COMPLAINTS MONITORING GROUP: ESTABLISHMENT OF A DATABASE

FIRST MEETING OF THE GROUP TO ESTABLISH A DATABASE ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE SECURITY FORCES IN NORTHERN IRELAND - 16 MARCH 1989

Those Present:

Mr Bell (LOB) - Chairman
Mr Blackwell (SIL)
Mr Beckett (Statistics Branch)
Mr Donnelly (Statistics Branch)
Mr Harrison (CIVAD)
Principal Secretariat
Mr Davies (LOB) - Secretary

Mr Bell opened the meeting by explaining the need for a Database and
the need for a consistent and reliable data on security force
activity generally, which would have the additional advantage of
enabling CMG to monitor more effectively the pattern of complaints
against the Army and Police.

Mr Blackwell recalled that CMG had been systematically collecting on
a monthly basis a considerable body of data relevant to interactions
between the security forces and the community. But it was clear
that in order to analyse this vast amount of data both over time and
geographically some form of Database would need to be established,
otherwise there was, for instance, a danger of double counting of
statistics. The meeting therefore needed to identify what the
Database could and should do and how this could be achieved.

As a first step it was decided to investigate exactly what
information was already produced by NIO Divisions (LOB, SIL, POB),
HQNI, RUC, ICPC, PANI and Anglo-Irish Secretariat. Each committee
member undertook to establish exactly what their division produced.

1

Mr Beckett (and Mr Donnelly) would have 'bilateral discussions' with the main providers of statistics to see what was currently available. Mr Beckett indicated that he would be happy to approach the RUC, ICPC and PANI but thought that the initial request should more properly come from POB. It was unfortunate that a POB representative was not present. Mr Bell undertook to approach POB separately.

Mr Blackwell indicated that SIL probably held some information on Extradition matters.

Mr Harrison (CIVAD) undertook to check exactly what HQNI produced in the way of statistical information, as he did not want to overload the system with a duplication of requests. He agreed that the VENGEFUL system could be used to provide details of most vehicles checked.

Principal Secretariat explained that the Secretariat held statistics on complaints and undertook to provide the relevant information. Mr Bell indicated that LOB would provide a list of statistics it distributed.

Use of Information

If the Database were to perform all the functions expected of it, it would be necessary to collect information in some detail in terms of key variables. These would need to be defined more precisely in the light of further work, but they would certainly cover, for example:

2

levels of activity; type of activity; location and time of incidents; complaints attributed to their activity. The Database would thereby be able to provide details of the entire 'Northern Ireland Security Environment.'

It was agreed that the information should also be compiled on a precise geographical basis (to be determined), accuracy was essential, and that there would be no attempt in view of the volume of data involved, to obtain information in terms of the new categories from before the new system came into operation. However, the basic security statistics (including details on murders, injuries etc) from 1969 would be included.

Indicators of Levels of Security Force Activity

Discussion then centred around Mr Blackwell's minute of 22 February to Mr Bell. The indicators of levels of Security Force activity set out there were provisionally agreed together with the following additions: number and location of PBR's fired; log of firearms discharged (not including negligent discharges); log of public disorder; numbers and type of incidents involving the Security Forces (not necessarily terrorist related).

The indicators of complaints were also provisionally agreed, but concern was registered that there was a possibility of complaints over a single incident received from separate sources being recorded as separate incidents; however, Mr Beckett confirmed that the computer would filter this.

3

Standardised Form for Complaints

Mr Bell thanked Principal Secretariat for his suggested comprehensive 'standardised' complaint record form (attached to his minute to Mr Masefield of 28 February 1989). It was agreed that the form (using a tick box system) would facilitate collation by Statistics Branch. Following discussion it was decided that the form should also include the headings Date/Time of Incident; Outcome Interim/Final. Under 'Outcome' the sub-section "not substantiated" should also be included. Further refinement was, however, not excluded.

Mr Harrison explained that HQNI might hesitate to indicate the exact Regiment involved in a particular incident. The Committee, as a whole, however, believed that this was essential. It would however be essential to interrogate such data intelligently. There was no question, for instance, of drawing the conclusion that because there might be a high number of complaints against a particular unit, in a particular location or period, that that unit was operating in an insensitive manner. Such figures were at least as likely to reflect organised campaigns against the Security Forces, and the difficulties of operating in particular areas. It was important to remember at all times that the aim of the exercise was to identify patterns of complaints, not to point an accusatory finger at the Security Forces. It was also agreed that the RUC and UDR sub-section should be further split into RUC and RUC Reserve and UDR (Part-Time) and UDR (Full-Time).

