

File No.

Department

Drafted by

(Block Capitals)

Tel. Extn.

OUTWARD

TELEGRAM

Security Classification
CONFIDENTIAL
Precedence
FLASH
DESKBYZ

FOR COMMS. DEPT. USE

Despatched (Date) (Time)Z

POSTBYZ

PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin).....Z(G.M.T.)

(Security Class.).....CONFIDENTIAL

(Codeword).....

(Restrictive Prefix).....

(Caveat/ Privacy marking).....

(Deskby).....Z

TO.....FLASH NASSAU..... Tel. No.of..... (precedence) (post)

AND TO (precedence/post).....

AND TO SAVING.....

INFO.....

INFO SAVING.....

Distribution:-

[TEXT]

FOLLOWING FOR WICKS, PRIME MINISTER'S PRINCIPAL PRIVATE SECRETARY, FROM FLESHER, 10 DOWNING STREET

We have the text of the Home Secretary's statement this afternoon. I understand that the Prime Minister had doubts about whether there should be a statement at all. The Home Secretary's judgement (and I agree with him) is that if he does not offer a statement there will be a demand for one from the Opposition or a P.N. Q attempt from one of the constituency members, which the Speaker would allow. In these circumstances he thinks that there is little choice but to make a statement. If the Prime Minister is strongly of the view that he should not we will need to know by 12 noon our time. The statement is too long to transmit all of it and most is an account of the events themselves. The following are the "policy" paragraphs.

Copies to:-

CONFIDENTIAL

The riot at Tottenham was the first occasion in Great Britain when the chief officer of police gave authority for plastic baton rounds to be used if necessary, though in fact they were not used. Plastic baton rounds and CS gas were made available to the police in Great Britain for public order use following the riots in 1981. They may only be used in the last resort, where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of the circumstances be unlikely to succeed if tried, and where the chief officer judges such action necessary because of the risk of loss of life or serious injury or widespread destruction of property. That threshold was reached at Tottenham. The Commissioner had my full support in making it clear that such weapons would be deployed if similar circumstances arose in the future.

Other matters need to be looked at in the light of police experience in these disorders. The defensive equipment introduced in recent years - helmets, shields and protective overalls - proved its worth. Without it ~~there would have been~~ more serious casualties. The Metropolitan Police are acquiring more shields and other defensive equipment. It is also right to consider whether any further equipment is required, and this is being done. Similarly there may be lessons to be learned in relation to police training and deployment. The Commissioner is pursuing these matters and I am in close touch with him. I shall ensure that any lessons learned are disseminated nationally.

From when it first came into office this Government has given tangible expression to its support for the police. That support continues unabated. The strength of the MP is now 26,681 compared with 22,225 in 1979. The Metropolitan Police still has scope to increase strength by more than 400 within its present establishment of 27,165. I support the Commissioner in his efforts to make good this shortfall as quickly as possible. The force's reorganisation should in addition release 200 officers for operational duties; and I have authorised an increase of nearly 50 in the civil staff ceiling next year for further civilianisation. I have also told the Commissioner that I am prepared in

principle to agree to an increase of 50 in the establishment next year, specifically to strengthen his efforts against drug trafficking. Beyond that I have set urgent work in hand to assess whether there is a proven need for further increases in the police establishment. Taken together these

CONFIDENTIAL

You will wish to look closely at the last of these paragraphs which in my view continues the same tone as prompted adverse headlines in the press last week. I have told the Home Office that I think it likely that the Prime Minister will wish a sentence along the lines of "Whatever the police need in their fight against crime, they shall have". Or some other formula more closely based on the Prime Minister's Blackpool speech than the present text. Could I have your comments urgently.

R

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. Biffen: I believe that it is perfectly possible for these matters to be properly concluded when a Cabinet Minister representing the interests of that Department sits in this House.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement on what the Prime Minister has been discussing at the Heads of Government Commonwealth conference. However, does he believe that the withering condescension with which the Prime Minister described the package of proposals for sanctions on the radio this morning will have done anything but comfort those in the Botha regime in South Africa?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the effectiveness of the package, which many of us doubt, will be discussed again in the months ahead so that we can be sure that everything possible is being done to give support to those fighting for the right of the the majority in South Africa to have a say in the running of their country?

