



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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**CONFIDENTIAL**

Secret & Personal

14 April, 1987

Mr. A. Ward,  
Secretary,  
Department of Justice,  
72/76 St. Stephen's Green,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Andy,

I enclose a paper on Security Cooperation by the Northern Ireland Office which has been given to us this morning by the British side.

You will be aware that the British side have previously informed us that, while they would wish to discuss the paper at the next meeting of the Conference, they do not expect us to be in a position to reply to it in detail.

We are arranging to have the paper brought to Dublin this evening by Eamon O Tuathail, who is here on other business, and who has been given a copy.

Yours sincerely,



Noel Ryan

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SECURITY CO-OPERATION

NOTE BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

1. We take it as axiomatic that this subject is of vital interest to both Governments. There are two essential reasons. First, terrorism is the single largest impediment to community reconciliation, political progress and economic recovery. Its eradication is therefore of fundamental importance in its own right. There is no doubt that terrorists seek, with some success, to exploit the existence of two separate jurisdictions, both in border areas and elsewhere. Both Governments therefore have a clear and common interest in curbing terrorism and all other forms of paramilitary activity. There can be no substitute for constant and close co-operation between the respective security forces on both sides of the border.

2. Second, terrorism is of immense political importance in terms of unionist perception of the Agreement. Improved security is the sole direct benefit which the unionist population may be able to identify. It was and remains a central objective of the Agreement and is a key yardstick of its success.

The Present Position

3. Genuine and valuable progress has certainly been made. A joint threat assessment was agreed; most of the recommendations of the Joint RUC/Garda Working Party on Intelligence have been or are being implemented; and similarly the agreed recommendations of the Working Party on Operational Planning are being progressed. We also appreciated the co-operation of the Irish side in agreeing a Standard Operating Procedure for our respective security forces in dealing with explosive

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devices on the border, and research on home made explosives is being pursued in a positive way. In the process, the climate of co-operation has been very greatly improved.

4. But such steps are only the necessary precursors to practical and successful co-operation. They should create the conditions for the production and passing of better intelligence, particularly pre-emptive intelligence; for operations on both sides of the border which if not joint, are at least closely co-ordinated, and designed wherever possible to support each other; for combined efforts to resist the terrorists freedom of movement and to interdict their supply lines; and for the swift resolution of problems on either side. In these respects, it is far less easy to point to tangible progress.

5. Terrorist activity has been higher overall since the Agreement came into force, and in recent months their success rate has been high. Predictable though this may have been, it has given a powerful focus for unionist political criticism. We recognise that the benefits of the actions and reorganisation already taken must take some time to come through. Nevertheless it is now nine months since the Working Party on intelligence matters and over six months since that on joint planning reported. A further point is that no new resources have been involved in the implementation of agreed recommendations on the Garda side, but rather a redeployment of existing resources.

6. Following the special Ministerial meeting on cross border security on 31 October 1986, it was stated in the joint record that

'It was therefore now for the two police forces at all levels to carry this work forward. The effectiveness of co-operation would be judged on the basis of results achieved and would need to be regularly reviewed.'

It seems therefore appropriate at this stage to take stock of the progress made, to analyse any difficulties, and to seek a concerted drive for practical results.

#### The Way Forward

7. The initial responsibility for pursuing security co-operation lies with the Garda and the RUC. Any problem which they cannot resolve at police level, including discussions between the Commissioner and the Chief Constable, may be referred to another appropriate forum such as a quadripartite meeting, discussions through the Secretariat, or IC itself. We now propose that the two police forces should be asked to prepare a full survey of the progress so far made together with proposals for accelerating it. This should be submitted through a quadripartite meeting to the following meeting of IC.

8. The quadripartite meeting should also consider the mechanics of communication. In their discussions with the Garda, the RUC are totally independent. They do not report to NIO or NIO Ministers. We understand that some matters for discussion may carry significant political overtones to the Irish side. In such circumstances, a prompt response from the Garda that they are unable by themselves to resolve or provide a definitive answer to a problem would allow the question to be remitted swiftly to a more appropriate forum where it may be brought to some settled conclusion.

