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Our reference

ADM 18/47/04  
Date

20 January 1984

*Dear Sir,*

VISITS TO NORTHERN IRELAND BY THE PRIME MINISTER

- Following the Prime Minister's visit to Northern Ireland last month, the codeword circulated by Mrs Newman under cover of her letter of .. 7 March 1983 is out of date. Accordingly, I attach, for your personal information, copy number / of a memorandum containing a new codeword and explaining its use. I should be grateful if you would destroy Mrs Newman's letter of 7 March and sign and return the enclosed receipt .. to me.
- .. 2. I also enclose, for your personal information, copy number / of a revised version of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). This supercedes SOP NIO1/81 which was circulated by Mr Rickard on 21 July 1981 and which I would ask recipients to return to me for destruction. The two main changes in the new version are designed to take account of the fact that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is no longer accompanied to Northern Ireland by Metropolitan Police Special Branch officers, and that the post of Personal Air Secretary to the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Defence Procurement has been dis-established and his duties, with regard to Prime Ministers' visits, transferred to the Head of Movement Operations. The revised SOP is still tailored towards a two day visit with at least one major public speech.

*Yours sincerely*  
*David Brooker*

D BROOKER  
Establishment Division

Encls

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DISTRIBUTION

1. Principal Private Secretary, 10 Downing Street
2. PS/Secretary of State, London
3. PS/Secretary of State, Belfast
4. PUS, NIO(L)
5. PUS, NIO(B)
6. DUS, NIO(L)
7. DUS, NIO(B)
8. Under-Secretary, (Political Affairs and Information Policy)  
NIO(B)
9. Principal Establishments and Finance Officer (PEFO), NIO(L)
10. Chief Constable, RUC HQ
11. GOC, HQNI
12. Press Secretary, 10 Downing Street
13. Head of Movement Operations (RAF), MOD Main Building
14. Second Permanent Secretary NIO and Head of NICS
15. Director, NI Information Services, NIO(B)
16. Head of the Prime Minister's Protection Team
17. Station Commander, RAF Northolt
18. Station Commander, RAF Aldergrove
19. File: ADM 18/47/04

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ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISITS TO NORTHERN IRELAND BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE - NIO 1/83

Background

1. This SOP is to be implemented from the time that a visit by the Prime Minister to Northern Ireland is first broached; it supersedes SOP ADM 18/47/03 of 16 July 1981. It is based on the assumption that the Prime Minister may stay overnight and will wish to include in her visit at least one major political speech.

Security

2. Security will be the overriding consideration in all planning and action:

- (a) Prior information about a visit will be classified TOP SECRET up to 24 hours before the visit, and SECRET thereafter. Following a visit, papers concerning the arrangements and programmes will be downgraded to RESTRICTED.
- (b) Reference by telephone to the visit or to any aspects of the arrangements must be kept to a minimum and the most secure telephone system available must be used, ie PICKWICK (or its replacement, STS), BRUIN, GOLIATH or at least (and only as a last resort) a privacy set but then only using extremely guarded speech.
- (c) To ensure that explicit references to the visit are restricted to a few essential occasions, an operational codeword ("Operation ....") will normally be used to refer to the Prime Minister's visit. The codeword and its meaning will be made known only to those who need to receive information concerning the true nature of the visit before the Prime Minister's first public appearance in Northern Ireland. All concerned must understand their roles sufficiently well for the passing of the codeword and the date to be an adequate indication of the action required of them. The codeword will be changed after each visit.
- (d) PUS will decide, in the light of all available intelligence reports received prior to the proposed visit, whether to recommend any changes to the visit arrangements.

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Dissemination of Information Concerning the Visit

3. The Prime Minister's decision to visit Northern Ireland will be agreed with the Secretary of State and the PUS. All those who are subsequently informed will receive the information on a strictly personal basis.

