

Prime Minister

OPERATION ABERCORN

Three points on the attached :-

1. You should look at the draft of the statement to be issued as you leave, attached to Bernard's minute at the top of the folder. It is based on a draft from N10, but I will clear it with the Secretary of State when you are content with it.

2. The plan provides for you to go straight to Chequers on return: is this right? No. No. 10.

3. We are told that Wellington boots are required for the visit to the border post. The men can rely on the army to provide them; but you may like to take something you can change into to walk through mud.

F.R.B.

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HELICOPTER SUPPORT

H1

Main party (2):

Private Secretary

2 Metropolitan Police protection officers

Supt Donaldson (RUC Head of Security Branch)

Press Secretary

Mr Merifield

H2

Secretary of State

~~Asst Private Secretary~~

Mr Gilliland

Mr Lyon

Secretary of State's escorts (2)

NIO Secretary

Major Trigger (army liaison)

H3

Doctor and medical team

H4

Army protection unit

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CAR PLAN A

- No 1 RUC Pilot car. Metropolitan Protection Officer
- No 2 Main Party (2)
+ Supt Donaldson
- No 3 Sec of State and Mr Lyon
2 escorts
- No 4 Private Secretary
Mr Merifield
2nd Metropolitan Protection Officer
- No 5 ~~A/Private Sec~~
Press Sec
Mr Gilliland
- No 6 Major Trigger
NIO Secretary
Miss J Owens
- No 7 RUC Rear Escort

CAR PLAN A1

As above plus

- No 8 Mr J Taylor
+ 2 escorts
- No 9 Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Ards Borough

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CAR PLAN B

No 1 RUC Pilot Car
 + 1 Met Protection Officer

No 1A Brig Mattingley, Lt Col Draper
 and Major Trigger

No 2 Main Party (2) and Supt Donaldson

No 3 Sec of State and Mr Lyon
 2 Escorts

No 4 Press Secretary
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Maginnis

No 5 RUC Rear Escort
 + 1 Met Protection Officer

[Car: Mr Gilliland with special press group to travel
from base to check point in advance of main party]

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NON FLYING TIMETABLE

If helicopters are grounded the final serial (Aughnacloy) will be deleted, and the main programme will be re-timed as follows:

10.00	Arrive Aldergrove	
10.05	Depart by car for Newtownards	Car Plan A
10.55	Arr Newtownards Regent St (Car parking area facing Queens Hall)	
	Tour shops in Conway Square calling in Browns (General drapery store) in High Street	
11.30	Leave town centre by car	Car Plan A1
11.35	Arr RUC Station Newtownards	
11.55	Leave RUC station by car	Car Plan A
13.05	Arr Drumadd Barracks, Armagh	
13.05 -		
13.15	Break	
13.15 -		
14.00	Buffet lunch	
14.00 -		
14.15	Tour of barracks	
14.15	Leave Drumadd by car [15 minutes later than in main programme]	Car Plan A
15.05	Arr Aldergrove [as in main programme]	

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BRIEFING ON EACH STAGE

SERIAL 1: ARRIVAL ALDERGROVE RAF

1. SECRETARY OF STATE

2. PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY NIO

Sir Philip Woodfield, KCB, CBE

3. 2ND PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY AND HEAD OF NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

Sir Ewart Bell KCB 2nd PUS NIO 1981: Head of NICS 1979 (Northern Ireland Civil Service since 1948).

4. GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING

Lieutenant General Sir Robert Richardson, KCB, CVO, CBE. : GOC NI June 82; Commander 39 Brigade NI 1974-75. (Latterly GOC British Sector Berlin 1978-80 and Vice Adjutant General/ Director of Manning Army 1980-81. Colonel of Royal Scots. (350th Anniversary this year)

5. CHIEF CONSTABLE

Sir John Hermon, Chief Constable RUC 1980. Educated Larne Grammar School. RUC since 1950.

6. STATION COMMANDER

Group Captain Tony Salter (assumed command early 1983).

To accompany visiting party

7. UNDER SECRETARY (POLITICAL) NIO

Mr Anthony Merifield. NIO October 1982; DHSS London 1965-82

8. DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION NIO

Mr David Gilliland. Under Secretary NIO Information Department. NI Civil Service now working in Stormont Castle. Accompanied Secretary of State on his recent visit to USA.

9. PRIVATE SECRETARY TO SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr John Lyon. Assistant Secretary. Private Secretary 1982, on secondment from Home Office.

10. SUPERINTENDENT WILLIAM DONALDSON - RUC PROTECTION OFFICER

Superintendent Donaldson joined RUC 1961, wide range of posts; Superintendent 1980; Protection Officer 1982 (and saw PM last year). His brother, Constable Samuel Donaldson, was murdered in Crossmaglen, Co Armagh in 1970 in the first booby trap car bomb.

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SERIAL 2 VISIT TO NEWTOWNARDS

Newtownards a Plantation town now a Belfast dormitory and market centre serving North Down agricultural area: 20,000 pop, largely Protestant and relatively unscathed by sectarian troubles. Has some light industry, and a new shopping centre (the largest in Ireland) which has taken trade from town centre shops.

