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FROM: MRS C R COLLINS
Police Division
14 March 1994

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)-B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Deverell - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Lyon - B
Mr Williams -B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Blackwell - B
Mr Brooker - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Bramley - B
Mr Sloan
Mr Kyle - B
Mrs Pritchard

Handwritten notes:
683/3
in the chamber
Mr W. H. H. H.
for file
D. H.
14/3.



PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B

KEY PERSONS PROTECTION SCHEME: REVIEW OF POSITION OF SDLP COUNCILLORS AND ACTIVISTS

1. A general review of the terrorist threat against members of the SDLP and of the protection measures currently available to SDLP Councillors under the Scheme was conducted following recent attacks of clearly lethal intent against an SDLP Councillor and an activist: this submission advises on the outcome. Councillor Alex Attwood wrote to the Minister on this subject on 14 February (Minister's Case SPB/0049/94, attached); and Dr Hendron also spoke to Police Division officials; this submission also provides advice on dealing with these contacts.

Recent attacks

2. The UFF attacked SDLP targets - the homes of Donovan McClelland, an SDLP Councillor on Antrim Borough Council and Terry Tracey who stood as an SDLP candidate in the Local Government elections in 1993 - on 11 February. The attack on Councillor McClelland's home took the form of a larger than normal bomb which

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(for reasons which are not entirely clear) was left in a neighbour's garden. In Mr Tracey's case, the terrorists forced their way into his home and shot and wounded his son. Mr Tracey was immediately admitted to the Protection Scheme and measures will be installed at his home as soon as possible. The installation of security measures was already underway at Councillor McClelland's home, following earlier advice from the RUC that he was under specific threat.

Background

3. These are the latest and most serious in a series of attacks on members of the SDLP, which began in February 1993, and which form part of the UFF's general campaign against the so-called "Pan-Nationalist Front" initiated in December 1992. For convenience, a chronology of these attacks is provided at Annex A.

4. The attacks have been confined to the Greater Belfast, Banbridge, Ballymena, Newtownabbey, Ballynahinch, Lisburn and Antrim areas. The homes of all those attacked have been or are in the process of being fully protected under the Scheme. In addition, the homes of all other SDLP Councillors living in Belfast, Banbridge, Ballymena and Ballynahinch are being protected by a package of measures agreed with the Minister in October last year, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Annex B lists the homes of those SDLP members and Councillors which have been protected.

Admission Criteria

5. In order for a person to be admitted to the Key Persons Protection Scheme, the RUC must have information to indicate that:

Either (a) the person concerned is under a serious and specific threat; or

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(b) the person concerned, although not under a serious and specific threat, is nevertheless under a significantly greater threat than that faced by those in, or who have been in, the same job/occupation;

or

(c) the person is a member of a democratic constitutional political party holding an electoral office, who is not personally identified as under a serious and specific threat or under a significantly greater threat but who is, on the advice of the RUC, part of a group which is under a serious threat which is greater than that to which others holding similar office are subject.

RUC Advice

6. We asked the RUC for advice on:

- The level of threat to members of the SDLP generally;
- Whether we should extend the package of measures to include SDLP Councillors living in areas other than those already identified as vulnerable to attack (paragraph 4 above);
- Whether we should enlarge the package of measures; and
- Whether we should extend the package of measures to other groups or individuals within the SDLP.

The Level of Threat

7. The RUC have told us that they have no intelligence to indicate a change in Loyalist paramilitary attitude towards SDLP members: they are considered by the UFF to be part of the so-called "Pan-Nationalist Front" and are "legitimate" targets. The RUC view is that the latest spate of attacks indicates a change in the UFF's mode of attack, from one designed to frighten and intimidate to one

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where the intention appears to be to injure or kill. The RUC believe the UFF is continuing to gather information on potential SDLP targets in the Belfast area. In short, while the RUC have no intelligence to indicate a "serious and specific" threat against identifiable individuals, there remains a general threat against the SDLP, with indications that Loyalist attacks have become more life-threatening.

Extending the Vulnerable Areas

8. The Minister agreed last year that those SDLP Councillors living in the Belfast, Newtownabbey, Lisburn, Banbridge, Ballymena and Ballynahinch areas should be admitted to the Scheme under the criteria at paragraph 5 (c) above, because of the serious threat posed by Loyalist attacks on the SDLP in those areas. Except for those individual Councillors who had been the subject of specific attack and who were therefore eligible for the full range of protection measures, protection was afforded to Councillors in these areas utilising an agreed package of measures (paragraph 4 above). The latest attacks (against Councillor McClelland and Mr Tracey) occurred in areas which we had previously identified as particularly vulnerable to Loyalist attack. The UFF have not therefore extended their geographical area of operations, and there is little justification for extending the geographical spread of vulnerable areas already covered by the package of measures. However, the position (especially in respect of Londonderry) will be kept under review.

Enlarging the Package of Measures

9. The potential need to enhance the package of measures, particularly in light of the gun attack at Tracey's home (the first such incident in the current Loyalist campaign against the SDLP) has been carefully examined.

10. [REDACTED]

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11. The RUC consider that these measures provide adequate physical protection; enhancing the package of measures eg [REDACTED] would not significantly improve the level of protection. Neither, in our view, would it represent good value for money. The agreed package of measures provides SDLP Councillors with a level of protection, similar to many other individuals who are considered to be under a higher level of threat.

12. There is currently no operational argument for doing so, but should the Minister wish to offer reassurance, additional panic alarms could be provided as part of the agreed package of measures. These allow for an instant alert to the RUC in the event of an attack or unauthorised intrusion on the householder's property. The speed of the RUC's response will, in any particular case, depend on the circumstances, location of the household and availability of RUC resources. The estimated cost would be approximately £1K + VAT per fitting, and funding would be provided from within the KPPS budget.

