

NORTHERN IRELAND: ADVANCE COPIES

Prime Minister

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FM WASHINGTON 082346Z NOV 79
TO PRIORITY FCO
TEL NO 3623 OF 08 NOV 1979
INFO ROUTINE NIO BELFAST AND DUBLIN.

YOUR TELEGRAM 1589: ARMS FOR RUC.

1. MY INITIAL VIEWS ARE AS FOLLOWS. THE AMBASSADOR MAY WISH TO COMMENT FURTHER ON HIS RETURN FROM LONDON, WHEN WE MAY ALSO KNOW WHETHER LYNCH'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON HAS ADDED ANYTHING TO THE PICTURE.

2. IF IT IS THE CASE THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MANUFACTURERS ARE INCOMPLETE AND A LICENCE APPLICATION COULD NOT IN ANY CASE BE SUBMITTED NOW TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT, EVEN IF THE LATTER CHANGED THEIR POLICY, THEN I RECOMMEND THAT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE PRESSED FORWARD TO A CONCLUSION WITHOUT DELAY. WE DO NOT NEED TO SEEK ANY UNDERSTANDING WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT ABOUT THIS NEGOTIATING STAGE (WHICH, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE U S ADMINISTRATION, MUST BY DEFINITION BE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S

MUST BY DEFINITION BE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL OF THE LICENCE APPLICATION). WE SHOULD SIMPLY INFORM THE STATE DEPARTMENT, AS A MATTER OF COURTESY, AND BECAUSE THEY WILL FIND OUT ANYWAY, THAT WE ARE PURSUING NEGOTIATION WITH STURM RUGER. (THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE U S ADMINISTRATION MIGHT BRING PRESSURE ON THE FIRM TO DELAY COMPLETION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS CAN PROBABLY BE DISCOUNTED, BECAUSE OF THE RISK THAT IT WOULD BECOME PUBLIC, AND CANNOT ANYWAY BE EXCLUDED BY NOT TELLING THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHAT WE ARE DOING).

3. IF THE STATE DEPARTMENT CONCLUDE THAT WE ARE PUTTING THEM UNDER PRESSURE, THIS WILL NOT MATTER, INDEED, ASSUMING THAT IT IS OUR INTENTION TO EXERT PRESSURE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL TO GET A REVERSAL OF THE PRESENT U S POLICY, WE MUST ENSURE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION FULLY UNDERSTAND THIS NOW, AND THAT WE DO NOT LEAVE THEM TO DISCOVER IT DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT. I THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT WE SHOULD MAKE IT VERY CLEAR TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT HERE AND TO KINGMAN BREWSTER IN LONDON THAT IF THIS ISSUE IS NOT RESOLVED, IT IS BOUND TO FIGURE PROMINENTLY DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S TALKS HERE ON 17 DECEMBER, AND THAT IT WILL THEREAFTER BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO AVOID SHARP AND DAMAGING PUBLIC DIFFERENCES WITH THE UNITED STATES.

4. THE ARGUMENT FOR MAKING THIS CLEAR NOW IS THAT, ONCE THE AMERICANS UNDERSTAND THE STRENGTH OF OUR DETERMINATION, THEY WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO MAKE WHAT MOVES THEY ARE PREPARED TO MAKE BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER REACHES WASHINGTON, OR AT OR AFTER HER MEETING WITH CARTER. IF THEY DECIDE TO CHANGE THEIR POLICY, FOR DOING SO BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER GETS TO WASHINGTON. THIS WOULD AVOID THE IMPRESSION THAT CARTER WAS GIVING WAY TO PRESSURE; AND WOULD CLEAR THE DECKS FOR MORE PROFITABLE DISCUSSION OF OTHER ISSUES OF COMMON CONCERN. BUT IF WE ARE TO ENCOURAGE THIS LINE OF THINKING, WE NEED TO MOVE, TO MAKE OUR POSITION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS VERY CLEAR, DURING THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, AND NOT LEAVE THIS UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER WHEN, GIVEN THE CUMBERSOME PROCEDURES HERE, IT MAY BE TOO LATE TO GET DECISIONS TAKEN BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER ARRIVES.

5. I ASSUME THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH STURM RUGER WILL BE FOR 3,000 FURTHER GUNS AND ALL THE SPARES AND AMMUNITION WE SHALL NEED UP TO THE BEGINNING OF 1981, AND THAT THIS WOULD ENOUGH FOR US FOR THE NEXT YEAR. DESPITE THE REFERENCE TO 6,000 GUNS IN U S NEWS AND WORLD REPORT (OUR TELEGRAM NO 3579) I RECOMMEND LIMITING THE OPERATION TO THREE THOUSAND PLUS SPARES AND AMMUNITION BECAUSE THIS IS THE ARRANGEMENT PUT TO KINGMAN BREWSTER (WHO WILL HAVE PUT IT TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT) ON 5 OCTOBER

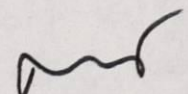
IT TO STATE DEPARTMENT) ON 5 OCTOBER.

