

TO BE CHECKED
AGAINST DELIVERY

BOMB EXPLOSION AT THE GRAND HOTEL, BRIGHTON

With permission, Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the bomb explosion at the Grand Hotel in Brighton on 12 October.

The House will be well aware of most of the circumstances of the explosion, the purpose of which was no less than to strike a blow at the heart of our democracy by killing the majority of the Cabinet. The gravity of this outrage is reflected in the full-hearted condemnation expressed from all parts of the House and the country at large, as well as from overseas.

I know that the whole House will wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families of our late colleague Sir Anthony Berry, Mrs Jean Shattock, Mr Eric Taylor and Mrs Roberta Wakeham, who lost their lives. We wish a speedy recovery to the 32 people injured, of whom ^{SIX} ~~seven~~ are still in hospital. I know that the thoughts of all in the House will be with them, including, of course, our colleagues, the Rt Hon Member for Chingford and the Rt Hon Member for Colchester South and Maldon. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute here to all those in the emergency services who responded so magnificently, some of them in conditions of great danger, immediately following the explosion.

The Sussex police immediately commenced a full, urgent investigation of this crime and this is proceeding. They are receiving assistance from the Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Squad and forensic, technical and computer assistance from the Home Office. I stand ready to provide whatever further resources and help may be required.

The task of obtaining evidence about the bomb itself is a formidable one. So far, 31 skips and 750 dustbins full of debris have been removed from the scene. 228 police officers are engaged in this operation. High winds and the dangerous state of the hotel structure has made their task more difficult. More than 200 police officers are engaged in the pursuit of enquiries. The police are not yet in a position to describe more fully the device itself beyond the fact that it is believed to have comprised about twenty pounds of commercial explosive.

A number of measures have been set in hand since the explosion. The Chief Constable of Sussex decided to ask the Deputy Chief Constable of Hampshire, Mr Hoddinott, to conduct an enquiry into the security arrangements in place at Brighton at the time of the Party Conference. I will receive a copy of that report. At this stage, it would be wrong to anticipate its conclusions. I shall, however, to the extent that this does not prejudice security, report them to the House in due course.

With regard to the wider implications for security of the events at Brighton, in the first place, immediate attention has been given to the assessment of other potential targets and the provision of proper protection for them. I shall not, of course, give details of the changes that have been made and the measures involved. I can, however, assure the House that after appropriate discussions the House authorities have already set in hand new measures to improve security in the Palace of Westminster.

The Brighton bombing also demonstrates the vulnerability of Party political engagements. This applies locally as well as nationally.

Local Party organisers should be careful to contact the police about arrangements well in advance; and the police service is co-ordinating advice to local forces about how they can best respond. I shall also shortly be in touch with the national Party organisations.

In addition, I have set in hand new arrangements centrally for countering the Irish terrorist threat. The aim is to bring to bear the widest range of experience in assessing Irish terrorist intentions and capabilities, and to advise on, and co-ordinate, the counter-measures required to meet them. These measures will supplement the continuing role of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch as the focal point for the collection and evaluation of intelligence and for police operations against Irish Republican terrorists.

Total security is impossible in a free, democratic society. Political and other leaders are vulnerable because they must be accessible. Everything which can be done will be done to prevent such outrages and to protect their targets. But we will not be bombed into boltholes by terrorists. Those who believe that terror can prevail against democracy understand neither the members of this House - nor the British people.

"Responsibility for the Brighton bomb by conniving with the Irish Government"

No, Sir. The attack at Brighton underlines the need for continued close co-operation between the two Governments in the fight against Terrorism.

Current state of casualties

Seven people are still detained in hospital. It is hoped that at least two of these will be discharged during the course of the week. [See Background Note A for full details of casualties].

Is a further attack likely?

Of course the possibility of a further attack can not be ruled out. But the police and all those responsible will remain particularly vigilant, and are urgently reviewing the measures available to them to prevent such attacks.

Allegations of poor relations between Sussex Constabulary and Metropolitan Police

These allegations are totally unfounded, as both the Sussex Constabulary and the Metropolitan Police have made perfectly clear.

Alleged lack of manpower/facilities available to Sussex police

These allegations are false. The Chief Constable of Sussex has made it known that he is entirely satisfied with the manpower and technical resources available to him in this investigation. [Everything is being done to ensure that additional resources are made available to him as and when necessary.]

IRA claim that 100lbs of explosive were used

The evidence from the explosion suggests to those best qualified to interpret it that about 20lbs of explosive was used. The IRA no doubt have their own reasons for making an exaggerated claim.

