

cc: . OD (I)

SECRET



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10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

20 June 1986

Lord President  
FCS

Chief Sec. to Treasury

Home Sec.

S/S Defence

LPS.

S/S N.I.

Chancellor of the Duchy

Chief Whip

Attorney General

**CONTINGENCY PLANNING IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Thank you for your letter of 16 June about contingency plans in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister has noted the Northern Ireland Secretary of State's comments on the points in my letter of 29 May and is generally content with the conclusions which he reaches.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD(I), to the Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Energy and Sir Robert Armstrong.

C. D. POWELL

N. D. Ward, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office

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EDD  
24/6.SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELANDCONTINGENCY PLANNING

1. Thank you for your letter of 30th May. Although I accept that you were painting a most remote "worst case" scenario when you referred to the possibility of troops undertaking tasks which would bring them into direct contact with prisoners, I am quite clear, and the Prime Minister has indicated that she agrees, that servicemen should not be placed in such a position. All our planning must therefore be based on the police filling the posts which would bring them into contact with prisoners with troops being made available to compensate for any gaps in police manpower on security and public order duties as a consequence of their employment in the prisons. I welcome your assurance that the Chief Constable accepts that this should be the case and I hope you will agree that we should proceed accordingly.

2. You suggested in Paragraphs 4 and 5 of your letter that a local contingency plan should be drawn up to deal with a walk-out at short notice by prison officers inside the Maze





Compound prison perimeter if the RUC are unable to fill the gap. Short of the declaration of a State of Emergency, however, it would be necessary for a Defence Council Order to be signed approving the employment of troops in such a situation and it would be some time before the additional military personnel could legally take on the duties you are proposing. In the circumstances described in your letter such a plan would have been of little help. Given the small number of men involved, the short duration you envisage, the presence of the Prison Guard Force close at hand, the existence of reaction plans in the event of disturbances and the RUC's acceptance that this is a task which is primarily for them to do, I doubt whether the preparation of the type of plan you suggest would really be of any practical benefit. The answer it seems to me is that the RUC should, as you suggest, take on the task in the prison and the Army will assist with manpower to replace the policemen withdrawn from their other duties in order to undertake this task. I consider that firms plans should be drawn up accordingly.

5. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister ✓ other members of OD(I) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

A.Y.

Ministry of Defence

18th June 1986

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