

GR1500

ERS TO PM

CONFIDENTIAL

FM WASHINGTON 230020Z

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2029 OF 22 JULY 79.

INFORMATION IMMEDIATE NIO LONDON AND NIO BELFAST. *Lord Carrington raised this at 01 this afternoon. He has now sent to*MY TEL NO 2028 : ARMS FOR RUC. *Mr. Vance the message at Flag A below.*

1. VANCE'S DECISION IS UNJUST AND INFURIATING.

I HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING WHETHER THERE IS ANY HELP I CAN GIVE IN SUGGESTING THE MOST EFFECTIVE LINE OF ACTION FOR US TO TAKE.

2. WHATEVER WE DO, THE US DECISION IS BOUND TO BECOME PUBLIC HERE BECAUSE (A) THE IRISH-AMERICAN LOBBY IN CONGRESS WILL WANT TO GET THE CREDIT FOR HAVING FORCED THE DECISION UPON THE ADMINISTRATION; AND (B) THE ADMINISTRATION, AS INDICATED BY VANCE'S DEAL WITH O'NEILL, WILL WANT IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES (AND THIS IS NO NEW PHENOMENON) TO SHOW THEIR READINESS TO RESPOND TO CONGRESSIONAL OPINION IF THIS IS NECESSARY FOR WIDER POLITICAL PURPOSES.

3. OUR FIRST CONCERN WILL BE TO AVOID REACTING IN A WAY THAT PLAYS INTO THE TERRORISTS' HANDS: THE DANGER HERE OF COURSE IS THAT THE MORE THE PUBLICITY GIVEN TO HMG'S INDIGNATION OVER THE US DECISION, THE MORE THE TERRORISTS CAN SAY THEY HAVE WON A FAMOUR VICTORY.

4. THERE WILL SURELY BE REACTION IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT WHEN THIS BECOMES PUBLIC AND IT WILL BE HEALTHY FOR CONGRESSMEN TO FEEL THIS BLAST, THE STRONGER THE BETTER PARTICULARLY THOSE NOT COMMITTED ON IRISH ISSUES, BUT WHAT HMG DOES SEEMS TO ME A RATHER MORE COMPLICATED MATTER IF WE ARE TO AVOID THE SORT OF GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT CLASH FROM WHICH THE TERRORISTS ALONE WILL BENEFIT.

5. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS EVERY RIGHT WHEN TAKING THE PRESIDENT UP ON HIS TELEPHONIC CONVERSATION WITH HER OF 4 JULY IN WHICH HE ASKED FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION, TO SAY THAT SHE IS SENDING THIS TO HIM AND THAT SHE WOULD LIKE TO THINK, IN VIEW OF HIS INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT, THAT HE HAS GIVEN THE SUBJECT CONSIDERATION BEFORE THE US GOVERNMENT COMMITS ITSELF PUBLICLY TO A NEW LINE.

6. THE NEW LINE WHICH VANCE APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED ON RELATES BOTH TO SUBSTANCE AND PRESENTATION. AS REGARDS THE FORMER IT COULD BE POINTED OUT THAT ON 15 JUNE MATTHEW NIMETZ, COUNSELLOR OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT, WAS WRITING TO REP. BIAGGI, CHAIRMAN OF THE AD HOC CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON IRELAND, SAYING INTER ALIA AS FOLLOWS:

"THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY IS THE LEGALLY CONSTITUTED POLICE FORCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND. AS SUCH, IT HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTING ALL OF THE PEOPLE THERE AGAINST CRIME AND TERRORISM. THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE THAT THE RECENT COMMERCIAL EXPORT SALE OF ARMS TO THIS POLICE FORCE IN NO WAY REFLECTS ANY US PARTIALITY WITH REGARD TO THE TRAGIC COMMUNAL DIFFERENCES IN NORTHERN IRELAND. IN THIS CONNECTION I WOULD NOTE THAT IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER O'KENNEDY, IN A MAY 31 FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH TO THE DAIL, PLEDGED THE CONTINUED COOPERATION OF THE IRISH POLICE AND ARMY WITH THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND."

7. VANCES DECISION COMPLETELY CONTRADICTS THIS. YET THERE IS NOTHING IN THE IRISH SCENE WHICH WOULD SEEM TO HAVE WARRANTED A CHANGE. THE US GOVERNMENT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE ACCEPTED SPEAKER O'NEILL'S VIEW THAT THE R.U.C. ARE A PARTISAN FACTION.

8. AS REGARDS THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF US POLICY MRS THATCHER MIGHT POINT TO THE STRONG LINE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER TOOK IN HIS STATEMENT OF 30 AUGUST 1977 AGAINST TERRORISM. WHILE REFERRING TO THE US GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF IMPARTIALITY, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WAS FIRMLY ON THE SIDE OF THOSE WHO SEEK PEACE AND REJECT VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND. BUT THE GUIDANCE WHICH THE STATE DEPARTMENT NOW PROPOSE TO USE (WASHINGTON TEL NO 2027) SPEAKS OF US IMPARTIALITY AS STATED IN THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT OF AUGUST 1977 BUT MAKES NO CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM. THE PRIME MINISTER MIGHT SAY THAT WHAT IS BEING FREQUENTLY SAID IN CONGRESS ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE SECURITY FORCES IS A COMPLETE TRAVESTY. TERRORISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND AT THE PRESENT TIME SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE AGE-LONG PROBLEMS OF IRISH INDEPENDENCE. TO TALK ABOUT PERSISTENT DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS WHEN DESCRIBING THE MEASURES TAKEN TO SUPPRESS TERRORISM IS BEYOND REASON. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT STRONG POLITICAL FEELINGS ARE NOT UNDERSTOOD BUT THESE EXIST ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC AND IT

WILL NOT HELP RELATIONS IF THESE ARE INFLAMED BY MISUNDERSTANDING AND MISREPRESENTATION OF FACTS ON ONE SIDE WHILE THE OTHER IS CONCERNED WITH THE DAY TO DAY PROBLEMS OF COMBATTING TERRORISM.

