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C O N F I D E N T I A L

MEETING OF THE INFORMATION STRATEGY GROUP (OFFICIAL) ON TUESDAY 15  
DECEMBER 1992 AT 2.30PM IN STORMONT HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM.

PRESENT

Mr Steele	Brig Low
Mr Watkins	Mr Bojdys
Mr Jardine	Chief Supt Craig
Mr Rickard	
Mr McNeill	
Mr Margetts	
Mr McCaffrey	
Mr May	
Mrs Black	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Mr Lyon, Mr Lavery.

1. GENERAL REVIEW

Since the last meeting of ISG(O) both the level of threat and activities of the security forces had remained high. There had been a number of serious incidents including bombings, shootings and murders. (Deaths for 1992 to date stood at 82, compared to 89 for the whole of 1991). The terrorists appeared to be determined in their efforts to succeed and although security force activity had stopped PIRA from bringing a large bomb into Belfast city centre they had been able to bring in a number of smaller bombs. The attack on the Army at Crossmaglen demonstrated the initiative of PIRA in South Armagh and had been a very serious well-planned attempt from which the Army personnel had been lucky to escape injury. Reaction of the general public during the period to the disruption caused by the additional security force activity had been muted.

2. PRIORITY ISSUES

a. Political Development

In the intervening period prior to the resumption of any further political Talks, and pending the formation of a new Government in the Republic of Ireland, briefings for members of the four main political parties had been resumed commencing with the Public Expenditure Survey. The parties

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themselves had not yet begun their informal talks and politicians were expected to shortly be focussing their attention on the forthcoming local government election in May 1993. Anticipated requests from Sinn Fein councillors for some measure of protection following recent attacks would be assessed on an individual basis as they arose.

b. Prisons Issues

There had been some further calls for segregation following the protestant paramilitary rocket attack on Belfast Prison on 13 December.

Christmas home leave for prisoners was due to commence on 23 December. The reduction of the qualifying period from 12 to 11 years had been generally well received.

Christopher John Hanna, the former prison officer who was serving a life sentence for his part in an IRA murder, was terminally ill and now had only a short time to live. It was possible that he might release further fabricated information to the media.

The outcome of a judicial review was awaited following the Sunday Times series by Liam Clarke on Sean O'Callaghan (PIRA), and O'Callaghan's protest that the written documentation which he had not been allowed to release to Clarke had been sent by the prison authorities to the RUC.

3. PREPARATION FOR ISG(M)

Revision of Themes to Hurt PIRA, Themes to Hurt Sinn Fein and Themes to Hurt the Loyalist Paramilitary Organisations. The papers were approved for onward transmission to Ministers. The Sinn Fein paper might need to be cleared in the first instance with legal advisers.

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## 4. KNOWN MEDIA PLANS

a. Army

BBC television was planning an "Inside Ulster" programme on the Army. Several features were also under consideration to mark the departure of the GOC from Northern Ireland in 1993, including one by the Daily Telegraph.

b. Lethal Force

The subject of lethal force was likely to be brought to the fore again in January 1993 when controversial inquests spanning the past 8 years were expected to begin. The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights was also taking an interest in the subject.

c. Peter Taylor

The MOD had decided not to offer any assistance to Peter Taylor for the new PANORAMA series entitled 'States of Terror' in which terrorism in Northern Ireland might be featured.

## 5. FORTHCOMING MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES AND SPEECHES

Culture and Identity

The Secretary of State would be making a wide-ranging major speech on 16 December featuring culture and identity. This might be expected to produce some adverse reactions from, amongst others, the protestant paramilitary organisations.

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a. Day of Action on 1 January 1993

Organisers of the day of action on border crossings on 1 January 1993 were planning to rally people from both sides of the border and obtain maximum media coverage for the event.

- b. Media handling by Ministers of Terrorist Incidents in GB  
A paper from the Home Office on handling media coverage of terrorist incidents in GB, which was circulated to all members of the Cabinet, would now be circulated by Mrs Black to those ISG(O) members who were not on the original copy list.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 January 1993 at 2.30 pm in Stormont House Conference Room.

