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cc PS/SofS (L&B) T  
PS/Ministers (L&B) T  
PS/EUS (L&B) T  
PS/Mr Bloomfield T  
Mr Stephens T  
Mr Burns T  
NI/Perm Secs T  
Mr Gilliland T  
Mr Wood T



Mr Chesterton

REGULAR REPORTS OF POLITICALLY SENSITIVE ISSUES TO NO 10

I attach a letter which I received yesterday from the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. You will see that it asks for:

- by close of play each Thursday a rolling review in diary form of all the politically sensitive matters within our responsibility which are likely to arise over the following two weeks; and
- brief and punchy speaking notes on political matters which concern the NIO.

2. I should be grateful if you could assume responsibility for providing both of these. In order to meet the requirement for a rolling review of politically sensitive matters, I should be grateful if by close of play each Wednesday you could submit material in the required format for consideration by the Secretary of State overnight and discussion on Thursday morning if necessary. On the second point, I expect that notes would mainly be related to matters reported in the rolling review but of course there may be issues of enduring political sensitivity which should be included.

3. I should be grateful if you could give thought to how both these requirements might be met and advise. The first weekly report should be with us by close of play on Wednesday 18 February, please.

*M.W.*

D J WATKINS  
PS/Secretary of State

11 February 1987

RETURNS FROM:

SECURITY (BELFAST)

DATE: WEDNESDAY .....  
PERIOD COVERED: 2 weeks from  
MONDAY .....

DATE

EVENT

REASONS FOR  
SENSITIVITY

SPEAKING NOTES

11 February

Court verdict  
on paramilitary  
fraud case

Paramilitary receipt  
of public money

Welcome verdict as demonstration of  
success of RUC efforts to choke off  
fraudulent sources of funds to  
Paramilitaries. 140 more cases in  
the pipe-line.

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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

9 February 1987

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*Dear Alan,*

The Prime Minister has asked me to have prepared for her for each Monday morning a summary of political events and issues arising over the following two weeks. This would be the basis of an assessment of the presentational problems and opportunities in the period immediately ahead. To this end, the Prime Minister would like Private Offices to send to me by close of play each Thursday a rolling review, in diary form, of all the politically sensitive matters within your Department's ambit which are likely to arise over the following two weeks. I know that Heads of Information send some of this material to the Prime Minister's Chief Press Secretary in the normal course of information coordination and I am anxious that we should not duplicate work unnecessarily. But I think that the material which I have asked for in this letter would be rather more comprehensive than the material already provided.

The Prime Minister has also asked that Ministers should be reminded about the importance of producing for colleagues, the Whip's office and Heads of Information, crisp and robust speaking notes on political matters which concern each Department's responsibilities. Such notes ought to be prepared as a matter of course for each politically sensitive issue. The Prime Minister believes it particularly important to have speaking notes available as soon as, and preferably before, a politically sensitive issue becomes public. Presentational opportunities are missed if the notes are prepared too late.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, to the Minister of Arts and Libraries and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Nigel Wicks*

(N. L. WICKS)

Alex Allan, Esq.,  
HM Treasury.