

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

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-6 JAN 1997
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FROM: A WOOD
DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SERVICE
6 JANUARY 1997

ASST 02 19/1
SEC -7 JAN 1997
CENT SEC

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Ray - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Hill - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Priestly - B
Miss Bharucha - B
Mr Clarke - B
Miss Jude - B

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MR PERRY - B

RECENT PIRA ATTACKS ONLY "CALLING CARDS"

I was impressed by your demolition job on the "calling card" theory and suggest Ministers will want to take every opportunity to rubbish it as well as we get back to business.

2. Your note was a timely reminder that this is only the latest attempt to find a second, "real" meaning for an attack. The mortar attacks on LHR - successfully executed by any standards - were also written up as "if they'd really wanted to ..." exercises. This ignores the reality that, if caught in such an operation, you're looking at 20+ years whether the bombs go off or not (and, dedicated to the cause though they are, I don't imagine there are too many Provos willing to do time for firing "blanks").

3. It also ignores the reality of the criminal act of lobbing lumps of metal - explosive or not - into one of the world's busiest

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airports. These factors, coupled with the implausibility of surrendering precious stocks (Hammersmith Bridge) all seem to me to add up to the inescapable conclusion that they're "back in business" for real.

4. Belfast Castle was, for them, 'bad luck' but as they chillingly remarked after Brighton: "you have to stay lucky - we only have to get lucky once".

(Signed)

A WOOD

Ext 28211

PS This was written before rocket attack on the Royal Courts of Justice.

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-6 JAN 1997
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FROM: S J LEACH
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR POLICING AND SECURITY

6 January 1997

ASST DL 16/1
SEC -7 JAN 1997
CENT SEC

DESK IMMEDIATE

cc PS/Michael Ancram (B & L)
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B & L)
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI&L)
PS/Mr Moss (DOE, DHSS&L)
PS/PUS (B & L)
PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Steele

Mr Thomas
Mr Bell
Mr Stephens
Mr Watkins
Mr Wood (L & B)
Mr Brooker
Mr Maccabe
Mr Perry
Mr Beeton
Ms Mapstone
Mr Webb

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B & L)

LINES TO TAKE: ATTACK AT LAW COURTS/PUNISHMENT BEATINGS

I understand that the Secretary of State may be giving some interviews later this afternoon in the wake of today's attack at the Law Courts and the continuing spate of "punishment" attacks. I attach some points to make on which he may wish to draw, supplementing those already circulated by Miss Hussain.

[sgd]

S J LEACH
Ext: 27012

EPC/11707

ATTACK AT LAW COURTS

POINTS TO MAKE

- This reckless attack demonstrates once again the murderous intentions of Republican terrorists. This is no "phoney war", but a deliberate attempt to kill and maim police officers and members of the public. Only the vigilance of the police officer concerned saved him from more serious injuries. The criminal gangsters who carried out this act will be hunted down and brought to justice.

- The overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland want to look forward to a peaceful and stable future in 1997, not backwards to the violence and fear which is all the terrorists can offer.

- The Government will not be deflected by terrorism from our determination to work towards a peaceful settlement supported by both communities. That is what the people want. The way into the political process is open to all who can show that they unequivocally reject violence. Sinn Fein could take part if the IRA called an immediate and genuine cease-fire. If the Republican movement is to have any credibility in the eyes of the world, then that action should be taken immediately.

- But let there be no doubt that participation in the political negotiations does require total commitment to democracy and to peaceful methods. Sinn Fein must choose between the gun and the ballot box: any "dual strategy" will not only fail completely in getting them into Talks, but will be treated with the contempt it deserves by the Government, the parties, and the people of Northern Ireland.

