

R E S T R I C T E D

NOTE OF A MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE SECURITY FORCES AND THE COMMUNITY (CSFC) HELD ON 8 AUGUST IN THE SPOB OPS ROOM

Those Present:

Mr Perry (Chair)
Mrs Todd (Deputy Chair)
Mr Woods (Prin Civrep, 3 Bde)
Mr Wilson (PANI)
Mr Sterling (PANI)
Ms McKnight (PANI)
Mr Groves (SEO CIV/MIL POL, HQNI)
Mr Jagelman (Central Secretariat)
Ms Lilley (HQNI)
Mr Armstrong (Civrep 8 Bde)
Mr Harkness (Civrep 39 Bde)
Ms Harper (Anglo-Irish Secretariat)
Mr Barbour (Secretary)
Mrs Gamble (SPOB)

Apologies were received from:

Mr Stephens (CIVSEC, HQNI)
Mr Margetts (SPOB)
Dr Smyth (PAB)
Mr Baird (Prin Civrep, 8 Bde)
Mr Dalzell (Prin Civrep, 39 Bde)
Mr Fisher (Anglo-Irish Secretariat)
Lt Col Moody (Military Liaison officer)
Mr Rogers (POB)

Mr Perry opened the meeting, noting that it took place against the background of serious recent disorder at sites across Northern Ireland in connection with marches which had resulted in a fundamental change in attitudes towards the RUC across both communities.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

2. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

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MATTERS ARISING

3. Mr Groves reported that the new mechanism to deal with helicopter complaints was still under consideration. It was hoped that it would be implemented in a few weeks time after Civrep comments had been considered.

HQNI

4. Mr Groves reported that despite the disorder of recent weeks, there did not appear to have been any serious impact on the level of complaints against the Army. Only 2 formal complaints had been received in the past two months and both were of a relatively minor nature. This meant that only 7 complaints had been made against the Army for the whole of 1996 to date.

PANI

5. Mr Wilson reported that although the figures for June (294 complaints) had been up slightly on May, the month of July had seen 421 complaints which was the highest figure on record. A full analysis of the complaints would not be available until the September meeting although it was noticeable that complaints of assault and arrest had increased for July and complaints from areas such as Ballymena, Bangor, Newtownards had also increased. Somewhat surprisingly, the number of complaints for Craigavon and Londonderry remained broadly steady.

6. Mr Wilson went on to explain that civil claims had now been received, including what appeared to be a test case from some lower Ormeau Road residents. There were early indications that the figures for August would also prove to be a difficult month.

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ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

7. Ms Harper reported on the complaints that had been received from the Irish side which included one in which a person had lost their eye as a result of a plastic baton round being fired in Keady. Ms Harper noted that there had been a strained atmosphere at Maryfield since the time of the Drumcree stand-off, which was only now beginning to thaw.

PRIN CIVREP 3 BDE

8. Mr Woods reported that support for Sinn Féin had clearly increased since Drumcree, with the party regaining any support lost as a result of the Manchester bombing. The nationalist community in the brigade area had felt betrayed by the RUC over action at Drumcree. It was felt that recent events could help PIRA recruitment and tourism was already being affected. There was apprehension that terrorism would come back onto the streets and that the political talks would fail without a Sinn Féin presence. There was frustration that the Unionists were refusing to talk about real issues. The feelings of both communities were as far apart as they had ever been.

Bessbrook

9. Relations with the security forces were reasonably good. Some thought was being given to closing High Street in which a temporary VCP was located. It was hoped that this would be avoided if at all possible.

Crossmaglen

10. The sangar on the Square continued to be paint-bombed from time to time and a new IRA sign had appeared:

"Simply the best, Richardson's Fertiliser. Tried and tested at home and abroad by the IRA."

Keady

11. Following some riots on 27 July, relations had been badly affected in the town. Some nationalists had been particularly upset when the RUC were alleged to have cheered when plastic baton rounds had been fired.

East Tyrone

12. Francis Rocks, a member of the Police Authority had called for the RUC to be disbanded and it was felt that he might resign.

Pomeroy

13. There was evidence of continuing discrimination against Protestant shops in the town by nationalist shoppers. Similar problems were being reported in Aughnacloy and Newtownhamilton.

Search and damage claims

14. Search and damage claims were up slightly, mainly in respect of fences and crops.

Royal Black Preceptory marches

15. There was some concern that forthcoming marches by Blackmen in Armagh and Keady could be difficult.

Helicopters

16. 75 complaints in respect of helicopter activity had been received, mainly from South Armagh.

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Drumcree

17. Drumcree was, quite simply, a disaster for both communities and their relationships with the police. They were now as far apart as ever. There was a total loss of confidence in the RUC and there was criticism of its senior officers. Father Dooley, the Parish Priest in Drumcree, had said that relations between the RUC and local nationalists were at an all time low. There was a perception that the RUC had not been impartial in their dealings at Drumcree and there were some allegations of collusion in that a Catholic street had been attacked by a loyalist mob immediately after 4 landrovers had been taken away to perform other duties on 11 July. (The SDC who had met with Fr Dooley afterwards, had admitted that the redeployment had been a mistake.) There was also a hardening of attitudes towards the decommissioning question with the Sinn Féin position becoming more favourable.

