

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF THE 11TH PUBLIC MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2003 AT 12:00 NOON IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Denis Bradley (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Alex Attwood
Viscount Brookeborough
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr Fred Cobain
Mr Brian Dougherty
Mr Sam Foster
Mr Barry Gilligan
Lord Kilclooney
Mrs Pauline McCabe
Mr Alan McFarland
Mr Eddie McGrady
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Sammy Wilson

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND:

Mr Hugh Orde (Chief Constable)
Mr Roy Toner (ACC Corporate Development)
Mr Duncan McCausland (ACC Operations)
Mr Sam Kinkaid (ACC North Region)
Senior Director of Human Resources
Director of Media and Public Relations
Chief Inspector, Command Secretariat

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Bob McCann (Chief Executive)
Head of Business Affairs
Head of Policy and Accountability
Head of Training and Community Consultation
One Board Official

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Mr W Hay and Mr Kelly.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

I would like to welcome members of the public and media to this public session. We welcome of course the Chief Constable and his colleagues. I understand we are going to begin with a presentation that relates to training and then we will have questions.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Thank you Chairman.

There has been a lot of interest and a lot of questions around the police college, which we have been pushing for some two years now and I thought that it was important the Board was updated on where we are. I have to confess to a degree of frustration, personally, around the fact that we have not moved any further forward, but I think we are getting more organised and it is quite an exciting time, so it would be useful for Assistant Chief Constable Toner to give us a brief overview.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Roy Toner:

Chairman, I want to take a few moments to give the Board, senior colleagues and members of the public an update on where we are with the new PSNI college and the developments that have taken place. As Change Manager for the PSNI, it sits within my responsibility to oversee this at the moment.

An interesting quote, "it might be cheaper and more convenient to acquire a new depot than to modify the existing one, which is old and needs major renovations. There is a clear need for greatly improved accommodation for training purposes, which we recognise may be difficult to acquire at short notice. The need could be aggravated if our proposals for increased recruitment are successful. The proposed change in the role of the Service will affect the training syllabus appreciably and there seems to be a need for an extension of training, particularly for those selected for promotion or likely

to benefit from higher training, for which Northern Ireland has no facilities". A very powerful quote which was made in 1969 in the Hunt Report, that is 34 years ago.

"The Police Service of Northern Ireland should have a new purpose built college and the funding for it should be found in the next public spending round." That was recommendation 131 of the Patten Report back in 1999, which is three and a half years ago, a very strong and important recommendation, which we are fully committed to.

The report broke down some of the issues that we have in relation to training provision within the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The report clearly said and we take no issue with, "the training centre has cramped and inadequate accommodation, with limited classroom space, there are no specialist rooms for information technology, interview custody or court room training, there are no proper library facilities, the physical training suite is inadequate and there is no swimming pool. Garnerville is not a good site and its facilities would continue to be required while a replacement is built. There would be an advantage to locating the facility away from other police property, at a site which could be linked to university campus". As you will know, for a foundation faculty the Senior Director of Human Resources works along with the University of Ulster for the graduation of all new trainee officers. This is the report of the Independent Commission of Policing at the end of September 1999, as I have already said. Proposed college requirements, in other words, the specification for what we are going to need for a police service college for the 21st century.

We have to have the capacity to train 400 to 450 new recruits, not only at this stage, but at some stage in the future, for natural wastage and turnaround, in what would be a service size of 7,500 regular officers. We need specialist facilities which will be provided for recruits in relation to physical training and for realistic indoor and outdoor practical exercises. Training facilities will be required for HOLMES, that is, the Home Office Large Major Enquiry System, training people in major murder and major incident investigation, interviewing

skills, crime scene management, intelligence related policing skills, using the national intelligence model, firearms training, evidence gathering, security and protection, patrolling, public order training, traffic, dogs and command training, it is a wide remit for the training college that we will require in Northern Ireland.

We are going to need approximately 20,000 square metres of a new ring and all terrain area for traffic and driver training. As you know of recent events, our road policing units are doing the best they can and we want to try and do as much as we can to skill them up appropriately for the future.

We will need, eleven ranges for firearms. We have to always take into account the developing situation in Northern Ireland and the Patten recommendation has said at some stage we should move to an unarmed police service, but at this stage we need eleven ranges for firearms. Even at some stage in the future if we move to armed response vehicles, we will still need a firearms range capacity.

