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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

S ~~CPD~~



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

~~XXXX~~  
Cabinet office will comment  
in due course.  
31<sup>st</sup> July 1986  
CPD/HP.

Charles Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

Dear Charles,

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Thank you for your letter of 11 July, in which you sought some further information for the Prime Minister on contingency planning. The Secretary of State hopes that Mr Younger will accept this reply as addressing the similar points which he made in his minute of <sup>at this</sup> July.

We have looked carefully at the concerns expressed over the MACM plan for electricity supply. As the Secretary of State pointed out in earlier correspondence, he did discuss external assistance with the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Electricity Service (NIES) in the aftermath of the Day of Action. Their assessment which remains current, was that their essential managers and engineering staff were likely to stay at their posts, and that they would be able from their own resources to maintain an output of at least that envisaged under the MACM plan for an indefinite period. The introduction of external assistance could well prejudice this. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State fully appreciates the vital nature of electricity supply, and the availability of MACM assistance as a last resort, and we have had a further exchange with the Chairman of NIES. He is certain that the suggestion made (at planning level) that the army should seek further information from the consultants in Great Britain who advise NIES on their plant would not be appropriate, since he could not guarantee that the approach would not feed back to his Service at middle management level, to our very considerable detriment. The Secretary of State therefore endorses the Chairman's advice that the planners should make the approach directly to the Chairman (although we will be most willing to facilitate this), and he will ensure that they obtain, in complete secrecy, all the information they require.

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As far as water and sewage services are concerned, consultation outside Government is not involved since these services are the responsibility of DOE (NI). We should therefore be able to answer any questions, and are already in process of providing further information on the availability of water supply to industries having a continuing process, and the extent to which generating stations are reliant on the public water supplies. As to liquid petroleum gas (LPG) a relatively small number of essential users require bulk supplies. In an emergency situation, deliveries would only be required at fairly long intervals, but the Secretary of State appreciates that there is a lack of trained army personnel to discharge this small part of the petroleum/oil plan. In such circumstances, he agrees that consultation/training should take place, but would much prefer it to take place in Great Britain.

You raised the question of our endurance if all MACM plans were implemented simultaneously. The period of 3 weeks and the term "operator fatigue" were derived from military sources, since they alone can estimate how long a particular military effort can be maintained. Clearly this shorthand form has been subject to misinterpretation. The true meaning seems to be that the MACM plans operated in their entirety can be expected to cope for at least 3 weeks in broadly their present form; thereafter we shall be moving into a new scenario with too many variables to allow for accurate prediction or meaningful planning. Some examples are

- a. the public order situation at the time;
- b. the success or otherwise of campaigns of intimidation;
- c. the degree of co-operation from the civilian workforce, particularly senior middle management;
- d. the possible need for some further reinforcements, depending for example on the factors at a. b. and c. above;
- e. MOD's capability to supply this, to maintain and support their forces logistically, and their position if other simultaneous demands for other purposes are placed upon them.

The difficulty therefore lies, in the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland and against a possibility of widespread disruption whose effect cannot be predicted, in estimating what the military requirement would be, and the minute from the Secretary of State for Defence shows clearly that a precise and reliable estimate for these circumstances is probably unattainable. There is however no doubt that the MACM plan endurance could and would go well beyond the

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3-week period, but that the initial period of the disruption and our success in coping with it would be crucial. The Secretary of State is very clear that there is no disagreement between him and Mr Younger on this.

Work is continuing on the distribution of essential supplies to end users, and we shall let CCU know of the outcome. This is an area where a precise plan would require detailed local consultation, and in present circumstances the gains would be enormously outweighed by the disadvantages. The Secretary of State is generally satisfied with our arrangements for co-ordination. Planning is co-ordinated through the Emergency Planning Branch of this Department, and the NI Emergency Committee would take the lead in co-ordinating action. The Committee is a very flexible structure which can operate at different levels, either Ministerial - or official-led, depending on the problem to be addressed. All NI Departments and the security forces are represented, although the Committee's constitution on any action would similarly depend on the problem. As soon as we have any warning of possible disruption, the Committee would meet as often as required, and at least daily.

The police already have plans to keep key routes open. It is understandable that those not familiar with the position in the province may have been confused by the events of the Day of Action, where police action was designed to keep as many routes open as possible while keeping the overall temperature down so that the 24-hour stoppage did not develop into something longer. Tactics would be quite different for planned longer term disruption, where firm priorities would have to be applied, and the security forces would set out to take and hold the initiative in the early stages.

Our basic objective would of course be the same as far as the media are concerned.

