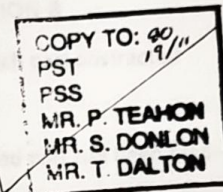


**Confidential**

19 November 1996



Mr. Sean O hUiginn  
Second Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Second Secretary

**Conversation with the Chief Constable**

I had a brief conversation with the new Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, at a reception at Hillsborough Castle last night.

Flanagan is looking forward to his first appearance at the Anglo-Irish Conference in his new capacity.

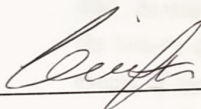
Since he took office a fortnight ago, he has been concentrating on internal management and organisation matters in the RUC and has deliberately not cultivated a high media profile. In the New Year, however, he plans to set out his policy objectives and ambitions for the job in a series of public statements. He stands firmly by the commitments to a neutral RUC which he gave in his recent Sunday Times interview (though he was somewhat taken aback by the controversy to which his remarks gave rise in the Unionist community).

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

# ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) OF A RECORD PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

Form to be completed and inserted in the original record in place of each part abstracted

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed:  
840/6694
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1
- (iii) The date of each such document: 19/11/1996
- (iv) The description of each document: Report of conversation with Chief Constable
- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention: Section 8 (4) (b)



Name: Lauren Clifton

Grade: Archivist

Department: *Foreign Affairs*

Date: 16/12/2021

Flanagan reiterated his gloomy prognosis in relation to an early restoration of the IRA ceasefire. He is personally convinced that the IRA are serious about wishing to end their campaign for good. However, they are waiting to get the right terms from the British Government and Flanagan is very doubtful that these will be forthcoming in the dying days of the present Government, whose vulnerability to Unionist pressure is becoming daily more apparent. He is acutely aware that a historic opportunity to end IRA violence once and for all could thereby go by default.

If the current search for language acceptable to both the IRA and the British Government fails, Flanagan expects that Sinn Féin will endeavour to drive a wedge publicly between both Governments, revealing drafts which, they will assert, the Irish Government supported but which the British Government did not, thereby squandering a unique opportunity.

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He praised the resolute public stance of the Irish, British and US Governments in response to Lisburn and other IRA activities in recent months. Coming so soon "after Drumcree and all that", he was gratified that the Irish Government and the US Administration (particularly given the latter's dependence on Irish-American votes) had not allowed their indignation over the events of the summer to dilute in any way the robust expression of their opposition to IRA terrorism. He also spoke warmly of cross-border security cooperation between the RUC and the Garda Síochána and praised the recent arms finds.

Flanagan was phlegmatic about the personal threat to himself and senior colleagues revealed in material discovered in a house which Bobby Storey, currently in RUC custody, frequented. Joking about the likelihood of the IRA not knowing the home addresses of himself and his colleagues, he said that the only element which concerned him about the apparent interception of details relating to his phone bill was that contacts who regularly phoned him at home could have been compromised (though, on balance, he thought this unlikely).

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Finally, I asked him about his long-awaited "fundamental review". Flanagan made clear that this exercise will not be "moth-balled" and that he is determined to go ahead with a number of the more structural reforms proposed in his plan. He indicated, however, that he is running into opposition from the British Government on this.

Yours sincerely

*David Donoghue*

David Donoghue