



1 Mr Whitlaw 17/7  
2 Prime Minister 2  
for information.  
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cont David

MO 19/1

16th July 1981

Dear Willie

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ASSISTANCE TO THE POLICE

in PM's box

Thank you for your letter of 14th July seeking assistance with the provision of temporary camps to accommodate the overflow from the prisons. Our officials have gone over your requirements in detail and on the basis of their discussion I can confirm that we can make available to you three camps: Rollestone Camp on Salisbury Plain, Beckingham Camp, North East of Nottingham and Nescliffe Camp near Shrewsbury. Your officials indicated that you would hope to bring Rollestone into use within the next few days and to start work on fencing Beckingham Camp next week: I can confirm that this is acceptable to us. Nescliffe would be kept in reserve but could be made available in about 7 days' notice. This of course is on the understanding, as set out in your letter, that there is no requirement for Servicemen to assist running these camps. Our officials are sorting out the financial details.

I am glad too that we have been able to help with the supply of protective equipment particularly riot helmets. We are certainly prepared to increase the number made available beyond the fifteen hundred already agreed and we will do our best to meet your request for a further two thousand.

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP



I understand that Army water dispensers have now been demonstrated to your Working Party and to representatives of Police forces. I am in principle prepared to release to Police forces the 14 smaller vehicles already in Great Britain, and if required I would expect to be able to make available a few of the 13 vehicles currently in Northern Ireland. I do not see any difficulty with the provision of dye and the assistance of training. There are, however, only 4 of the special water dispenser vehicles (which fire a slug of water capable of knocking over a rioter) and these are all in Northern Ireland where I think it would be prudent to assume they should remain.

We await a further approach on CS gas where if required we should be able to help. We do, however, have a shortage of baton rounds and their dischargers. A large number of baton rounds have been fired in Northern Ireland in recent weeks and until new production arrangements could be set up (unlikely to be before the autumn) our scope for help must be very limited.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, and to Geoffrey Howe, Christopher Soames and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours ever*  
*John*

John Nott