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FROM: MARTIN HOWARD
PS/SECRETARY OF STATE
MARCH 1995

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14 MAR 1995
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CIVIL SERVICE

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RECEIVED 14 MAR 1995

- cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) [2&3] - B
- PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) [4&5] - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) [6&7] - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) [8&9] *1. has [unclear] 15/3* - B
- PS/Mr Fell [10] *2. has [unclear]* - B
- Mr Legge [11] *[unclear]* - B
- Mr Thomas [12] *14.3* - B
- Mr Williams [13] *Mr Williams* - B
- Mr Leach [14] *to see [unclear]* - B
- Mr Bell [15] *return* - B
- Mr Wood (L&B) [16&17] *Stee* - B
- Mr Steele [18] *13/3* - B
- Mr Perry [19] - B
- Mr Stephens [20] - B
- Mr Bramley [21] - B

MR POPE [1] - B

NI FORCE LEVELS - RELOCATION OF THE DRUMADD ROULEMENT BATTALION

The Secretary of State was very grateful for your minute of 13 March enclosing a draft press statement and Q and A for tomorrow's announcement of the relocation of the Drumadd Roulement Battalion. The Secretary of State is content with both drafts subject to some minor amendments which I have incorporated in the attached re-draft: the changes are shown in bold type.

SIGNED

MARTIN HOWARD
PS/Secretary of State

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ANNEX A

DRAFT PRESS STATEMENT

The Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP, today announced the relocation of an Army unit from the Province. Sir Patrick said:

"Since the IRA declaration of 31 August and the CLMC statement of 13 October I have, with the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding, kept under very close review the level of Army support for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Our continuing concern has been that that support should continue only for so long as there is a need for it.

A wide range of measures has been taken by the security forces since the ceasefires to reduce the number of soldiers on the streets. As a result, for the first time in many years large parts of the Province are being patrolled by the RUC without direct Army support. These steps have been accompanied by a number of other measures which have combined to reduce significantly the impact of the security situation on the people of Northern Ireland.

The Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding now judge that, as a further step, one major Army unit currently serving in Northern Ireland can be relocated. This unit - 5 Regiment Royal Artillery - will be relocated from the Province within the next 2 weeks to return to Great Britain,

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where it will remain available at short notice to re-deploy here if it should once more be needed. Its intended successor will be similarly available and fully trained.

This decision has been taken solely on the basis of the operational judgement of the security forces' commanders. It reflects the improved security situation and is a further step towards normality."

The Secretary of State added:

"The move will also relieve pressure on military accommodation and training facilities in the Province, end family separations that are no longer necessary, and enable the unit to concentrate again on training for its primary role.

? *Ministry in GB.*

The decision can, however, be quickly reversed should that prove necessary. The Government will continue to ensure that the police continue to receive whatever level of military support the Chief Constable judges they require."

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DRUMADD ROULEMENT BATTALION (DRB) - LINES TO TAKE

- Q1. Does this mean that HMG regards the ceasefires as permanent?
- A1. You are well aware of our position on the working assumption. This move is a sensible and balanced operational response to a continuing reduced level of violence and is a natural consequence of the much reduced levels of Army patrolling across the Province.
- Q2. This is a concession to Sinn Fein/IRA. It reflects a "secret" deal.
- A2. This is absolutely not the case. The decision has been taken on purely operational grounds by the security forces commanders. It reflects the much reduced terrorist threat and the consequent need for direct Army support to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. It relieves serious resulting difficulties for the Army.
- Q3. What political pressure was put on the Chief Constable/GOC to "speed up" the peace process?
- A3. None. I have already made it absolutely clear this was an operational decision. It was based on the analysis of the need by the security forces commanders and them alone.
- Q4. What further moves are in the pipeline?
- A4. I clearly cannot comment on operational issues which are for the Chief Constable and General Officer Commanding. They keep the operational need under continuous review and it is for them to decide on the resources that they require to meet that need.

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Q5. Where is the Unit based now?

A5. Various bases in East Tyrone and South Armagh.

Q6. Where is the Unit going?

A6. It is returning to its base in Great Britain. I would not wish to comment in detail on operational movements.

