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PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND SECURITY CO-ORDINATOR

You will recall the arrangement made in the spring for further reports from the Security Co-ordinator. There was to be an interim one in the autumn, which I now enclose, and a final one next spring, at which time we would review the arrangement with a view to discontinuing it.

2. The enclosed report covers the period of the Republican hunger strikes at the Maze Prison with accompanying disturbances, and the immediate aftermath: a period in which you and other colleagues have followed the Northern Ireland security scene closely. As envisaged in the spring, the report's first concern is with the co-ordination of the security effort, and on this Sir Brooks Richards finds that the tripartite machine - RUC, Army and NIO - stood up well to the strains put upon it: civil government also played its part in dealing with the consequences of the disturbances. In the field of counter-terrorist operations, especially in relation to co-ordination of intelligence, the report shows some progress but, as might be expected, higher performance in some areas than others. Those responsible will continue to work for better results. But it is important to maintain continual vigilance about the state of these relationships; co-ordination between the various agencies is not an altogether natural function, and needs positive attention all the time.

3. From a wider point of view, however, we face problems both of substance and of presentation. The substance is that there is a limit to the extent to which even highly efficient and numerous security forces can prevent a relatively small number of dedicated terrorists from committing some acts of murder and violence - and it may be that in Northern Ireland we are not now very much above that level. The presentational problem is that, even though arrests, charges and convictions may continue at their current high rate, the Northern Ireland public is in practice unlikely to experience from

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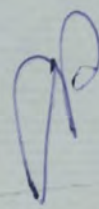
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now on an appreciably lower level of terrorist activity unless the terrorists decide to give up violence of their own volition.

4. The Co-ordinator looks at a number of ways in which various of our Unionist critics advocate or demand that our present security policy be modified, but concludes that none of them, even if they produced short-term advantages, is likely to lead in the longer term to a marked reduction in the level of terrorism and that many are likely to prove counter-productive; I certainly see no reason to disagree with him. However, given the seriousness of the problem - and particularly given the present understandably strong feelings among Unionists about the security position - I think this is an appropriate moment to take stock. Furthermore, RUC and Army force levels are now approaching those judged, five years ago, to be appropriate for the long term and it is sensible to test that judgement against the prospects as we now see them. I have set work in hand accordingly. In the meantime, I think it would be unwise to close our minds to all the options which the Co-ordinator has identified. Affairs could develop to a point where we might, for example, need to enlist Dublin's support for a joint re-introduction to detention. That said, I shall be surprised if a case can be made for any major shifts in the near future. In that case the problem will be one of justifying, in Northern Ireland, in Parliament and elsewhere, our determination to stay on our present course. At that level, it becomes part of our overall approach to the other problems of the Province: political advance, relations with Dublin, and the recovery of the economy.

5. I am sending copies of this minute and the report to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence.



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REVIEW OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN
NORTHERN IRELAND: NOVEMBER 1981

Report by the Security Co-ordinator to the Secretary of
State for Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

1. When I presented my report 'The Way Forward' on the co-ordination of the Security effort in Northern Ireland to your predecessor last March it was envisaged that I should return in the autumn to report on progress made subsequently in the development and in particular the co-ordination of the security effort. Since then I have attended the Secretary of State's Security Policy Meetings and have seen the key papers on security matters. This report is the product of a week of briefing and visits to the organisations involved in the development and implementation of the security policy in Northern Ireland. I have been helped in its preparation by a small team specially assembled for the purpose but it has no claims to be an intensive investigation of current security issues. Such an investigation would not have been possible in the time available. The Review took place against the background of the challenge mounted by the Rev Ian Paisley MP in the wake of the Anglo-Irish summit. The murder of the Rev Robert Bradford MP took place half-way through our work.

2. The present paper reviews progress on the issues covered by my final report in March. It does not try to cover the more detailed matters which were dealt with in the Area Reviews conducted between 1979 and 1981 by the Planning Staff established by my predecessor, the late Sir Maurice Oldfield. In preparing this Report I have looked particularly at how the co-ordination of the various elements of the security forces, as well as the civil government and agencies, have come through the stormy events of last summer; I have focussed on certain problems which will need to be addressed in the coming months and finally I have considered possible alternative security options, including some of those put forward by "Loyalists" as a panacea to the terrorist problem.

