselves subject to the law. Much effort goes into the task of ensuring that the implementation of security policy is carried through in a way which avoids promoting PIRA's proximate objectives (as listed in para 2.2 above and at Annex A). The prime objectives are to pre-empt terrorist operations and in particular to remove known terrorists from the scene while acting within the law; also of key importance are finds and interception of weapons, cutting off the terrorists' supplies of money etc. For these purposes, good operational or tactical intelligence is essential; and every effort is being made to provide it. But not all operations need be, or are, pro-active: there is an important role for a deterrent security force presence, especially at particular times and places.

4.6 It is a further essential element in the strategy for ending terrorism that the security forces should act, and be seen to act, with integrity and evenhandedness. Only by behaving in this way, will they secure the support and confidence of all sides of the community which they need to act successfully against the terrorists. Members of the security forces are strictly required to use no more force than is reasonable in the particular circumstances (although this may, on occasion, need to be lethal force).

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4.7 HMG's security policy must also be consistent - in both presentation and execution. It must therefore avoid over-reaction - not least because there is good reason to suppose that this is precisely the response which PIRA are hoping to provoke. The aim is to produce a response to a major security incident which will be both effective and proportionate, (following wherever possible existing contingency plans) and taking account of the need to maintain widespread community support or, at least, acceptance for security force activity. Action which alienates local communities is unlikely to be effective, even in the short run.

4.8 The legislative framework for security force action against terrorism must similarly combine operational utility and widespread acceptability. It must also be seen to represent a proportionate response to the current security threat. The Government's intention is that it should, to the maximum extent possible, comply with contemporary European standards (as embodied, for example, in the European Convention on Human Rights). This approach will inform planning for the new legislation which will be required to replace the two Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Acts which expire in 1992.

4.9 This approach to security policy generally, and to legislation in particular, has certain implications - some of which are unwelcome. It concedes that there is a point beyond which the law cannot go and action that the security forces cannot take. This means that known terrorists will go free in the absence of evidence that will secure their conviction in a court of law. But, in anything but the shortest of timescales, any other approach would be worse. For example, the temporary suspension of the legal requirement to use only reasonable force, or, in current or immediately foreseeable circumstances, the introduction of detention without trial (internment) would undermine the

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acceptability of HMG's security policies not only among Nationalists in Northern Ireland and the Republic, but much more widely both at home and abroad. HMG has deliberately retained a legal basis for detention, acknowledging that it might, one day, need to be used; but it recognises that the effect of introducing internment would be further to polarise political attitudes in Northern Ireland and outside it, and to give PIRA terrorists a new "cause". If, therefore, terrorists are to be effectively targetted without these deleterious effects, HMG's security polices must continue to

- a. adhere to the rule of law (including the spirit of the rule of law); and
- b. promote and enhance of confidence in the security forces and the system of criminal justice within which they operate.

4.10. The thrust or direction of HMG's security (as also its wider, but related, policies) is towards 'normal' civilian government. Although this paper acknowledges that the degree of military support for the police is likely to remain substantial for some considerable time, it is policy that, where circumstances permit, there should be a progressive reduction in the role of the Army in support of the civil power (the RUC) to those specialist activities which it would not be appropriate or cost effective for the police to undertake. This will involve withdrawing the Army from tasks currently regarded as essential under which it finds itself in an anomalous quasi-policing role.

4.11. The Government's pursuit of 'normality' in its policies for Northern Ireland does not imply that policies are unacceptable or undesirable if they differ, even in the long term, from law or practice in GB. Nevertheless, so far as security policy is concerned, the intention is that it should

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- be demonstrably justifiable having regard to the special circumstances of Northern Ireland. (This will tend to mean directly and proportionately related to the problems to which they are addressed); and
- conform, broadly speaking, to what the countries of Western Europe see as standards acceptable in a free and democratic society.