We will also need purpose-built public order training, which is standard for any large police service in the United Kingdom, or indeed anywhere else in Western Europe.

Provision of a new training college, the new facilities required to train officers in the appropriate environment, we require a centre of excellence, if we ask people, both serving and new trainee officers to come on board on this organisation. If we are to become an employer of choice we will need a centre of excellence where we treat people with the dignity and give them the facilities they require. Training must be open and transparent engage external organisations, include civilian community groups and reflect human rights in its core. We cannot do this in substandard accommodation. The site should be away from other police estate, preferably linked with a third level education establishment, and that would still be our proposal.

We have prepared an initial business case in 2000, recommending that the project should be through the Private Finance Initiative, or as it is now known, the Public Private Partnership. It is anticipated that the contract for construction should be awarded in early 2005 and we hope that the completion date should be 2007. As a slight update from that, we have had responses from Northern Ireland Office updating us on our Outline Business Case and they have asked for further information, which is not uncommon in this type of large project and we will supply that in relation to training usage over the next ten years.

The Oversight Commissioner, Mr Tom Constantine has said, "training, education and development is the engine room for the transformation of policing" and I would have to agree with him. There are massive training requirements for this organisation to deliver on the 175 recommendations in the Patten report, to deliver on what we want as a police service and what the people of Northern Ireland deserve from a police service.

Finally, the Police Service of Northern Ireland regard the provision of a new police college as envisaged by Patten, crucial to the complete success of the programme of change, that cannot be underestimated. We are moving forward on this, we have taken this forward to the Northern Ireland Office, with Board colleagues. It is fundamental to us achieving a quality, high standard and professional Police Service for Northern Ireland for the 21st century.

Chairman: Professor Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much indeed.

Chief Constable, we will move then to questions from Fred Cobain, Sammy Wilson and I believe Joe Byrne wants to follow up in respect of the loyalist feud.

Mr Fred Cobain:

Would the Chief Constable comment on the ongoing loyalist feud which resulted in the killings on Saturday night? Could he also explain to the Board how lower Shankill, which is clearly linked to the feud, how a large number of men were able to go into that estate last night in what someone described as being out of the Chicago movies, were able to operate in that area for a considerable amount of time without any security forces in the area? Could he tell us if there were security forces in the area and if not, why not and how long it took the security forces to respond?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

In terms of the loyalist feud in general. As Members and no doubt members of the public will be aware, this has been going on for some time. Since the murder of Mr Warnock, which will probably signify the very beginning of this, there have been six murders, seventeen attempted murders, seven shooting incidents that we are aware of, two hoax bombs, two blast bombs, an explosive device, four pipe-bomb attacks, one petrol bomb attack and we have, in terms of searches, been successful in ten searches out of fifteen. We have arrested thirty-nine people and we have charged twenty. So there is a lot of police action going on and a lot of police disruption going on.

The most serious development in the loyalist feud was the murder of Mr Gregg. As you are aware, he was returning from a Rangers football match and he was shot with Robert Carson, at the weekend, that suggests there was a major setback. It took us by surprise quite frankly. I was not anticipating an attack from that side of the divide, we were geared up for attacks but we thought it was perhaps likely to be the other way round. What you saw last night was I think, a combination of the other brigades of the UDA trying to force out "C" company from the lower Shankill. I can comment on that because I happened to be around at about 1.30 am this morning with my senior command team. The police response, as ever on these things those people who are prepared to live by the sword, as soon as it starts to get difficult call the police for help. We had numerous TSG officers on duty, the Scarlets responded fairly quickly, or as quickly as they could, bearing in mind

the level of threat, supported by the Blues and the Ebonys. They came under a sustained attack and without doubt they saved lives last night, one in particular. Shots were fired. We made an arrest. We have some success in terms of the situation that went on and intelligence tells us that not only do we have to police the lower Shankill, we have had to deploy resources to Larne, resources to Carrick and elsewhere, which is part of the fallout. So it was not just one location, there is violence across a number of areas.

In terms of the current situation, what appears to have happened last night, is a number of people from the lower Shankill have chosen to leave Northern Ireland, which may have some calming affect. We had a major police operation on yesterday, in relation to the funerals, one of which is running concurrently and we have a large number of not only police but our colleagues from the army supporting us in trying to maintain a high degree of order in what is a very difficult and moving environment.