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THE IMPACT OF RECENT EVENTS

The Main Events

3. Key events in the Province since my last Report were the hunger strike which was renewed on 1 March, the success of the H-Block candidates in the two bye-elections in Fermanagh, the change of Government in the Republic, the November talks between HMG and the Irish Government and the appointment of a new Secretary of State. By and large the first two tended to emphasise the polarisation of the communities and the first also put considerable pressure on the Security Forces, the Prisons and the Government, the third had a mildly beneficial effect, the fourth aroused some fears among the Loyalists and the fifth was well received in the Province.

Terrorist and Paramilitary Organisations

4. The hunger strike was a mixed blessing for the Provisionals. On the one hand, it gained for them in the early stages increased sympathy in the Province, gave international prominence to the Republican cause and produced potential recruits for PIRA and INLA and some money. On the other, the street violence which followed the death of each of the 10 hunger strikers was confined to Republican areas and became increasingly unpopular, the needless deaths attracted more and more adverse comment from Roman Catholics, the political campaigns used up much of the money collected in the Province and in the USA and the Security Forces' successes in West Belfast affected morale.

5. The possibility of sectarian violence after the death of Sands was prevented by firm action on the part of the Security Forces and a responsible attitude by the Loyalist paramilitaries, whose leaders succeeded in exercising a large measure of control over their men throughout the period of the hunger strike.

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6. In the longer term the hunger strike will become part of Republican folk history but in practical terms its immediate benefit to the terrorists is limited. A summary of the current threat appears in paragraphs 16-23.

Flow of Intelligence

7. In this Review I have been primarily concerned with intelligence to pre-empt PIRA and INLA operations. The hunger strike had little lasting impact on the available coverage. During the rioting it was often impossible to meet and obtain information from agents and the surveillance teams found it difficult to operate within Republican areas. Once the streets were cleared and life returned to normal, intelligence again became available. In the summer PIRA instigated a rigorous 'tout' hunt following the Security Forces' successes in Belfast. Many members of PIRA were interrogated and a few murdered as alleged informers. Although this had an inhibiting effect on some potential agents it also resulted in disaffection among PIRA activists and has not significantly stemmed the flow of information. Nevertheless, good intelligence remains hard to come by. As far as Loyalist terrorism is concerned there has been good preventive intelligence.

Security Forces' Operations

8. As a direct repercussion of the second hunger strike there was a significant increase in street violence and in Republican terrorism. The Security Forces successfully met both problems. Terrorism was countered by a continuation of the intelligence-based attack on the terrorist organisations backed by overt defensive measures designed to frustrate the terrorist and to reassure the population. Street violence was primarily contained by the RUC with the Army available to assist where necessary. This assistance was required to a greater or lesser extent for most of the summer in Belfast and in Londonderry. The

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Spearhead battalion was deployed from England in May, for a month, largely as a contingency measure, to maintain reserves, to prevent units from becoming over-tired, to ensure that the street violence could be controlled without a lessening of the anti-terrorist effort, and to demonstrate the Army's ability to reinforce to meet changing levels of violence.

9. Once again, the use of the plastic baton round was an important factor in controlling the riots within limited areas and in reducing the number of Security Force and civilian casualties by keeping the rioters beyond 'arms'-length'. Though baton rounds caused some unfortunate deaths, there is no doubt that this relatively selective anti-riot weapon is the best available to meet riots in Northern Ireland. This effectiveness is reflected, in part, by the active Republican PR campaign mounted this summer against the use of 'plastic bullets'.

10. This successful containment of a temporary increase in violence had several by-products:

- a. Police confidence and morale was improved and their command and control methods were vindicated.
- b. The RUC gained confidence in the Army support available from a resident presence, backed by an ability to reinforce from England. The anti-terrorist effort was sustained throughout the period.
- c. The switch of limited RUC resources to countering street violence did, however, result in a reduction in the manpower available to counter non-terrorist crime.
- d. Inevitably, progress towards the return of 'normal policing' in hard Republican areas was reversed during the months of rioting. The use

of the RUC in a riot-control role in these areas ran contrary to the relationship which had been fostered between the Catholic community and the RUC in the preceding period. However, the ground lost was regained faster than might have been expected. In Belfast, the situation is now comparable to that in the first quarter of this year. Elsewhere in the Province greater progress has been made and additional areas are being policed without direct military support.

Cross Border Co-operation

11. Cross border co-operation between the Garda and the RUC steadily improved. There was concern that the new Government might adopt a different attitude but it soon became clear that they were if anything anxious to improve the level of co-operation. The hunger strike had no discernible effect in this area except perhaps to cement the liaison between two professional forces (which was further demonstrated when they worked closely together over the Dunne kidnapping in October).

