

C O N F I D E N T I A L

17 MAY 1994 *dekniky*

96/94

FROM:

C D KYLE

Ms Murphy

16 MAY 1994

CDK/27943/94/AL

313/94

441/93

NOTE FOR INFORMATION

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|-----|
| cc | PS/Sec of State (B&L) | - B |
| | PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) | - B |
| | PS/PUS (B&L) | - B |
| | PS/Mr Fell | - B |
| | Mr Legge | - B |
| | Mr Thomas | - B |
| | Mr Steele | - B |
| | Mr Williams | - B |
| | Mr Watkins | - B |
| | Mr Bell | - B |
| | Mr Perry | - B |
| | Mr Marsh | - B |
| | Mr Smyth | - B |
| | Mr Daniell | - B |
| | Ms Johnston | - B |
| | Mr Rodell | - B |

711/5

in 1988/5

MEETING TO DISCUSS IRISH STUDY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES AND THE COMMUNITY IN NORTH AND WEST BELFAST

A meeting took place at Maryfield on 12 May to consider the Irish paper arising from their monitoring of relations between the security forces and the community in North and West Belfast during the months of January and February of 1994. The British side was represented by Mr Steele, Mr Williams, Mr Smyth, Mr Marsh, Ms Johnston, Mr Dalzell (Civil Representative) and myself. The Irish representatives were Mr Farrell, Mr Mellett, Mr Hennessey, Mr Kelleher and Mrs Nic Coitir.

2. Mr Kelleher opened the discussion by acknowledging that this was a complex issue and noting that although the original proposal had been for a joint study this had not been possible. He believed that the Irish findings accorded with a wider view of the situation in Northern Ireland and that some of their points were in line with comments made in the report by Mr Hewitt, the Independent Assessor of Military Complaints; especially in relation to areas like training, pre-tour orientation, Patrol Identification Cards (PIC), and accompaniment.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

96/94

C O N F I D E N T I A L

3. Mr Steele said that the meeting had the benefit of Mr Dalzell's presence, the Principal Civil Representative for the Belfast area, and he went on to explain that the British side was keen to enhance the level of confidence between the security forces and the community. There were a number of strands to this work and these included organisations such as the Civil Representatives, the use of PICs, training, the appointment of the Independent Assessor for Military Complaints, and an understanding by the Security Force Commanders that relationships with local communities should not be jeopardised by careless actions. It had to be recalled that there were some 18,000 soldiers, as well as policemen, serving in Northern Ireland often in very difficult situations and with the constant threat of attacks on their own lives. He believed that they did a good job and the issue of confidence remained one of major importance to both the Northern Ireland Office and the security forces. Mr Steele commented that he found the Irish report interesting although it was somewhat short in detail.

4. In discussion on the Patrol Identification Card the Irish side reflected a concern that there was a psychological problem associated with people having to ask for the card; they wondered if there was no other way around this. Mr Steele replied that he could understand this difficulty but perhaps the availability of the card needed greater publicity. It had been decided some time ago not to go down the road of using flashes or berets as means of identification; he also noted there was the facility of the early warning arrangement whereby soldiers alerted their Commanders that an 'incident' had occurred which might lead to a complaint. Mr Dalzell commented that in the early days soldiers had been somewhat reluctant to hand out the PICs as this might suggest an element of guilt. Army officers had made it clear that the issue of cards to civilians was not a reflection on a soldier's behaviour.

5. Mr Kelleher referred to complaints about repeated 'stop and search' activity by the security forces and he wondered if this was too free a use of the powers under the emergency legislation. He

C O N F I D E N T I A L

96/94

C O N F I D E N T I A L

went on to say that there was also a perceived variation in the behaviour of Army units, commenting that in North Belfast there appeared seen to be fewer problems with regiments such as the Royal Artillery than with the Royal Marines in West Belfast. It was believed that there were differences in the way people were treated in middle class areas such as Andersonstown compared to working class estates such as Ballymurphy. Mr Dalzell explained that every army unit serving in North and West Belfast received a 3 month training package. In relation to Ballymurphy this area had the highest rate of harassment complaints regardless of the regiment serving there. He explained that there was a small element in Ballymurphy who were intent in creating trouble for both the security forces and local residents; in particular they had devised a practice of isolating a member of a patrol and forcing a confrontation with the security forces. He added that behaviour of the Royal Marines had been praised by local SDLP politicians and priests, and he explained that in the last six month period 117 members of the Royal Marines had been injured with the vast majority of these injuries being suffered whilst on duty in Ballymurphy.

6. Mr Kelleher enquired about occasions when there might be a mutual 'wind up' between security force personnel and members of the local community. Mr Dalzell explained that the guidance to members of a patrol was to walk away and avoid provocation. Mr Kelleher then enquired if the level of training was the same for all soldiers serving in Northern Ireland. Mr Steele said that at one time there had been a much heavier dependence on the Spearhead Battalion and they may not have had adequate training. Mr Dalzell outlined the sort of training which took place pointing out that in areas such as North and West Belfast a number of local worthy individuals contributed to that training package. This helped set up links between the local community and the security forces and it was hoped that it would enable problems to be resolved quickly on the ground, rather than having a bureaucratic channel for complaints.

