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1. Mr. Bloomfield 2. SEC 1

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B)



CONTROL OF EXPLOSIVES: MEETING BETWEEN NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE AND
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE REPRESENTATIVES ON 25 OCTOBER 1985

1. The fourth in a series of meetings of officials from the Republic's Department of Justice and the Northern Ireland Office took place in London on 25 October 1985. The main purpose of the meeting was to take stock of progress being made in the UK and ROI on the joint programme of research into ways of preventing the use of agricultural fertilisers in the manufacture of home made explosives. We also used the opportunity to raise various points of concern of the control of commercial explosives and related materials in the ROI.

2. Joint Research Programme on Home Made Explosives

To recapitulate, the aim of the research was to try to identify an AN/Urea based fertiliser which would be:-

- (a) (ideally) capable of commercial production, using existing manufacturing processes in the fertiliser industry;
- (b) agronomically acceptable; and
- (c) of no, or limited, value as an explosive to the terrorist.

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3. The research work undertaken in the UK suggests that, while it will not be possible to manufacture the proposed AN/Urea formulation in single granule form, as had originally been hoped, it should be possible to manufacture it in double granule form. Arrangements have been made with a leading UK fertiliser manufacturer (Norsk Hydro) to have quantities of the formulation manufactured on a pilot plant in Norway in quantities sufficient for explosives testing. Field trials undertaken by the Department of Agriculture on the proposed formulation had been very encouraging indeed from the agronomic standpoint, indicating that it is as good as the AN based fertiliser which is the current market leader, and better than Urea, the principal alternative nitrogen source. The explosives tests conducted hitherto are not a safe basis on which to make a forecast about the explosives characteristics of the proposed formulation. Tests on the materials being produced by Norsk Hydro are scheduled for mid November and mid December and should provide a better indication of prospects. Subject to the outcome of these tests, there are grounds for some qualified optimism that the proposed formulation may substantially satisfy the criteria described at paragraph 2. It was originally hoped to complete the UK side of the research by end November but the indications are that it may now run on into January. The ROI research has also shown some promising results and has identified substances which, if incorporated in the proposed formulation, should help to frustrate "recovery" of potentially explosive substances. Details of the research work in the UK and the ROI are given at appendices A and B respectively.