Inter-Community Relations

12. The hunger strike inevitably caused considerable strains on the relationship between the two communities in Northern Ireland. Its effect in two respects was enhanced by its co-occurrence with the District Council elections in March and the bye-elections in Fermanagh and South Tyrone; in these elections the prison issue was the dominant theme, though on the Unionist side the Anglo-Irish talks gave scope for competitive opposition. The council elections as a result showed increasing polarisation: moderate parties lost heavily. The veneer of tolerance, which had existed in some local councils at least, disappeared and even the formerly moderate parties came under pressure to adopt a more extreme position in order to survive electorally. The elections

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also saw the movement of paramilitary supporters and their nominees from both sides into electoral politics, in several cases successfully.

13. Within the minority community the hunger strike, with its strong emotional appeal, gave rise to feelings of bitterness and alienation from the Government and the forces of law and order. This does not seem to have been lasting. As the deaths continued there was increased disillusionment with the campaign, reflected in the turn-out at the later funerals. Since the end of the hunger strike a feeling that the political situation has changed substantially has led to a greater confidence amongst all Republicans that the realisation of their aspirations is now nearer.

14. The same perception of approaching change which has boosted Republican morale has unsettled Protestant opinion. The Protestants, however, remained quiet while the hunger strike marches were taking place and serious sectarian confrontations were avoided by re-routing demonstrations, by strong Security Force deployments along interfaces, by the successful containment of the rioting within the areas in which they originated, and in part by the deliberate policy of restraint, notably by the UDA. The potential dangers were nonetheless graphically underlined by the discovery and disposal on 13 July of an 800lb bomb on the route near the assembly point for the main Belfast Orange march, due to take place that day.

15. There have been regional variations. In Belfast, where polarisation has been long established, there has been little change; in Londonderry, where there had appeared to be growing co-operation, particularly at District Council level, there have now been considerable setbacks. In other areas continuing attacks on members of the part-time Forces have combined with the hunger strike to prevent any moves towards better relations. This was shown most clearly by the two bye-elections in Fermanagh and South Tyrone which increased Protestant

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suspensions of the attitude to terrorism of their Catholic neighbours. Against this background, the continued rise in unemployment, which is now affecting both communities, contributes to social unease.

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

THE THREAT

Republicans

16. As a result of their electoral successes this year North and South of the border the PSF decided to 'adopt a positive approach' to all future elections; this probably means contesting them all but not taking up seats at Westminster. Their ability to run a good political campaign should not be under-estimated though it will be much harder to win votes without an issue such as the hunger strike to help them. However, the measures announced when the hunger strike ended appear to have resolved the dispute and the campaign is unlikely to be re-started. An important result is that since then there has been no recurrence of street violence of any consequence by the Republicans but it could erupt again if they found a cause to latch on to.

17. The political campaign will, however, go forward in tandem with PIRA's terrorist campaign. The Provisionals see both as essential to their cause. As Danny Morrison (PSF) put it to the Ard Fheis: "Who will object if with a ballot paper in this hand and an Armalite in this hand we take power in Ireland". This clearly puts paid to any consideration of a ceasefire in the immediate future.

18. Liaison Staff have recently circulated a threat assessment which concludes that both PIRA and INLA have the capacity and the will to sustain indefinitely the pattern of activity of recent months. This has taken the form of the murder of off-duty members of the Security Forces by both organisations. PIRA has also been responsible for cross-border attacks, command detonated bombs and attacks on commercial premises.

*Paragraph 19 deleted and closed, 40 years,
under FOI Exemption.*

*Wayland
2 October 2012*

20. Although the general level of terrorist activity has fallen over recent years, this is not always obvious: periods when little happens are interspersed with others of intense terrorist activity which tend to spark off Loyalist reaction. In fact, terrorism has declined to a level at which the Security Forces can do little to bring about the sort of transformation which will change public perceptions of terrorist activity. It takes only a handful of terrorists to sustain a successful campaign and paradoxically the less terrorist activity there is, the more notice is taken of anything which does happen.

21. INLA has always been fissiparous but with the emergence of Steenson in Belfast it is beginning to show signs of cohesiveness. The number of INLA terrorists is small and they are not at present well equipped. The picture appears to be changing, however, and INLA's capacity to mount serious terrorist attacks, particularly in Belfast, must not be underrated.