Q7. Where are their replacements based?

A7. The Unit which would have replaced 5 Regiment will also remain at its base in Great Britain. When it takes over that task it too will remain ready to move, at short notice, to Northern Ireland should the Chief Constable and General Officer Commanding decide that there is a need for it to do so. It has been fully trained for the role.

Q8. How long would it take to get the Unit here if a need is identified?

A8. This is an operational issue on which I would not wish to comment - but the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding have judged that the time-scale is acceptable to meet any need.

Q9. How many soldiers are leaving?

A9. About 400.

Q10. How many soldiers remain in Northern Ireland overall?

A10. Over 17,000 soldiers remain deployed in the Province. Because this battalion will continue to be committed to Northern Ireland duties, 18 major units will remain available to support the RUC as required.

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Q11. Do we need as many of these in a time of peace?

A11. This is primarily a judgement for the security forces commanders. But it will be wrong to take any decisions without careful consideration of the security forces ability to respond to any future developments. As has been made clear on a number of occasions our aim remains to remove soldiers from the streets of Northern Ireland as soon as the situation allows.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

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FROM: S M POPE
Security Policy and Operations Division 1
13 March 1995

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cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Williams - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Bramley - B



1413
a. M. W. Watson

1. Mr Perry [Agreed NP 13/3/95]
2. PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

NORTHERN IRELAND FORCE LEVELS - RELOCATION OF THE DRB

I refer to PS/Secretary of State's minute of today. I attach a bull points briefing for Ministers to use in discussion with back-benchers. HQNI are aware that the announcement will be made at noon tomorrow. Copy recipients will wish to note that information remains confidential until then.

2. Mr Steele will brief the Irish at 0930 hours on 14 March.

[SIGNED]

S M POPE
Ext 27030

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FORCE LEVELS IN NI - DRUMADD ROULEMENT BATTALION - BULL POINTS

Current force levels

- In 1992, in the light of the security situation then prevailing, 2 additional Army Units were deployed to Northern Ireland to support the RUC. The operational judgement of the Chief Constable and General Officer Commanding is that one of these Units (of approximately 400 soldiers) can now be relocated to its home base in GB while remaining on short notice to return if necessary.

Reasons for decision

- The Chief Constable and GOC have concluded, on purely operational grounds, that it is safe to reduce the numbers of soldiers actually in Province (by, in this case, about 400).
- A reduced requirement for direct Army support of the RUC (eg the ending of daylight patrolling in Belfast and other areas) means that fewer soldiers need to be retained in the Province.
- The Unit involved (5 Regiment, Royal Artillery) will remain committed to NI and will be retained at short notice to return should the Chief Constable and GOC require it. Its successor Unit is already nominated and will complete its training and be ready to deploy fully trained at short notice should the need arise.
- There is no question of dropping our guard. The IRA and Loyalist ceasefires are only a matter of months old. Terrorist capabilities remain. The security forces will retain the ability to respond and to protect and reassure the community. This decision is, like all other post-31 August security measures taken by HMG, reversible should the need arise.

Numbers

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- At 13 March, over 13,000 members of the RUC (including over 4,500 RUC (Reserve)) and over 18,000 soldiers (including 5,000 Home Service members of the Royal Irish Regiment) were serving in NI. The Army figures represent 18 major Units. The number of security forces personnel committed to NI will remain unchanged as result of this relocation, as the Unit will remain committed to NI in its home base.

Other operational factors

- The reduction in levels of Army patrolling has increased pressure on Army accommodation and training facilities in NI.
- This decision will relieve that pressure, allow soldiers to spend more time with families and enable the Unit to concentrate on training for its primary role. The decision can be quickly reversed and troops deployed effectively from their home base should the need arise.

Military support for RUC

- The Government will continue to ensure that the RUC receive whatever level of military support they require.
- This is not a decision taken to 'speed up the peace process' nor is it a 'concession' to anyone. The decision has been taken solely on operational grounds. It represents a sensible and balanced operational response to a much reduced level of threat.

Other moves?

- It is for the Chief Constable and GOC to advise on operational requirements and on the resources they require. Adjustments to deployments are based entirely on their security advice.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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