

RESTRICTED
From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

relat 2



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Prime Minister
An unfortunate follow-up to
your meeting with the widows
25 September 1980

Dear Mike

MS.

to
Wm

MAD 25/IX

Roy Harrington spoke to you yesterday about the murder of Constable Johnston near Rosslea on Tuesday night. Mr Atkins thought the Prime Minister might wish to know that Constable Johnston, who was a full-time member of the RUC Reserve, was one of those identified as being at particular risk by the widows from Fermanagh who met the Prime Minister in June. Mr Johnston lived only a couple of hundred yards from the Border, and had already been identified by the RUC as being at particular risk: senior officers had drawn his attention to the dangers, and steps were taken to reduce the risk. Special security forces patrols were deployed in the area of his home (mostly covert, so we cannot refer to them publicly) and Mr Johnston's working hours were varied daily without notice to ensure that he did not have a regular pattern of behaviour. No doubt partly reflecting the advice he had been given by the RUC, Mr Johnston was on the point of moving home when he was murdered.

Although Mr Johnston's murder is no less callous and unpleasant than murders of off-duty policemen and UDR soldiers earlier this year, it does not seem likely that there will be a repeat of the public anxiety displayed in Northern Ireland early in the Spring, and in June. Much of that well-publicised anxiety was stimulated by Doctor Paisley, who, coincidentally, saw the Chief Constable the day before Mr Johnston's murder, and whose conduct then suggested that he was unlikely to try and exploit this incident. Perhaps equally significant, local councillors have been calling for calm in Fermanagh.

The Government's sympathy for the widow has been swiftly demonstrated by a visit from our Minister of State, Mr Michael Alison: Mr Alison was visiting Fermanagh on departmental business and his diversion to call on Mr Johnston's widow seems to have been well received locally.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins
M W HOPKINS

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