Programme

Walk to town centre (Conway Square) bounded on 3 sides by a selection of small shops. Visit Woolworths (a small branch) and Browns of High Street an old established family draper business which has recently been extended. This shop stocks a large selection of Ulster made shirts (made in Londonderry).

Note

If the weather in Newtownards is so poor as to preclude a visit to the main streets and square, cars will move direct to the WOOLCO shopping centre, to arrive at the main entrance. Mr Hewitt NIO will be in attendance with Mr Cecil Hull, and with the Head of Operations and Security at the centre who will guide the party on a tour of the centre visiting interesting shops such as Easons, large newsagents with a fine display of recently published books on NI.

Personalities

Rt Hon John D Taylor MP MEP Official Unionist MP for Strangford 1983- Member of Northern Ireland Assembly. Former Stormont Minister for Home Affairs. Mr Taylor survived an IRA murder bid in 1972 in which he was severely injured.

Mr Thomas J McBriar Mayor of Ards Borough Council. Alliance Party. Deputy Mayor Ards Borough 1981-83, Member 1978- Area Chairman of the Round Table 1982-83. Formerly member of the Young Farmers Association. Age 40, married with young family.

Mr Oliver W Johnston Deputy Mayor of Ards Borough Council. Democratic Unionist Party (but formerly Officier Unionist). Has business interests, including concrete products firm. Age 60, married 1 son, 1 daughter.

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Mr Cecil Hull President of the Newtownards Chamber of Trade. Has held this office for less than 1 year. Owns two jewellers shops (one in High Street and in the Ards shopping centre).

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SERIAL 3 NEWTOWNARDS POLICE STATION

Background This station is Headquarters G Division (covering the Eastern portion of County Down, including Newtownards, Downpatrick and Newcastle) and sub divisional headquarters for Newtownards. Building fully completed in 1981 and serves a population of 118,700.

The total strength of the force based at Newtownards is 535 men and women: of these 350 are full time and the remainder part time.

Programme will include a visit to the Operations Room followed by coffee in the station canteen with serving officers, their wives and 3 widows whose husbands were killed on duty this year.

Personalities

Assistant Chief Constable David Cushley

Regional Assistant Chief Constable David Cushley has operational responsibility for all NI except Belfast. He will be supervising local Police operations in Newtownards. Has been in the RUC since June 1955. Assistant Chief Constable since May 1983.

Chief Superintendent Michael Forde, Divisional Commander, G Division, is based at Divisional Headquarters, Newtownards. Joined RUC in 1944. Promoted to Chief Superintendent in May 1974. Was Divisional Commander at Springfield Road, Belfast, during a period of much unrest and terrorist activity.

Superintendent Austin Anderson, Deputy Divisional Commander has been at Newtownards for past 2 years. Previously served in Newry as Border Superintendent.

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SERIAL 4 DRUMADD BARRACKS (ARMAGH CITY)

Background

Armagh. Cathedral city (RC and Prot). One of the cultural centres of Northern Ireland. Centre of religion and learning. Situated on one of old routes between Belfast and Dublin.

Drumadd Barracks. Modern barracks. Currently occupied by:

- a. Battalion HQ, and one company 1 Grenadier Guards;
- b. One company 1st Devon and Dorsets. One company of 1st Queen's Own Highlanders under operational control of 1st Grenadiers;
- c. Battalion HQ and three companies of 2 UDR;
- d. RUC Divisonal Mobile Support Unit (DMSU), a quick reaction RUC unit.

PROGRAMME

Brief meeting with military patrol immediately after landing.

Buffet lunch for Officers, WOs and SNCOs of 1 Grenadier Guards, 1 Devon and Dorset, 1 Queen's Own Highlanders, 2 UDR. Guests will include RUC Div Commander, Mr Nicholson MP, and Chairman, Armagh District Council.

Short tour of barracks to meet other ranks and DMSU.

PERSONALITIES

1. Comd 39 Inf Bde. Brig H M (Mike) Rose OBE QGM. Assumed comd 39 Inf Bde this month. Last job was Col GS in ASD, MOD.

2. CO 1 GREN GDS. Lt Col Alexander Beroys, who assumed command Sept. 82. Been moved to NI from Hounslow October 1983 for a "roulement" tour which ends in February 1984.

3. CO 2 UDR. Lt Col M (Mike) J Nicholson MBE RA. Assumed command May 1982.

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4. Mr James Nicholson MP. Official Unionist. MP for Newry and Armagh 1983. Assembly Member for Armagh. Council Member since 1975. A quiet man, who just defeated Mr Mallon (SDLP) when the Catholic vote split SDLP 17,000: 10,000 (Sinn Fein), and the Unionists fielded only 1 candidate. Farmer.

5. Mr Douglas Hutchinson. Chairman of Armagh District Council. Democratic Unionist Party. Became Chairman following the murder by terrorists of Mr Charles Armstrong in November. Councillor since 1953. Former Assembly and Convention member. Strong line on security. (Was expelled from Orange and Black Orders in mid 60's for opposing their leader's "appeasement", and later received short sentences for anti-civil rights disturbances). Owns large fruit farm. Met PM in December 1982 when Deputy Chairman.