In the event of an emergency arising we will at once establish a 24 hour service to the media, the objective being to ensure that the Government's view is fed to the television and radio outlets from 5.00am; the Secretary of State and Ministers will be available to be interviewed at any time and at any frequency throughout the day; and briefings and interviews will be given to the writing Press in time for evening deadlines both for national and local newspapers.

In order to overcome the problem of Ministers going to broadcasting studios we are in the final stages of setting up, in co-operation with the BBC, a studio in Stormont Castle which can be used for either television or radio broadcasts. There will be a remote

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control camera for television and a direct radio link. In addition, the BBC will install at Stormont Castle an outside broadcast unit which can be beamed directly to the Divis transmitter so that even in the extreme case of a takeover or widespread strike within the BBC we will still have capacity to broadcast nationally.

The Director of Information Services in the Northern Ireland Office and his senior staff will co-ordinate all departmental publicity, will co-ordinate the information work of the security forces and will be responsible for ensuring that publicity from other public service bodies (eg the Electricity Service) will conform with Government policy.

Finally, the Secretary of State has asked me to make one or two general points. The circumstances of the province, and the conditions for which we are planning have no parallel elsewhere in the UK. As a result, there are far more variables and the experience of 1974 and 1977 has taught us that the situation develops and plans have to be modified in ways that cannot be precisely forecast in advance. The essence to our approach to planning here is therefore flexibility so that changes can be made as matters develop. Finally, the worst case scenario that we are considering is unlikely at present. We do not face an imminent crisis, but could easily provoke trouble if our contingency planning became too visible; that could be taken as a sign either that the Government was running scared or that it was planning itself to seek confrontation, neither of which would be helpful.

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).

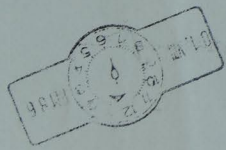
*Yours sincerely  
N D Ward.*

N D WARD  
Private Secretary

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[Faint, mostly illegible typed text, likely a memorandum or report.]



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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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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

CDP  
2/4.

Mark Addison Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

1<sup>st</sup> September 1986

Dear Mark,

CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Tim Flesher wrote to Jim Daniell on 19 August about contingency planning for Northern Ireland.

I can confirm that work is continuing on the basis set out my letter to Charles Powell of 31 July, and that the Secretary of State will wish to inform the Prime Minister of its outcome. In the light of that, we shall of course consider the likely impact on the overall endurance of the MACM plans insofar as this can be assessed in the different circumstances.

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

Yours Sincerely  
Neil Ward

N D WARD

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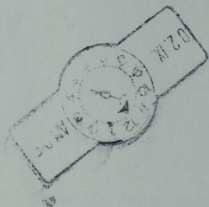
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From the Private Secretary

19 August 1986

Contingency Planning for Northern Ireland

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The Prime Minister was glad to learn, from your letter of 31 July, that your Secretary of State had agreed to further consultations on a number of your contingency plans. She understands that the planners will be getting on with the necessary work as quickly as possible and she would be grateful to be informed in due course of the outcome of this work. The Prime Minister has noted the other points in your letter - particularly that there is no disagreement between your Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Defence on the factors likely to determine the overall endurance of the plans. She believes it would be helpful to carry out a fresh assessment of likely overall endurance once the additional work now being undertaken is completed.

This letter is copied to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD(I), Geoff Dart (Department of Energy) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

(TIM FLESHER)

J.A. Daniell, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

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Mr FLESHER



cc Mr Mallaby o/r  
Mr Unwin o/r

Contingency Planning for Northern Ireland

1. We have spoken on the telephone about the letter of 31 July from PS/Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to Mr Powell. There is now scope for improving a number of the contingency plans - particularly the one for maintaining an adequate level of electricity supplies, on which success of the others largely depends. MOD planners believe about three weeks will be needed for this work - assuming no problems arise because the 'right' people are away on leave.

2. In these circumstances I recommend you should send a holding reply to Northern Ireland - on the basis of the attached draft. We will provide further advice as soon as the necessary information is available.

*Budd*

Brigadier J A J BUDD

18 August 1986

VK (95)

Draft

PS Prime Minister to PS Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Contingency Planning for Northern Ireland

The Prime Minister was glad to learn, from your letter of 31 July, that your Secretary of State had agreed to further consultations on a number of your contingency plans. She understands that the planners will be getting on with the necessary work as quickly as possible and she would be grateful to be informed in due course of the outcome of this work. The Prime Minister has noted the other points in your letter - particularly that there is no disagreement between your Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Defence on the factors likely to determine the overall endurance of the plans. She believes it would be helpful to carry out a fresh assessment of likely overall endurance once the additional work now being undertaken is completed.

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