I would not wish to second guess where we go at the weekend, I have as many officers as I can possibly have out and they will stay out, they are focused in Belfast. We have moved resources to other places on an intelligence led basis. The nature of this is that it is a fast moving series of events, I have many officers deployed trying to gather intelligence and spot what is going on so we can respond. We cannot solve this situation, we can police it out and we will continue to disrupt as much as we can. We are targeting a large number of people who we would say is responsible for much of the activity that went on last night and we almost caught some of them. We did not quite get to where we wanted to be last night but it was a major police operation, I watched it operating. I watched my senior team working and moving people and I can tell you the commitment of my officers to deal with this is 100%. I was highly impressed, it was a real privilege to be watching how they worked, how they moved people around, how they dealt with the situation that was unfolding very, very quickly, with complete professionalism. That was not just the uniformed officers, it was the CID officers who had to follow up the crime scenes, it was the special branch

officers who were working in the areas where they do best and it was all coming together quite well. If people felt we should have responded quicker, well it is difficult when you are facing a ballistic threat. You have to get enough officers into the area before you can go in, because you come under fire, that is if there was a delay and that is why there would have been a delay.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Sammy Wilson do you wish to raise a question?

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Yes, could I just first of all say that in regard to last night, I have no doubt that the quick police action probably did save lives. Could the Chief Constable tell us first of all, how many officers are currently being tied up in seeking to prevent these attacks and secondly, in investigating the attacks which have taken place? You also mentioned the use of specialist units, the Blues and the Blacks last night, could you confirm the rumours to disband these specialists units in North and East Belfast and if that is true, is that a wise decision in the current situation?

One last point, what action can the police take, because I think people are increasingly sickened by the open threats which are now being made on television by those who are involved in the feuds and the language is quite graphic on many occasions. Could the Chief Constable tell us what action can be taken when public threats like that are made, because I think that in the minds of many people the fact that those who are involved feel that they can make threats so publicly just confirms that we now have reached the stage of a Mafia state?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

On your links to a Mafia feud, your comments are well made in a way, because part of this is rather like a Mafia feud and people who are convinced of their own invincibility until they end up dead.

In terms of the number of officers, you mentioned specialist units, they are at the cutting edge of this because they have the equipment and the training to deal with it. So, a large number of my TSGs and indeed some of my even more specialist units are deployed trying to police out this issue. It is not just us, we could not do it without the army, large numbers of companies are now deployed in Belfast to support us and without them we would be struggling in terms of policing it out. Now that is an expensive tactic to sustain over time. It does have successes because it does force people into the open and we catch them in our road blocks. One success on the night of the murder was a road block, firearms recovered, people charged, so it is a legitimate tactic to use, but it is expensive.

In terms of investigations, I am told it is around seventy of my detectives looking at murders in relation to this loyalist feud, so it is about a third of my total strength in Belfast, in terms of CID. Specialists units I have covered. In relation to the Blacks, I think the ones you are talking about are a level two, TSG unit, which report together and have been extremely successful. It has been reviewed and I am told there is a plan. I am not sure how far down the line it is because they were actually available last night, their names were certainly mentioned last night. They are not a level one TSG unit, they were people drawn from districts in Belfast to fill a gap. So if a decision has been made to disband them it is because they would be redeployed in the areas from which they came, I have not denuded Belfast by one officer on terms of reorganisation. If the district have decided to reorganise it slightly, it is because they see the need to do it in a different way. It is probably around front line response policing, that is their business and I am very keen for them to get on with it. Last night we did not have a problem in terms of deploying sufficient numbers. As ever in these situations, it is not just Belfast, the PSNI comes together and north and south regions have been providing additional resources, including detectives to help Belfast out and that will continue as long as it is needed.

In terms of the TV threats, I did not see them, I was probably out working. We are looking at that, you are right. The big frustration I have, two frustrations I have, one is, some of the outstanding and dangerous work done by my officers leads to arrests of people, for example, in possession of firearms who have committed what we