4. At the outset the PUS will sound out those most directly affected including the Chief Constable and the GOC on the timing and content of the programme so that he can advise PS/Prime Minister accordingly. Initially, only the following will be informed within the NIO:-

- (a) The Secretary of State
- (b) PS/Secretary of State
- (c) The PUS
- (d) PS/PUS
- (e) The Second Permanent Secretary
- (f) The Deputy Secretary (London)
- (g) The Deputy Secretary (Belfast)
- (h) Under Secretary (Political Affairs and Information Policy), (Belfast)

The Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister will be responsible for informing the Head of the Prime Minister's Special Branch Protection Team of the planned visit and asking him to consult the Chief Constable about security arrangements.

5. Detailed consultations with the Prime Minister's Private Secretary concerning the programme and the theme of any major speeches should be started by PUS at least 10 working days before the visit.

6. Seven working days before the visit the Press Secretary at No 10 and the Director NI Information Services should be informed and should meet to discuss speeches and press coverage before the programme is finalised. Others who should be informed at this stage are:-

- (a) The Assistant Secretary, Political Affairs Division
- (b) The Principal Establishment and Finance Officer (PEFO)
- (c) NI Permanent Secretaries concerned with the visit
- (d) The APS/Secretary of State (Belfast)
- (e) The APS/Secretary of State (London)

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7. Not more than 24 hours before the visit, PS/Prime Minister will inform the Head of Movement Operations (Mov Ops) (RAF) (Ministry of Defence, Main Building, Tel: 01-218 6073) who should notify directly the Station Commander, RAF Northolt, by-passing all normal chains of command. No other officers in the MOD or the RAF need to know about the visit before the Prime Minister's departure.

8. During the 24 hours prior to the visit the areas which the Prime Minister will visit will be checked in accordance with arrangements made between the Chief Constable and the Head of the PM's Special Branch Protection Team.

9. PUS, or AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy) (B) on his behalf, will consult with the Chief Constable and GOC to determine at what point before the visit they can inform those of their subordinates who need to know and to make dispositions that a visit is in prospect. However, unless the PUS authorises otherwise, the Chief Constable and GOC may only issue orders for arrangements to be made for a "proxy" visit.

10. One hour before the estimated time of arrival of the Prime Minister's aircraft the Assistant Private Secretary (Belfast) to the Secretary of State will notify the Station Commander, RAF Aldergrove, by passing the codeword and timing to him personally by telephone.

11. When the Prime Minister's aircraft has landed at RAF Aldergrove, the Senior RUC Officer on the Stormont Estate will be informed by the Assistant Private Secretary (Belfast).

#### Co-ordination of the Visit

12. Although overall responsibility for co-ordination of the visit and for preliminary arrangements will rest with the group at paragraph 4, working through PS/Secretary of State to PS/Prime Minister, there is a requirement for a small co-ordination team to take over the detailed planning of the visit not more than seven days before it takes place. The team will be chaired by the AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy) who will be supported by the Director of NI Information Services, the Assistant Secretary, Political Affairs Division and APS/Secretary of State (Belfast).

13. The Assistant Secretary, Political Affairs Division will act as PUS's special assistant during the period of the visit, to be available to deal on the spot with the various unforeseen problems which are likely to arise. His task is to ensure that the visit goes as smoothly as possible. He will also be available, in the absence of the PUS or the Private Secretary, to effect any necessary immediate co-ordination with the PS/Prime Minister.

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Planning the Programme

14. A draft outline programme for the visit (to include flying and non-flying arrangements) and the outlines of any proposed speeches will be prepared under PUS's directions as soon as the visit has been agreed. These should be cleared with the Prime Minister's Secretary at least 10 working days before the visit. Once the Prime Minister has agreed to the outline programme and speeches, the Co-ordination Team should take over to fill in the precise details of the programme and to liaise with the appropriate senior officials from the groups at paragraphs 4 and 5 to flesh out the outline proposed speeches (including clearance with other Whitehall Departments where appropriate). Final programmes and speeches must be with the Prime Minister at least five working days before the visit.

15. AUS (Political Affairs and International Policy) (B) is to ensure that the objectives of the visit are clearly defined in advance during the early consultations with the PUS, PS/Secretary of State and PS/Prime Minister. The programme should then be assembled based on those objectives and bearing in mind the hazards of and time wasted in too much travelling. This constraining factor, however, must be counter-balanced by the enhanced value of the visit when the more remote parts of the Province are included in the itinerary. Helicopters should be used for travelling wherever possible. But an alternative non-flying programme is always essential in the event of bad weather.

