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PS/Mr Bell  
18/10

FROM:

Security Policy and Operations Division  
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DESK IMMEDIATE

602/10  
cc PS/Paymaster General (B&L) - B  
PS/Minister of State (B&L) - B  
PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B  
Mr Wilson - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Alston - B  
Mr Leach - B  
Mr Dodds - B  
Ms Lodge - B

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

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a Mr [signature]

SECTARIAN ATTACKS/TAXI REGULATIONS/UFF THREAT AGAINST GAA

I understand that the Irish may raise the issue of sectarian attacks during the Restricted Session of the Conference. I believe they have three things in mind: firstly, the recent sectarian attacks and the likelihood of future incidents, which the Chief Constable and Garda Commissioner normally cover in their threat assessments, but where a line and background is attached; secondly, their concern about what they perceive as a particular threat to taxi drivers; and thirdly, the UFF threat to the GAA; lines to take on these are also given below.

1. SECTARIAN ATTACKS

Line to take

- The current spate of nakedly sectarian attacks is horrific, but sadly it is not a new phenomenon.
- It will continue to be met by a resolute, determined and intelligent response by the police and armed forces.
- The police have had some successes in foiling attacks, and in arresting and charging those suspected of involvement in such

CONFIDENTIAL

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crimes; but their success depends upon help from the public, as well as on their own professionalism and skill.

- The Chief Constable will wish to tell you in more detail about his operational response to the current situation. I can assure you that the Government will continue to endorse firm resolute action against all terrorists, within the law, and will continue to pursue policies, across the whole range of its responsibilities, aimed at finally bringing terrorism to an end.

### Background

1. There has been a marked increase in sectarian "tit for tat" killings over the past few months. Such episodes have occurred in the past, and have either fizzled out naturally, or have been halted by a mega attack - such as the Kingsmill massacre, when 10 Protestant workmen were killed by PIRA, ending a spate of Loyalist killings in the Armagh area. There is concern that were Republican groups (currently behind in the body count) to attempt to repeat this tactic now, the current Loyalist terrorist leadership would not back down, but might well respond in kind; there is little doubt that they now have the capability to do so.
2. Against this background, the police are striving to get a real grip on the situation, and in particular to put those responsible behind bars. Accordingly, the Chief Constable has announced a range of measures in North Belfast (more uniformed and plain clothes patrolling; more covert operations; a new squad investigating UFF/UVF crime). This should increase further the police success rate - and their operations recently have been successful, leading to arrests, to aborted attacks, etc.
3. The message to the Irish must be that we take this current manifestation of the terrorist campaign seriously; we will deal with it resolutely and professionally; and we will not be deflected by it - or by anything else - from pursuing the objective of bringing terrorism to a permanent end by firm action within the law, and by the use of the whole range of Government policies to undermine its rationale.

## 2. TAXI REGULATIONS

Line to take

- Earlier this year, following a series of sectarian assassinations of taxi drivers, Lord Belstead and Mr Needham requested a review of the Regulations governing taxis. After a series of useful and constructive meetings with interested parties, it was concluded that taxi drivers were exposed and vulnerable targets to sectarian attack, and that there was a case for some amendment to the legislation to reduce the risk to drivers of their religion being identified from official documents or signs - even though these did not, in fact, substantially add to the risk intrinsic to being a taxi driver. In addition, in the medium term, a wide-ranging review of the whole regulatory framework also needed to be undertaken, not only from the transport perspective, but from a security viewpoint. Both will balance the concerns of the taxi drivers about their safety, against the broader public interest of having a safe, well regulated taxi industry with easily identifiable taxis.
- A set of regulations making minor amendments to the roof sign displayed by taxis and removing the applicant's name from the PSV Vehicle Licence Disc comes into operation on 21 October. It is hoped these, together with some administrative changes which will enable the driver to remove his name from his driver's identity badge, should meet concerns that the content of the roof signs and display of names enable paramilitaries to "target" taxi drivers, as of a particular religion, by reference to their name or the geographical location of their firm.
- A full review of taxi regulations should begin before Christmas. The remit of this review has not yet been decided but it will be a wide one, covering both private and public hire taxis.

Background

1. Following a series of sectarian murders of taxi drivers, the Government came under pressure, earlier this year, from various groups representing taxi drivers to take some action. A number of meetings took place with interested bodies including representatives of taxi drivers, the RUC and the ARU, following which the following conclusions were reached:

- i. overall the current legislation did not actually increase or reduce the risk of sectarian attack on drivers, although the perception was sometimes different;
- ii. therefore, some changes to ensure the anonymity of the driver were desirable but these had to be balanced against a requirement, in the broader public interest, for a means of identifying both vehicles and drivers as properly licenced; and
- iii. A wide-ranging review of the legislation was necessary.

2. The "short term" changes are currently being implemented and in addition to some administrative changes (for example removing the name of a driver from the back of his identity badge), Regulations, made on 1 October 1991 will come into operation on 21 October. These Regulations remove the requirement for the name of the applicant for a PSV vehicle licence to be shown on the licence disc and, whilst retaining a compulsory illuminated roof sign, alter the requirements of what may be shown on this, allowing the word "TAXI" to appear both to the front and back of the sign and so rendering it anonymous.

3. Work on the wider review will begin once a Chairman has been appointed - it is hoped the post will be filled shortly. This review, which will involve consultation with a wide range of bodies, including the Irish, will be taken forward as quickly as possible and will probably result in fresh legislation.

### 3. GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION - UFF THREAT

#### Line to take

- The UFF's threat on the GAA, even in its modified form, has been spurned by all decent sections of the community in Northern Ireland. As the NIO statement said "there is no legitimate target for terrorist activities".
- The police need the help of everyone to beat these thugs: and I am sure that GAA Clubs and officials should seek to make contact with their local police, inform them of any suspicious activity, make arrangements to keep in touch, and take the advice the RUC can offer on safeguarding themselves and their property.
- Perhaps the Chief Constable could give us his comments, including his assessment of the level of threat against the GAA.

#### Background

1. Following a firebomb attack on the GAA hall in Kircubbin, Co Down on Monday 7 October, the UFF issued a statement on Tuesday 8 October to the effect that members of the GAA were "legitimate targets" on the grounds that the GAA supported and financed the IRA and because of "ongoing sectarianism" in the Association (presumably this refers, in part at least, to the GAA rule that the security forces are barred from membership). There was immediate criticism of this statement by politicians, clergy, the RUC and the NIO.
2. On Wednesday 9 October the UFF resiled somewhat, issuing a second qualifying statement in which they narrowed their threat to individuals with "strong Republican links".



3. There is no intelligence to suggest that the UFF are or have been actively targetting the GAA, or its officials. Sporadic attacks on GAA premises, or on prominent Republicans (who may participate in GAA activities) are, however, not unknown: the UFF revised statement does not, therefore, seem to represent any marked change in policy by that organisation.

4. The increased capability and aggression of Loyalist terrorists in recent weeks is however a cause of genuine concern: it is and will continue to be met by an intelligent and determined response from the security forces, but does divert scarce resources from the main, PIRA, threat.

5. There is some irony in the fact that the best protection for the GAA against these attacks comes from the RUC, castigated by it as "unacceptable to the majority of the [Nationalist] community"; and also in the possibility that closer contact between the RUC and GAA resulting from this threat might ultimately be helpful in getting the GAA to remove its ban on members from the RUC and "Crown Forces" - but perhaps that is a distant and uncertain hope.

[signed]

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