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INCIDENT REPORT - UPDATE RE PORTADOWN

Summary

Issue: Further details as available this morning of incident recorded in today's Duty Officer's report.

Recommendation: The Minister is made aware of details.

Timescale: Immediate

Details

The RUC have advised that at approximately 2130 hours last night, a crowd of up to 1,000 Loyalist protesters gathered at Drumcree in support of the Orange Order's determination to complete their return parade. The Minister will be aware that it is 5 months [153 days as at today] since the protests started, but last night saw the largest numbers for some time. I understand Dr Paisley arrived during the evening to give his support to the protest.

2. Trouble broke out and the police came under heavy attack from rioters throwing stones, bottles and fireworks. There are also reports of bricks and wooden stakes being thrown at the police. As a result of the riot, ten police officers are reported to be injured, though none believed seriously. One PBR was fired at an

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identified rioter who was struck on the upper part of his left leg. A garage on the Dungannon Road was attacked and windows and cars were damaged in the area. There was also an unsuccessful attempt by rioters to hi-jack a lorry. They were prevented from doing so by the action taken by police officers.

3. It is understood that four civilians [two males and two females] were treated at Craigavon Area Hospital and have since been released. One of the females has lodged an official complaint against the RUC.

4. The Chief Inspector on duty at the time has said that the gathering at the bridge was not peaceful and that he saw no sign of Orange marshalls trying to control the crowd. An Orange Order spokesman has accused the RUC of 'heavy-handed' tactics and claimed that a young woman and elderly man were injured by plastic baton rounds. Although Army support was on hand I understand no soldiers were deployed.

5. During follow-up investigations after the crowds had dispersed [at around 2 am this morning], police recovered three pick-axe handles, a traffic stop sign and a water hydrant cover.

(Signed)

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