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5 September 1997

Mr Adam,

I understand that your officials have informed you of the latest, and unwelcome, development with plastic baton rounds.

The discovery that the weight of the plastic plug in 34,000 of the baton rounds manufactured in 1996 varies from that specified, and in some cases significantly, is disturbing, particularly when these rounds passed the proof tests for speed and consistency. These variations have come to light as part of the detailed investigation into the reasons for the abnormal performance of rounds manufactured in 1994 that were withdrawn earlier this year. We have been able to trace the fault in respect of weight to one particular sub-contractor and have therefore been able to identify the Lots made using the faulty plugs. I am advised that action was taken immediately to restrict all suspect Lots to training use only and that remaining stocks of baton rounds are adequate to meet current operational commitments. I am also assured that the plastic plugs used in rounds manufactured this year have been subject to 100% inspection and that this requirement will continue.

Adam Ingram Esq MP
Northern Ireland Office

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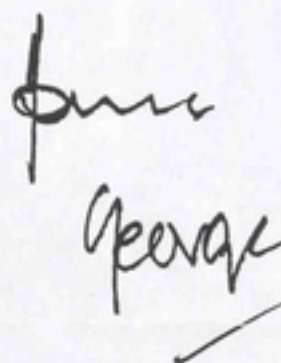


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Mindful of the various sensitivities in Northern Ireland at this time, we need to consider how and when this problem should be presented publicly. I would not wish to wait until the House is sitting to make an announcement and I am minded to issue a written press statement along the lines attached. John Reid will write to Brian Sedgemore who, as you know, takes a keen interest in this subject. I thought I might issue the press statement and the letter to Brian Sedgemore on Thursday next; perhaps you could let me know if you have any objections.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'George Robertson', with a checkmark below it.

GEORGE ROBERTSON

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