"Loyalists"

22. Protestant fears about the content of the Anglo-Irish talks will at least lead to forms of passive protest and could at any time erupt into disorder; at the time of writing, their doubts about HMG's willingness to tackle terrorism in the manner they deem most appropriate provide the justification to protest not only about the murder of the Rev Robert Bradford but also about the talks. However, the "Loyalists" are not united; each of the political and paramilitary organisations distrusts the leaders of the others. Much of the threat in fact comes from Paisley (basing his claim to leadership of the Protestants on the advances made by the DUP in the local elections in May). He attacks the Chief Constable whom he sees as the head of the Security Forces and has stated publicly that he is prepared to act unlawfully if he fails to get the Government to change policies which he feels are leading to eventual unity with the Republic; this unlawful activity he has made clear could include 'armed resistance' in order to 'preserve the Province' but it is

difficult to judge what sort of following he would get; much would depend on what he chose as his issue and how the Government handled the matter and also the extent to which he had the Protestant work force on his side. A recent statement includes the phrase 'making the Province ungovernable'.

23. It remains the policy of the Ulster Freedom Fighters, fully endorsed by its parent organisation the UDA, to kill identified Republican targets. The Ulster Volunteer Force/Red Hand Commando are less discriminate, choosing their Catholics almost at random. "Loyalist" killings in either category are likely to provoke some sort of retaliation.

SECURITY FORCES DEPLOYMENT

24. Army Force levels have been reduced by one Roulement battalion this year and are now based on 6 Resident and 3 Roulement major units plus the UDR. The RUC continue to recruit towards their established target of 7,500 Regulars and 2,200 full-time Reservists. This target will be achieved by 31 March 1982. There have been minor changes in deployment since April 1981. The key changes are:

- (a) the number of Brigade Headquarters has been reduced from three to two. 39 Brigade is now responsible for the East of the Province, including Belfast and 8 Brigade is responsible for the West of the Province including Londonderry and the border with the Republic. This is a rationalisation of command and control arrangements and has not affected the number of units deployed;
- (b) the extension of UDR tactical areas of responsibility (TAORs). Each UDR battalion now has its own TAOR and there are plans to extend these areas further. This allows the Regular units to concentrate in those areas where they are most needed to counter terrorism;
- (c) The removal of a regular Army presence from such towns as Newry, Coalisland, Cookstown, and, in the future, Dungannon;

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- (d) a new police station has been established in the predominantly Republican town of Carrickmore in East Tyrone. As additional resources become available, new Divisional Mobile Support Units (DMSUs) are being deployed in border areas.

OPERATIONAL BALANCE

RUC/Army

25. The RUC's growing confidence and capacity has speeded the return of armed policing to most areas. However, the security situation limits the use of their increased manpower in the maintenance of law and order in two ways. Firstly, major periods of civil disturbance such as we have had this year divert police resources from non-terrorist crime. Secondly, police stations must be guarded against attack and even such a simple task as serving a summons requires at least two vehicles and four men in many areas. Thus a direct numerical comparison of the RUC with police forces in Great Britain would be invalid. An additional difference is that, whereas in Great Britain a police force can call on neighbouring constabularies for reinforcements to control public order situations, this option is obviously not open to the RUC. Although the RUC therefore require relatively greater resources than other UK constabularies, they must ultimately rely on the Army to provide reinforcement.

26. The Army is needed to support the RUC in two separate fields, counter-terrorism and the maintenance of public order. These two roles require very different approaches, the first necessitating a continuous presence on the ground in certain areas, the second demanding considerable manpower available for relatively short periods of time. The present balance of Resident and Roulement battalions meets these requirements. The Resident units contribute to the counter-terrorist effort at a level of activity sustainable for their two-year tour of duty whilst providing a local capacity to reinforce the RUC to counter civil disorder. The Roulement battalions provide concentrated counter-terrorist forces in those areas where this

is still necessary (West Belfast, South Armagh and Fermanagh), but in the case of West Belfast they are also available to counter civil disorder.

27. In the counter-terrorist role the overt Army presence is essentially defensive and is deployed as patrols, vehicle check points and observations posts but in those areas where normal policing is still being re-established the Army presence serves the valid purpose of providing a secure environment in which the RUC can re-establish a working relationship with the local population. In some rural areas, in particular Fermanagh, the Army adopts tactics which are specifically designed to reassure the local Protestant community, while at the same time having some deterrent effect.

28. In UDR areas of responsibility they supply first-line military support to the RUC and provide a useful level of deterrence and reassurance. In a few areas, however, the terrorist threat is now so reduced that there is no obvious role for the UDR. Despite this, it has been decided that in the current political climate no major changes in the UDR organisation should be made in the immediate future.