Background Note on the proposed meeting between the Prime Minister and Dr Fitzgerald

In his statement to the House of Lords on 16 October, Lord Whitelaw said ".... my right honourable Friend [the Prime Minister] is determined to meet the Taoiseach as properly arranged."

Have there been any arrests?

A number of persons have been detained for questioning by the police in connection with the Brighton enquiry but all have now been released. [IF SPECIFICALLY ASKED: I understand from the Chief Constable that two men are to be charged today with possession of explosives in the Seaford area, but there is at present no evidence to link them with the Brighton attack].

Is it true that the police know the identity of the person/persons responsible for the attack?

I am advised by the police that there is no evidence as yet to identify positively those responsible for the attack.

Allegations of lax security arrangements at the Grant Hotel

Security at the hotel is being considered by Mr Hoddinot in his enquiry and it would not be right for me to comment on these arrangements while the enquiry is in progress.

Allegations of lack of consistency and co-ordination in the questioning of hotel staff

I have every confidence in the conduct of this investigation which is being carried out by police officers who are fully experienced and expert in such matters.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that two days before the bombing, all police forces received a "Bikini Black Alpha" alert from Special Branch in London warning that there was an increased possibility of a terrorist attack on the mainland?

It is not the practice in this House to discuss intelligence matters, and in any case Hon Members would not expect me to comment on such matters in advance of the results of the enquiry.

Long-delay timing devices

It is not yet established what device was used to set off the explosion. Several items taken from the scene of the explosion and a large amount of debris are being forensically analysed. It is certainly possible that a long-delay timing device may have been used. [IF ASKED: I understand that the police have been aware for some time that the IRA have the capability of using such devices.]

Full review of the wider implications for security (who is doing it; will its conclusions be reported to the House; when will it be completed?)

The aim is to ensure that all the implications of the threat from terrorism will be kept under close and continuous review. I have already indicated to the House some of the matters, eg as to the protection of political gathering, that are being considered and it will be one of the purposes of the new arrangements which I mentioned in my statement to see that other issues are identified and relevant action implemented.

New arrangements: what experience was not previously being brought to bear?

The role of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch will be substantially unchanged. The objective of the new arrangements is to facilitate readier access between them and the various Departments and agencies concerned to discuss the interpretation of available information in relation to other information, including political developments, which could have a bearing on the security situation.

What is being done to improve the security of Ministers and members of the Royal Family?

It is not the practice to discuss publicly the detail of security arrangements, but Hon Members may be assured that in the light of recent events protection arrangements have been reviewed and that appropriate measures are being taken.

Why was a bomb-sniffing machine not used to search the Grand Hotel?

As the House knows, Mr John Hoddinot is considering all aspects of the security arrangements which were in June at the hotel and it would not be right for me to comment on them while his enquiry is in progress.

Are the police still looking for a "bearded man"?

I understand that one man closely resembling the description released on Friday of a man seen in the hotel during the Conference has come forward and has been eliminated from the enquiry. Naturally the police have not ruled out that someone of similar description may have been the man seen by a member of the hotel staff at that time.

NOTES FOR SUPPLEMENTARIES

Capital Punishment [Debate]?

[I understand the Hon Member's strong feelings.] Whatever my view of the matter may be, I think we do have to recognise that the House took a very clear decision on this matter last year. [But my Rt Hon Friend, the Leader of the House, will have noted the Hon Member's point.]

NOTES FOR SUPPLEMENTARIES

SECURITY IN THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

Detailed Questions About Security in the House

As Mr Speaker made clear in his statement on security made to the House on 2 April 1979, recommendations affecting security in the Palace of Westminster are made by the Joint Committee on Security. If hon Members have proposals to put forward or questions to ask about our security arrangements, they should address them to the Joint Committee.

On What Authority have Changes in Security Been Made?

Approval has been given by Mr Speaker on the advice of the Joint Committee on Security.

When will the Home Secretary announce the appointment of a person to report to the House on the use of the powers in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984?

The Home Secretary will announce this appointment shortly.

(Background

In the closing stages of the Prevention of Terrorism Bill's progress through the Lords the Government undertook, at Lord Henderson's request, to appoint a person to look at the use of the Act each year and to report. Officials have been compiling a list of suitable candidates for this work, and subject to the comments of other Departments with an interest, will be submitting the names to the Home Secretary within the next 2 - 3 weeks.)