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PUNISHMENT BEATINGS

- I condemn wholeheartedly the barbaric so-called "punishment" beatings which are an almost daily assault on the fabric of our democratic society.
- These attacks are hypocritical - savage assaults on alleged criminals being carried out by thugs whose own organisations are deeply involved in crime, racketeering and human misery.
- Nor is it right to claim that these assaults stem from growing crime levels with which the police are not dealing. The police campaign relentlessly against drugs and other criminality, acting at all times within the rule of law. [Recorded crime in October 1996 was 15% down on the figure for the same month in 1995, while the clear-up rate in October 1996 was 1% higher.]
- These assaults are little more than the law of the jungle, with the same people who are most keen on their rights when in custody happy to play the part of judge, jury and executioner when it comes to dealing with others.
- The Government and the RUC remain absolutely committed to the effective rule of law within Northern Ireland. There should be no room for any tolerance of such attacks, and I call on everyone who has any information on them to pass it to the police.

[Loyalist attacks should disqualify them from Talks?]
- I do not know who was responsible for specific attacks. But certainly Loyalists just as much as Republicans must turn away from such cynical brutality.

EPC/11707

As for the Talks, there is a procedure under which allegations that a party has breached the Mitchell principles can be investigated and adjudicated upon. I am not going to pre-empt any such procedure. But as the Prime Minister has said, it would be a tragedy for the Loyalist parties and for Northern Ireland as a whole if the great advantages gained by the CLMC cease-fire were thrown away.

EPC/11707

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-6 JAN 1997

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FROM: N P PERRY
Security Policy and Operations Division

3 January 1997

L. Harty

! for ! too late to

have this gloomy assessment.

- cc: PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir David Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Stephens - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Ray - B
- Mr Beeton - B
- Mr Hill - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Priestly - B
- Miss Bharucha - B
- Mr Clarke - B

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- 6 JAN 1997
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1. Mr Steele - B [I agree with this assessment. Signed JMS 3/1/97]
2. PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

RECENT PIRA ATTACKS

1. The RUC have confirmed that the vehicle-borne bomb left at Belfast Castle on New Year's Eve was intended to inflict multiple casualties on the security forces.

[REDACTED]

The fact that the various elements of the initiation system were present but not connected up has led the police to believe that the terrorists were disturbed by a member of the public during the final stages of the bomb's preparation.

2. This incident takes place against a background of speculation, in the media and elsewhere, that since the Thiepval bombing PIRA has not really been trying in its military campaign in Northern Ireland, and has instead been putting down markers (or "calling cards") to demonstrate that it has not gone away, and to exert political

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pressure on the Government. The most recent expression of this theory is contained in Gerry Moriarty's article in today's Irish Times. This view is of course flatly contradicted by the analysis of the security forces and Security Service, [REDACTED]

3. While it is clear that PIRA has not returned to a full-scale campaign - attacks occurred on almost a daily basis before the 1994 ceasefire - some commentators have found it hard to understand why, given PIRA's proven capacity to mount sophisticated operations, and given reports of widespread targeting and training both during and after the ceasefire, its post-Thiepval attacks have appeared somewhat amateurish and half-hearted. This in turn has given rise to speculation that the attacks were not intended to succeed.

4. [REDACTED]

5. Indeed, all the indications are that the attacks have not been pressed home because of good work by the security forces, and bad luck on PIRA's part. Preparations for a possible landmine attack near Londonderry were uncovered in a RUC search on 17 November. The huge trailer bomb discovered near Drumadd on 28 November seems to have been abandoned either because the trailer got a flat tyre, or because of security force patrolling in the area. An attempted MK16

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Attack outside Girdwood on 11 December was foiled by the cautious security force response, and an alert passerby. The attack on Nigel Dodds' escort, whether Mr Dodds or the police officers were the intended target, was clearly an attempted assassination (the Irish theory that this was a reconnaissance that went wrong stretches credulity).

[REDACTED]

Police finds of a rifle, PRIG and MK16 in Dungiven on 19 November, and of three MK16s and PRIG in Belfast on 5 December will have disrupted other PIRA preparations.

6.

[REDACTED]

All the indications are, however, that further attacks are being actively prepared, and that one will sooner or later be successful.

Signed

N P PERRY

Ext 27028

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