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FROM: C COLLINS
Police Division
4 January 1995

*Attachment received
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reply issued
6/11)*

*109. [initials]
1 - [unclear]
2 - [unclear]*

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
Mr Daniell-B
Mr Steele-B
Mr Williams-B
Mr Wood-B

C
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- 9 JAN 1995
CENT SEC
15/11

PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

SIZE OF THE RUC;
LETTER FROM THE POLICE ASSOCIATION

*cc [unclear] [unclear]
[unclear] [unclear]*

The Secretary of State will recall that an interview he gave to Mr Drax of the Yorkshire Post on 21 December was widely reported in the local media over Christmas. Most significantly, the Secretary of State was misrepresented as saying that if permanent peace were established, the RUC would be reduced in size to some 3,500 officers.

2. Although we moved quickly to reassure the Police Federation that this was a misrepresentation, the further reporting since 23 December has led Mr Beattie to write to the Secretary of State on behalf of the Police Association (which comprises ACPO, the Superintendents' Association and the Police Federation).

3. I attach a draft reply which seeks to reassure the Association that

- there is no blueprint for the changes which might be needed to the RUC in the event of an established peace;
- nor is there a considered basis for a figure of 3,500 officers as the Force which would be needed in that scenario;

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- but that if we come to carry out a planning exercise we will do so on the basis of a professional assessment, informed by consultation with all relevant interests.

4. While the reassurance provided by the draft letter is limited, it would act as a bridge between our position up to now (that no planning has begun) and our imminent position (that questions about long term change must be addressed now) by setting out some of the steps we intend to take.

5. It would be helpful if a reply to Mr Beattie's letter could issue by Friday 6 January, as this would enable its publication in the January edition of Police Beat which would be seen this month by every RUC officer, achieving maximum impact.

Signed

C COLLINS

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hcc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Legge
Mr Thomas
Mr Daniell
Mr Steele
Mr Williams
Mr Wood
Mrs Collins

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY SECRETARY OF STATE

Thank you for your letter of 3 January on behalf of the Police Association. I am glad to have this opportunity to assuage the concerns about coverage in the local media of remarks I made in an interview with the Yorkshire Post.

I enclose a copy of the full transcript of my interview. As you will see from the relevant passage, I was at some pains to emphasise that I was discussing a hypothetical situation which may arise in the future, when we would have built an established peace in Northern Ireland. Against that background, there would be a need for change in the RUC, as is widely acknowledged; and I note and welcome the Police Association's recognition of the need for change in the police service.

But we are by no means at that stage yet, nor have we begun to plan on that basis. There is no blueprint for the future structure or establishment of the RUC. There is therefore no properly analysed and considered basis for a figure of 3,500 officers as the size of Force which might be needed for ordinary policing in the event of permanent peace; this is one of the factors which will require the most careful consideration.

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We are, of course, in an evolving situation and it may be that we will soon want to address questions about long-term changes. If that proves to be the case, we will move forward on the basis of a proper professional assessment of policing requirements, informed by consultations with the appropriate interests. That is a commitment shared by both the Chief Constable and the Police Authority. I would add that preparing such a plan would necessarily take some time, and its implementation could well be over a protracted timescale. I would want us to take the time to plan and implement in an orderly, careful way.

We are going through a period of momentous change for Northern Ireland, and I am sympathetic to the concerns which uncertainty about the future may cause to RUC officers. The Prime Minister and I have put on record the Government's sincere appreciation of the contribution made by the RUC to combatting terrorism and bringing us to the point where we are talking seriously of building peace.

I am equally impressed by the steadiness of the RUC in the face of the uncertainty this situation necessarily causes. I hope that you will be able to communicate these views to your members and that they will derive some reassurance from them.

My very best wishes go to all the members of the Police Association for their continued success in 1995.

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POLICE FEDERATION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Please reply to the Secretary

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Sir Patrick Mayhew
Secretary of State
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont House
BELFAST

Our Ref: BJB/DB/41/1

3rd January 1995

Dear Secretary of State

On behalf of the Police Association, which includes A.C.P.O, superintendents' Association and the Police Federation, I am writing to express our collective concern about the coverage given to your recent interview with the Yorkshire Post.

As you know, the interview was unfortunately paraphrased to the extent that the impression was conveyed that normality would result in a Force of some 3,500 officers. This figure caused considerable dismay among our members, mostly because it would entail a major and disruptive reconstruction of the Force but mainly because it is a totally unrealistic appreciation of how Northern Ireland, even with the cessation of terrorist violence, will (n)ever see the normality of the 'pre troubles'.

Despite the efforts of Mr Michael Ancram, our Staff Associations have been less than assured by the Northern Ireland Office and by the loose talk by various authoritative people with regard to the impending changes that Peace will mean.

I can assure you that the Police Association understands the need for change in the Police Service. However, we would be more supportive if there was some evidence of greater coherence and consistency in pronouncements of the Force.

I would appreciate hearing from you - without the dilution or misinterpretation that the Media can bring - on these points.

Yours sincerely

E J BEATTIE QPM
CHAIRMAN