Overt/Covert Operations

29. The terrorist organisations have now been refined into relatively small and secure groups. Faced by this threat, the role of the overt elements of the Security Forces is largely defensive and deterrent in nature. The successful attack on the terrorist organisations comes from intelligence-based covert operations. Such methods result in the conviction of key terrorists following "red-handed" arrests and may achieve local, short-term reductions in violence but they do not often result in a lasting cessation of terrorism in an area. The regenerative nature of Irish terrorism makes this inevitable and the key "godfathers" who direct the campaign ensure that they are normally sufficiently distanced from terrorist operations not to be caught red-handed. I am satisfied, however, that selective, intelligence-based operations leading to convictions still provide the most effective counter to

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the current forms of terrorism and, linked to some change in the political balance, offer the best hope of a long-term solution.

30. Operationally the success of an intelligence-based attack depends on the sophisticated co-ordination of RUC Special Branch, Army Intelligence units and various other agencies. At Province level I am satisfied that this is proceeding well. At Regional level the co-ordination which can be achieved is exemplified by the Tasking and Co-ordination Group (TCG) in Belfast, which has co-ordinated a large number of successful operations. This level of co-ordination has not been achieved in other areas of the Province and I believe that, as such operations form the main plank of the Government's attack on terrorism, it is important that they should be accorded the highest priority in co-ordination, manpower and resources. In this field the current level of Army specialist support will be required for the foreseeable future.

31. This policy does create presentational problems. The nature of the operations and sub-judice rules has inhibited the Government from claiming credit for Security Forces' successes and the Government has largely relied on an unprompted public realization of an overall reduction in the number of terrorist incidents. As recently seen, a few successful terrorist attacks can dramatically change this perception without the Government being easily able to counter with the other side of the security story. I believe, however, that the time has come when greater prominence can be given in general terms to this aspect of Security Force operations without paying a security penalty.

THE FUTURE STRUCTURE OF THE SECURITY FORCES

32. The key issue of security policy which must be resolved in the near future is the long-term size and structure of the Security Forces. Inevitably this has to be planned against a forecast of terrorist violence which includes many imponderables, but the future strength, nature and roles of the RUC, regular Army and UDR are inextricably linked. As the Army and UDR are both committed in support of the RUC, it is right that the

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desirable future strength and capability of the RUC should be considered first. This process has been initiated by the Manpower Review conducted at the request of the Chief Constable and is shortly to be considered by an NIO-chaired Working Party.

33. At present it is envisaged that future reductions in the Army Roulement units will take place as the security situation allows. There is currently no pressure from the Ministry of Defence for a further reduction in the Roulement commitment. However, there is still some limited scope for a further handover of responsibilities from Army to police in some rural areas without any major change in the security situation.

34. In the longer term the Army will obviously continue to provide the necessary technical specialist support such as helicopters, bomb disposal and some intelligence related agencies. The overt commitment of uniformed troops will only be reduced as the security situation allows and therefore this reduction should not need to be matched by a further increase in the RUC. Even when the Army has 'returned to barracks' there will be six resident battalions in the Province ready to provide military support to counter civil disorder or a resurgence of terrorism. I do not believe their presence should be discounted when considering the long-term strength of the RUC.

35. The UDR also provides valuable support for the RUC but because of the political implications of any change in the force it is very much harder to make rapid adjustments to their organisation. However, in the medium and long-term the size, capability and role of the UDR will also have an obvious impact on the necessary size of the RUC and must be reviewed. Both the UDR and the regular Army effectively provide a buffer in times of heightened violence which avoids the necessity of developing a police force which is too large or too paramilitary for use in more normal times.

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CROSS BORDER CO-OPERATION

36. Co-operation between the Garda and the RUC has improved. And although this has had little effect on the level of cross border terrorism from the Dundalk area it has led to some successes against terrorists from the Monaghan salient. It is extremely difficult for the RUC and other agencies seeking intelligence to penetrate these PIRA gangs and obtain any, let alone pre-emptive, intelligence from people who are based on the other side of the border; but it is important that efforts in this direction should continue. The Garda also, despite their improved effectiveness, have not had a great deal of success in acquiring pre-emptive intelligence but they have provided useful information about movements or terrorists which has saved lives and enabled them to make arrests. They have also arrested two of the Crumlin Road Gaol escapees and charged them under the extra-territorial legislation with serious offences.

37. Although co-operation on security matters is a sensitive issue for the Irish Government, the improvement has been praised by Ministers on both sides of the Border. It is important that these excellent relations at which the RUC have worked hard should continue to evolve. I was told that political interference from the Irish Government - the possibility of which I outlined in my previous report - was now less likely because the relationship has developed into a solid professional link at many levels with both parties engaged in a common fight against crime and terrorism.

