

CPL1/17286

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cc Mr Leach - B  
Mr Marsh - B

1. Mr Perry [NP 18/1]
2. Ms G Harrison, SIL - B

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTION: 21 JANUARY 1994

As requested, I attach security lines to take for the debate on Mr James Couchman MP's Private Members motion, due to take place on 21 January 1994.

(signed)

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SECURITY POINTS - LINES TO TAKE

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SECURITY POINTS - LINES TO TAKE

1. SECURITY POLICY

- Government will not shirk its responsibilities to deal with terrorism. There is no acceptable level of violence: and Government is responsible for ensuring that the law effectively protects its citizens rights - including the right to life.
- First priority is to bring terrorism to a permanent end. This must be done within the rule of law. That principle cannot be set aside.
- First task of Government is to ensure all arms of the security forces enjoy necessary moral, legal and material support.
- Will consider any workable new measures within the law. Draconian measures are likely to be self-defeating.
- Considerable resources are already given to the security forces, however, extra resources are made available, when this is judged to be an appropriate and effective response.
- Work of the security forces must be and is complemented and reinforced by effective political, economic and social policies.
- (Clampdown on Security): Government's security policy is unequivocal: terrorism will be met with stern and unyielding opposition no matter which side of the community it comes.
- The police and army, acting always within the law, conduct operations designed both to prevent terrorist attacks, and where crimes have been committed, to track the perpetrators down and bring them before the courts.

- The policy is kept under review: security force operations and resources, and the legislative framework, are adjusted where necessary to take account of the changing threat.

2. STATISTICS INCLUDING SUCCESSES:

Background

- (as at 17 Jan] [0] people have been killed this year (cf 4 at the same stage in 1993).
- So far this year (as at 16 January) 14 people have been charged with serious terrorist offences, including 2 with attempted murder and 4 with firearms offences (cf 10 in 1993)
- 84 people were killed in NI last year as a result of the security situation, including 70 civilians, 8 soldiers and 6 RUC officers. (CF 85 killed in 1992 and 94 in 1991.)
- Last year there were 474 shooting incidents, compared to 506 in 1992. There were 256 bombing incidents compared to 318 in 1992.
- Last year 366 people were charged with terrorist related offences, including 60 with murder or attempted murder.
- In 1992 410 people were charged with terrorist related offences including 102 with murder or attempted murder. In 1991 397 were charged, and 380 in 1990.
- Last year 196 firearms and 59 rocket/mortar launchers were recovered;
- Last year over 3945 kgs of explosives were found and 6560 neutralised;

(Security Force Successes)

- The security force are achieving very significant successes. As a direct result of their professionalism and dedication many lives have been saved, much terrorist weaponry recovered, and many terrorist criminals apprehended and their activities disrupted.
- In recent months the security forces have had considerable success. These include 10 people who have so far been charged in connection with 20 murders committed in September/October. A number of individuals have also been charged in connection with recent atrocities, including a mortar attack on a police station in Co Tyrone, a landmine in Londonderry and a gun attack on the security forces in Belfast.
- Recovery of weapons and explosives continues; for example, these include within the last [4] weeks the recovery of a Mk 15 mortar believed to be intended for attack on a police station; 11 rifles, 2 pistols and 1000 rounds of ammunition in Rathcoole; and a bomb comprising approximately 250 kgs of HME and a quantity of ammunition in Londonderry.
- Last year 366 people were charged with terrorist related offences, including 60 with murder or attempted murder.
- Last year, 196 firearms and 59 rocket/mortar launchers have been recovered, compared to 194 and 49 in the same period in 1992).
- Last year, 3945 kgs of explosives have been found and 6560 kgs neutralised compared to 2167 kgs and 4142 kgs in 1992.

3. INTERNMENT

- Internment is an option which the Government believes it must retain while the terrorist threat remains active, and the possibility of reintroducing it is kept under review. It would be a very serious and difficult step, which would only be taken after very careful consideration and in particular circumstances. I am not prepared to discuss what these might be.

4. LOYALIST TERRORISM

- The police, supported by the Army, seek to bring all terrorists no matter what their organisation, to justice. The statistics for charges bring this out clearly.

- (If pressed) Of course there is concern about attacks by co-called Loyalist terrorists; these are as vigorously investigated as any others. The Government and security forces are determined to bring all terrorism to an end, without favour.

- (UDA 'Doomsday' Plan) Any suggestion that the future of Northern Ireland lies down the road of violence is evil and wicked.

- The security forces will continue to protect the people of Northern Ireland from the terrorist threat, from wherever it emanates.

- (Threat against pan Nationalist front) Threats against everyone are taken seriously. The police are taking steps - with Army support where necessary - to counter this particular threat.

5. RECENT TERRORIST ATTACKS

- Government utterly condemns all terrorist attacks whether against people or property.

- As recent attacks evidence, the level of threat in Northern Ireland and the mainland remains high from terrorists on both sides of the community. The Government is determined to bring terrorism to an end and will continue to provide the security forces with all necessary resources to achieve this aim.
- Those responsible for crimes are pursued by the police, who are carrying out comprehensive investigations into recent attacks. Steps are being taken to make even more effective the measures already in place to prevent such attacks. These measures have led to the capture of terrorists; to the disruption of planned attacks; and to the saving of life, livelihoods and property. They will continue.
- Measures to protect security force bases - A range of measures are already taken to provide protection for bases and these are kept under close review. It would not be appropriate for me to elaborate.

