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17 NOV 1993
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FROM: JACQUELINE BLACK
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
17 NOVEMBER 1993

PRESENT

Sir John Wheeler
Mr Williams
Mr Watkins
Mr Wood
Mr Templeton
Mr Marsh
Mr May

- cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Shannon - B
- Mr Wood (B&L) - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr Rickard - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr McCusker - B
- Mr Lavery - B
- Mr Templeton - B
- Mr Marsh - B
- Mr Maitland - B
- Mr Perry - B
- Mr McCaffrey - B
- Mr May - B
- Chief Constable, RUCHQ - B
- Mr McGookin, RUCHQ - B
- Brig Strudley, HQNI - B
- Lt Col Hicks, HQNI - B
- Mr Gillies, HQNI - B
- CIVAD, HQNI - B

Mr Williams - B

SECURITY INFORMATION GROUP

I attach the record of the meeting of the Security Information Group which was held on Wednesday 10 November 1993.

[Signed]

J A BLACK (MRS)
EXT 27090 SH

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To Jassonelle will
paper for meeting
tomorrow*

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MEETING OF THE SECURITY INFORMATION GROUP ON WEDNESDAY 10 NOVEMBER
1993 AT 11.30 AM IN STORMONT HOUSE

PRESENT

Sir John Wheeler Brig Strudley
Mr Williams Mr Gillies
Mr Watkins Mr McGookin
Mr Wood
Mr Templeton
Mr Marsh
Mr May
Mrs Black
PS/Sir John Wheeler

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Mr Steele

1. **SECURITY INFORMATION STRATEGY**

Mr Williams opened the meeting by welcoming Sir John Wheeler for the discussion on the 'Plan for Information Strategy on Security' and Mr Wood's paper 'Security Information Effort - The Outline of a Way Forward'.

Mr Wood's paper contained an outline brief against which practical detailed research and development could be carried forward. The section on mechanics would form a substantive part of the review to be undertaken by an experienced information specialist, which had now been endorsed by PUS. The crucial question of the additional resources required to set up a dedicated information unit, and where it might best be located, still remained unresolved. It was necessary for long-term strategic thinking to have fully-resourced mechanisms in place, particularly at a time when the Prime Minister was giving a higher priority to Northern Ireland issues.

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The Minister was in full agreement with the thrust of the 'Plan for Information Strategy on Security' and emphasised that in putting our messages across in an effective way the closest co-operation between the NIO, Army and RUC was absolutely essential. Sir John was conscious that the Government was failing to win its case. There was a depth of ignorance among important opinion formers particularly Members of the House of Commons, where this extended to the new intake of MPs, longer-standing Members and those who took an interest in Northern Ireland matters. It was essential to address this gap, especially where there were negative influences at work such as MPs who were active in promoting Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein, and the influence on the general public in GB of those who advocated 'Troops Out' of Northern Ireland. The Minister suggested targeting friends of Northern Ireland in the House of Commons and arranging visits to Northern Ireland by MPs on an ad hoc basis. These would only be of value if contact was maintained and followed up on a regular basis by, for example, a News letter giving up-to-date information on a broad range of Northern Ireland issues. The Minister also acknowledged that different audiences to be addressed required different solutions. He suggested that he might place articles in GB newspapers, tailored to the individual newspaper and its audience.

After a general discussion of the Minister's and others' ideas for future work on information strategy activities, Mr Williams thanked the Minister for attending the meeting. Sir John in turn asked to be kept closely informed of progress on the setting up of the new information unit, whose aim would be to work in addition to, and not detract from, the work of the Information Services.

Mr Williams asked for comments (including nil returns) on Mr Wood's paper to reach him by close of play on Wednesday 24 November. The MOD and FCO would also be given the opportunity to comment.

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Consideration would specifically be given on how to take forward the targeting of visitors to Northern Ireland, including MPs, the House of Commons Defence Committee, other opinion-forming groups and foreign journalists (where the Army had particularly noticed a lack of understanding of Northern Ireland matters). This should also address the follow-up action such as the production of a News letter.

2. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October were approved.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Congressman Newt Gingrich

The British Embassy in Washington had replied to Mr Williams' letter suggesting that Congressman Newt Gingrich might be a potential candidate for a sponsored visit to Northern Ireland. The Embassy was seized of the importance of such visits and would be keeping in contact with the Congressman's office to identify a suitable date, in addition to continuing to identify other suitable figures to target.

4. **GENERAL REVIEW**

Since the last meeting of the Security Information Group, 26 people in the Province had died as a result of terrorist activity. PIRA had killed 12 people - 11 civilians (including one of its own members) and 1 RUC officer. Loyalist terrorists had murdered 14 civilians (including one Protestant ex-UDR soldier at Greysteel). The atrocities on the Shankill Road (10 killed by PIRA) and at Greysteel (7 killed by the UFF) had been widely condemned and Ministerial statements had sought to reassure the community that terrorism would not prevail and that those responsible would

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be brought to justice. The Chief Constable had emphasised that although the situation was very serious it was not out of control. The attack at Greysteel was one of a series in retaliation for the Shankill bombing, and other such attacks carried out by the UFF/UVF included the murder of 2 Catholic council workmen at the Kennedy Way Depot, and of 2 brothers in their home in front of their 11-year-old sister. There had been numerous other serious shooting attacks during the period and attacks on taxis had continued. Significant bombing incidents included the attack on Cookstown Courthouse on 15 October and the MK15 mortar attack on RUC Caledon on 7 November, which landed in the grounds of Caledon Presbyterian Church. In addition there had been 2 incidents where civilians were shot and injured by the Army; the first was on 26 October when a leading PIRA member was shot outside the home of Thomas Begley, the PIRA bomber who died in the Shankill explosion. A soldier had been charged with attempted murder. The second, on 7 November in Carrickmore, appeared to have been an accident. It was unfortunately the case that incidents such as these overshadowed any credit given to the security forces, such as, for example, praise for the way the RUC handled the funeral of Thomas Begley. On the plus side the additional Army manpower in the Province in support of the RUC had helped to stabilise the situation. There had also been some successful arrests and significant finds of arms and explosives including the recovery of a primed radio-controlled improvised explosive device (IED) in the Markets area of Belfast.

5. PUBLICISING SECURITY FORCES' SUCCESSES

It had been noted at the meeting of SCM on 6 October that both the RUC and HQNI were in favour of better publicising the security forces' successes. A paper had been prepared by SPOB on the NIO requirements for information on security force successes. Any information to be released should be

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11640/LO

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readily available and timed and targeted, rather than in the form of a regular statistical bulletin. Highlighting successes might be counter-productive in that it also pointed to the successes of the terrorists, but if used selectively could be extremely effective. For example, the RUC had been able to highlight the fact that more Loyalist than Republican terrorists had been charged in 1993, to counter claims of collusion by the security forces.

SPOB would consider for the next meeting of SIG the way this work might be taken forward. [Action: Mr Marsh].

6. **KNOWN MEDIA PLANS**

Both the Chief Constable and the GOC would be continuing their briefings for the media and other visitors to Northern Ireland over the coming weeks. These would, inter alia, highlight successes by the security forces and emphasise the role and importance of the community in assisting the security forces in their efforts to combat terrorism.

7. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of SIG will be held on Wednesday 8 December 1993 (and not Thursday 9 December as had been agreed at the meeting) at 2.00 pm in Stormont House Conference Room.

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