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FROM: TOM CLARKE  
SECURITY POLICY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION  
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File  
Ms. K.

cc: Mr Leach - e

PS/PUS (B&L) - e

MEETING WITH JOHN HOLMES

1. PUS is to meet with John Holmes shortly. One of the topics under discussion will be de-escalatory measures. PUS will know that the Prime Minister has asked whether more can be done to reduce the security presence on the ground, in the aftermath of his meeting with the SDLP on 12 November. Advice in relation to this will be provided by Wednesday 19 November, but this meeting may serve as a precursor to that advice.

2. There are a number of general points that PUS may wish to make (based largely on Mr Perry's submission of 24 October which was taken at SPM on 28 October):

- de-escalatory strategy must be intelligence driven and based on threat;
- aware of need to adopt pro-active approach which set the agenda;
- trade off between overt and covert measures;
- judgements to be made in striking right balance between countering threat; and demonstrating a willingness to respond to ceasefire;

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- major changes made during first ceasefire were not reversed;
- significant de-escalation since July; scope for further changes; and threat is being countered and demonstrating to Nationalists that we are
- threat remains; CAC, INLA and LVF no ceasefire; PIRA long-term intentions not entirely clear.

### Over/Cover Measures

3. Please find below some more detailed briefing lines to take in relation to these points:

### Strategy

- Speed and extent of de-escalation must be intelligence driven and based firmly on assessed threat. Reflects reality that ceasefires, while in the main well observed, are fragile. Comments by Molloy last week underline this.
- CAC, INLA and LVF still active and pose considerable threat to lives.
- De-escalation is distinct though complementary to wider confidence building agenda.

### Pro-active Approach

- Essential for us to set agenda and avoid accusations of foot-dragging. Positive action on this front reduces pressures on issues where less flexibility exists. Individual measures are carefully presented. Last

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Saturday's Belfast Telegraph headlined de-escalatory measures taken to date.

- Need to strike proper balance between reassuring Unionists that any threat is being countered and demonstrating to Nationalists that we are willing to respond to ceasefire.

### Overt/Covert Measures

- Certain capabilities must be retained in case there is a return to violence; legal framework for dealing with terrorism; ability to gather intelligence; command control and communication systems and essential military infrastructure.
- Removal of South Armagh towers, PVCPs on border and other essential installations are not realistically achievable in short-term; presentation of this is not always easy.
- Maintaining comprehensive covert surveillance helps to reduce need for overt security presence.

### Changes at first Ceasefire

- Major changes were made during first ceasefire which were not reversed. Border roads remains open, number of Army bases demolished; Civilian Search Unit in Belfast stood down.

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### De-escalation since June

- Significant military patrolling down 35% across Northern Ireland. Commercial centres Belfast, Londonderry, Newry patrolled by RUC alone. Even in difficult areas there have been changes to military profile (25% less South Armagh/North Belfast and 65% West Belfast). Battalion of Parachute Regiment withdrawn from North Belfast - hope to soon announce further relocation to mainland - soon.

### Scope for further changes

- Several in pipeline. Army base Kilkeel, Co Down to close soon. Rockwood, Co Tyrone under review. Hope to announce removal of security furniture from main Belfast - Dublin Road by Christmas. In longer-term PVCPs etc can be reviewed.
- If threat diminishes further there may be scope for further troop relocations in short-term. Kept continually under review.
- Resident units not a short to medium-term option. Significant impact on Army, incur major costs etc.

### Sum up

- Keen to normalise situation as quickly as possible. Aware of dangers of allowing others to set the agenda. But this is different from last ceasefire with real threat from several groups. De-escalation can only take place on basis of assessment from security force commanders.

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4. I hope this is helpful, but if you require further clarification or additional briefing please let me know.

[Signed: Tom Clarke]

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