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ANNEX B

FROM: TOM CLARKE
 Security Policy and Operations Division
 10 January 1997

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
 PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
 PS/PUS (B&L) - B
 PS/Sir David Fell (B&L) - B
 Mr Steele - B
 Mr Thomas - B
 Mr Leach - B
 Mr Bell - B
 Mr Stephens - B
 Mr Watkins - B
 Mr Wood (B&L) - B
 Mr Perry - B
 Mrs Collins - B
 Mr Smyth - B
 Mr Beeton - B
 Mr Maccabe - B
 Mr Hill - B
 Mr Margetts - B
 Mrs Todd - B
 Supt Maxwell
 Lt Col Moody
 Mr Webb - B

PS/SIR JOHN WHEELER (B&L) - B

SECURITY FORCE RESPONSE TO RECENT ATTACKS

The purpose of this note is to inform the Minister of the security force response to recent PIRA attacks. They have not, as has been suggested in some local newspapers, re-introduced all the measures in place prior to 31 August 1994, but clearly with each additional attack, steps have to be taken to counter the threat.

The most visible sign of the increased security effort is the increased profile now being adopted by the Army at the request of the RUC. Full details of the new measures in place are listed below and are broken down by region.

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Belfast

The Army are now accompanying:

- RUC routine patrols (vehicle and foot) in 'B' Division (West Belfast);
- RUC foot patrols in 'D' Division (North Belfast);
- RUC Neighbourhood Unit foot patrols in Markets, Short Strand and Ormeau areas of South/East Belfast (as a direct result of the attack on the Chichester Street sangar on Tuesday 7 January);

and are patrolling in Bangor, Lisburn and the Strandtown area of Belfast. Snap VCPs manned by both RUC and Army can be located throughout the region. In addition RUC patrols in the city centre have been strengthened and are protected by MSU personnel. Furthermore, a limited number of physical security measures have been re-introduced, with rocket screens being erected at vulnerable bases and the Belfast city centre security gates being closed as necessary between 10.00 pm and 6.00 am.

North Region

Following the incident on 7 December when a burned-out HGV containing HME was discovered at the border near Rosslea, the Army have stepped up routine patrolling in Fermanagh. In Londonderry there is still no routine support to the RUC in the city, though there has been some military accompaniment to VCPs on Foyle Bridge. The RUC have requested limited Army accompaniment in areas West of the Foyle to counter the Mark 16 horizontal mortar threat on RUC vehicles - (this will commence shortly and was requested before the attack on the RUC patrol on Wednesday 8 January). A limited number of physical security measures have also been introduced in the region, including the closure of Strand Road and the installation of a security chicane at Rosslea RUC Station.

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South Region

Prior to the latest incidents, the Army had already adopted a higher patrolling profile in South Region because of the prevailing threat. Since early December 1996, however, particularly in the Armagh and South Armagh area, this has been supplemented by "surge" operations, ie swamping small areas with concentrated numbers of troops for short periods of time to disrupt potential attacks. On occasions these areas have included Nationalist housing estates. In addition police patrolling in South Armagh has been limited to counter sniper attacks. On the physical security side, town centre barriers are regularly closed in Portadown, Armagh, Lurgan, Markethill and Banbridge.

Conclusion

At this stage, the security forces response continues to be a measured one appropriate to the level of threat. The latest attacks do however mean that the pace of re-introducing security measures has gathered some momentum. For example, in addition to the more major measures outlined above, other minor steps have been taken such as the closure of a narrow country road heading out of Belfast and the bricking up of derelict property in Dungannon. Of greater significance perhaps, was a call to this office from ACC Lewis enquiring about the procedure for extending the Control Zone Order. Clearly in the aftermath of spate of hoax alerts in Belfast this week the RUC are giving consideration to re-introducing at least some of the parking restrictions that were in force prior to 31 August 1994.

The Minister will also be aware that a Unionist delegation is to meet ACC Stewart today to demand the return of security measures that were in place prior to the ceasefire. We understand they will be pressing for greater overt security, but not for a "ring of steel" around Belfast. It will be important therefore, at every opportunity that we get across the message that the increase in security and the consequential restriction on freedom of movement

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and increase in inconvenience to the general public are a direct
response to the action of the terrorist.

Signed

TOM CLARKE

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