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PT.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

NORTHERN IRELAND: CONTINGENCY PLANNING

*PLAC PT. 20*  
I have seen the correspondence between your Private Secretary and No 10 about how long our MACM contingency plans for Northern Ireland could be expected to maintain essential services in the face of widespread political strikes. I hope very much that we will never be faced with such a prospect but, if we are, it will be essential that we make our decisions on the basis of the best possible assessment of the likely effectiveness and potential weaknesses of our plans. For this reason, I would like to spell out more fully the MOD view of the prospect of sustaining all the plans in simultaneous full operation and to draw attention to a key area in which I believe it is essential that we undertake further work immediately.

2. First, I should emphasise that the plans are intended as a response to industrial action in key industries (whether separately or together) and do not explicitly allow for additional problems which might be encountered if such action was combined with wider civil disobedience which resulted, for



example, in widespread obstruction of roads or deliberate sabotage. If these circumstances were to arise the Army would, of course, do its utmost to assist the RUC in dealing with them, but it is virtually impossible to predict the extent to which such extra problems, and the need to divert resources to meet them, would affect the sustainability of individual MACM plans.

3. Leaving aside the problems of wider civil disobedience, we have in general terms shared your assessment that the present plans, if implemented simultaneously, should enable us to sustain essential services in the Province for a little less than a month. But this is a rather over-simplified limit. It would not necessarily be impossible to sustain services for a longer period (we do not see operator fatigue as the determining factor), but by that time it would be necessary to cope with additional factors such as the cumulative effects of the lack of maintenance of essential plant and extra logistic load of the 7000 additional troops in the Province. This would almost certainly require further resources, some of which might not be within the capability of the Services to provide. In particular, in the absence of civilian managers and technicians, there is likely to be a failure or progressive run down of the water and electricity supply systems. Moreover, it is likely that the Provisional IRA (and possibly Protestant extremist groups) will by then have been able to step up their terrorist activity to exploit the situation.



4. Our further study into the problems of sustaining all the MACM plans simultaneously has drawn attention to the crucial importance of water and, above all, electricity - on which the water supply itself depends. I have already referred to the increasing difficulties which we would face in maintaining these supplies beyond the initial period. If we are to make a realistic assessment of our ability to cope beyond this we must have expert advice and I do not think we can afford to leave this until the problem is upon us. Equally, given the importance of these industries to all our plans, I believe that we would be unwise to rely entirely on our own limited expertise even in planning for the initial period. I understand why you have not so far felt able to go outside Government in preparing your plans, but if we do not do so we leave ourselves at much greater risk of overlooking potential problems which could undermine our plans.

5. Although I have emphasised the importance of electricity and water, there may also be other areas where we could benefit from some outside help. For example, our experience with contingency plans for Great Britain has shown that the Services have no experience in the particular problems of handling Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). If you still feel unable to go outside Government within Northern Ireland, it should be possible to obtain the necessary advice discreetly from sources on the mainland.

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UK EYES A



6. I am sending copies of this minute to the other members of OD(I) and the Secretary of State for Energy, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

C.Y.

Ministry of Defence

4th July 1986

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UK EYES A

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SITUATION  
PT 21



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Ministry of Defense

10 July 1981

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File



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 July 1986

cc: OD(1)  
D/Energy.  
CO  
Sw PC

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- DG2BFY

Dear Jim,

CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister has seen the minute of 4 July from the Secretary of State for Defence to your Secretary of State. She has also now seen a copy of the report on the overall state of contingency planning for Northern Ireland prepared by the Secretary of the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) following his visit to Belfast on 2 & 3 July.

The Prime Minister appreciates the problems that could arise if the scope of contingency planning to counter the effects of a politically inspired strike against the Anglo-Irish Agreement became too widely known outside Government circles. She hopes, however, that some way can soon be found to permit the degree of consultation necessary to allow at least the plan for the maintenance of electricity supplies to be brought to a state in which Ministers could have confidence that it will work. She also believes it is highly desirable that the necessary consultations should be authorised, outside the Province if necessary, to raise the level of confidence that other plans - particularly those for the maintenance of water and sewage services and oil product delivery - could also be implemented successfully.

