

MR. Watkins

10.4

PS/MR. Wheeler (L.B.)
Sig members

FROM: ANDY WOOD
DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SERVICES

DATE: 7 NOVEMBER 1993

Mr Williams
Mr Steele

ASST
SEC

162/11

11 NOV 1993

CENT MBW SEC

UNDER/
SEC

393/11

10 NOV 1993

SECURITY INFORMATION EFFORT

I attach a paper for consideration at tomorrow's meeting, which builds upon my minute of 27 September and offers an outline brief against which practical detailed research and development could be carried forward.

We have, I believe, taken a long time to reach this point and if members of SIG agree that this "work programme" is sensible and appropriate then I stand ready to proceed as suggested in my earlier minute ie to dedicate to the task an experience information specialist for, say, 3 months (assuming he can be freed of other duties).

While it is not specifically addressed in the paper, I would anticipate that out of all the research and development work it proposes, there will emerge clear pointers on the sensible size and location of appropriate machinery to undertake any campaign which is ultimately deemed appropriate and feasible.

Andy Wood

A WOOD

Make a tape

FW-977

In the center

This ppr. was generally
welcomed at SIG today, but
more detailed comments in

writing were sought by
24 Nov.. Confident for a draft

which should, inter alia,
suggest a stronger link with
the JED main office to make
the initial point at pers. F.
10.4

SECURITY INFORMATION EFFORT - THE OUTLINE OF A WAY FORWARD

1. Over the past 2 to 3 years considerable thought has been devoted to the means of securing a better perception and understanding of the Government's security policy. As a result of these deliberations positive progress has been made eg -

- in devising themes to hurt the terrorists;
- in identifying a lexicon of words and phrases to use and to avoid;
- in attempting to "understand your enemy" in PIRA, and the Republican viewpoint generally;
- in devising machinery for a more measured response to major incidents;
- in identifying a Principal Information Officer with specific responsibility for security matters.

2. However the same degree of progress has not been made on one of the principal areas of debate, the recognised need to devise and implement a broadly based, strategically planned public relations campaign encompassing both short and long-term aims and measures.

Much has already been said and written about the generalities of such a campaign. This paper seeks to put some flesh on those bones and to offer some more specific thoughts on how those generalities might translate into practice.

It is neither comprehensive nor prescriptive but illustrative and the detailed work of establishing precisely how these operational areas and techniques should be researched, implemented and measured would fall to whoever carries the work forward.

General Principles

- a. While the campaign will seek to develop a long-term approach to the problem, it must clearly be capable of accommodating, and using to advantage, short-term issues eg our approach to specific incidents, remarks and proposals etc; we do not always have the luxury of setting the agenda.
- b. The news and current affairs media will remain the principle vehicle for disseminating the Government view, with much more emphasis on turning to advantage the multiplicity of opportunities they offer. However this should in future form part of a co-ordinated campaign using all other appropriate public relations techniques.
- c. The campaign should be subject to regular monitoring to assess its effectiveness and value.
- d. The security forces must be subscribing partners in principle and concept, and major contributors in day to day terms, although they will quite properly reserve their right to operational individuality.
- e. It follows therefore that a first principle for the study is the recognition of that concept of operational individuality and within the concept to offer suggestions for greater co-operation and security force contribution to the overall task. View of security policy and activities will be heavily dependant for success on having in place policies which are seen, or perceived to be, having effect.

4. The Baseline

It will be essential to establish clearly at the outset the objectives of the campaign, in specific terms - what do we wish to get out of a stronger information effort eg -

- a. Northern Ireland news and current affairs media, encompassing:-

- a. Better media and public understanding of policy;
etc occurring naturally or contrived by us for
- b. Realisation that security is not a "stand-alone" area;
- c. Understanding of the difficulties facing Government and the security forces - especially when things are not going our way;
Secretary of State or Ministers
- d. A better flow of information to the security forces and more evidence of support for them; and political correspondents and those at editorial level, by way of some
- e. Some indication of growing public support for Government security policies and for the security forces who execute those policies.