38. The Government of the Republic continues to be subject to political inhibitions in relation to co-operation in a number of legal areas, as became evident from the Taoiseach's line on extradition during the recent summit talks. Although the record of the extra-territorial legislation has been unimpressive since it came into force in 1976, there have been recent signs that it may now begin to achieve some successes. A man was convicted this autumn in Belfast of the murder of a UDR man in the Republic (only the second successful case under the legislation in Northern Ireland) and three cases, including the two cases against the escapers mentioned above, are pending

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in the Republic. In each of these there are good prospects of achieving convictions.

39. The new Irish Attorney-General is notably keener than his predecessors on making use of the extra-territorial legislation. Following the recent decision to remit these juridical problems to the two Attorneys-General, it is to be welcomed that their meeting is to take place as soon as possible.

CO-ORDINATION

40. Within the scope of this Report I have only been able to examine in any detail the extent of co-ordination at senior levels between the different organisations involved in the security effort. It is nonetheless apparent that co-ordination between the RUC, the Army and the NIO has improved considerably. All concerned seem to be aware of the importance of keeping in touch with colleagues in other organisations and there is a general feeling that co-ordination is now better than it has ever been. It is clear that at senior levels informal meetings are arranged frequently and flexibly and that matters of mutual interest are discussed without fuss as they arise.

41. When necessary there have also been daily meetings to ensure that public services are maintained as far as possible and to co-ordinate activities such as clearing debris from riot areas. On the whole, both the formal and informal co-ordination machinery works well and the hunger strike period has consolidated the habit of regular contacts between the different agencies.

42. In my Final Report in March I recommended that the civil departments should take care that the security implications of their actions were taken fully into account in reaching decisions. Some progress has been made in this area. There is still room for some improvement, though it is a fact of life that officials in some areas are subject to intimidation.

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It is important, for instance, that in such fields as the development of housing plans the views of the police should be obtained at an early stage. In present circumstances, anything positively helpful to Police morale deserves sympathetic consideration by civil departments.

43. Prisons play an important role in the implementation of security policy. The past six months has seen one armed escape of eight important terrorists from the Belfast Prison (Crumlin Road) and a second case in which a weapon was used by a Loyalist prisoner in the same gaol. Two men prisoners in the Maze Compound made their way through or over eight security fences before they were detected by an alert dog-handler and it was clear that a mass escape had been intended. Crumlin Road at present appears to contain nearly twice as many high-risk terrorist prisoners on remand as there is suitable high security accommodation for; there appears to be an urgent need either for a more selective classification of prisoners in terms of security risk or of more satisfactory arrangements to hold high-risk prisoners once they are remanded for trial. I was glad to hear that these problems were being tackled.

44. It is necessary that all concerned should continue to take co-ordination very seriously. The present good co-ordination needs to be worked at to be sustained, the more so as personal links forged in the past will have to be renewed as the personalities change.

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ARE THERE ALTERNATIVE SECURITY POLICIES?

45. It has been unfortunate that to date the Anglo-Irish talks have taken place against the background of the political tensions associated with the hunger strikes and a difficult security situation. As a result, the Unionists' fears of any links with Dublin and their frustrations at the lack of visible advances against terrorism, culminating in anger at the murder of Mr Bradford, have developed into a crisis which is above all political. However, because of the sense of insecurity prevalent in the majority community, the Government's security policy is also under attack. The security measures which have already been taken as part of our response to this crisis are in fact of greater political than security significance. The present raised profile of the Security Forces, though in line with what Unionist opinion wants, will do little to improve the fundamental security situation. Indeed this is particularly true at a time when the current posture of Unionist leaders makes further attacks on UDR and RUC(R) targets more attractive than ever to PIRA and INLA.

46. The present policy of selective, intelligence based operations, leading to convictions has inevitable limitations: above all it will not achieve results quickly. Even in the absence of juries, intimidation will remain a frustrating obstacle to the successful prosecution of identified terrorists and terrorist 'godfathers'. Complaints from Unionists range from sweeping and emotional demands that "something must be done" to the advocacy of specific alternative policies. Many of the more concrete suggestions are minor detailed grievances which are in some measure adduced to give credence to the general complaint rather than being the root cause of dissatisfaction. These include matters such as the calibre of personal protection weapons issued to members of the UDR and RUC(R); complaints that the Police or Army have failed to attack PIRA

men on particular occasions when they have appeared publicly in uniform or flaunting weapons; that the UDR should be given a more active role within the security effort; and other matters relating to detailed deployment and operations. For the most part these are cosmetic issues in terms of the overall security policy which have been frequently examined and deemed to be impracticable or not cost-effective. However, in the current climate, it is obviously right that some of the more acceptable of these detailed measures are being examined again. In other cases the reasons for their impracticability could be spelled out more clearly than before. Some more fundamental alternatives have also been regularly demanded. I discuss here briefly six of the commonest demands.