BT  
The Prime Minister would be most grateful for an early and comprehensive report on likely endurance should it prove necessary to implement all the contingency plans concurrently. The Secretary of State for Defence has mentioned some of the factors involved and the Prime Minister notes that he does not accept that operator fatigue would be the determining factor as mentioned in your letter of 16 June to me. As potential endurance is bound to be a critical issue should Ministers need to consider activating the plans, agreement on this point should be achieved as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister would also be glad to know what progress is being made on work to complete planning for the distribution of essential supplies to end users, and on any

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steps you may be taking to take up the points in Brigadier Budd's report on overall co-ordination, public information and keeping essential routes open.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD(I), Geoff Dart (Department of Energy) and to Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,  
Charles Powell

Charles Powell

Jim Daniell, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

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Prime Minister 2  
Agree that I  
should write as  
proposed?

P 02166

From: J B UNWIN  
10 July 1986

MR POWELL - NO 10

Yes

cc Sir R Armstrong  
Mr Mallaby

COP  
10/7.

Contingency Planning for Northern Ireland

FLAP PT 20

I minuted to you on this subject on 27 June. Since then the Defence Secretary has made a number of further points in his minute of 4 July to the Northern Ireland Secretary; and Brigadier Budd has reported to me the outcome of his talks in Belfast. Both confirm our anxieties about the state of contingency planning in Northern Ireland.

2. The Defence Secretary's minute explains more fully the Ministry of Defence's views on a variety of factors that might limit the overall endurance of the Northern Ireland MACM plans to something under a month. It puts particular stress on the inhibitions on effective planning imposed by the ban on consultation outside Government, particularly in relation to the maintenance of electricity supplies, on which effective implementation of virtually all other plans depends.

3. Brigadier Budd's report (of which you may like to have the attached copy) confirms the importance of the need for outside consultation, and raises a number of other important points on which further work in Northern Ireland urgently needs to be done. Once contingency measures are in train, the responsibility for day to day coordination and supervision rests with the Northern Ireland Emergency Committee (NIEC). But the CCU remains responsible for coordinating the preparation and implementation of plans to maintain the essentials of life in an emergency, and for keeping those plans under regular review, throughout the whole UK. Hence my intervention in this case

4. In view of the above, I think it would be right for the Prime Minister to intervene again and I attach an appropriate draft. If, however, the Prime Minister did not wish to do so, I could, as an alternative, convey the points to the Northern Ireland Office in my capacity as Deputy Chairman of the CCU. I



think it would be helpful, however, if the Prime Minister gave here authority to the importance of improving the present Northern Ireland Plans.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J B Unwin', located to the right of the main text.

J B UNWIN

Cabinet Office



SECRET

To jmf  
C/S

DRAFT:

From: PS/Prime Minister

To: PS/Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

cc Private Secretaries to other members of OD(I)  
Private Secretary to S/S for Energy  
Sir Robert Armstrong

Contingency Planning for Northern Ireland

The Prime Minister has seen the minute of 4 July from the Secretary of State for Defence to your Secretary of State. She has also <sup>Kaw</sup> seen a copy of the report on the overall state of contingency planning for Northern Ireland prepared by the Secretary of the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) following his visit to Belfast on 2 & 3 July.

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0628PM



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involved and the Prime Minister notes that he does not accept that operator fatigue would be the determining factor as mentioned in your letter of 16 June to me. As potential endurance is bound to be a critical issue should Ministers need to consider activating the plans, agreement on this point should be achieved as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister would also be glad to know what progress is being made on work to complete planning for the distribution of essential supplies to end users, and on any steps you may be taking to take up the points in Brigadier Budd's report on overall coordination, public information and keeping essential routes open.

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

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## NORTHERN IRELAND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Notes of discussions held in Dundonald House, Belfast on 2 & 3 July 1986.

### Introduction

1. Arrangements for these discussions were made by Mr Brian Doherty and Mr Ian Kennedy. I had a general discussion on 2 July with Mr Sean McKillop - head of the Criminal Justice Division of the Northern Ireland Office (to whom Messrs Doherty and Kennedy work). This division is responsible for Civil Emergency Planning.
2. In the event I was unable to see the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Emergency Committee - nor did I see the Secretary of that Committee, who was on annual leave.
3. On the morning of 3 July I had a conference with representatives of the Northern Ireland Departments of Economic Development (Messrs Beaman, Cherry and McMinnis) Environment (Mr Graham) and Health and Social Services Mr Corry). These departments have individual/lead responsibility for one or more contingency plans.