16. Given the need for the strictest security concerning the visit, a "proxy" programme offers the best chance of combining advance planning with secrecy and accordingly, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, a "proxy" programme will always be used. A credible "proxy" other than the Secretary of State should be considered where possible, since using the Secretary of State as a cover has become transparent due to the number of times this device has been used.

17. The visit will normally be for two days and will include one major speech. The programme should include items during which the Prime Minister is seen outside the Stormont Estate or the perimeter of a security force base, security permitting (eg a city centre walkabout). Civil dignitaries, especially the Lord Mayor of Belfast feel strongly that they should be involved when the Prime Minister visits their areas and this should be taken into account in planning so that no offence is caused. The Co-ordinating Team must decide how much notice of the impending visit should be given to civic dignitaries, using the "proxy" in the first instance and revealing the true identity of the visitor only at the latest possible moment.

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18. The programme should ideally include at least one visit to a civilian organisation which serves the community such as the medical or fire services.

Briefs

19. DUS (London) will co-ordinate briefing for the visit. Those commissioned to brief should not be told why it is required unless they belong to the groups at paragraphs 4 and 5 above when they will be told at the due time. Briefs will be submitted to PUS five working days before the visit. PUS will arrange for the briefs to be sent to No 10, PS/Secretary of State and for information to other officials who are already aware of the visit and need it. The briefing should contain a statement of the agreed principal objectives of the visit and how they might be achieved, a background note on the general situation in the Province, and further notes on specific topics relevant to the visit or which might be raised by those whom the Prime Minister will meet (about whom short biographical notes will be attached). Special briefing will also be required for any interviews to be given by the Prime Minister to the press or on television or radio.

UKCS and NICS

20. The possibility of the Prime Minister meeting members of the UKCS and NICS during the visit should be borne in mind.

Transport

21. Careful co-ordination is essential to ensure that the aircraft, helicopter and car arrangements for the visit work effectively. The Co-ordination Team will ensure that the necessary transport for the flying and alternative non-flying programme is laid on. In particular APS/Secretary of State (Belfast) is to arrange, as late as possible on the day before the visit, with ASOC (Air Support Operations Centre) at HQ NI for helicopters of the required capacity to be provided for the "proxy" and his party, to meet the requirements of the programme.

22. The responsibility for making arrangements for additional RUC cars will be solely for the Chief Constable. To avoid the omission of this essential contingency planning, PUS will confirm this requirement with the Chief Constable when initially informing him of the proposed visit. The Chief Constable is to make appropriate contingency arrangements as late as possible, without disclosing the true identity of the visitor.

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Meetings

23. Formal meetings between the Prime Minister and political representatives or, say, representatives of industry will usually take place in Stormont Castle.

24. Once proposed meetings have been agreed with No 10 the Co-ordination Team will discreetly ascertain the availability of the appropriate groups, individuals and organisations. All external consultations in the pursuit of these enquiries must be cleared first with PUS. PS/Secretary of State will then make advance internal arrangements within the Private Office for the issue of invitations to any meetings at the appropriate time. If an important group or any individual essential to the purpose of the meeting is discovered to be unable to attend, the Co-ordination Team will consult PUS as to whether the item should be cancelled, and whether any other action will be necessary.

Receptions (Meals or Drinks)

25. Usually the Prime Minister will give at least one reception. PUS, in consultation with PS/Secretary of State will consider:

- (a) How many receptions there should be and of what kind.
- (b) Where the receptions should be held (eg Stormont House, Parliament Buildings or Hillsborough Castle).
- (c) Who should be invited.

26. Having obtained the agreement of PS/Prime Minister to suitable proposals for one or more receptions, PUS will authorise APS/Secretary of State (Belfast) to issue invitations, normally by telephone, 48 hours in advance, to a reception with the "proxy". The RUC will produce addresses and telephone numbers of guests about whom such information is not known. Guests will be told that provisions for car parking will be made, and they will be advised by which gate(s) they should enter the Stormont Estate (if applicable). A guest list will be provided by APS/Secretary of State (Belfast) for the Senior RUC Officer on the Stormont Estate or at Hillsborough Castle at 9.00 am on the day of the reception explaining that those invited are coming to a reception given for the "proxy". Provision for secure parking under police surveillance will be required.