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SERIAL 5 AUGHNACLOY ARMY BASE (COUNTY TYRONE)

Background

1. Aughnacloy. Border village in an agricultural community. Has always been close to a principal border crossing point and has therefore always been a focus of security force attention. Army base in village since early days of campaign. RUC station is located elsewhere in village.

2. Army Base. Currently occupied by:

a. Company of 1 CHESHIRE detached from barracks at Ballykelly.

b. Part-time company of 8 UDR.

3. Vehicle Check Point (PVCP). This check point operates between the village and the border to cover an approved road crossing point. Permanently manned by Army and RUC. Border at its closest is 200m away across fields.

4. Programme.

a. Tour of base to meet officers and other ranks.

b. Brief visit by principal visitors to PVCP to meet soldiers and policeman on duty.

PERSONALITIES

1. Comd. 8 Inf Bde. Brig C (Colin) Mattingley OBE. Brigade Commander since Nov. 82; commanded 1 KOSB 78-81.

2. CO 8 UDR. Lt Col R (Robin) A Draper. Assumed command in September 1983.

3. Mr Ken Maginnis MP. MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone 1983. Official Unionist Member of the NI Assembly and until his party's walkout, Chairman of its Security Committee and Deputy Chairman of its Finance and Personnel Committee. Member of the Dungannon District Council. Formerly principal of a primary school and UDR Major. Age 45.

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4. Mr W Ralph Brown. Chairman Dungannon District Council. Official Unionist. Sixth term as Council Chairman; Council member since 1973. Owner of Dungannon Electrical Store. Late 40's.

5. Supt David Hall. Deputy Div Commander. Based at Cookstown, has responsibility for Aughnacloy. Previously served in Bessbrook, Newry and Dungannon.

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NORTHERN IRELAND: CURRENT POSITION

1. Politics in Northern Ireland are currently unsettled, ostensibly deadlocked. (The constitutional parties see little immediate room for manoeuvre and are under no pressures from their supporters to take risks). There are some signs of serious thinking in most of the parties, but no sign of movement at present. The murder of Edgar Graham makes it difficult for the UUP to resile from their withdrawal from the Assembly even if their pro-integrationist leadership favoured renewed participation. Mr Paisley's DUP have had little reward for their relatively positive approach in the Assembly and may contemplate reverting to a more populist and harder line. Alliance have as usual been moderate and constructive but the electoral breakthrough they seek seems as elusive as ever. On the nationalist side the SDLP's grip on community politics (particularly in Belfast) has been loosened by Sinn Fein. The party has staked its future on the New Ireland Forum (as to a lesser extent has Dr FitzGerald's government) and the European election in June 1984 will be a severe test of its capacity to resist the Sinn Fein challenge.

2. There is no possibility of the SDLP taking their Assembly seats before the Forum reports, and without their participation and that of the UUP the Assembly is unable to submit proposals for devolution. While Mr Kilfedder occupies a potentially crucial role as Speaker (technically presiding officer) of the Assembly, he can do little at the moment to enhance the prospects for political development (and he perhaps also lacks the weight to act with full effectiveness as an honest broker between the parties). Mr Molyneaux hopes to develop proposals for administrative devolution, but whilst he might be able to devise arrangements acceptable to the DUP and perhaps Alliance, there is little prospect of the UUP securing SDLP support.

3. There have been a number of very serious security incidents recently. In addition to the murder of Mr Graham, there have been a number of attacks against the security forces. But the

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overall level of violence has continued to decline since the mid-1970s. For instance, as of 20 December this year there had been 74 deaths attributable to terrorist activity compared with 97 in the whole of 1982 and 101 in 1981. Similarly, the number of injuries due to terrorism has continued to decline. On the other hand, the number of people charged with serious crimes continues to increase: 63 people have been charged with murder so far this year and 59 with attempted murder.

4. The Chief Constable and the GOC have made a number of fresh dispositions following recent incidents both to protect individuals and to provide some reassurance in the border areas. The Secretary of State has given public assurance of his support for the security forces and his readiness to consider any requests for additional resources. At the same time has confirmed his commitment to the existing broad policy of police primacy, with the army in support, and of actions within the normal conventions of the law, and has stated his continuing belief that this is the most effective long term means of securing the kind of community support which is essential to the long term defeat of terrorism. The RUC remains committed to effective cooperation with the Garda and there is no reason to believe that at operational level collaboration is unsatisfactory. But relations between the two Chief Officers remain uneasy because of the McGovern affair. Mr Prior hopes to discuss these matters with the Republic's Justice Minister next month.

5. Political instability and violence have discouraged potential investors and currently, through the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit, every effort is being made to promote local jobs and attract new inward investment. Fresh investment incentives were announced in March 1983. In November this year the number of unemployed was 119,748 or 21.5% of the workforce. The Government has allocated a proportionately higher share of resources to Northern Ireland and a comprehensive youth training programme was introduced a year ahead of the GB scheme.