4

Data Protection

In response to questions as to whether the database information
would be liable to public access under the recent Data Protection
Act, <u>Mr Beckett</u> explained that there were certain exceptions built
into the Act, including those relating to National Security, which
he believed would protect the material.

9)

Distribution of Data

<u>Mr Beckett</u> suggested that he would provide regular (monthly)
analysis of data which would be distributed to interested parties on
Floppy Disc. The information would be Menu Driven. Also if
required, he would provide special analysis on an ad hoc basis.

Summary of Points Raised and Action

The principal conclusions of the sub-group were that:

1. It was essential that POB be represented at all future meetings
    in order to provide guidance on statistical and related matters
    affecting police activities.

2. Mr Beckett and Mr Donnelly should have bilateral discussions
    with Mr Harrison and Principal Secretariat and after discussion
    with POB, the RUC, PANI and ICPC. On the basis of these talks
    they would provide a paper for discussion at the next meeting
    of the sub-group.

3. LOB would refine details of what might be required from the
    Security Environment Database and circulate a paper for the
    next sub-group meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the sub-group should be held in about a month's
time - exact date to be decided.

G W Davies

G W DAVIES
Law and Order Division

5 April 1989

cc   Those present — B
     Mr Burns — B
     Mr Stephens — B
     Mr Chesterton — B
     Mr Wilson — B
     Mr Shannon — B
     Miss Mills — B

GE 7927

F D

Basis of Army Complaints Statistics

9.   The Chairman asked on what basis HQNI statistics on complaints were compiled; it was unclear how comprehensive a picture they gave of complaints about security force activity in general, rather then simply allegations of misbehaviour. CIVAD explained that the figures excluded claims for compensation and complaints about routine operational activity, such as helicopter noise. Such complaints were fairly frequent, although not in hundreds. Equally, most complaints alleging criminal behaviour (which were passed on automatically to the RUC for investigation) were excluded. The figures included those complaints which had been made in writing, and had been directed to HQNI by the Secretariat, NIO, MPs, local commanders, or by the individual concerned or his solicitor; a large proportion of these were of abuse or threatening behaviour. Mr Watson confirmed that the CIVREPs recorded complaints on this basis.

10.   It also emerged in discussion that there were some differences in the methods of recording complaints made against the Army and those made against the police (where the complaints system was on a statutory basis).

11.   The Chairman concluded that the statistical picture remained occluded. Not only were there the differences between Army and RUC (and ICPC) recording systems, but the Army figures were less transparent than perhaps CMC had hitherto realised. For example, the details of most "criminal" complaints, which could represent a significant proportion of complaints against the Army, were unavailable to the Committee; and while the Committee was primarily concerned with complaints of misbehaviour, it was nevertheless important, in the context of public confidence in the security forces generally, to have some information about other kinds of activity which lead to complaints, and also some aggregate figures for the number of claims made each month. Further work would need to be done, including under the aegis of the statistical sub-committee of CMC, to clarify what should count as complaint

CONFIDENTIAL

statistics against the Army, and how these should be presented eg to   9)
the Irish. In the meantime CMC would need to be aware of the
qualifications surrounding such figures.

Complaints against the Police: ICPC Statistics

12. Mr Beckett confirmed that, following his discussions with the
ICPC, it should now be possible, without too much difficulty, to
reconcile RUC and ICPC statistics on complaints against the police;
and to gain more information, for the purposes of the Committee,
about the nature of such complaints. Mr Hannigan wondered whether
it might be possible to compare these statistics with similar
figures in other countries, for example the Republic; the recent
report of the new Irish Independent Complaints Commission appeared
to give sufficient information to make such comparisons
realistically. He confirmed that while the ICPC would not be
willing to disclose information about individual complaints under
investigation, it should be possible for the ICPC to pass on
informally any concerns about general trends in complaints. The
Committee endorsed this approach. The ICPC was aiming to increase
the number of cases which it supervised from the current level of
7-15%; but it should be noted that the Commission had access to the
files on all complaints which were under investigation. Technical
work on police complaints statistics would continue.

Date of Next Meeting

13. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would be
on Thursday 8 June at 10.00 in Stormont House. (Note: the
Statistics Sub-Group will meet on 23 May at 10.00 in Stormont House).

R C WEST
Law and Order Division

22 May.   CONFIDENTIAL   8707