### Discussion with Mr McKillop

4. A wide ranging discussion touched on virtually all aspects of contingency planning to counter the effects of a political strike against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Points relating to individual plans will be incorporated under the appropriate heading later in this record. The following main points emerged:

- a. The ban on consultation outside Government was making certain aspects of sound contingency planning virtually impossible. A move is already in hand to obtain a relaxation of the ban in connection with the maintenance of electricity supplies - without which other contingency plans could not work;
- b. In the event of a political strike it was expected that the majority of civil servants would wish to work as normally as possible and certain parts of a number of plans (particularly on the paper work side) relied for their success on civil servants undertaking jobs either normally carried out by company employees (eg

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oil supplies) or arising from the contingency plans themselves (eg distribution of essential food supplies);

c. The Northern Ireland Office, in consultation with HQ Northern Ireland, were doing further work to explain more clearly why it is anticipated that contingency plans might overall not be expected to endure for longer than 3-4 weeks, although it was possible that individual plans might endure longer.

## Discussion of Individual Plans

5. Maintenance of Electricity Supplies (MACM Plan Clout) This plan is essential to the success of others. Effective contingency planning cannot proceed until the ban on consultations outside Government is eased. Adequate consultation might be possible in Great Britain - eg with management of CEGB/SSEB who might run systems similar to those in Northern Ireland, with adequately qualified consultants or with the manufacturers of the system in use in Northern Ireland. Operation of the generating and distribution system must be catered for. Even in the circumstances of a widespread political strike it was considered unlikely that employees of the NIES would sabotage their installations or connive at an unsafe closedown - although the possibility of damage (eg at some of the more remote points of the distribution system) could not be ruled out. Provision of an alternative labour force from civilian, rather than service, sources in GB would be very difficult to manage and could lead to further protection commitments for the RUC/Army. The MOD have not yet been asked to consider the possibility of training service personnel to man the electricity supply and distribution systems in advance of an actual threat to disrupt these supplies. It was not known when a decision about easing the ban on consultation outside Government would be taken but it appears to be the single most important factor inhibiting the development of this vital plan.

6. Maintenance of oil supplies (MACM Plan Manorial) There was some confidence that servicemen could operate the main oil distribution terminal in Belfast with minimum participation by normal management and supervisors - one man it was thought would suffice, although his personal endurance may be an inhibiting factor. The distribution terminal in Londonderry should be operable without management assistance if in fact it proved necessary to use it. There remained some doubt about the status of

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calor gas as an essential of life and therefore the degree to which the filling facilities would need to be operated by servicemen. (Special training would be required) Work is in progress on this point but progress would be hastened if the ban on consultation outside Government could be eased in this area also. The issue of vouchers to permit those authorised to have access to oil products from service manned filling stations (21 are envisaged) is planned to be handled by civil servants operating from Job Centres and/or Social Security benefit offices. Payment would be made before vouchers were issued. Confidence in the likely successful implementation of this plan is enhanced by experience gained in 1977 when servicemen delivered oil products (but did not man petrol filling stations).

7. Working the Ports and Distributing Essential Supplies (MACM Plan Odell) As only two ports are involved, Larne (RO-RO) and Belfast (break bulk operations handling, inter alia, flour, wheat and animal feed) it is considered that the MACM plan has a good chance of working effectively. Management participation on the earlier stages is desirable at Belfast docks to facilitate a smoother "run in period" than might otherwise be achieved. The MACM plan also provides for the transport of essential supplies to warehouses which are either within dock areas or within 3 miles of the dock gates. A further contingency plan is being developed in Northern Ireland to provide for staffing the warehouses, accounting for essential supplies and if necessary transporting them to distribution points. It was not clear how much time would be needed to complete this part of the overall plan. Nor was it clear how essential goods would be transported from warehouses to distribution points should the normal means of transport be unavailable. It appeared that a further demand for service assistance could arise and work to identify the size and scope of the requirement needs to be pursued urgently. It is intended that the warehouses should be manned by civil servants. Until the second plan is ready it is not possible to evaluate the chances of success of arrangements for the maintenance of essential supplies.

8. Maintenance of Water Supplies and Sewage Services (MACM Plan Footway) It was considered that, given the availability of standby generating plant to provide power for pumps and other machinery, plus the fact that virtually all water supplies in the Province are gravity fed (North Belfast is the major exception) there was a reasonable chance of these services being adequately maintained in the absence of the normal workforce and management. Information was not immediately available about industrial water requirements - particularly for continuous process plants, but it was assumed that,

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in the circumstances being considered, such plants would be closed down in an orderly fashion by their normal operators, to ensure they could be re-started in due course. The extent to which electricity generating stations are reliant on public water supplies would also need to be established clearly.