Selection of Guests for Receptions etc

27. Guest lists will vary according to the occasion and whether the Prime Minister is meeting prominent Northern Ireland figures on other occasions during the visit, but PUS, AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy), PS/Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary (Political Affairs, Belfast) should consult and choose from among:



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- (a) Leaders of the established political parties.
- (b) Leaders of the four main Churches.
- (c) Chief Constable and Senior Deputy Chief Constable.
- (d) GOC, CLF and possibly Commander UDR.
- (e) Lord Mayor of Belfast and Mayor of Londonderry.
- (f) President and Secretary of Northern Ireland Branch of CBI.
- (g) Chairman and Secretary of Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU.
- (h) NI Permanent and Under Secretaries.
- (i) NIO Civil Servants of the grade of Under Secretary and above.
- (j) Prominent members of the business or commercial community.

28. The Co-ordination Team will designate Civil Service staff to help guests to circulate at the reception and, as appropriate, to meet the Prime Minister. VIPs (eg Church leaders) will be escorted in and out of the reception area and will be offered assistance in handling the media. This will also be arranged by the Co-ordination Team.

Public Relations

29. Subject to guidance from PUS and PS/Prime Minister on PR objectives of the visit, AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy) and the Director of NI Information Services will submit to PUS, as soon as possible after being informed of the proposed visit, plans for handling the media which will specifically include the extent to which, without revealing the Prime Minister's visit, they would wish to prepare the ground for suitable PR coverage. No action of any kind with the media in advance of the visit will be taken without the express authority of PUS.

30. The Director of NI Information Services will agree in advance with the Press Secretary at No 10 a draft press announcement for issue on the Prime Minister's departure from Northern Ireland which should be cleared by PUS and PS/Prime Minister. Amendments in the light of developments during the visit on procedure and timing for release will be agreed between the Director of NI Information Services and the Press Secretary of No 10 and cleared as appropriate.

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31. Within the objectives of the visit, time should be set aside for the Prime Minister to give a Press Conference and/or a radio or television interview. The Secretary of State and PUS will brief the Prime Minister for this and will be available during the interview or Press Conference.

Office Support for the Prime Minister's Party

32. It is essential that the Prime Minister's party should have day and night access to full office services throughout the visit (ie secretarial support, MUFAX links, secure telephone links etc). APS/Secretary of State (Belfast) is responsible for arranging these and ensuring that all members of the Co-ordination Team, PS/Secretary of State and PS/PUS are fully briefed on all the arrangements.

Movements in Advance of the Prime Minister's Arrival

33. The Secretary of State should normally be in Belfast in advance of the Prime Minister. Together with the AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy), he should receive the Prime Minister at Aldergrove. AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy) will accompany the Prime Minister throughout the visit.

34. AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy) will be assisted by the Assistant Secretary (Political Affairs, Belfast) during the visit who will keep closely in touch at all times with the Belfast Private Office, the administrative focal point. The Assistant Secretary will be responsible for dealing with all unforeseen problems which are likely to arise during the visit. It is to him that any snags (eg helicopters unable to fly, guests held up in traffic, personal problems of dignitaries) should be immediately reported. If PUS is for any reason unavailable the Assistant Secretary in consultation with AUS (Political Affairs and Information Policy) is authorised to take any essential decision on changes to the programme.

Check Lists

35. An activity list setting out the arrangements for the PM's visit in chronological order is at Annex A and a daily check list for key officials is at Annex B.