Mr. Biffen: I can say without any equivocation that the decisions reached at the conference will be debated in the House.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his hon. Friends believe that the appointment of two Cabinet Ministers responsible for unemployment emphasises in a positive and dramatic way the emphasis that the Government place on that problem?

Mr. Biffen: Absolutely.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the changes in business allow time for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come to the House to make a statement on the progress of negotiations on steel production quotas in the Steel Council of the European Community? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that at the beginning of the recess the Government announced major proposals, including the closure of the Gartcosh works, with its consequences for Ravenscraig and flat products generally in this country? Are not those decisions being taken without the necessary information being given to the House? Will he ensure that an early statement on that matter is made?

Mr. Biffen: I realise the importance of the subject generally, and specifically in relation to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I shall certainly draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Inner City Disorders

4.3 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the recent disorders. During the past six weeks there have been three serious riots—in the Lozells road area of Birmingham, in Brixton, and Tottenham. Four people have died, one a police constable who was savagely killed. There have also been disorders in Liverpool, Leicester and Peckham in south London. Many police officers and others were injured. There were appalling attacks on the police with petrol bombs and other missiles, and especially in Birmingham and Brixton there was extensive looting of and attacks on shops and cars.

All responsible members of our society will condemn the disgraceful criminal behaviour which has occurred and all responsible members of our society will applaud the courage and dedication of the police in doing their job of maintaining and restoring order on the streets and the housing estates of our major cities. Public order is essential for the maintenance of a civilised way of life and for the safety of individual citizens—on that there can be no compromise. So far 700 people have been charged with offences arising from the disorders.

The riot in Brixton was triggered by the tragic shooting of Mrs. Groce, and the riot in Tottenham followed the death of Mrs. Jarrett after a search had been made at her home. These police operations are being investigated by senior officers from other police forces under the supervision of the independent Police Complaints Authority. These arrangements will ensure that they are fully investigated and that any necessary action is taken. In the case of the Lozells road riot, the chief constable of the west midlands is preparing a report which will be published. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary is being associated closely with the preparation of that report.

So far as police operations are concerned, although the other disorders were serious enough, the riot at Tottenham stands out for the problems which it presented to the police. In that riot, a police officer was killed, firearms were used and the police had to face a ferocious barrage of petrol bombs and other missiles. The design of housing estates like that at Tottenham poses particular difficulties in such circumstances. The Metropolitan police commissioner is urgently reviewing the tactics of the force on such occasions. There must be no no-go areas in any of our cities.

The riot at Tottenham was the first occasion in Great Britain when the chief officer of police gave authority for plastic baton rounds to be used if necessary, though in fact they were not used. Plastic baton rounds and CS gas were made available to the police in Great Britain for public order use following the riots in 1981. They may be used only in the last resort, where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of the circumstances be unlikely to succeed if tried, and where the chief officer judges such action necessary because of the risk of loss of life, serious injury or widespread destruction of property. That threshold was reached at Tottenham. The commissioner had my full support in making it clear that such weapons would be deployed if similar circumstances arose in the future.

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

Other matters need to be looked at. The defensive equipment introduced in recent years—helmets, shields and protective overalls—proved its worth. Without it there would have been more serious casualties. The Metropolitan police are acquiring more shields and other defensive equipment. We have to consider whether any further equipment is required, and that is being done. There may be lessons to be learnt in relation to police training and deployment. The commissioner is pursuing these matters and I am in close touch with him. I shall ensure that any lessons learnt are disseminated nationally.

This Government have done more to meet the needs of the police than any in recent history. Since 1979 the Metropolitan police have increased in strength by nearly 4,500 officers; and other forces in England and Wales are stronger by a similar number. Including civilians, strength has increased by some 12,000. Even after a welcome intake of recruits, the Metropolitan police still have scope to increase strength by about 300 within its present establishment of 27,165. I support the commissioner in his efforts to make good this shortfall as quickly as possible. The force's reorganisation should, in addition, release 200 officers for operational duties; and I have authorised an increase of nearly 50 in the civil staff ceiling next year for further civilianisation.

Following my predecessor's announcement in July on drugs, I have told the commissioner that I am prepared in principle to agree to an increase of 50 officers in the establishment next year specifically to strengthen his efforts against drug trafficking. Taken together, these steps mean that there will be a substantial strengthening of the Metropolitan police in the months ahead. Beyond that I have set urgent work in hand to assess where there are specific needs for further increases in the Metropolitan police establishment, and I shall consider applications from provincial police authorities on the same basis—namely, that the police should have what they need in the fight against crime.