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INQUIRY BY MR HODDINOTT

"To determine by the broadest possible enquiries within and outside the boundaries of the Sussex police, whether all reasonable steps were taken by the Sussex police in planning the security of Ministers, officials and delegates to the Conservative Party Conference at Brighton between Tuesday 9 October 1984 and Friday 12 October 1984 against the background of the prevailing situation and information available to them at the time. Also to determine how effectively those plans were executed."

How long will Mr Hoddinott's enquiry take?

In view of the scale and nature of Mr Hoddinott's task it would be wrong to impose unrealistic deadlines on this enquiry. He is, however, well aware of the urgency of this matter.

BACKGROUND NOTE (NOT FOR USE)

Mr Hoddinott has said this morning that at this stage of the enquiry it is difficult to anticipate when it will be completed. He says he is unlikely to have formed any useful conclusions until about 3/4 weeks' time. He and his team are well aware of the pressure for an early report and are working as fast as they can.

Is it true that the police know the identity of the man responsible for IRA operations in Great Britain?

The police hold a considerable amount of intelligence relating to the operations of the IRA. It would not be right for me to comment more specifically than that.

Can the government take any action against the GLC employing Mr James Faulkner, a former official of Sinn Fein

Sinn Fein is not a proscribed organisation and membership of it is not illegal. It is for the GLC to decide whom they should or should not employ.

Will Dr Fitzgerald's firm line against terrorism affect the actions of the forthcoming summit meeting?

One welcome Dr Fitzgerald's firm statements. These show that the Republic and the United Kingdom share a common determination to overcome terrorism. That can only be to the good when it comes to the discussions at the summit meeting.

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Is there a rift between the Chief Constable of the RUC and the head of the Garda?

Security co-operation across the border is vital to countering terrorist activity and the nature of this co-operation is kept under constant review for any further improvements that may become apparent.

Background Note [NOT FOR USE]

There are difficulties between the two men and they have not met since 1983. But the Northern Ireland Office advise that it is important not to be drawn into the reasons for this breakdown as the situation is delicate.

BACKGROUND NOTE ON EXTRADITION

Extradition from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom is governed principally by the Irish Extradition Act 1965. Unlike the procedure for the preparation, processing and submission of applications for extradition on rendition from foreign states or states of the Commonwealth, applications for extradition from the Republic are handled by the police forces of the two states. As in extradition to the Republic from the United Kingdom, no prima facie case has to be shown against the offender, and the procedures governing extradition to the United Kingdom consists

- (a) of an administrative process by which the United Kingdom warrant may be endorsed in the Republic (there are exceptions in certain cases);
- (b) of an arrest of the offender in the Republic by the Irish police force under that warrant;
- (c) of an order made for his return to the United Kingdom following his arrest;
- (d) of his delivery up from the Republic.

Clear-up of recent major terrorist crimes in Great Britain

Two men were charged earlier this year with offences of conspiring to cause explosions, in connection with terrorist bomb attempts in Great Britain last Christmas (Harrods and others). A man, who is understood to be living in the Republic of Ireland, is wanted by police ⁱⁿ connection with the Hyde Park bomb attack in July 1982, and the preparation of a case for his extradition is in hand. (See separate note on Downey).

Security at the memorial service in St Paul's, Brighton on Sunday 21 October.

I understand that very careful security was provided at yesterday's memorial service at St Paul's, Brighton. Of course the police must exercise some discretion even in these circumstances as to what measures to take in respect of individuals. [NOTE: The Bishop of London commented to Lord Elton's office this morning that he was surprised not to be subjected to a baggage search on entering the church].

*Paragraph deleted and temporarily
retained*

*12 June 2014
Wayland*

LOST PASSES OF MR AND MRS JOHN TAYLOR

This question, along with many other enquiries, is being pursued urgently. Insofar as it relates to security at the Conference itself, it is a subject for Mr Hoddinott's enquiry.

DO THE POLICE HAVE THE NECESSARY POWERS TO DEAL WITH THOSE WHO KEEP SAFE HOUSES? [This replaces the supplementary question previously submitted]

The powers are adequate. The problem is rooting out the people involved. [IF RAISED: SECTION 10 OF THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) ACT 1984 MAKES IT AN OFFENCE TO MAKE AVAILABLE MONEY OR OTHER PROPERTY KNOWING OR SUSPECTING THAT IT MAY BE USED IN CONNECTION WITH ACTS OF TERRORISM RELATED TO NORTHERN IRISH AFFAIRS@