9. It may be instructive to cite one or two examples where difficulties have occurred. It is emphasised that these are not raised for purposes of instant resolution, but as examples of serious delays which still occur, and which demonstrate that even the mechanics of co-operation and lines of communication are not working as smoothly as they ought.

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- a. Irish deployments near the South Armagh border. The RUC's Senior Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) (SACC (Ops)) wrote to a Deputy Commissioner of the Garda on 13 November 1986. No reply has been received.
- b. Clady border crossing point. SACC (Ops) wrote to a Deputy Commissioner about the long term future of this crossing point on 17 June 1986, 10 October 1986, 20 October 1986, and 4 November 1986. There has been a recent meeting between the two officers concerned, but the matter is still unresolved.
- c. Army communications with the Garda in emergency. SACC (Ops) wrote to his opposite number on 18 November 1986 about urgent contact through the X-ray radio system between the British Army in the area of Forkhill, Drumackavall etc and the Garda in circumstances of urgency when the RUC were not present. No reply has yet been received.
- d. Communications. A Garda officer was to be appointed to liaise with his RUC opposite number. Following RUC prompting, the RUC have been informed that this has been approved, and an officer designated. The Garda officer however has as yet no authority to discuss the subject matter with the RUC. The potential effect on communications is obvious.

10. We shall therefore be proposing at the forthcoming IC that the quadripartite group should be tasked to provide a full survey of progress so far; to identify any difficulties, and propose means of overcoming them; and to make proposals for accelerating the whole process of security co-operation. In addition the British side would welcome some discussion at IC of the following issues which we regard as significant.

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- a. Joint threat assessment. We should like to confirm whether the assessment which was jointly prepared and agreed is being kept up to date. We see this as a straightforward and factual task, though a vitally important one. The assessment is the instrument through which we should direct our resources towards the destruction of terrorism.
- b. Irish security force deployment to complement intensified British patrolling in South Armagh. As noted in paragraph 9 (a) above, the RUC's approach to the Garda has received no substantive reply.
- c. Emergency communications between the British army and the Garda. (See paragraph 9 (c) above). This not a principle of general application. It would apply only in emergency - as for example immediately following a terrorist incident close to the border where time was of the essence and the RUC were either not deployed or not available. Where the RUC are present, communications will continue to be handled by them. There must in addition be training in communications/radio joint procedures followed by joint exercises to ensure that the procedures are operated with maximum efficiency in an emergency.
- d. Direct RUC participation in questioning of suspects who are in Garda custody, and vice versa. We regard this as a regular and normal feature of police to police co-operation in Europe. It is difficult to see why it is precluded in this case, and even more so to explain it. The point was remitted to one of the legal working groups. The Irish side has explained the difficulties it faces and the British side has made suggestions as to how those difficulties might be overcome. We look forward to an early response, and

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regard it as important that the impetus should be restored as part of a drive for much more coordinated activity between CID North and South aimed at the pursuit of terrorists through the courts.

11. It would in addition be helpful to have up to date information on the resources employed to combat terrorism both North and South of the border. We shall therefore be preparing a paper on the resources used in Northern Ireland, and pass it through the Secretariat.

Summary

12. We value the progress that has already been made. In practical terms, however, this has been confined to the framework and structures through which tangible success should be sought, and we see no inconsistency in welcoming the former while expressing unease about the absence of the latter. It was previously agreed that co-operation should be kept under regular review, and we shall therefore propose that a quadripartite meeting should be tasked with preparing a full analysis of the progress made and difficulties encountered, together with proposals for stepping up activity. It should also give thought to whether the lines of communication are operating smoothly. At the same time, we look forward to some discussion in the forthcoming IC itself on the matters set out in paragraph 10 above.

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