In recent years, much effort has been put into establishing good liaison and consultation between the police and the community in inner city areas, particularly, for example, in Brixton and Handsworth. These disorders must be—I know that they are—deeply depressing for those community leaders and police officers who have put so much effort into establishing a better understanding. But it would be wrong to assume that these efforts were misplaced. On the contrary, they must be continued and redoubled if the police are to protect and serve the community efficiently.

More broadly, the Government will continue their strong commitment to urban regeneration. The urban programme has more than tripled, from £93 million in 1978-79 to £338 million in 1985-86, and there has been substantial expenditure in all the riot areas. The Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission are spending more than £100 million in the partnership areas, and my Department plans to spend some £90 million in 1985-86 through section 11 grants.

We must ensure that the very substantial sums that now go, and will continue to go, to inner city areas are spent to the best advantage and directed to the real needs of the people who live there. The city action teams have been set up to improve the co-ordination and targeting of

Government programmes in the partnership areas. We shall do everything to ensure that our objectives in the inner city areas are achieved.

These disorders are shocking events. It is of paramount interest of us all, young and old, people of all ethnic backgrounds, that public order should be maintained. I acknowledge—we all acknowledge—the social problems which exist in these areas, but it is no solution to loot and burn shops which serve the area or to attack the police. Mob violence must be dealt with firmly and effectively and criminal acts punished according to the criminal law. The police should have the support of all of us in striving to maintain order and uphold the law. It is their first priority. It is the Government's also.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment to his high office and I regret, as I am sure he does, that his first duty in that new office is to come to the House on such a wretched occasion.

Five people have died in sad and savage circumstances, and the first duty of the House today is to send sympathy to those who are mourning Mr. Kammalia Moliedina, Mr. Amir Moliedina, Mrs. Cynthia Jarrett, Police Constable Keith Blakelock and Mr. David Hodge. We send our concern and best wishes for a speedy and full recovery to Mrs. Cherry Groce, a tragic victim of these dreadful events, and to all others—police, firemen, ambulancemen and ordinary innocent citizens—who have suffered injury in disturbances which have included arson, looting and the dreadful crime of rape.

Many have undergone serious financial loss, and I must first ask the Home Secretary what action can be taken to speed up the payment of compensation under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 and to expand that Act's scope to take account of loss of income after the riots.

The House will be debating these matters on Wednesday, and I must repeat the anger that is felt on this side at the failure of the Government to provide time, which has meant that the House will have only half a day on each occasion to debate this profound issue and the crisis in southern Africa.

Grave questions arise from these disorders and it is essential that the country receives answers on matters which have caused profound national concern. These relate to the nature of policing during riots, and such questions come from the populations of the affected areas and from the police themselves. What the Home Secretary said today will not allay any of these anxieties.

They relate to the relationship between the police and the community, in the inner cities and elsewhere. They include disquiet over the spreading use of firearms by the police, the background to the riots, mass unemployment, especially among teenagers, bad housing, environmental decay and dereliction and racial discrimination.

The Home Secretary boasted today about funds provided under the urban programme, but such sums are only a fraction of the money that has been taken away from these areas in abolished housing subsidy, reduced rate support grant and rate support grant penalties. It is an absurdity that the Home Secretary boasted at Handsworth of the money going to Handsworth when in this financial year alone more money is being taken away from the city of Birmingham in rate support grant penalty than all those sums given over a period of years.

TO BE CHECKED
AGAINST DELIVERY

INNER CITY DISORDERS: STATEMENT

21 October 1985

Mr Speaker, with permission I should like to make a statement on the recent serious disorders. In the past 6 weeks there have been three serious riots, in the Lozells Road area of Birmingham, in Brixton and at the Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham. Four people have died, one a police constable who was savagely killed. There have also been disorders in Liverpool, Leicester and Peckham in South London. Many police officers and others were injured. There were appalling attacks on the police with petrol bombs and other missiles, and particularly in Birmingham and Brixton there was extensive looting and attacks on shops and cars.

Mr Speaker, all responsible members of our society will condemn the disgraceful criminal behaviour which has occurred. All responsible members of our society will applaud the courage and dedication of the police in doing their job of maintaining and restoring order in the streets and on the housing estates of our major cities. Public order is essential for the maintenance of a civilised way of life and for the safety of individual citizens. On that there can be no compromise. So far over ⁷⁰⁰670 people have been charged with offences arising from these disorders.