6. IN ADOPTING THIS COURSE, WE MUST NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE OBSTACLES ON THE AMERICAN SIDE AND THE DIFFICULTY WE SHALL HAVE TO OVERCOME THEM. CARTER'S POLITICAL ADVISERS WILL TELL HIM THAT A QUARREL WITH BRITAIN IS LESS DAMAGING TO HIM THAN A QUARREL WITH THE IRISH VOTE. CARTER'S READINESS TO OFFEND LYNCH BY INVITING BIAGGI TO DINNER WITH HIM SHOWS THE MOOD HERE. CARTER'S POLITICAL PROBLEM IS TO WIN THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION AGAINST KENNEDY. HE WILL BE TOLD BY ADVISERS THAT THE TIME TO GIVE WAY TO THE BRITISH WILL BE AFTER HE IS SURE OF GETTING THE NOMINATION (WHICH CANNOT BE UNTIL NEXT MARCH/APRIL AT THE VERY EARLIEST AND COULD WELL BE MUCH LATER). IT IS ONLY A MONTH AGO (OUR TELEGRAM NO 2980) THAT VEST IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT WAS MAKING IT CLEAR TO US THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S PRESENT POLICY WOULD NOT BE CHANGED UNTIL AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. IT WILL BE ARGUED THAT A CHANGE OF POLICY ON ARMS FOR THE RUC COULD CAUSE A SERIOUS ROW WITH O'NEILL AND IN CONGRESS AND MAKE THE WHOLE QUESTION AN ELECTION ISSUE IN IMPORTANT CONSTITUENCIES WHICH WOULD DAMAGE THE PRESIDENT WITHOUT HELPING US.

7. AGAINST THIS, CARTER WILL BE CONSCIOUS THAT THE REPUBLICANS WOULD MAKE USEFUL CAPITAL OUT OF EVIDENCE THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION WAS BEING DISLOYAL TO ONE OF AMERICA'S CLOSEST ALLIES. BUT CARTER'S IMMEDIATE OPPONENT IS KENNEDY RATHER THAN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

8. THE STAKES ARE HIGH ON THE AMERICAN SIDE AS WELL AS ON OUR OWN. WE CANNOT BE SURE OF SUCCEEDING. BUT IF WE ARE TO PUT OUR HAND TO THIS WE SHOULD DO SO FIRMLY, LEAVING THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN NO DOUBT OF OUR INTENTIONS, AND WITHOUT DELAY. IN THE SAME CONTEXT WE SHOULD AT THIS STAGE AVOID GOING FURTHER IN PUBLIC THAN WE HAVE SO FAR.

ROBINSON



NNNN

9/10/45

GRS 440A

BS TO PM

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Prime Minister

FROM FCO 071535Z NOV
TO PRIORITY WASHINGTON
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1589 OF 7 NOVEMBER
INFO ROUTINE NIO BELFAST DUBLIN

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ARMS FOR THE RUC

1. WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING WHAT MORE WE CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF A SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF THIS ISSUE DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN MR LYNCH'S VISIT TO THE U.S. AND THAT OF THE PRIME MINISTER. CERTAINLY IF THERE IS A CHANGE OF MOOD FOLLOWING MR LYNCH'S VISIT AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT (PROBABLY ON OR SHORTLY AFTER 16 NOVEMBER), WE SHALL WANT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT, PERHAPS AT SHORT NOTICE. AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHICH IS APPARENT FROM YOUR DISCUSSION WITH O'NEILL (YOUR TELNOS 3471 AND 3472), IS THAT A LICENCE APPLICATION HAS NOT YET BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN RESPECT OF THE ADDITIONAL 3,000 RUGERS WE NEED. WE ARE TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW QUICKLY AN APPLICATION COULD BE SUBMITTED ONCE A DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN TO GO AHEAD. CERTAINLY THERE WOULD BE SOME DELAY,
2. WE ARE THEREFORE CONSIDERING ENCOURAGING THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICE AUTHORITY TO INSTRUCT VIKING ARMS TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS WITH STURM RUGER FOR THE 3,000 REVOLVERS, PLUS, PERHAPS, ANY FURTHER SUPPLIES OF SPARES AND AMMUNITION WHICH MAY BE NEEDED OVER THE NEXT YEAR OR SO. THE AIM WOULD BE TO ENSURE THAT STURM RUGER ARE IN A POSITION TO SUBMIT A LICENCE APPLICATION TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT AT SHORT NOTICE WHEN WE JUDGE THAT THE TIME IS RIPE. WHICH MIGHT BE AS EARLY AS THE END OF NOVEMBER. WE WOULD NATURALLY HOPE TO DO THIS ON THE BASIS OF AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT. BUT WE WOULD NOT ALTOGETHER EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF GOING AHEAD EVEN IF THE STATE DEPARTMENT ADVISED THAT THEY SAW NO CHANCE OF LICENCES BEING GRANTED. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WE MIGHT BE CONCERNED TO SEE THAT THE ISSUE BE PRESENTED IN CLEAR CUT TERMS BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT. AND THERE MIGHT BE DOMESTIC ARGUMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN NORTHERN IRELAND, FOR AVOIDING A SITUATION IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT COULD BE ACCUSED OF TACITLY ACCEPTING AN AMERICAN BAN AND OF DISCOURAGING THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICE AUTHORITY FROM ORDERING THE WEAPONS THEY NEED.

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/3. WE SHOULD

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3. WE SHOULD BE GLAD OF YOUR ADVICE ON THE POSSIBLE COURSE OF ACTION SUGGESTED IN PARA 2 AND IN PARTICULAR ON WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WE MIGHT SAY TO THE AMERICANS IF WE WERE TO DECIDE SO TO PROCEED. SEEN FROM HERE THERE WOULD BE SOME ADVANTAGE IN OUR TELLING THEM PRECISELY WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND, I.E. THAT WE WANT TO BE IN A POSITION TO RESPOND PROMPTLY IF, AS WE HOPE, THE STATE DEPARTMENT DECIDE OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS THAT OUR MOST IMMEDIATE REQUIREMENTS SHOULD BE MET. THEY MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT WE WERE PUTTING THEM UNDER PRESSURE. WOULD THIS MATTER?
CARRINGTON

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PS/MR HURD
PS/MR RIDLEY
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