would say are serious offences, some of those people are now currently back out on bail, so we are back to square one. I am not going to talk about individual cases because it would be improper and because legal decisions are not really my territory. I think we do need to look at how the criminal justice system works as a whole so when we do arrest people who we would say are dangerous and heavily involved and are charged, which suggests we believe we have a case to put before a court, then if those are serious then those people are kept locked up, as they probably would be anywhere else in the United Kingdom and not let loose to cause us even more difficulty and put my officers at even more risk, as well as the communities in which they operate. We are looking at, for example, section 108 of the Terrorism Act, which is a membership of an illegal organisation. Again I find myself struggling in the sense that if this is an offence whereby a superintendent can give an opinion that someone belongs to an illegal organisation, the problem is that opinion is inevitably based on intelligence. If my officers are continually put under pressure by members of legal profession to disclose where that intelligence comes from, then it is obvious to people round this room that there comes a stage where you cannot disclose that intelligence in open court because the rights of other people, under Article 2 would be threatened and again my intelligence would dry up. So it is a very difficult legal position to be in. That having been said, it does not mean we are not going to continue trying and if you look at the experiences in the South of Ireland, they have a similar offence and they have been far more successful than we have in actually locking people up on the evidence of the superintendent, but the legal position is different. That is where we are going and I am having that actively looked at by my lawyers at the moment to see if we can push some edges on this one.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Mr Joe Byrne.

Mr Joe Byrne:

Chairman, given what is happening in some of the loyalist areas, which is very disturbing, can the Chief Constable give any assessment of the security situation and indeed public order situation that might currently be pertaining in the nationalist or republican areas and in particular at the flash point areas in Belfast?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Well, the flash point areas recently have been fairly quiet. There have been some sporadic disturbances but I think one impact of the feud that we have noticed is that there is a lot less movement within the loyalist community and people are keeping undercover and out of the way, because of fear. This is basically a small number of people putting a large community in fear, which is why we are doing our level best to fix it.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

A question regarding the police investigation into the Claudy bomb, Mr Brian Dougherty.

Mr Brian Dougherty:

Chief Constable, would you please comment on the current position regarding the police investigation into the Claudy bombing and provide assurances that the families of the victims and the people of Claudy themselves will get the recognition, respect, equality and ultimately closure that they deserve?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

I will ask Assistant Chief Constable Sam Kinkaid to answer that as he is personally leading on it.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Sam Kinkaid:

Chairman, the ongoing enquiry is a review of the original investigation. At the conclusion of the review, the reviewing officer will bring forward recommendations to myself and the Chief Constable as to whether there is any prospect of advancing the investigation towards criminal charges. Twenty-three next of kin of the deceased have been identified, together with twenty surviving injured and all these people have had contact with the Family Liaison Officer who has been dealing with them.

Currently the review team is speaking to many retired officers who were involved in the original investigation and re-examining issues relating to intelligence and

forensics. It is anticipated that all material will hopefully be reviewed in about three months, at which time the reviewing officer will prepare a report. But it should be noted that this timescale might change, should the review team discover other issues of note that they feel they are going to have to examine.

I can give a full assurance that the families and those who were injured will be given full support by the PSNI. They are being kept informed. There was an interim report for example, given to them on the 20 December last year, in relation to one particular issue that emerged during the review on which there was a lot of public and press comment. It was felt it would be better not to leave that to the end of the review, which I think showed our commitment to keeping them updated and ensuring that they heard it directly from us, rather than through press leaks. We will be continuing to keep them up to date as the review progresses.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Thank you, regarding road traffic fatalities, Mrs Rosaleen Moore.

Mrs Rosaleen Moore:

Chief Constable, the number of road traffic fatalities this year, gives a great deal of concern. Could you comment on the level and causes of road traffic accidents and fatalities and outline the measures that the Service has taken to try and reduce this?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

ACC McCausland leads on that. As an overview you are right, it is twenty people now who have died on the roads in one month. In a population of 1.6 million that is probably the highest in United Kingdom. In very broad terms, one could probably summarise it as drink and speed, although the last twenty are a very much more complex series of causes, which Duncan will no doubt go into in more detail.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Chairman, last year 150 people unfortunately lost their lives on the roads in Northern Ireland and as the Chief Constable has already outlined, twenty people to date have

been killed and this compares to twelve the previous year. This represents, I think, for all of us a terrible tragedy, both for the families and the whole community.

The biggest causation factor we have found is clearly speed, followed by carelessness, then alcohol or drugs, pedestrian faults, as with the unfortunate latest accident, and non-wearing of seatbelts.

The police are committed to targeting these causation factors to reduce this unnecessary loss of life on the roads and if I could quickly outline what we have done during 2002. In terms of excess speed, we have detected and prosecuted over 30,000 people. In terms of careless and dangerous driving, 2,500 people. In terms of driver alcohol or drugs, which is an ongoing concern for us, almost 2,600 people and in terms of non-wearing of seatbelts 10,500 people.

