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Minister of State

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Alliance Party of NI  
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11 September 1997

*Dear Lord Alderdice,*

**QUALITY CONTROL PROBLEMS WITH 1996 PLASTIC BATON ROUNDS**

I attach, for your information, the text of a press release issued today by the Ministry of Defence, about the withdrawal of certain stocks of plastic baton rounds manufactured in 1996. As you may be aware, the Chief Constable acted immediately to withdraw these rounds from operational use. It is most regrettable that such problems should have occurred; but it should be noted that the Ministry of Defence have already introduced new inspection procedures to ensure that such problems do not recur.

Looking to the future, as you may be aware the RUC are participating fully in the Association of Chief Police Officers review of public order handling, and of the guidelines governing the use of plastic baton rounds. This is part of an ongoing process designed to ensure that the best available techniques and equipment are used, to deal with the very difficult public order circumstances which the police must face, especially here in Northern Ireland. This process has my full support; I believe it is essential that we do all we can to ensure public safety, recognising the very real difficulties and practical problems which the police face in dealing with dangerous and fast-moving situations on the ground.

[Approved by the Minister  
and signed in his absence]

*Yours sincerely  
Adam Ingram*

ADAM INGRAM JP MP  
Minister of State

## PLASTIC BATON ROUNDS WITHDRAWN

A stock of plastic baton rounds manufactured in 1996 has been withdrawn from operational use with immediate effect, after inspections showed variations in the weight of the baton plugs.

While the discrepancies are unlikely to be of any operational significance, there is a possibility of accuracy being affected. The rounds have therefore been restricted to training use only, the Ministry of Defence said today.

Full inspection has been introduced to ensure that plastic plugs used in current and future contracts conform exactly to specification.