CIVREP 8 BDE

18. Mr Armstrong reported that there had been civil disturbances amongst loyalists in Aghadowey, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Dervock, Garvagh, Larne, Limavady, Londonderry, Maghera, New Buildings and Tobermore from 7-11 July and in Ballycastle, Bellaghy, Dungiven, Kesh, Londonderry, Newtownbutler and Omagh amongst nationalists from 11-14 July. The most serious disturbances had been in the Bogside from 11-13 July and in the town centre on 13/14 July, but it was reported that the forgiving attitude displayed by Mrs Teresa McShane on the death of her son had done much to curtail further disturbances in the city. There had also been attacks on property across the brigade area and the bomb at the Killyhevlin Hotel had surprised many people.

19. The boycotting of Protestant businesses by Catholics in Co Tyrone and Fermanagh had been followed later by tit-for-tat action on Catholic businesses in Castlederg. The attempted removal of the UUP Mayor, Cllr Richard Dallas, by the SDLP had resulted in a denial of support services to him and was a further indicator of

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community tensions. There was little or no cross-community activity and the annual Killeter fair near Castlederg, which had been reinstated during the ceasefires, had been cancelled.

20. It was reported in Newtownstewart that 30 people had transferred their bank accounts because they had seen their bank manager at Drumcree and later on the Deputy Manager had been spotted at a road block. A diabetic woman in Castlederg had found her pharmacist blocking the road when she had been on her way to get her insulin supply. She had subsequently changed her chemist.

The Apprentice Boys' march

21. One glimmer of hope had been the much welcomed and unique series of meetings chaired by John Hume MP between the Apprentice Boys of Derry and the Bogside Residents Group. Although they had not succeeded in the end, they had been ground-breaking in themselves. It was also to be noted that a Commemoration of Internment march and other rallies to be held by the Bogside Residents Group on 9 August in the Diamond within the city walls could be used to blockade the city centre as a prelude to orchestrate confrontations against the Apprentice Boys' march the following day. [Note: in the event, the marches in Londonderry over the weekend passed off peacefully.]

CIVREP 39 BDE

22. Mr Harkness reported that events at Drumcree had led to the deployment of the BRB/GRB but no complaints had been received against the Army as a result. It was fair to say that in Belfast, confidence in the RUC was at an all time low.

23. The majority of complaints continued to be helicopter related although the upturn in violence had made it easier to justify their use.

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24. Sinn Féin demonstrations continued to be held outside RUC stations sporadically and it was noticeable that these and other re-routing demonstrations had grown in size and that some SDLP representatives were also taking part. The SDLP constituency office in West Belfast were very gloomy and were convinced that Dr Hendron MP had "no chance" of re-election.

25. All other parades had passed off relatively peacefully.

Punishment beatings

26. Punishment beatings continued mainly against youths involved in the sale of drugs or theft. This was tolerated by the local communities who had no confidence in the police.

Sectarianism

27. Sectarian violence had increased at all interfaces and some 200 families had been forced to move out of the Torrens and Oldpark area of North Belfast. It was not generally known that some Sinn Féin activists had advised Catholic families to move out. There had been calls for an increase in security at peacelines and walls across the city. There were no obvious cross-community contacts.

OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

28. In concluding the discussion, Mr Perry noted that recent events had proved disastrous for the police, political development and community relations. Old attitudes had re-emerged which it had been hoped had been weakening. The forthcoming weekend in Londonderry would be crucial and it was possible that the RUC would be the long term losers.

29. The Secretary of State had announced a review of parades and marching to be headed by Sir Peter North and assisted by Fr Crilly and the Very Rev John Dunlop. It was expected that they would report by the end of January 1997. The expectations of what could

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be achieved from the review remained to be seen; it was hoped that it might provide some baseline for proposals around which agreement could be sought amongst the parties involved. A second review had also been announced into the RUC's procedures and training for handling public order situations including the use of plastic baton rounds. What was clear was that the RUC's incremental approach towards policing marches over the past 10 years has now been shattered. The nationalist community had mobilised around the issue of consent in a way that had not been seen since the hunger strikes.

30. Mr Sterling reported that the tensions in the Police Authority had been evidenced as a result of events at Drumcree. He believed that it would be a great success if the membership could be kept together; certainly nationalist members were very unhappy although the vote of no confidence proposed against the Chief Constable had eventually been withdrawn after his appearance before the Authority. There was, however, a feeling amongst the Authority members that the police had not been impartial and it was probable that Francis Rocks would resign at some stage. There was also concern about Trevor Wilson's action at Drumcree. To some extent the announcement of the two reviews had helped thwart Authority calls for an inquiry. Some members were concerned that the RUC were continuing to purchase baton rounds but it was clear that, like the RUC, PANI would need to re-establish its credibility. It was intended that a survey of public attitudes towards the police would be sought at some time in September. One chairman of the Police Liaison Committee had resigned and it was possible that there would be further difficulties ahead.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

31. The next meeting of the CSFC will take place on 19 September at 2.30 pm in the Stormont House Conference Room.

[signed]

CLIVE BARBOUR
SHA Ext 27019

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