

RESTRICTED - POLICY
From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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Press



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File

Prime Minister

To glance. Both these reports have
emerged and attracted attention, but
no real trouble.

John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON

Jan 23/1 23

January 1997

Dear John

FORTHCOMING REPORTS INTO POLICING ISSUES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

I am writing to let you know that two reports are being published this week, and one next, into policing/public order issues in Northern Ireland. They are likely to attract media attention.

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Mr Colin Smith's, annual inspection report into the RUC was published on Wednesday 22 January. It contains the usual commentary on the performance of the RUC but, exceptionally, this year it also contains a section on the RUC's procedures and training for handling public order situations, including those relating to the use of plastic baton rounds (PBRs). HMIC was asked to look at these areas after the events, associated with 'the marching season', in Northern Ireland last summer.

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was. Interest in this report is likely to be significant in Northern Ireland and this is likely to extend to the media in GB. In brief, HMIC makes a number of recommendations about the use of PBRs, including on issues such as better training, control etc; he does not criticise the use of baton rounds per se. As this is an inspection of the RUC's operational handling of these issues it will largely be for them to respond. The Government will be welcoming the report and encouraging the police to consider it carefully. We will also be seeking to divorce this operational issue from the North Review of parades. Lines to take are attached.

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An independent report into the police complaints system by Dr Maurice Hayes is to be published on Thursday 23 January. Dr Hayes was appointed by the Government in November 1995 to conduct a wider-ranging review of the police complaints system in Northern Ireland. There had for some time been a lack of confidence in the complaints system and, in light of this, and the fact that the civilian oversight body was requesting additional powers, the Government decided to appoint a reviewer to look at the system.

Dr Hayes has now presented his report and it is being published today. Again, there is likely to be a good deal of interest in the Hayes Report and as some may try to apply its recommendations to the Police Complaints Authority in England and Wales, there may be some interest in Great Britain too.

Dr Hayes recommends significant changes to the police complaints system in Northern Ireland, including the creation of a Police Ombudsman who would control the complaints process and would have the power to investigate, using his/her investigators. This power would extend to any complaint about police conduct, whether or not this involved possible criminal behaviour by the police officer or officers concerned.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be welcoming Dr Hayes' thorough and detailed report of this difficult area and will be stating that he needs a little time to consider the recommendations along with the RUC, the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland and others. Clearly it will also be necessary to discuss it with, for example, the Home Office, (although the Secretary of State believes that any readacross can be resisted). Lines to take are attached.

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Finally, Dr North's Report into parades and marches is nearing completion and is likely to be published on 30 January. Further advice will follow on this report.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of other NI members and to the Chief Whip and the Lords Chief Whip.

Yours ever
David Kyle
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