7. Mr Kelleher said that accountability and speedy redress were important dimensions to confidence. He queried the element of

C O N F I D E N T I A L

96/94

C O N F I D E N T I A L

double jeopardy which arose at times; if a criminal complaint was not proceeded with was it referred back as a non-criminal complaint. Mr Steele explained that soldiers could still be subject to disciplinary action which was often very severe. In response to Mr Kelleher's point about how the outcome of such disciplinary action was made known to complainants, Ms Johnston said that Mr Hewitt had raised this in his report that it was under consideration. In response to a point from Mr Mellett that some people would not bother bringing forward their complaints, Mr Dalzell emphasised that Civil Representatives had links with all important people in their local communities and they encouraged them to raise any points of difficulty. Generally there was no impression that people were slow to complain.

8. Mr Kelleher then turned to the issue of house searches and the adverse affects they had on the local community. There had been reports that whole streets were sealed off causing great inconvenience and annoyance. Mr Dalzell explained that when a house search had taken place the local Civil Representative would visit to arrange compensation for any damage caused. He pointed out that during the Royal Marines tour of West Belfast there had not been one complaint about the behaviour of soldiers. He advised that entire streets were not sealed off, but rather a cordon was set up around the house(s) being searched. This was to provide protection for the soldiers carrying out the search.

9. Mr Kelleher said that people in North and West Belfast liked to see the police about but there was a view that some senior police officers were seen as problem-solvers whilst others were perceived as less helpful. Mr Steele said that there was a big RUC investment in training and community relations; policing was about dealing with the community. Mr Kelleher said that there was a perception that the more senior officers were seen to be sensitive community relations whilst the younger officers were not; should more training be directed to these officers? Mr Steele responded that this was not a view which he had received from any other source.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

10. Turning to the issue of accompaniment Mr Kelleher said that a premium attached to this issue but there was a perception in West Belfast that RUC accompaniment was not always operated in practice. Mr Steele said he could understand that when 2 RUC officers had to be accompanied by a patrol of 16 soldiers it would be dangerous to move together and present a target; therefore their dispersed nature might lead observers to believe that policemen were not present. Mr Kelleher enquired about RIR deployment around the city centre and what he described as the margins of South and West Belfast. Mr Steele said that the formation of the RIR had been an attempt to get away from certain perceptions, but clearly there were some people who would wish those perceptions to continue. He was very conscious that the Army's senior command were working hard to avoid legitimate causes for concern in regard to the RIR.

11. Mr Kelleher returned to the question of training and enquired about details. Mr Steele offered members of the Irish side a visit to see the training in operation but Mr Hennessey said that he would prefer to get details first. Mr Dalzell outlined the 3 month package of intensive community relations and attitude training, but of necessity soldiers had also to be prepared for the fact that there were terrorists trying to kill them. Mr Kelleher wondered if there was any way of monitoring short term deteriorations in relations at local level. Mr Steele said that this was one of the prime purposes of the Civil Representatives' organisation which monitored relations between the security forces and the local population. Mr Marsh pointed out that this was not a bureaucratic system; the main object was to sort out problems on the ground as they happened.

12. Mr Kelleher then enquired about peacelines and the question of security force protection in nationalist communities. There was a clear concern amongst nationalists that the police should be seen to operate in loyalist estates although he realised there was sometimes a conflict between operational requirements and perceptions. Mr Steele emphasised that the RUC and the Army sought to prevent all

C O N F I D E N T I A L

96/94

C O N F I D E N T I A L

attacks whether sectarian, or upon themselves. They were not always successful, but he recalled that more loyalists had been arrested this year than republicans. Mr Dalzell added that a high priority was being given to policing sectarian interfaces.

13. In concluding the meeting the Irish side noted they would probably want to have a discussion on the report by the Independent Assessor of Military Complaints. Mr Steele advised that this report was currently being looked at by the GOC; he asked if the Irish would wish to talk further about their survey at the forthcoming IGC. Mr Kelleher said that they considered the issue of confidence between the security forces and the community to be a very important one, but they did not envisage that they would wish to discuss their North and West Belfast monitoring exercise in any detail at the Conference.

[Signed]

C D KYLE

16 MAY 1994

Mr Danell

Mr Maitland

Mr McCartney

Mr Rodell

Mr Archer

NMA Dublin

MEETING WITH IRISH SIDE TO DISCUSS SECURITY WORKS AT CROSBAGLEN AND
FUTURE WORKS AT BORDER BASES

A meeting took place at Maryfield on Thursday 12 May to discuss the ongoing security works at Crossmaglen RUC station and future security works at border bases. The British side was represented by Mr Steele, Mr Williams, Mr Smyth, Mr Marsh, Mr Perry, Mr Maitland and myself. The Irish side representatives were Mr Farrall, Mr Mallett, Mr Hennessey and Mrs Nic Colair.

2. Mr Hennessey recalled that at the last IGC both the Taoiseach and the Minister for Justice had conveyed their concerns about the impact of the current security works at Crossmaglen RUC station. There was the problem of the community and the Irish side had also been disturbed by the lack of adequate briefing

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L