6. RUC RESOURCES

- The Government provides the Police Authority with financial resources to ensure the provision of an efficient police service.
- This year, the Police Authority Grant is nearly £590m, an increase of £23m on last year.
- The decisions on priorities within the Police Authority Grant are a matter for that Authority, and the Chief Constable.
- If additional resources are required, then it is open to the Police Authority to request these; any such request will be considered, but must be justified, to ensure that public money is used to greatest effect and not wasted.

7. FORCE LEVELS

- The Force levels available to the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding are kept under frequent review.
- The Prime Minister has made it quite clear that the Government (will) continue to devote all resources necessary to security.
- The protection of UK citizens and property from attack is of the highest priority for this Government.

- Withdrawal/Further Battalions

- I am not prepared to speculate about future changes. Force levels are kept under careful review.

- Current Force Levels

(As at 31 October) 13,079 members of the RUC (including 4,577 RUC (Reserve)) and 17,506 soldiers are in Northern Ireland (including 5,427 home service RIR).

- Running down the part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment/Hidden Agenda:

- The Royal Irish including the part-time element have an important role to play in supporting the RUC in the fight against terrorism in NI.

- The Government recognises that the trend in the strength of the part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment has been slowly downwards. The Government fully recognises the important role of the part-timers - I have no hesitation in praising their excellent service - and I know that work is ongoing to improve both recruitment and retention.



- (Structural matters - eg bases amalgamation) These are a matter for my rt hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence on the advice of the GOC.
- 8. CHIEF CONSTABLE'S CALLS FOR CHANGES IN THE LAW
  - The Government and the RUC keep the effectiveness of the law in combating terrorism continually under review. The suggestions made by the Chief Constable are receiving the fullest consideration in that context. There is always a careful and sensitive balance to be struck between measures intended to secure the conviction of the guilty and measures which in practice may increase the likelihood of innocent people being convicted.
  - The consequences for the character and reputation of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland must also be considered at a time when the support of sensible and decent people is as important as the duty to support the RUC, assisted by the Army, in eradicating terrorism by bringing terrorists to justice.
  - We do not shirk the responsibility of amending the law against terrorism when necessary and desirable. The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 introduced several new provisions including a number directed against the evils of terrorist racketeering. The recently enacted Criminal Justice Act 1993 added further to this body of legislation. The content and balance of the criminal law are kept under continual review.
  - (Defensive). There is no question of any RUC proposals being "blocked" by the Northern Ireland Office. All proposals, whether from the Chief Constable or anyone else, are considered carefully and sensibly. It is all too easy to legislate in haste and repent at leisure; this is something we must avoid at all costs.

9. INFORMERS/AGENT HANDLING

- Lives would be lost in Northern Ireland if the security forces were unable to receive information from informants. It is the duty of a police force to protect the community from terrorist violence by every lawful means. This includes the recruitment of and use of informants within terrorist organisations.
- The RUC Chief Constable has made clear that the RUC will not allow any life to be taken to protect the intelligence system.
- There is no immunity from prosecution for informants who commit crime. It is an offence to incite any individual to commit crime.
- [Provision of Guidelines on Agent Handling]. The consideration of the issues is continuing.

10. TERRORIST FINANCE AND THE TFU

- Government is totally committed to the defeat of terrorism, and the ending of terrorist fund-raising.
- Government has ensured that the law provides for the investigation and detection of terrorist financial activity, and that the courts have the powers to deal with it severely, including by confiscation of property.
- Government is confident that the combination of professional police work and effective legislation, supported by the community as a whole, will prevail and the racketeers will be defeated.

11. SECURITY CO-OPERATION

- Cross border co-operation is vital to the safety of citizens not only of Northern Ireland, but of the Republic.

- Security co-operation with the ROI has never been better - there is of course still more that can be done.
- Both Governments recognise the importance of keeping existing measures under review, and of making further improvements wherever practicable.
- Progress has been made in a number of areas, including improved communications, technical co-operation, liaison structures and joint threat assessment.
- There have been a number of significant finds by the Garda in recent months. These include, in September, a substantial quantity of weapons, at a training camp for terrorists (Co Louth); 4 finds of weapons, explosives and ammunition in October (Co Louth); a find of more than a quarter ton of home-made explosives in October (Co Donegal); and the recovery of 4 MK15 mortars in December (Co Donegal).
- At the inter-governmental conference on 3 November 1993, both Governments welcomed the successes of the security forces in both jurisdictions since the 10 September 1993 conference and discussed practical ways of increasing still further the very valuable and effective co-operation that already exists.
- In addition to significant finds, the Garda and RUC have also liaised closely in a number of operations.
- (If pressed on allegations of failure of security co-operation with ROI): There are a number of examples of operations where there has been close liaison between the Garda/Irish Army, including in May of last year two operations resulting in the seizure of documents and videos, and in October the RUC and Garda carried out co-ordinated searches in County Armagh in Northern Ireland and in Counties Monaghan and Cavan in the Republic of Ireland.