

23 December 1997

Our Ref: ComSec 97/195/23

MEETING WITH ROBERT HAMILL'S FAMILY - MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER 1997

I refer to your letter of 28 November 1997 and enclosure regarding your meeting with the family of Robert Hamill on 24 November 1997. I will deal with the matters raised in the order in which you raise them:-

1. **Press Statements**

The first press release was issued at 0600 hours on the morning of the incident (27 April 1997). The Duty Press Officer obtained the information from local police in Portadown, whose perception at that time, was that "two rival factions" were involved. It is now accepted that the use of words, "two rival factions" was not appropriate.

The second press release was issued on the same date, appealing for witnesses to come forward.

The third press release was issued on 30 April 1997 in response to allegations of inaction by the occupants of the police landrover.

On 7 May 1997 the fourth press release was issued at the request of the senior investigating officer, to appeal for witnesses. As a result of the ongoing investigation, events surrounding the incident had become clearer, therefore, the opportunity was taken to update the press and clarify matters reported previously.

There was never any attempt by police to be duplicitous in the release of the various press statements. The ongoing investigation does not include the aspect of press releases.

2. **Suspension of Police Officers**

Decisions regarding the suspension of police officers are taken after consideration of various factors, including the seriousness of allegations and the availability of admissible evidence to secure the conviction of officers for any criminal or disciplinary offences. Cognizance is also taken of the NIO Guidance to the Chief Constable on Police Complaints and Discipline Procedures. The issue of suspension is reviewed at all significant stages in Complaints and Discipline investigations, including when the recommendations of the investigating officer are made and when the decisions of the DPP and ICPC are taken respectively, regarding any criminal or disciplinary proceedings. To date no police officer has been suspended in connection with the ongoing investigation.

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