As you Chairman and Members will be aware, we are currently running a campaign with the Department of Environment and Department of Roads in terms of addressing the education by a new television advertising campaign about pedestrian fault and jay-walking.

Recently we just announced a safety camera scheme and the Board did receive a presentation and update on this system, two months ago, that from the 1 July this year a three year implementation plan will begin and that will lead to the introduction of safety cameras across Northern Ireland. It will see twenty fixed site speed cameras, fourteen fitted sites where red light running cameras will be identified and placed, this will utilise the latest digital technology available in the United Kingdom and will allow us to continue to research our work in terms of speed detection technology and it will be basically a self-financing scheme. Clearly research has found in the United Kingdom, that where you target using speed cameras and safety cameras, you can reduce casualties by 47% and upwards of 47%, which I think would be a significant introduction if we can do this in Northern Ireland. But our policy and please Members be assured that we will only deploy these speed cameras or safety cameras where we clearly find there is a high incident of speed related collisions, in other

words, where we have clear information and intelligence and it will not be done randomly.

It would be fair to say however, that everyone in Northern Ireland, not just the police has a responsibility in this issue. It is not just what we the police can do, it is what everyone can do and my message this morning and our message has been constantly to the people of Northern Ireland, “think safely and act responsibly”. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to return to this subject in March when we would update Members as to what we have done in the next few weeks.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much indeed. We will bear in mind the suggestion for the March meeting.

Lord Kilclooney:

I just have one brief supplementary on that Chairman. Part of the cause of these accidents, in some places is the actual design of the roads, does the police service make any recommendations to the roads authority about the need to give priority to certain roads. I am thinking in particular of roads outside Comber where we have a very bad record?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Duncan McCausland:

Yes, Chairman, I can confirm that clear consultation goes on across the three key areas, the three ‘Es’ as they are known, enforcement, education and engineering. Members are correct to think engineering is a critical factor in terms of this particular speed reduction. In terms of designing out the faults, the police do actively consult with our partners in this.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Ian Paisley Junior has a question relating to the Chief Constable’s speech in the United States.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

Thank you Chairman. I would just like to thank ACC Toner for his presentation on the academy, I hope that the Government is listening to the Board and listening to the police. We want this academy, we want it quickly, we want the money available for it and I hope that it can be delivered in the time span and that the government does not drag its feet in making those resources available, because it is absolutely vital and necessary.

Turning to the issue of your speech in America, Chief Constable. In light of those comments, are you considering a review of your senior command structure, can you tell us if any of the Assistant Chief Constables here or any of the Superintendents here, if you suspect them of wanting you to fail or if they are disloyal. On reflection, do you not feel that if you have views like this, that you should actually share them with the Board in-house rather than going state side and in affect slandering, not only the police but nameless officers within the police.

You also commented in your speech about the British Army, you say that the difference is now you tell them what to do. I was not aware that I grew up in a military state. I did not think that the military told the police what their role was and I am sure that your predecessors, not only in the police but also in the British Army would be quite alarmed at that view. I am wondering if they have actually expressed that position to you. I am wondering if, on reflection, you feel that some of those comments were actually misplaced?

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Chief Constable.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Thank you. I need to get some context first of all, why did I go to America? I went to America because there was an audience there that has consistently received people from Northern Ireland who talk about policing, who are not police officers. A number of them have a fairly one dimensional view on how good or how bad the police service in Northern Ireland is. The reason for going was actually to tell them how good my officers were, how effective they had been and how much change had

been implemented and the plan for the future of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. So I was talking about those three things, that was the main reason for going.

In terms of specific comments, you are right, near the end of my speech I made a number of observations in relation to organisational change, at no stage of my speech did I accuse anyone of disloyalty. At no stage of my speech did I refer to senior officers. I am not sure where those two observations have come from.