The riot in Brixton was triggered by the tragic shooting of Mrs Groce, and the riot in Tottenham followed the death of Mrs Jarrett after a search had been made at her home. These police operations are being investigated by senior officers from other police forces under the supervision of the independent Police Complaints Authority. These arrangements will ensure that they are fully investigated and that any necessary action is taken as a result. In the case of the Lozells Road riot, the Chief Constable of the West Midlands is preparing a report which will be published. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary is being associated closely with the preparation of this report.

So far as police operations are concerned, though the other disorders were serious enough, the riot at Tottenham stands out for the problems it presented the police. In that riot a police officer was killed, firearms were used and the police had to face a ferocious barrage of petrol bombs and other missiles. The design of housing estates like that at Tottenham

pose particular difficulties in such circumstances. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner is urgently reviewing the tactics of the force in such occasions. There must be no no-go areas in any of our cities.

The riot at Tottenham was the first occasion in Great Britain when the chief officer of police gave authority for plastic baton rounds to be used if necessary, though in fact they were not used. Plastic baton rounds and CS gas were made available to the police in Great Britain for public order use following the riots in 1981. They may only be used in the last resort, where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of the circumstances be unlikely to succeed if tried, and where the chief officer judges such action necessary because of the risk of loss of life or serious injury or widespread destruction of property. That threshold was reached at Tottenham. The Commissioner had my full support in making it clear that such weapons would be deployed if similar circumstances arose in the future.

Other matters need to be looked at in the light of police experience in these disorders. The defensive equipment introduced in recent years - helmets, shields and protective overalls - proved its worth. Without it there would have been more serious casualties. The Metropolitan Police are acquiring more shields and other defensive equipment. It is also right to consider whether any further equipment is required, and this is being done. Similarly there may be lessons to be learned in relation to police training and deployment. The Commissioner is pursuing these matters and I am in close touch with him. I shall ensure that any lessons learned are disseminated nationally.

From when it first came into office this Government has given tangible expression to its support for the police. That support continues unabated. The strength of the MP is now 26,681 compared with 22,225 in 1979. The Metropolitan Police still has scope to increase strength by more than 400 within its present establishment of 27,165. I support the Commissioner in his efforts to make good this shortfall as quickly as possible. The force's reorganisation should in addition release 200 officers for operational duties; and I have authorised an increase of nearly 50 in the civil staff ceiling next year for further civilianisation. I have also told the Commissioner that I am prepared in

principle to agree to an increase of 50 in the establishment next year, specifically to strengthen his efforts against drug trafficking. Beyond that I have set urgent work in hand to assess whether there is a proven need for further increases in the police establishment. Taken together these steps mean that there will be a substantial strengthening of the Metropolitan Police in the months ahead.

In recent years a great deal of effort has been put into establishing good liaison and consultation between the police and the community in inner city areas particularly, for example, in Brixton and Handsworth. These disorders must be deeply depressing for those community leaders and police officers who have put so much effort into establishing a better understanding. But it would be wrong to assume that these efforts were misplaced. On the contrary they must be continued and re-doubled if the police are to protect and serve the community efficiently.

More broadly, the Government will continue its strong commitment to urban regeneration. The Urban Programme has more than tripled from £93m in 1978/79 to £338m in 1985/86 and there has been substantial expenditure in all the riot areas. The Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission is spending more than £100m in the Partnership areas and my Department plans to spend some £90m in 1985-86 through Section 11 grants. We must ensure that the very substantial sums that now go, and will continue to go, to inner city areas are spent to the best advantage and directed to the real needs of the people who live there. The City Action Teams have been set up to improve the co-ordination and targetting of Government programmes in the Partnership areas. We shall need to look at new ways of ensuring that this new objective is achieved.

These disorders are shocking events. It is a paramount interest of us all, young and old, people of all ethnic backgrounds that public order should be maintained. I acknowledge the social problems which exist in these areas, but it is no solution to loot and burn shops which serve the area, or to attack the police. Mob violence must be dealt with firmly and effectively and criminal acts punished according to the criminal law. The police should have the support of all of us in striving to maintain order and uphold the law. It is their first priority. It is the Government's also.