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228/96

From: Jacqueline Black
Political Affairs Division
8 August 1996

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Shannon - B
Mr Daniell - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mrs Collins - B
Mr Cornick - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Burnett - B
Mr McKervill
Mr Jagelman - B
Chief Constable, RUC HQ
Mr Hanna, RUC HQ
Supt McConnell, RUC HQ
Brigadier Strudley, HQNI
Mr Gillies, HQNI
Mr Moore, HQNI
CIVSEC, HQNI

Mr Steele - B

SECURITY INFORMATION GROUP

I attach the record of the meeting of the Security Information Group which was held on Wednesday 7 August 1996.

(Signed)

J A BLACK (MRS)
SH Ext 27090

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MEETING OF THE SECURITY INFORMATION GROUP ON WEDNESDAY 7 AUGUST 1996
AT 4.30 PM IN STORMONT HOUSE

Present

Mr Steele	Brigadier Strudley
Mr Lavery	Mr Moore
Mr Cornick	Supt McConnell
Mr McKervill	
Mr Jagelman	
Mrs Black	

Apologies for Absence: Mr Hanna, Mr Gillies

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 July were approved.

2. PARADES

The Apprentice Boys had been meeting the Bogside Residents under the Chairmanship of John Hume to discuss the parade on 10 August. After initial hopeful signs, the Apprentice Boys had become frustrated with the constant moving of the goal posts. Once an attempt had been made to tie this parade in with other parades in the province, the Apprentice Boys were unable to agree that any local community should have the right to veto a local parade, and the negotiations then broke down.

The Secretary of State had therefore agreed, on the advice of the Chief Constable, that there would be a ban on public processions and open air meetings on the western section of Londonderry City walls. The order was made under Article 5(1)(b) of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 and would take effect from 18.00 on 7 August and last until midnight on 31 August.

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It was hoped that following the breakdown in negotiations most people would recognise this move as a sensible compromise on the part of the Government, who had a responsibility to protect all its citizens. Churchmen were however continuing to attempt to find a way forward, and in the event of local agreement being reached before 10 August the order would be rescinded.

The Army would be securing the western section of the walls, which would be closed until 31 August to combat any unauthorised marches, (a point which coincidentally could help the Apprentice Boys leadership when explaining the position to its members) but could be opened earlier if it was felt to be appropriate. Additional Army Battalions had already arrived in Northern Ireland to be deployed as necessary.

The situation was dangerous and the Secretary of State and Chief Constable were trying to find a balanced way forward, but things could get out of control and were dependent to a large extent on how Martin McGuinness and Sinn Fein dealt with events. The Bogside Residents had the solution they wanted and there would therefore be no excuse for violence (although attempts might be made to orchestrate incidents) and any trouble in Londonderry itself would be containable provided the crowds remained at manageable levels. The Apprentice Boys had proved helpful and it was not thought that Loyalists would retaliate across the province.

There would be a parade in Londonderry on 8 August, and a nationalist rally on 9 August from Free Derry Corner to the Diamond, which if it got out of hand might have repercussions - in particular for the rally in Belfast on Sunday 11 August to celebrate the Anniversary of Internment.

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It was possible that the Apprentice Boys parade in Belfast, which had accepted (although was not happy about) the decision for it to be re-routed away from the Ormeau Road and had said it would only be making a written protest, might now reconsider its attitude.

There was potential for much disinformation over the period and a concerted line on the information side would therefore be needed. Both the Secretary of State and Chief Constable would be heavily involved in media interviews.

It had been helpful that the names of Father Oliver Crilly and the Very Reverend Dr John Dunlop had been announced on 7 August as members of the review team set up to examine marches and related public order issues under the Chair of Dr North.

3. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Mrs Black would contact members to arrange a date for the next meeting of SIG.

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