9. THIS COULD BRING THE PRIME MINISTER TO REFER TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTION OF ARMS. A FURTHER REFERENCE COULD BE MADE TO NIMETZ'S CLEAR ACCEPTANCE OF US ARMS SUPPLIES IN JUNE. HMG HAS OF COURSE NO OPTION BUT TO ACCEPT THE US GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON THIS BUT THEY MUST REFER TO THE CHANGE AND ASK THAT DUE ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE USE TO WHICH THE TERRORISTS CAN PUT THIS DECISION UNLESS GREAT CARE IS TAKEN IN THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION. THE LATTER MUST THEREFORE CONTAIN STRONG CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM. THERE MAY BE IMPARTIALITY AS BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN IRELAND BUT THERE CAN BE NO IMPARTIALITY AS BETWEEN TERRORISM ON THE ONE HAND AND LAW AND ORDER ON THE OTHER.

10. FINALLY THE PRIME MINISTER MIGHT MAKE A POINT THAT THE NEW BRITISH GOVERNMENT ARE DETERMINED, WHILE COMBATTING TERRORISM, TO TRY TO GET AT THE ROOTS OF A SOLUTION, BUT THIS IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN HAPPEN OVERNIGHT.

11. THE ACCOMPANYING BACKGROUND PAPER ON SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS MIGHT ALSO NOW BE STRENGTHENED SO AS TO:

(A) POINT UP THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE SECURITY FORCES:

(B) COUNTER THE USE MADE BY THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS AND ITS SUPPORTERS OF THE AMNESTY AND BENNETT REPORTS TO SUPPORT THEIR ALLEGATIONS OF SYSTEMATIC ILL-TREATMENT OF SUSPECTS AND PRISONERS AND OF OPPRESSION OF THE MINORITY COMMUNITY BY THE R.U.C.

(C) COUNTER ALLEGATIONS OF CONTINUING CIVIL RIGHTS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE MINORITY COMMUNITY.

12. I DO NOT, IN THE ABSENCE OF FULL INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT, SUGGEST THAT ANYTHING SHOULD BE SAID AT THIS STAGE ON THE POSSIBILITY OF ORDERING THE ARMS BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WITHOUT ANY SPECIFICATION OF THEIR DESTINATION. TO RAISE THE QUESTION MIGHT WELL IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES PROVOKE SOME WEASLY

CONFIDENTIAL

RESPONSE. IF WE WANT TO GO AHEAD ON THIS BASIS I THINK IT IS MUCH BETTER TO DO SO WITHOUT ASKING.

BUT IN ANY EVENT I SHOULD NOT WISH AT THIS STAGE TO ALTER MY EARLIER RECOMMENDATION THAT WE SHOULD AWAIT THE AUGUST CONGRESSIONAL RECESS BEFORE PUTTING IN FURTHER ORDERS: SO THERE IS TIME FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THIS.

13. WHETHER YOU YOURSELF WOULD WISH TO SEND A MESSAGE TO VANCE DEPENDS, I THINK, UPON WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER DECIDES TO DO BUT IT STRIKES ME THAT, IF SHE DOES SEND A MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT ON THE ABOVE LINES, YOU COULD TAKE PARALLEL ACTION WITH VANCE. IF THE PRIME MINISTER DECIDES TO AVOID THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT OF ARMS SUPPLIES IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND TO CONFINE HER COMMUNICATION MAINLY TO THE PAPERS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN DRAFTED THEN PERHAPS YOU WOULD CONSIDER RAISING THE ARMS ISSUE YOURSELF WITH VANCE IN THE WAY SUGGESTED ABOVE. AS YOU WILL SEE I DO NOT THINK THERE IS MUCH POINT IN A PUBLIC ROW, BUT WE SHOULD MAKE OUR CASE AND DO WHAT WE CAN TO LIMIT THE DAMAGE IN THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION.

HENDERSON

DEPARTMENTAL DISTN.

RID

N AM D

ADDITIONAL DISTN.

NORTHERN IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO MR VANCE

1. I thought I should let you know at once of my very grave concern over your decision, conveyed by Mr Nimitz to our Embassy in Washington last Friday, to hold back on the approval of the supply of weapons for the Royal Ulster Constabulary.
2. In the past you have, I know, taken a helpful view of problems of this kind and have fully understood the practical and political arguments which make it so important that the US Government should not appear to have a partial view of the role of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in combatting terrorism. I well understand your difficulties, but I wonder whether you have given full weight to the consequences of such a decision becoming public knowledge. It would certainly be seen as a sharp shift in US policy, and could only greatly encourage the Provisional IRA, who would exploit it to the full. I must leave you in no doubt of the appalling affect I believe such a decision would have on British public opinion and of the consequential damage it could do to Anglo-American relations.
3. I hope that in instructing Mr Nimitz to speak as he did you were not ruling out an opportunity for me to express to you how strongly my colleagues and I feel on this issue, before committing yourself to a final decision.