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Reference Code: 2021/100/15

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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTEANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST**URGENT****Secure Fax: 976SE**

DATE : 25 August 1998

NO. OF PAGES (including this one): 2

TO: Tim O'Connor
Anglo-Irish DivisionOmagh file
25A

FROM: Kieran Dowling

SUBJECT: Content of Prime Minister's Announcement

1. In discussion with Pat Folan and myself, the British side have indicated that the announcement to be made by the Prime Minister in Omagh this afternoon is expected to be of a very general nature, and will not go much, if at all, beyond the statements on security measures already made by the Secretary of State (eg her remarks to the press after the meeting with Minister O'Donoghue on Monday last). The statement would cover the "general security response, without specifics".
2. They understand that, as of now, the main themes of the announcement will be as follows:-
 - Intention to bring forward measured but important additions to anti-terrorist legislation, designed to increase its effectiveness.
 - Important that dissident Republican groups should not derail the political process.
 - Close co-operation with the Republic continues at political level and between the two police forces - and co-operation has never been so good. However, a joint approach can further improve the effectiveness of anti-terrorists efforts.
 - The Prime Minister, in addition, is likely to refer to the ongoing operation to discover the individuals responsible for the Omagh atrocity. He may also refer to the ongoing joint examination by the Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable in regard to improving operational capability. If asked about internment, he will not rule it out but will probably say that he is not

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currently persuaded in regard to its introduction. He is not expected to say anything about Parliament being recalled as he would be unable to do so in advance of tomorrow's Ministerial meeting (see next paragraph).

3. There will be a "Ministerial" meeting tomorrow (presumably attended by the relevant Ministers including Secretary of State Mowlam and the Home Secretary) to discuss the actual content of what should be included in the proposed legislation to be placed before Parliament next week. The intention in this regard is for Parliament to be recalled on 3 September.
4. According to the British side, two areas in particular are being looked at:
 - (i) If (as expected) there is to be a Bill, the Home Secretary would be keen to create an offence of conspiring to commit a terrorist offence abroad (the British side are unclear as to how precisely this would impinge on the situation in Northern Ireland).
 - (ii) As regards Northern Ireland, the 'front runner' for the Bill would be the replication of our Offences Against the State Act in relation to obtaining convictions, on the word of a senior police officer, of members of illegal/unlawful organisations.

They emphasise that they do not know if there will be any specific reference to the above measures in the Prime Minister's announcement.

5. The British side understand that the intention is to "match" generally the changes being made to the Irish legislation. They will not be speaking of "harmonising" anti-terrorist legislation with us given our existing power of internment and the range of other (separate/distinctive) measures in our Offences Against the State Act.