

CONFIDENTIAL

351/2

CONFIDENTIAL

B/2/23/MLR



Dr Mawhinney (B&L)M

cc	PS/Sofs (B&L)	M
	PS/Mr Scott (B&L)	M
	PS/PUS(L)	M
1.	Mr Bloomfield	
	Mr Stephens	
	Mr Burns	M
	Mr Gilliland	
	Mr Innes	
	Mr Spence	
	Mr Wood	M
	Mr McConnell	
	Mr Blackwell	

2. *Scrup A1 10.*

PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF SECURITY

During a recent conversation which the Secretary of State and Mr Scott had with the Chief Constable and the GOC, the point was made that there was still a problem in getting across to the people of the Province - not least those in the minority community - what the security forces were trying to do to protect them and what had actually occurred in specific incidents. It was suggested that this called for a very positive and proactive form of PR, though it must at all times stick firmly to the truth and must exclude anything in the nature of "black propaganda". It was felt that this was something on which the lead could best be taken by NIO, in association with the RUC and the Army; there were doubts, however, whether existing staff effort would be adequate for the task.

2. As an example of what more might be done, it was suggested that a favourable impression could often be achieved through interviews with police and Army personnel on television and radio. It was not thought that this would give rise to any security difficulties (though it was noted that there were frequently legal difficulties in issuing a full account of an incident immediately after it had occurred).

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

3. The Secretary of State expressed considerable interest in the idea that had been put forward, which coincided closely with his own thinking, and he indicated that he would give it very careful consideration. This seems to be a matter which falls within the purview of your Presentational Strategy Group. I wonder, therefore, if you would be willing to take on board an examination of the means to promote greater public understanding of the Government's security policy, of the terrorist threat and of the actions of the security forces. I am sure that the Secretary of State would be grateful for an early report of the Group's conclusions.

17 February 1987

  
ROBERT ANDREW

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-2-