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FROM: N P PERRY
SECURITY POLICY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION
5 JULY 1998

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

DRUMCREE REVIEW MEETING: 5 JULY 1998 - 1500 HOURS

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The Secretary of State held a meeting in Stormont House Conference Room at 1500 hours this afternoon to review the security situation. Also present were Mr Ingram, Mr Steele, Mr Leach, Mr Watkins, Mr Kelly, Mr Warner, Supt Hunter, Lt Col Hodges, Mr McKervill, Ms McCoy and myself.

2. The following areas were discussed:

- a. Operational situation. The **Orange Order** remained determined to march. Their intention appeared to be gradually to reduce the numbers at Drumcree to facilitate other Province-wide support marches. They planned a further meeting tomorrow to discuss their protest plans. The **Spirit of Drumcree** intended to call out over loud speakers the names and addresses of police officers and to picket homes of members of the Parades Commission. The **LVF** planned to attack police homes, possibly starting tonight. Roman Catholic chapels also remained targets for attack, and disorder in Loyalist estates overnight was likely. The LVF had access to weapons if they wished to attack the security forces. The **UVF and UDA** were monitoring the situation, but there were no indications as yet that they intended to become involved. The statement purporting to come from the mid-Ulster UVF had been denied in a newspaper article. On the Garvaghy Road itself, there were reports that **PIRA** members were in the area. PIRA units in a number of places had been instructed to make defensive preparations. Orange Halls were being targeted and hoax calls were likely. The **security force operation** at Drumcree had gone well, and the atmosphere there was quiet and good humoured. Around 3000 people had marched in all, but with onlookers and hangers-on the

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figure at the church might have been closer to 5000. Vehicle checkpoints were in place across a wide area, and the police were determined to prevent busloads of Orangemen being brought into Portadown. Arrangements were being made for a letter of protest from the marchers to be handed to the police. William Bingham had been in touch with the Prime Minister with a view to entering discussions with nationalists: Seamus Mallon was a possible intermediary for this purpose. [Note: Mallon and Bingham are now in touch.]

- b. Exit strategy. An exit strategy would be needed at some point. One possibility would be to generate an event which acknowledged the importance of Orange culture. A conference in the autumn to explore the nature of Orangeism, the role of marching within it, the extent of Government support for Orange culture, and the linkages with Irish culture (including cross community contacts) was one option. This might be accompanied by a Portadown-focused economic initiative, bringing together business people, the voluntary sector and others, possibly also involving a community relations dimension: this might appeal to both sides. The timing of the deployment of such an initiative would be important; it would best be played in a situation where, perhaps after a reasonably lengthy stand-off, the Orange Order was looking for a way out. Initiatives for earlier deployment should also be developed.
- c. Action points. A letter to No 10, copied to colleagues, would issue early tomorrow morning reporting the current situation. A further update would be sent once the Parades Commission's determination on the Ormeau Road was known.
- d. Media handling. Four distinct groups were emerging: the main body of relatively moderate Orange protesters; the Spirit of Drumcree group; moderate Nationalists; and McKenna. McKenna's comments were designed to be inflammatory, and it was important that his allegations were countered before they generated momentum. Mr Ahern was understood to be encouraging him to maintain a low profile. NIO Ministers would take the opportunity presented by forthcoming interviews to re-emphasise the need for calm, express support

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for the RUC, praise the dignity of the marchers to date, and rebut McKenna's criticisms. The opportunity would also be taken to warn that peaceful protest would rapidly become unacceptable if it became associated with unlawful or intimidatory acts. If the anticipated public threats against police officers or others materialised, strong Government condemnation should follow; such threats were likely to play very badly in the wider Unionist community. Further interviews would take place tomorrow morning; decisions on the precise message, and whether the Secretary of State or Mr Ingram should lead, would be taken in the light of events overnight.

[Signed: Nick Perry]

N P PERRY

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cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - e
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L) - e
PS/PUS (B&L) - e
Mr Steele - e
Mr Jeffrey - e
Mr Leach - e
Mr Watkins - e
Mr Kelly - e
Mr Warner - e
Mr Clarke - e
Supt Hunter
Lt Col Hodges

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