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SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND

Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP  
Secretary of State for Defence  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
SW1

*M3PM*

18 September 1985

*Dear Secretary of State,*

CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR A POLITICAL STRIKE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your minute of 5 September, and in particular for assurance that you would have sufficient servicemen available to meet the plans which have been made to cover this eventuality. I realise that this could only be at some detriment to other defence commitments, and we shall naturally be doing all in our power to avoid matters reaching that point.

I appreciate your concern at the possibility that servicemen might be asked to replace striking prison officers, to the point of coming into direct contact with prisoners. This ground has of course been well tramped in previous planning for possible trouble with our prison officers. I understand your preference for finding manpower of other kinds - perhaps police or prison officers from Great Britain - for the purpose. No option is less than highly undesirable, and it does not make practical sense to attempt to make hard plans about this extremity until we are approaching closer to it. I should say, by way of reassurance, that it does seem very unlikely even if the course of Anglo Irish events does give rise to disturbances here more generally.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary, Secretaries of State for Employment and Energy and Sir Robert Armstrong.

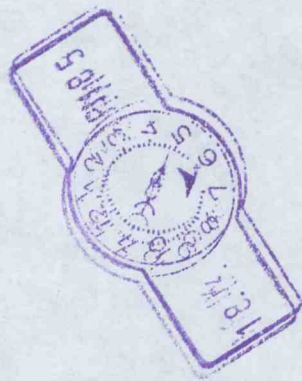
*Yours sincerely,  
Jonathan Duke-Evans*

TK  
(Approved by the Secretary  
of State and signed in  
his absence)

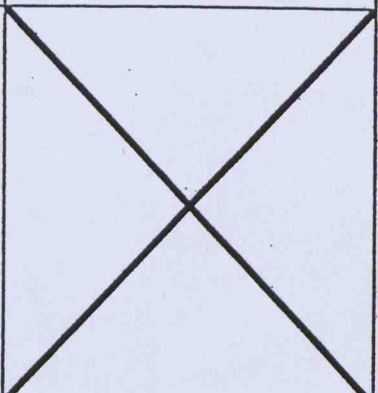
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