



DUNDONALD HOUSE  
UPPER NEWTOWNARDS ROAD  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SF

PS/Mr Patten (L)

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - M  
PS/Mr Patten (B)  
PS/Mr Scott (L&B) - M  
PS/PUS (L&B) - M  
PS/Sir Ewart Bell  
Mr Bourn  
PS/Dr Hayes  
Mr Buxton  
Mr Coulson

COMPLAINTS BY REV MARTIN SMYTH ABOUT SINN FEIN PRESENCE AT THE RVH

Mr Martin Smyth telephoned the Minister's office on the afternoon of Friday, 16 March, complaining about reports that members of Sinn Fein were 'guarding' Mr Adams and 3 others who were injured during a shooting incident on Wednesday, 14 March. He was particularly indignant that these people were reported to be stopping and questioning members of the public going about their business within the hospital.

When Mr Adams and the 3 others who were injured with him were admitted into the RVH suffering from gunshot wounds on 14 March, they were housed in a secure ward and placed under the protection of armed police officers. All 4 were material witnesses to an armed assault and clearly their lives were at risk which is why the police took these precautions.

It is believed that, as a propaganda exercise, Sinn Fein issued a statement indicating that they would be 'guarding' Mr Adams themselves as they did not trust the police. The police, for their part, cannot confirm or deny whether this boast by Sinn Fein was carried out. They did, however, satisfy themselves on a number of occasions that there were no persons in the hospital who were either a threat to Mr Adams and his colleagues or to the staff and patients of the hospital. In particular, the police were not aware of any person being continuously or regularly present in the hospital, and did not observe anyone behaving in a manner which was likely to cause annoyance or a breach of the peace. If they had observed such behaviour they would have intervened to prevent it. In the event they were not called upon to act and instead went about their primary operational task which was to safeguard Mr Adams and his friends.



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The Eastern Board have reported that they believe that two, and on occasions possibly more, people who could have been members of Sinn Fein were present in the hospital. These people were not allowed into any wards but were restricted to public areas where they did not interfere with the normal running of the hospital or cause a nuisance either to the patients or the public. Although technically they were infringing the normal administrative arrangements of the hospital, the management, having consulted the police, decided to take no action to eject them because their presence was doing no harm and any further action, possibly involving force, would have undoubtedly been exploited by Sinn Fein for propaganda purposes. Indeed, it would be reasonable to assume that Sinn Fein's actions were intended to provoke just such a reaction in order to generate more tension and ill-feeling in the aftermath of the shooting. The police, for their part, were content with this decision.

In retrospect it could be argued that local hospital management should have taken steps to exclude these people from the hospital precincts. The police would have provided any support which was requested to prevent any breach of the peace or violence occurring during the removal of these people from the premises. However, a forcible ejection of people from the RVH would, as suggested earlier, undoubtedly have been used by Sinn Fein for their own propaganda purposes. It would have attracted the attention of the media and played into the hands of Sinn Fein by securing publicity for them. Moreover, had one group of interlopers been successfully ejected they could easily have been replaced by another and the whole undignified procedure would have to be repeated again and again.

The sensible response to attempts by Sinn Fein or others to gain a propaganda advantage in this way would seem to be to maintain the same low-key response to such provocation. No harm has been done, no annoyance was caused to the public, and no breach of the peace occurred. The responsibility of the police for guarding Mr Adams was in no way hampered or impaired. However, if at any time any action is taken by Sinn Fein which threatens a breach of the peace or threatens to be detrimental to the delivery of essential patient services in this or any other



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hospital, the management would take all necessary steps to eject those involved from the hospital, and they would receive from the police any support they might require.

The terms of this submission and of the draft letter have been agreed with Mr Coulson.

It is recommended that the Minister should write to Mr Smyth setting out these facts and offering him this assurance.

R S STERLING

22 March 1984