Detention

47. There is understandable frustration at the impossibility of convicting in court a small number of very important men, including some who organise much of the terrorism without getting operationally involved. Detention could be implemented by Order, with endorsement within 40 days by Parliament; it would be much more selective and based on more and better intelligence than in 1971. Detention played a conclusive part in bringing under control the terrorist campaign of 1956-62 when parallel action was taken south of the Border. Unless the same complementary action were taken in the Republic in the future, detention would have only a short term operational effect within Northern Ireland. On the assumption that the present Irish Government is not in a position to follow suit even if they so wished, it is a measure that would almost certainly cost us their future co-operation in security matters.

48. The use of detention in 1971 on a wide scale but without Dublin's co-operation proved counter-productive both in political and security terms. As a result of this, detention is now a trigger word which evokes highly charged memories and its

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re-introduction would be exploited by the Republicans in the same way as the hunger strike. There is the further serious complication that in order to appear politically even-handed we would find it necessary to detain leading 'Loyalist' terrorist organisers. This would remove certain figures who have proved to be restraining influences and would unite our 'Loyalist' opponents as nothing else would. Though a recent editorial in the "Daily Telegraph" asserted that detention was an option supported by my predecessor, the late Sir Maurice Oldfield, I know this to be untrue. The objections to this course seem to me to be equally valid today.

Further pressure on Irish Republic

49. The role of the Border in terrorist activity is perhaps the most recurrent theme in Unionist complaints. The perception of the Republic as a safe haven, the lack of effective extradition and the lack of hot pursuit facilities are all part of this. It should be recognised that the support of the Irish authorities against terrorism has been as essential in the reduction of violence to current levels as it has been in dealing with previous campaigns. Further pressure from us and, above all, any hint of the sanctions which many Unionists would like to see in the absence of further progress would undoubtedly risk setting back the progress which has been achieved. It is self-contradictory to argue, as many Unionists do, that security can be restored whilst reversing HMG's policy of developing links with the Republic.

Sealing off Republican Areas

50. Unionists have from time to time demanded that Republican areas of Belfast should be sealed off completely with all access and egress strictly controlled. The political repercussions of such action would quickly feed back into a worse security situation by alienating minority opinion. It is also operationally impractical, would tie up large numbers of Security Forces indefinitely, and would not solve the problem of rural and cross border terrorism.

FR.

A "Third Force"

51. Unionists have for a decade deprecated the abolition of the Ulster Special Constabulary (the "B Specials") which had been seen as an important element in the maintenance of the "Protestant ascendancy". Current Unionist threats to create a "Third Force", though they lack precision and appear to mean different things to different people, have to be seen against this background. The least objectionable version of the "Third Force" is the voluntary communications network suggested by Mr Molyneaux which might provide some assistance for the existing security forces. There are also advocates of "community defence groups": that is, vigilantes equipped with some form of weapons. Thirdly, there have been calls for some development of the present Protestant paramilitary capability to enable operations to be mounted against those whom they suspect to be supporters of Republican terrorism. Finally, Mr Paisley's hillside demonstrations of paramilitary strength specifically evoke the precedent of the 1914 Ulster Volunteer Force with which Lord Carson intended to resist attempts by a Westminster Government to break the Union.

52. The existing Ulster Defence Regiment and the RUC Reserve are intended to provide outlets for the legitimate involvement of the community in the security effort. Both are being employed as important parts of the present heightened security force profile. However, there is no scope for further expansion of these forces in an attempt to divert current demands for a "Third Force" into disciplined lawful bodies. Recent experience has underlined the fact that the part-time security forces tend to increase the number of targets without a commensurate contribution to the security effort. In any case, the disciplined nature of these forces detracts from their appeal to many extreme "Loyalists".

FR.

Capital Punishment

53. Capital punishment is also often advocated as a key to future progress. Apart from the wider issues involved, including the question whether there would be a Parliamentary majority for the introduction of such a measure in the United Kingdom as a whole, capital punishment would carry very particular risks in the context of Northern Ireland. Irish history demonstrates how damaging it is for a British Government to create Irish martyrs. The impact of the self-imposed 'martyrdom' of Sands gives some indication of what could be expected if a terrorist were executed.