9. Provision of an emergency fire fighting capability (MACM Plan Bickley) There would seem to be no reason why this plan should not work effectively. Further consideration should be given to overcoming any difficulties that might arise in issuing fire fighting appliances (known as "Yellow Goddesses" in NI) from their storage depots should normal depot staff not be available.

## Other Areas of Concern

10. Maintenance of Health & Ambulance Services There is no MACM plan for these services. Experience over a number of years, and in widely differing circumstances, indicate that the essentially humanitarian nature of these services will achieve a high enough degree of voluntary service and public cooperation to ensure adequate emergency levels of hospital and ambulance services. Planning would need to include measures for informing the public, at the appropriate time, about the emergency arrangements being made.

11. Keeping essential routes open Many of the contingency plans will rely for their success on sufficient routes being kept open. It was not clear whether a plan had yet been developed, or was indeed feasible in advance, to decide which routes needed to be kept open, for how long each day, and how such an operation would be controlled. The Northern Ireland Emergency Committee (NIEC) would have a major coordinating role to play, but because it appears impracticable to exercise this aspect of the NIEC's responsibilities the preparation of a specific contingency plan - related to all the other plans which rely for their success on road (and in certain circumstances rail) movement might be considered.

12. Public Information In view of the importance attached by the Secretary of State to this aspect of dealing with the effects of a political strike against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the possibility that a high proportion of the population may be disinclined to believe what they are told, or to cooperate with the emergency

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arrangements it would seem advantageous to have plans prepared so that all concerned are clear about the overall policy, the way it is intended to manage implementation and the part that each department of Government and others in the Province will need to play.

13. Overall Coordination This would be the responsibility of the NIEC. The contingency arrangements to maintain the essentials of life in the particular circumstances being considered are necessarily inter-related and complex. Consideration might be given to the potential advantages of holding briefing sessions or perhaps a seminar for members of the NIEC, to achieve the best possible understanding of the overall scope of the plans and identify in advance likely difficulties and possible solutions.

## Summary

14. The discussions gave an opportunity to consider the current state of contingency planning to maintain the essentials of life in the face of a politically inspired strike in protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. A number of areas were identified in which further work appeared to be necessary. Action on the following points was either in hand or should be considered, as a matter of some urgency, by the relevant departments of the Northern Ireland Government:

- a. Relaxation of the ban on consultation outside Government - particularly with regard to the maintenance of electricity supplies and perhaps in other cases;
- b. Completion of the plan for moving essential supplies onwards from warehouses;
- c. Clarification of the need to maintain LPG (calor gas) supplies;
- d. Preparation of contingency plans for:

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- i. keeping essential routes open;
  - ii. public information.
- e. Arrangements for overall coordination should the plans need to be implemented.

BRIGADIER J A J BUDD

9 July 1986



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SITUATION  
PT 2¢

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CCDC



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND

CDP  
4/7

The Rt Hon George Younger MP  
Secretary of State for Defence  
MOD Main Building  
WHITEHALL  
London  
SW1A 2HB

3 July 1986

*Da George*

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

PLAPP T 20

Thank you for your minute of 18 June in which you dealt with two points on the use of servicemen in the context of a prison problem.

I readily accept what you say, and confirm that this is the basis of our planning. I had not previously taken the point that a Defence Council Order would be necessary in circumstances of industrial action by Prison Officers because the troops would be acting under MACM arrangements, as opposed to the MACP arrangements which govern the Prison Guard Force. As a separate point, I hope to write to you about the PGF and related matters within the next few days.

- / Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, the other members of OD(I) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*TK*

TK

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JLD

IRELAND

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON  
LONDON OFFICE

SITUATION

PT 21



GD  
FW

It has been reported that  
early of these for details  
Main building  
MAIL

2 July 1954

*[Handwritten signature]*

THOMAS W. BROWN

It is for your information that the  
points on the use of the word in the context of a person  
List

fully accept what you say and realize that this is the  
of our country. I had not previously taken the point  
a distance from the point which would be necessary in our  
national action by the United States because the troops  
to be taken into the United States, as opposed to the  
arrangement to which we are the United States have