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FROM: [REDACTED]

Security Policy and Operations Division
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PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING - BACKGROUND TO LAST NIGHT'S CLASH IN
PORTADOWNSummary

Issue: You asked for a full report on last night's clash in Portadown for the Prime Minister's meeting later today.

Timing: Immediate

Recommendation: You note the RUC perspective on events.

Detail

As an Orange arch was being erected in the Parkmount area of the Garvaghy Road of Portadown, some ball bearings were fired from catapults by Nationalists at those erecting the arch. It is understood that some children may have been injured but not seriously. Police moved the Nationalist crowd out of range. Barbara de Bruin was reported to be in the area at the time.

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Parkmount

2. This area is right at the bottom of the Garvaghy Road and one through which the Parades Commission has allowed orange parades to pass through; the Junior Orange parade on 29 May is an example. The arch goes over the road at a point just on the edge of the Corcrain river, beside People's Park. Most of the housing in that area appears to be derelict but the inhabitants are mainly Protestant.

MacCionnaith

3. I understand from police that Brendan MacCionnaith met senior police officers in Portadown yesterday afternoon when he was advised that the arch was to be erected and that his assistance in avoiding trouble would be appreciated. He was praised for using his influence in the past.

4. MacCionnaith immediately went on the offensive, accusing police of not responding to his correspondence, outstanding for four weeks, about the issue of planning permission for the arch. When pressed, he admitted that the letter had been faxed just the previous day. He was advised that he would receive a reply as soon as possible but that that reply would advise that planning permission was not a matter for police.

Planning permission

5. This is of course for the DOE but I understand, as the arch is a temporary structure, planning permission would not be required. There may, however, be some legislation under the Roads Order which states that a permit is required. This would also be the responsibility of the DOE. Colleagues there may wish to advise.

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Policing

6. The RUC advise that last night they policed the erection of the arch from a public order and road safety point of view. It appears that some form of "deal" was struck whereby Nationalists were allowed to erect tri-colour flags after the arch went up. My understanding is that all remain in place this morning.

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