I referred to the difficulty of implementing one of the biggest change programmes in Europe, across an organisation of some 12,000 to 13,000 people. There are clearly people who do not think this change process is good, that is the point of that comment. I know that because I have met them. I am certainly not going to talk about names because our job is to lead those people through the uncertainty and convince those people that the way forward is the sensible way forward to deliver an effective and efficient policing service. I have met officers from the ground floor who have been honest enough and frank enough to tell me they think the move from the RUC to the Police Service of Northern Ireland was a disaster. Our job is to convince them that it is wrong, because they have also been clear that the old world was better than the new world. Those conversations were by officers, who I think were open enough and honest enough to make those statements and I have no intention of embarrassing them, even if I could remember their names, because I gave them that guarantee when I was speaking to them, it is how you find out how good or committed your organisation is to change. So that was the reason for those observations. I did not slander anyone, I was making a simple mechanical observation on the difficulty of implementing change in an organisation.

In relation to the army, that was a bit clumsy, the intent was to point out clearly, because there was clearly lack of understanding, that the army is subordinate to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I have made comments today, both in the public and private section of this meeting, the fact that the army have been giving us total support. I think there have been some five companies deployed today, at about 1 o'clock last night they were offering to come out to help us deal with the situation in Larne, so that shows how good and how seamless the relationship is. There was no

intention at all to suggest the army was doing anything wrong, it was simply trying to explain to an audience who has received many pieces of information in the past that have not been accurate, about who is in charge of policing. The civilian police are in charge of policing in Northern Ireland, that is the point I was trying to make.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Sam Foster on the closure of police stations.

Mr Sam Foster:

Thank you Chairman. Chief Constable should you action the demands and requirements of the recent SDLP missive, you will find yourself accused of being in the category of succumbing to the expectations of a political party. Or will you act as you have indicated as a professional police officer in assessing a situation then considering action which is appropriate to the needs of community you serve in the enforcement of the law? It is a political one, but I am a bit worried about influences.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Thank you, I understand the question. I only received the official SDLP document this morning, it arrived in my headquarters yesterday. However, having scanned it, I am aware of the main points I think, they were made very publicly in the press by that particular party.

I had a meeting with Mark Durkin and Alex Attwood in relation to general policing issues, in the same way as I meet many parties. In relation to the security advice and I made the point very clearly, that the security assessment is made by my officers, supported by intelligence from other places, it is something we actually do daily. I am not quite sure what was demanded in terms of an update on the security situation or review, and if I was to make an assessment now I would say the threat was high. That is why we are policing in the style we are policing, albeit dissident republicans, albeit the loyalist feud.

In terms of disarmament, that was not discussed at my meeting, certainly it was something that took me slightly by surprise. What is interesting, if you look at United

Kingdom generally, more and more officers are actually carrying firearms, not less. In fact in London more officers wear body armour and stab proof armour than they do here. I would say currently I am totally comfortable that the need to carry side-arms is made. We had to open fire last night for example, in the Shankill. Since I have been here officers have come under firearm attack in public order situations, so the need to carry side-arms is well made and we will continue to assess when it is safe, if ever, to downgrade that level of carrying guns. At the moment I have no intention of disarming my police service in any way, shape or form.

As far as the estate is concerned, those points have been well made before and the debate has been made through this Policing Board before. Patten is very clear, if we want to rationalise our estate we can start with our local communities, then we bring our case to the Policing Board and I have no intention of going outside those rules at all. My police officers, my senior officers who run the districts, will make those decisions in consultation with their communities and then they will come to us and then they will come to you. If you want my personal view, I think our police estate is too large, but how we rationalise it is something for a long debate which is actually not yet started. So that is my take on it, I am happy to listen to anyone that wants to make a positive contribution on policing, but in terms of operational need that is clearly my responsibility.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Thank you Chief Constable, one final question.

Lord Kilclooney

A supplementary question. If the Chief Constable says he is happy to consult with anyone who makes a contribution to policing in Northern Ireland, as Mr Ahern and Mr Blair have said the IRA Sinn Fein are inextricably linked, they are known as a the republican movement, it was alleged yesterday in the House of Commons by the SDLP MP

Mr Seamus Mallon, that you had been meeting these people, is that correct?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

A number of comments were made in both Houses of Parliament that are not accurate, that was one of them, I have not met with any republicans whatsoever. What I have said is, that if they wish to engage, if anyone wishes to engage in a positive way in policing then I will meet them. But currently I have not met any member and I think that comment was made public yesterday in the Belfast Telegraph.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

Thank you very much to you Chief Constable and your officers for attending this public session and for the answers to the questions posed.

F:\BOARD SECRETARIAT\POLICING BOARD MEETING\MINUTES\2003\17th meet-6 Feb-verbatim-11th public meet.doc