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Rt Hon Michael Howard QC MP
Home Secretary

Dear

Michael

I have been thinking about the extension of the Decommissioning Bill to England and Wales and the quite reasonable concern of police forces that it would be used by criminals to get rid of "hot" weapons free from any forensic examination. The problem could be met if the Bill is confined to terrorist weapons only. This should not involve any detailed drafting.

It is many weeks since I was shown a copy of the Bill and so I can only give general advice, but I think only two additions to the Bill are necessary.

One would simply insert into the clause providing for decommissioning schemes a qualification that the schemes are for the decommissioning etc of weapons, munitions etc held by or for the purposes of a proscribed organisation under the PTA/EPA.

The other would add a subsection to the section forbidding forensic examination of decommissioned weapons saying that this section would not apply to any test or examination to determine whether the weapon etc was one that came within the purposes of the scheme.

I do hope this will enable you to support a comprehensive Bill.

Sincerely

David Trimble

David Trimble MP

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