13. The provision of UCBT detection devices was suggested in Councillor Attwood's letter. The RUC advise that these would be of limited use, since the UFF have not perfected the use of magnetically-attached UCBTs. Consequently, the devices would not detect the present type of pipebomb placed under cars by the UFF; and they might make the position worse by encouraging a false sense of security. Police advice is that, as always, the best means of detection is by physical inspection of the car.

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Extending protection to other SDLP groups

14. The key consideration is the purpose of the Key Persons Protection Scheme; that is, to protect those whose death or injury as a result of terrorist attack would damage or seriously undermine the democratic framework of Government; the effective administration of Government and/or the criminal justice system; and the maintenance of Law and Order. It is not the Scheme's objective (nor is it possible) to protect everyone who may be at risk. A small number of individual Party administrators and officials have been protected under the Scheme, on the basis of their contribution to the democratic process and on the advice of the RUC that a serious and specific threat existed against them. It is difficult to argue that some kind of automatic physical protection should be afforded to SDLP staff and activists per se. We do not provide such "blanket" protection for everyone within other potential target groups covered by the Scheme (for example police officers and prison staff) even when these are arguably under a greater level of threat than the SDLP group.

15. The UFF threat is against the SDLP generally and is not confined to those holding electoral office (eg the attack on the Tracey home). The increasing level of protection being afforded SDLP Councillors, may encourage the Loyalist paramilitaries to shift their focus of attention to softer and more peripheral targets. Councillor Attwood has asked for protection for staff at SDLP Head Office in Belfast. The office is already protected under the Scheme, and the homes of individual staff members working there could be protected if there was intelligence of a specific, personal threat.

16. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In the absence of RUC advice indicating that a serious

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threat exists against them as a group, SDLP Headquarters staff and activists in the Belfast area must be assessed as being under the same general level of threat as other SDLP members.

Conclusion

17. After careful consideration, it seems that:

- (i) The geographical areas where SDLP Councillors are currently protected by a package of measures because of their particular vulnerability to attack (Belfast, Banbridge, Ballymena and Ballynahinch), should not be extended;
- (ii) Admission to the Scheme should continue to be based on current job/occupation and threat criteria; (this would mean, for example, that "SDLP activists", and Party Headquarters' staff will not generally be admitted to the Scheme, except where the "serious and specific" threat criteria is met);
- (iii) As additional reassurance, the Minister may wish to offer Panic alarm systems to those SDLP Councillors already protected under the Scheme.

18. A draft letter on these lines is attached in response to Councillor Attwood's representations. The Minister may wish to write also to Dr Hendron, who spoke to Police Division officials last month on the same issue; and a short draft letter is attached for this purpose.

Signed

CHRISTINE COLLINS
SHA EXT 27053

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DRAFT REPLY FOR SIGNATURE BY PS/SIR JOHN WHEELER

Councillor Alex Attwood
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

The Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 14 February asking that consideration be given to enhancing the protection already provided for SDLP Councillors living in particular areas, and suggesting that protection should be made available to staff working in the SDLP Head Office.

The Minister has asked me to pass onto you his deep concern about the continuing attacks on members of the SDLP. As you know both he and the Secretary of State attach considerable importance to protecting those who play a key role in the constitutional political process from terrorist attack. That is why the Minister agreed last year that it was appropriate to provide protection measures at the homes of a number of SDLP Councillors.

The Minister has considered very carefully your request that these measures should be enhanced and has decided that this could not be justified. In reaching this decision the Minister has taken into account advice which he received from the Chief Constable which indicated that the measures already provided are sufficient to meet the level of threat. [The Minister has however decided that it would help to provide additional reassurance and support to ensure

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that those Councillors already identified as at risk should be provided with means of alerting the police. He has therefore asked officials to make arrangements to install panic alarms in these homes, including your own, as quickly as possible. The Minister hopes that this will help alleviate some of their concerns.]

The Minister has also considered very carefully whether protection should be provided for other members of the SDLP but has concluded that this could not be warranted. As you know the purpose of the Scheme is to protect those whose death or injury as a result of terrorist attack would damage or seriously undermine the democratic framework of Government; the effective administration of Government; and/or the criminal justice system; and the maintenance of law and order. It is simply not possible to provide protection for all those who may be at some risk.

There is provision to bring into the Scheme individuals who, like [REDACTED], are considered to be under a high level of personal threat. After considerable deliberation, the Minister has concluded that the Scheme should continue to operate on this basis. The Minister has however asked me to reassure you that he will not hesitate to authorise the installation of protection measures for individuals where the police consider that this is justified on the basis of the threat.

I hope you find this helpful.

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DRAFT REPLY FOR SIGNATURE BY SIR JOHN WHEELER

Dr J Hendron
Unit 6
Twin Spires Centre
155 Northumberland Street
BELFAST
BT13 2JF

I know that you have spoken to my officials to express your concern about the continuing attacks on members of the SDLP and about the protection of a number of SDLP Councillors. The Secretary of State and I both share this concern, and following Councillor Attwood's letter, on foot of the deplorable attacks on Councillor McClelland and Mr Tracey, I asked for a review of the situation.

In conjunction with the Chief Constable, the level of protection afforded to SDLP Councillors and members has been carefully considered, [and as a result I have, in order to provide a measure of reassurance and support, authorised the installation of panic alarms, to allow a rapid alert to the police of any attack or intrusion at the homes of those already assessed to be at risk]. I have concluded that the extension of protection to those outside the existing 'high risk' areas is not justified, although that situation will be kept under review; and that the measures currently provided should not be further enhanced. In particular, I am advised that non-magnetic UCBT devices of the type used by Loyalists are best detected by visual inspection.

I do assure you that this area is kept under constant and active review.

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