Summary

4.12 HMG's security policy is based on a firm commitment to defeat terrorists. This translates into resolute action, both to prevent or interdict terrorist activity and to react quickly in pursuit of terrorists (and/or to protect the local community) if terrorist activity does take place. It is therefore both proactive and reactive. It consists (or should consist) at all times of the even-handed application of the law. This means that, as necessary, there will be vigorous action against Loyalist paramilitaries, and, indeed, against members of the security forces themselves, if they fail to meet the high standards expected of them. It is a policy which in its implementation has the police in the lead role - even in the 3 Brigade area, where the Army's operational independence in counter-terrorist activity sits within a police-led general framework.

4.13 The policies and principles described in the preceding paragraphs represent the only realistic and workable option. This conclusion is supported by some empirical evidence, as well as by logic and common sense. It is beyond question that, between 1976 (when the present police-led policy was introduced) and 1984, there was a substantial improvement in the security situation. Moreover, this was achieved despite the strains imposed by the hunger strikes, improved terrorist 'professionalism' and the tighter organisation of PIRA. Since 1985, and

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especially during the past two years, PIRA have put a lot of effort into reversing that trend and intensifying the level of terrorist activity. That they have not succeeded as they would have wished can be attributed, in some measure, to the skill and professionalism of the security forces working within the existing policy framework. But, whatever the precise reasons, it remains the fact that despite their continuing campaign of murder and intimidation, PIRA have made no progress at all towards their ultimate aim as set out in paragraph 2.1 above.

4.14 The broad thrust of HMG's policies will not change; but their details are not set in concrete. Security policy will adjust to the requirements of a developing security situation. It will remain necessary to be thinking continually about whether our 'armoury' (in either legal or operational terms) can be improved - weighing the likely short-term impact of new policy initiatives against their longer term political and security etc impact on the nationalist (and wider GB and international) community; and on any individual occasion, between an imperative to respond (and to be seen to respond) firmly and effectively to a particular notorious incident, and not being shaken, as PIRA would desire to shake us, from adherence to the fundamental principles that inform all HMG's policies in Northern Ireland.

C. THE WIDER CONTEXT

5.1 A clear and consistent security policy and resolute action by the police and the Army are the factors which will most influence the PIRA leadership (or, perhaps, its rank and file, if the leadership continues to blind itself to reality) to the conclusion that the current campaign is futile because it is no closer to achieving its stated objective than when the violence began. But there are

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numerous ways in which political and, perhaps above all, social and economic, policies can and do significantly re-inforce what is being done on the security front. An intermediate aim of PIRA (see paragraph 2.2 above) is to discredit HMG and all its policies in Northern Ireland. To the extent, therefore, that the Government's economic and social policy measures produce evident benefits for the people in Northern Ireland (and especially if those benefits are felt within the communities from which PIRA has traditionally drawn support), they will also strike effectively at PIRA/Sinn Fein's raison d'etre and sap the will of their followers to continue with the 'struggle'. The Fair Employment Act 1989, the Belfast 'areas of needs' initiative and plans to revive other parts of the province are simply a few examples of measures which are intrinsically right, but which also have value in the context of ending terrorism.

5.2 Thus, political progress, economic progress (jobs, houses, general amenity, improved life chances etc) and progress towards a fairer society can all reduce the scope for, and tolerance of, terrorism - even though progress on these fronts is unlikely, of itself, to undermine the motivation of PIRA/Sinn Fein activists. The implementation of Government policy in 'non-security' areas is most likely to be valuable also in the 'security' context, ie to the overall effort to bring terrorism to an end, if it can

- demonstrate fairness and political balance in its application
- avoid giving PIRA/SF a new "cause" (ie by appearing to deny what may plausibly be represented as a reasonable social or political expectation, or by perpetuating social or economic imbalance).

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A clumsy or inept approach in relation to a non-security matter can boost the morale of PIRA/Sinn Fein as surely as a mistake (or perceived mistake) by the security forces. A perceived failure to act impartially could also undermine the readiness of the public in Britain to continue to sustain (with money and manpower) a prolonged commitment to the defeat of PIRA.