A Substantially Increased Long-Term Deployment of the Regular Army

54. Though the presence of Army units is normally reassuring to the majority community and has some effect in deterring terrorism it does not of itself contribute to the long-term reduction of terrorism. The main offensive thrust against terrorism comes from intelligence-based operations which are of their nature covert. It follows that there would be little correlation between any increase in the long-term overt presence of more soldiers and a reduction of terrorism. In fact in two major respects a greatly increased deployment could be expected to lead to an increase in violence: there would be more targets; and an operationally unnecessary increase in the contacts between the minority community and the Army would risk additional friction which could only too easily be exploited by Republican terrorists. Although there are countervailing presentational advantages in deploying more troops as a sop to Unionist opinion, experience shows that such resources are more easily committed than withdrawn. In the past an important justification for the deployment of the Army in large numbers was the relatively low strength of the RUC. The RUC is now considerably larger and it would be a retrograde step to commit expensive Army resources on a long-term basis without genuine operational advantage.

55. There is a 'Loyalist' tribal belief in the effectiveness of 'SAS-type' operations, by which they appear to mean covert operations in general. I am satisfied that all the troops trained for covert operations are adequate for the tasks which they are required to perform.

*Passage deleted and retained under
Section 3(4). DWayland
2 October 2012*

56. I am in no doubt that such of the options discussed above as are practicable offer at best short term political and operational advantage but in the long term they are likely to give rise to even greater security problems. Politically, too, it is important that HMG should not appear to be taking steps of this kind as a result of threats by the extreme Protestants. The likely results of the options most stridently demanded by our "Loyalist" critics would be the total alienation of the minority community and the ending of co-operation on the part of the Irish Government. This reinforces my belief that the existing security policy offers the best prospect of achieving long-term progress against terrorism while the search for a political settlement continues. I am sure that all concerned, however, would agree that there is still scope for further refinement of the intelligence based attack on which that policy rests.

FR.
SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

57. The substantive conclusions of my review of security are:

- (a) The Security Forces coped well with the simultaneous challenge of street violence engendered by the hunger strike and an upsurge in Republican terrorism. The RUC gained in efficiency and confidence but paid a price in two respects: their developing relationship with the Catholic community received a reverse and they diverted resources from combatting non-terrorist crime. The lost ground has been regained faster than might have been expected. (Paragraphs 3-10).
- (b) Since my last review cross border co-operation between the Garda and the RUC has steadily improved despite changes in the Irish government and the hunger strike. (Para 11).
- (c) In 1981 there has been a movement in both communities towards the political extremes. (Paras 12-15).
- (d) PIRA and INLA are able and likely to continue indefinitely the present pattern of terrorist activity. In PIRA's case this can be expected to be linked with a political campaign. (Paras 16-21).
- (e) Apart from reactive terrorism by Protestant paramilitaries there is a danger that Loyalist fears about the implications of the Anglo-Irish talks could at any time manifest themselves in the form of more violent action. (Paras 22-23).
- (f) The RUC are now firmly in the lead and the present Army Force level has proved capable of providing the required military support. (Paras 25-28).
- (g) Selective, intelligence-based operations leading to convictions still provide the most effective counter to the current forms of terrorism. (Para 29).

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- (h) There is still scope for further improvement in the application of this policy. (Para 30).
- (i) Greater prominence might now be given in general terms to the covert aspect of Security Force operations without paying a security penalty. (Para 31).
- (j) The long-term size and structure of the Security Forces must be resolved in the near future. In this respect the future strength, nature and roles of the RUC, regular Army and UDR are inextricably linked. (Paras 32-35).
- (k) RUC/Garda relations will remain of critical importance but urgently needs to be underpinned by improvements in co-operation in the legal sphere. (Paras 36-39).
- (l) At the highest levels co-ordination between RUC/Army/NIO has improved considerably. There has also been an improvement in co-operation between the Security Forces and Northern Ireland civil departments. Prison security for terrorist inmates has become increasingly important and requires co-ordinated attention. (Paras 40-44).
- (m) The more fundamental alternatives to our present policy offer at best short term political and operational advantages. In the long term they could all give rise to even greater political and security problems. (Paras 44-55)
- (n) Undeterred and vigorous pursuit of our present security policy offers the soundest prospect of achieving long term progress against terrorism, while the search for a political settlement continues. (Para 56).