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

20 January 1984

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ANNEX A

ARRANGEMENTS FOR PM'S VISIT IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Serial	Date	Activity	Person Responsible	Comments
1	V - ?	SoS, PUS and No 10 agree on a visit taking place.	SoS PUS PM	(Prior information about the visit will be classified TOP SECRET up to 24 hours before the visit.)
2	V - ?	PUS informs GOC, Chief Constable and all those at (A) not yet informed and discusses timing and content of visit.	PUS	(A) SoS, PS/SoS, PUS, PS/PUS, Second Perm Sec, DUS(L), DUS(B). (This group will have responsibility for overall co-ordination working through PS/SoS to PS/PM.
3	V - ?	Draft outline programme and outlines of speech(es) prepared (to include flying and non-flying arrangements) including decisions on whether any meetings and receptions take place, and if so of what nature.	PUS	
4	V - ?	Chief Constable asked by PUS to consider Security and arrangements for additional RUC cars.	Chief Constable	Contingency plan required without disclosing true identity of visitor.
5	V - 10	Draft programme and speech(es) discussed and cleared with PS/Prime Minister (including plans for any meetings or for receptions).  AUS (Political Affairs) to ensure that objectives of visit are clearly defined in advance.	PUS  AUS (Pol Affairs)	

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Serial	Date	Activity	Person Responsible	Comments
6	V - 10	DUS(L) will commission briefing for the visit.	DUS(L)	Briefing should contain a statement of the agreed principal objectives of the visit, a background note on the general situation in the Province and further notes on other relevant topics.
6A	V - 10	PS/PM informs Head of PM's Special Branch Protection Team of draft programme. Head of PM's Protection Team and Chief Constable make all arrangements before and during the visit, to check the areas the Prime Minister will visit.	PS/PM Chief Constable Head of PM's Special Branch Protection Team.	
7	V - 7	Director of Information Services and Press Secretary at No 10 meet and discuss speeches and press coverage subject to guidance from PUS, PS/PM and AUS (Pol Affairs).	Director of Information Services	No action to be taken with the media in advance of the visit without PUS's authority.
8	V - 7	Co-ordination Team established to be chaired by AUS (Pol Affairs) and composed of Director of NI Info Services, AS(PAB) and APS(B).	AUS (Pol Affairs)	The Co-ordination Team will be responsible for precise details of programme, liaison as necessary with other Whitehall Departments fleshing out outline speech(es), ensuring all transport arrangements are made and all proper arrangements made for meetings and receptions (see below).
9	V - 7	The following informed of the visit - PEFO, NI Perm Secs involved in the visit, APS(L).	PS/PUS	

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Serial	Date	Activity	Person Responsible	Comments
10	V - 7	Once proposed meetings are agreed with No 10, the Co-ordination Team will discreetly ascertain the availability of the appropriate groups, individuals and organisations subject to PUS's approval.	Co-ordination Team	
11	V - 7	Co-ordination Team begins detailed arrangements for reception(s).	Co-ordination Team	
12	V - 5	Final speech(es) and programme sent to No 10.	PS/PUS	
13	V - 5	Briefing submitted to PUS.	DUS(L)	
14	V - 4	Briefing forwarded to No 10.	PS/PUS	
15	V - 3	Draft press release agreed between Director of NI Information Services and Press Sec at 10. (Cleared by PUS and PS/PM).	Head of Info Services	Amendments in the light of developments should be made. Procedure and timing of release will be agreed between Director of NI Info Services and Press Sec No 10 and cleared as appropriate.
16	V - 2	APS(B) - with PUS's authorisation - issues invitations, normally by telephone to a reception with the "proxy" visitor - guests will be told that car parking is available and RUC will arrange secure car parking.	APS(B)	RUC will produce addresses and telephone numbers of guests about whom such information is not known.
17	V - 1	PS/Prime Minister informs Head of Mov Ops (RAF) 01-218 6073 of visit who will notify directly the Station Commander, RAF Northolt (by-passing all normal chains of command).	PS/PM Head of Mov Ops	No other officers in the MOD or the RAF need to know about the visit before the PM's departure.