5.3 In developing policies in 'non security' areas in ways which will contribute to the ending of PIRA terrorism in Northern Ireland without offending Unionists, HMG is inter alia

- emphasising, in accordance with Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that Northern Ireland remains a part of the United Kingdom unless and until a majority of its people wish otherwise: with the corollary that there will be no change in the status of NI as the result of violence.
- further emphasising that, if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish to see the establishment of a united Ireland, they will give effect to that wish: with the corollary that the democratic road to a united Ireland is not blocked.
- seeking to devolve significant responsibilities for the affairs of Northern Ireland to local representative in a way which improves accountability and is acceptable to both communities; and, in the meantime, providing opportunities for people from both communities to take part in the political institutions of direct rule; (eg Regional Boards)

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- pursuing community relations and an education policy which seek to bring the two communities closer together in a number of different ways, including a recognition of the value of different cultural traditions.
- providing credible mechanisms to redress individual and collective grievances (eg by introducing effective procedures for dealing with complaints against the security forces and by providing remedies for discrimination). (The Government is also trying to tackle disparities between the economic and social privileges of the two communities);
- promoting economic and social regeneration, especially in areas of deprivation, via support for local entrepreneurial activity, inward investment, job creation and training;

Or, it is at least, attempting to do these things.

5.4 HMG needs international support in its efforts to defeat PIRA. For that purpose, the support of the Government of the ROI is vital. Any public demonstration of that support (especially from a Fianna Fail government) makes it more difficult for PIRA/SF to claim to represent the authentic voice of Irish nationalism. The machinery established under the Agreement is well suited for this purpose - although the work of the IGC and the Secretariat needs to be re-inforced by other bilateral contacts.

5.5 In brief, all measures which are effective in ensuring that Northern Ireland is governed fairly and which will help it to achieve normality, good order and prosperity, and which ensure that HMG's constitutional position is understood and accepted both domestically and internationally, will serve to deny ground to PIRA and to weaken its challenge.

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6. PRESENTATION

6.1 The Government's policies for Northern Ireland need not only to be consistent in their execution. They need also to be consistently and effectively presented. Effective presentation is necessary for two principal reasons, viz

- i. to win and maintain acceptance for the validity and good sense of a policy and
- ii. to dishearten (or otherwise influence in HMG's direction) the terrorist opposition.

The second is of equal importance to the first. The aim, therefore, is to present the whole security strategy (including those political, social and economic policies which re-inforce the anti-terrorist effort) as a coherent and cohesive whole from which the Government will not be deflected - either by terrorist action or by external pressures generated by particularly appalling terrorist atrocities, whether in Northern Ireland or elsewhere.

6.2 That presentation is currently being made to a range of important audiences - in Northern Ireland, in Great Britain and also abroad. The United State is still the most influential international audience; but there is every indication that the countries of the EC will become more significant. The current emphasis is mainly on the objective identified at (i) in the preceding paragraph.

6.3 It has been recognised that the credibility of the strategic message will be eroded if there is no effective response to media interest in individual incidents. The NIO and the security forces have therefore taken steps to ensure that their Information Services work closely together to develop the best possible response (given the constraints of

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what may be a current criminal investigation and the need not to prejudice any future court proceedings). Reviewing and monitoring this work is one of the functions of the newly established inter-disciplinary Information Strategy Group, which meets at both Ministerial and official level. Similar close collaboration in responding to 'incidents' is being developed between the NIO, the FCO and posts abroad.

6.4 In seeking to pursue the objective at (2) in para 6.1 above (undermining the will of terrorists to continue and that of nationalist communities to support them), the Government is aiming its message at the vulnerable elements in PIRA's motivation. The most vulnerable of those elements is doubt about their own ability to achieve their political objective by the armed struggle. Every opportunity is being taken, therefore, in explaining or justifying the Government's policies in Northern Ireland, to emphasise the point that the Government, or 'the British' will never surrender to violence and will never therefore "withdraw" in response to a so-called military campaign. There is also a need for PIRA to be reminded that their 'campaign' is becoming increasingly inglorious and a discredit to the Republican tradition which they claim to uphold. This point can be made most effectively by members of the nationalist community whether in NI or the ROI. This provides further justification for a policy of opening up and extending the Government's contacts with people of influence in the nationalist community generally.

D. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The aim of Government policy is to eradicate terrorism. For this purpose a coherent and defensible strategy is available.

7.2 This strategy aims to provide an effective counter to the PIRA threat at both the political and security levels;

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it takes full account of PIRA's resources and motivation. The PIRA campaign of violence will end when PIRA and/or its supporters are brought to the point when even they recognise its futility. They must be 'motivated' to end it. Continuing pressure by the security forces, equipped with the necessary resources, will be a necessary condition for achieving that objective; but it will not itself be a sufficient one. It must therefore be reinforced by effective Government action in the political, social and economic fields. All the Government's policies seek to take account of the wider geographical, social and political contexts.

7.3 The Government will therefore continue to seek to provide good government for all the people of Northern Ireland. Its security strategy will continue to be to deal with terrorism within the law, while recognising there is a point beyond which the law cannot go. The Army will continue to be required to provide essential support for the RUC in current and foreseeable circumstances; but it remains an objective of policy to reduce the Army role in support of the civil power to specialist activities which are either inappropriate or not cost-effective for a non-military police force to undertake. The strategy has to be consistently executed and presented over the long term. This may require a deliberate refusal to respond to security setbacks either with some new initiative or with a major escalation of an existing policy. A firm, effective well-targetted security policy, combined with a commitment to 'good Government' should together contribute to the undermining of Sinn Fein/PIRA's conviction that they can hope to secure 'British withdrawal'.

7.4 Effective security policies will remain an essential condition of sapping PIRA's will to continue the struggle, but political and economic policies can decisively reinforce the effect of security policies and operations. There are a number of specific ways in which this can be done. The

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validity of HMG's approach as a whole will be enhanced through achieving active and sympathetic recognition internationally. The support of the Republic of Ireland is of especial importance in security as well as in wider political terms. It is also important to deny ground to PIRA/Sinn Fein by avoiding mistakes.

7.5 The impact of our policies and their chances of acceptance will be enhanced both in Northern Ireland and more widely by the effective presentation of our security strategy. The message must continue to be put across effectively at home and abroad, and also revised in response to developments. A rapid and effective response to media interest over individual incidents is also needed.

7.6 HMG's present security policy remains the only realistic and viable option. It is credible, defensible; and it has proved its worth. It needs to be applied and presented consistently. In adjusting to the requirement of a developing security situation no radical changes of direction seem necessary. But there needs to be continual review of whether the Government's armoury in legal or operational terms can be improved. At all times, it will be necessary to strike the right balance between an imperative to respond firmly and effectively and not being shaken from adherence to fundamental principles.

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ANNEX A

PIRA's INTERMEDIATE OBJECTIVES (para 2.2)

PIRA's intermediate objectives can be classified in various ways. But they include:

- demonstrating that Northern Ireland is a failed and illegitimate political entity, partly by showing that it is ungovernable by normal processes;
- representing government, particularly under direct rule, as the colonial rule of an alien power;
- characterising the British Government and all its agencies as arbitrary, unfair and oppressive;
- emphasising the allegedly uncertain constitutional status of Northern Ireland, by disrupting ordinary life, challenging governmental authority and seeking to deny legitimacy to the central apparatus of the State, including the courts;
- provoking an over-reaction, or blatant abuse by the security forces, with the aim of losing sympathy and compromising their legitimacy;
- maintaining and enhancing the alienation of the Nationalist community;
- asserting PIRA dominance and control in Nationalist areas, and seeking to extend that into other areas by a sustained programme of disruption using selective assassination and other means;

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- fomenting intercommunal tension;
- discrediting, or eliminating, competitive and responsible leadership in the Unionist or Nationalist community;
- fostering the representation of the Unionist community as sectarian, oppressive and generally unsympathetic;
- fostering, through cause celebres or otherwise, tension between the UK and the Republic of Ireland; and between the Unionist community and the Republic of Ireland.