(iv) Particular attention to weekly paper editors, who
This would all be founded on an updated, simple, statement of security policy, and would involve an assessment of current perceptions of security policy in different areas of the community. It would also require an assessment of current security information activities and their impact, including progress made during the past 2-3 years, and lessons learned along the way, etc. partly since daily newspapers/broadcasters covering the scene here are GB based, and partly because there is a serious security threat to mainland GB which has its roots in the Northern Ireland problem and which is obviously the subject of much concern

5. The Means

It should be accepted at the outset that any attempt to improve the public view of security policy and activities will be heavily dependent for success on having in place policies which are seen, or perceived to be, having effect. partly important, partly for similar reasons of Northern Ireland coverage from

A total communications approach to securing an improvement in the community perception of security policy and activities might involve activity in all of the following areas:- so have an interest in persuading people in the ROI that we

- a. Northern Ireland news and current affairs media, encompassing:-

- (i) Normal coverage of announcements, visits, reactions etc occurring naturally or contrived by us for publicity or other purposes;
- (ii) Articles specially prepared for newspapers (particularly local newspapers) in the name of the Secretary of State or Ministers;
- (iii) Cultivation and education of journalists, especially security and political correspondents and those at editorial level, by way of more briefings/meetings with Ministers, senior officials, and security chiefs;
- (iv) Particular attention to weekly paper editors, which could produce useful results, especially if done occasionally by Ministers.

local: UK?

b. News and current affairs outside Northern Ireland:-

- (i) The GB dimension requires particular attention, partly since many newspapers/broadcasters covering the scene here are GB based, and partly because there is a serious security threat to mainland GB which has its roots in the Northern Ireland problem and which is obviously the subject of much concern and thought in the Home Office and police forces across the country.
- (ii) The ROI media is equally important, partly for similar reasons of Northern Ireland coverage from a base outside the Province, and partly because the ROI has a common interest in security issues especially in border areas; we also have an interest in persuading people in the ROI that we

operate a fair, unbiased and reasonable security policy.

(iii) London based and visiting overseas media people, particularly from USA, Canada and EC partner countries also merit attention if we are to seek balanced and fair coverage of Northern Ireland affairs and defuse the propaganda efforts of PIRA supporters.

- c. Paid advertising has proved useful in getting across certain types of message and should continue to play a part in the overall mix. The persuasive power of the visual image is enormous and the nature of television commercials offers an opportunity to apply our own particular gloss and to vary it and the message at will.

To capitalise on its success, television would need to be backed by radio, press and poster publicity to ensure that the message is constantly before the public.

It might also be helpful to consider other themes not linked to the Confidential Telephone, to avoid the "switch-off" factor.

- d. "Lobbyists and opinion "formers" - there are in the community many people totally opposed to violence and whose voices would be influential in the media and much of the wider community. While perhaps not in agreement with every aspect of security policy, and particular its execution by the security forces, they might nevertheless support the general thrust of our effort and rationale.

If even some of these people, properly approached and correctly briefed, could be persuaded to lend their voices to

our efforts (though not identifying themselves with Government) they would do so with a high degree of community credibility and would be a useful force.

- e. Consideration should be given to extending the programme of meetings between Ministers, officials etc and local groups and organisations around the Province. Some may be worthy of publicity but their principle value would be in spreading the gospel by personal contact and influence.

These could also form a useful part of the information gathering and impact assessment process.

- f. Similar local level meetings may already be part of the security forces' programme. It might however be examined to see if it could be enhanced and contribute more fully to the wider effort.

As part of such an examination the security forces should perhaps consider whether sufficient emphasis is given during training to enable more junior ranks to carry out their duties without risk of alienating any section of the community.

- g. Very occasionally, it might be considered worthwhile to produce a message, statement or appeal which would be mailed to every household in the Province. While expensive and sometimes devalued by a welter of other material it offers one means of ensuring that the message is received in full and without advance interpretation and/or comment by media, politicians etc.

