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cc: 80



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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SECRETARY OF STATE

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① a Press office
+ file
10 July 1996
mentioned this
to you.
ph 10/7.
ph 10/7.

Dear John,

DEPLOYMENT OF ADDITIONAL TROOPS TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Following the NI meeting yesterday, and further discussions with the Chief of the General Staff, General Officer Commanding NI and the Northern Ireland Office, my Secretary of State agreed this morning to the deployment of the following units to Northern Ireland:

- a. The Spearhead Battalion (The 1st Battalion The Parachute Regiment);
- b. All elements of the Notice to Train Battalion (The 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment);
- c. The reinforcement company (from The 1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment) for the Urban Reinforcement Battalion.

We shall keep a close watch on the security situation so that, if it were to improve, we can stop the deployment of the latter two units or, if it were to degenerate, speed up the deployments.

I attach press lines which have been cleared with NIO officials. I am sending a copy of this letter to Martin Howard (NIO) and to Tony Dawson and Jan Polley.
/ and ever.

Mike
(M A VENABLES)
Private Secretary

J Holmes Esq
10 Downing Street

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Recycled Paper

NORTHERN IRELAND - ADDITIONAL TROOP DEPLOYMENTS

CHANGES FROM YESTERDAY'S STATEMENTS?

We can now confirm that the decision has been taken to deploy two additional units to Northern Ireland, following from yesterday's statement that preparations were in hand. The decision has been taken by Ministers following advice from the Chief Constable of the RUC and the GOC.

NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL TROOPS?

Approximately 1,000.

This would bring the number of troops deployed to Northern Ireland to approximately 18,500.

WHEN DID WE LAST HAVE SO MANY TROOPS DEPLOYED?

In the early months of 1994, there were approximately 19,000 armed forces personnel deployed in NI.

WHEN AND WHERE WILL UNITS BE DEPLOYED?

This is an operational matter; not prepared to give details, though can say that leading elements will arrive very shortly.

WHICH REGIMENTS TO BE DEPLOYED?

The first unit will be the SPEARHEAD Battalion currently 1 Battalion the Parachute Regiment. We are not at this stage prepared to give details of the second, for operational reasons.

1 PARA are being deployed simply because they are currently the SPEARHEAD Battalion: there is no other significance in their selection for this role.

RUC RESORTING UNNECESSARILY TO USE OF MILITARY?

No. The RUC are greatly stretched by events at Drumcree and elsewhere in Northern Ireland and have requested additional support to ensure that law and order are maintained. The armed forces remain ready to provide whatever level of support the police require.

Military force levels are kept under constant review to make sure that they remain appropriate to the needs of the RUC and to the prevailing security situation. We will continue to make changes to force levels as and when necessary.