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Serial	Date	Activity	Person Responsible	Comments
18	V - 1	Check of areas which the PM will visit.	Chief Constable, Head of PM's Special Branch Protection Team.	
19	V - 1	APS(B) arranges with ASOC (Air Support Operations Centre) at HQ NI for helicopters of the required capacity to be provided for the "proxy" and his/her party.	APS(B)	
20	V day - 1 hour	APS(B) informs Station Commander, RAF Aldergrove by passing codeword and timing to him personally.	APS(B)	
21	V day	When PM's aircraft lands at Aldergrove, APS(B) informs the Senior RUC officer on the Stormont Estate.	APS(B)	PM met by SoS and AUS (Pol Affairs). AUS (Pol Affairs to accompany PM throughout visit.)
22	V day (1 or 2)	APS(B) provides a guest list for reception to the Senior RUC officer at Stormont Castle or Hillsborough at 9.00 am on day of reception.	APS(B)	
23	V day	AS(PAB) will act as PUS's special assistant during visit.	AS(PAB)	
24	V day	APS(B) will ensure that PM's staff have full day and night office support, and that the Co-ordination Team, PS/SoS and PS/PUS are fully briefed on the arrangements.	APS(B)	

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VISIT BY PM - KEY OFFICIALS DAILY CHECK LIST

Key Officials		V - ?	V - ?	V - 10
S of S	Agrees with PUS and PM that visit should take place.	V - ?		
PUS	Agrees with PM and S of S that visit should take place.	PUS informs GOC, Chief Constable and the following (AUS (Pol Affairs)), PS/PUS, PS/SofS, Second Perm Sec (NIO), DUS(L), DUS(B) and discusses timing and content of visit.	PUS prepares draft programme and outline of speeches and asks Chief Constable to arrange for appropriate additional RUC cars.	Draft programme and speeches discussed and cleared with PS/PM.
Chief Constable			Chief Constable is asked by PUS to consider arrangements for additional RUC cars.	
DUS(L)				DUS(L) commissions briefing for visit.
AUS (Political Affairs)				AUS to ensure that objectives of visits are clearly defined in advance.

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Key Official	V - 7	V - 5
PS/PUS	PS/PUS will inform the following of the visit: PEFO, NI Permanent Secretaries involved in visit, APS(L).	Final speech(es) and programme sent to No 10.
AUS (Political Affairs)	Co-ordination Team established. Chaired by AUS composed of AS(PAB), Director of NI Information Services and APS(B).	
Head of Information Services	Head of Information Services will meet Press Secretary at No 10 to discuss speeches and press coverage.	
Co-ordination Team	Once proposed meeting has been agreed with No 10, the Team will discreetly ascertain the availability of the appropriate groups, individuals and organisations - subject to PUS's approval.  The Team will also begin detailed arrangements for the reception(s).	

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Key Official	V - 5	V - 4	V - 3	V - 2
PS/PUS		Briefing forwarded to No 10.		
DUS(L)	Briefing submitted to PUS.			
Head of Information Services			Head of Information Services to agree draft press release with No 10 (cleared with PUS and PS/PM.)	
APS(B)				APS(B) - with PUS's authorisation to issue invitations normally by telephone to a reception with the "proxy" visitor.

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Key Official	V - 1	V - 1 hour	V Day
S of S			Meets PM at Aldergrove
AUS (Political Affairs)			Meets PM at Aldergrove and accompanies PM throughout visit.
AS(APB)			AS(PAB will act as PUS's special assistant during the visit.
APS(B)	APS(B) arranges with ASOC at HQNI for helicopters to be provided for the "proxy" and his/her party.	APS(B) informs Station Commander RAF Aldergrove by passing code-word and timing personally.	When PM's aircraft lands, APS(B) informs senior RUC officer at Stormont Castle.
PS/PM	PS/PM will inform the Head of Mov Ops (RAF) of the visit.		
Head of Mov Ops (RAF)	Head of Mov Ops (RAF) will notify directly the Station Commander, RAF Northolt by-passing all normal chains of command.		
Chief Constable and Head of PM's Special Branch Protection Team	Head of SBPT will check areas which PM will visit.		

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Key Official	V - day
APS(B)	<p>APS(B) provides guest list for reception to the Senior RUC officer at Stormont Castle or Hillsborough at 9.00 am on day of reception.</p> <p>He will ensure that PM's staff have full day and night office support and that the Co-ordination Team, PS/Secretary of State and PS/PUS are full briefed on the arrangements.</p>

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