6. Themes/Messages/Audiences

Clearly there are different target audiences we wish to reach,

with different messages, but broadbrush promotional means - news releases, speeches, advertising etc - do not lend themselves to the fine targeting of audiences. To the extent that this is required therefore it will have to be achieved either by a carefully sustained balance of approach or by the coding of messages sent out on a broad basis. It may also be possible to use narrowly defined avenues of approach, eg meetings/briefings of target groups, direct mail, by influencing weekly papers, which generally serve one community only and have little impact outside that area.

More work may need to be done to further identify perceptions and wrong impressions in both communities, including what they would like to see happen and explaining why it can/cannot be done. Achieving the right balance and applying it consistently will be important.

Some possible themes which could be useful in demonstrating success or otherwise securing support might include:-

- a. making more capital out of security force successes;
- b. linking conviction and sentences to often long-forgotten crimes;
- c. being more open about the rationale for policies;
- b. better and more timely explanation where there are failures, specific or more general;
- e. a more focused look at upcoming events/anniversaries etc so that our response or treatment can be properly planned and co-ordinated eg the 25th Anniversary of "the Troubles" next year;

- f. identifying and stressing the element of pure gangsterism/criminality which lies behind much paramilitary activity;
- g. making more of the fact that it is the terrorists themselves and their activities which are preventing solutions and peace;
- h. using some details of terrorist activities prevented, especially through information received;
- i. stressing that violence is self-perpetuating;
- j. maximising evidence that the great majority really do want peace and are willing to do something about it.

7. Research

A continuous programme of research will play a vital role in discovering the full range of community perceptions and attitudes to security, and in monitoring progress in altering these perceptions, attitudes and actions.

Contributions to the overall picture may come from eg -

- a. continuing research programmes by PPRU;
- b. market research in connection with the testing of security advertising;
- c. information gleaned by the security forces;
- d. calls made to the Confidential Telephone;

- e. increase/decrease/nature of the levels of violence;
- f. systematic monitoring of news media and assessment of changes in their attitude;
- g. similar monitoring of the media for changes of attitude in the community/paramilitaries etc;
- h. contacts with community leaders;
- i. reports received through Foreign Office from post overseas;

8. The Wider Dimension

There is a tendency in many parts of Government to regard themselves as divorced from the unpleasant business of politics and security and to ignore them. This should not be; security policy costs and activities impact upon all socio-economic policies and upon every arm of Government.

The security information strategy should recognise this fact and incorporate some machinery for ensuring that Departments and bodies such as IDB and NITB make some contribution to solutions and presentation. Unpopular as it may be there are occasions when reference to the security dimension could and should be made in the context of statements/arrangements - if only to drive home the message that the security effort diverts resources. The human and financial cost of job losses through bombings could be more effectively played up in this way, with blame placed squarely with the perpetrators.

A further area which might be examined, despite the obvious difficulties, is the scope for persuading the ROI Government to adopt a higher profile in support of security policies and activities on this side of the Border. They could certainly

influence attitudes/perceptions in the media and elsewhere, both in Ireland and abroad.

They might also eg be persuaded to promote their own confidential telephone system and use it as an opportunity to deliver a security message.

9. Mechanics

There will be 3 strands to these efforts:-

- a. The long-term, ongoing, strategic thinking and development of plans;
- b. Everyday executive work in carrying through the various proactive elements of the emerging strategy;
- c. Everyday executive work in connection with speeches, statements, House business, visits, response to incidents and other everyday developments.

Of the work categorised above, the executive functions at b. and c. fall naturally to the Northern Ireland Information Service although they would of course be subject to input from other sources and perspectives.

10. Priorities/timescales/resources

These areas cannot be addressed here in any depth, and will be an early concern of those tasked with developing a full strategy. In a different sense it can also be said with certainty that the entire exercise will require to be given high priority by ministers, senior officials and security chiefs - without drive and commitment at that level it will undoubtedly prove ineffective.

It is worth recording however, that any programme of activities of sufficient scale to make real impact will inevitably carry a price tag greatly in excess of the present budget, which is mainly for security advertising and is itself inadequate.

INFORMATION SERVICE

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