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FM FCO 231748Z JUL 79

TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM 910 OF 23 JULY

INFO IMMEDIATE NIO BELFAST UKREP BRUSSELS (FOR SECRETARY OF STATE)^{21/7}
ROUTINE DUBLIN

*Ende ma
out*

MIPT

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF MY MESSAGE TO VANCE.

BEGINS

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.

ENDS

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FM FCO 231750Z JULY 79
TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON
TELEGRAM NUMBER 909 OF 23 JULY
INFO IMMEDIATE NIO BELFAST, UKREP BRUSSELS (SECRETARY OF
STATE), ROUTINE DUBLIN

YOUR TELNO : 2029: ARMS FOR RUC

1. IN MY ABSENCE PUS ASKED US AMBASSADOR TO CALL THIS AFTERNOON TO RECEIVE PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM ME TO VANCE.
TEXT IS IN MIFT.
2. PUS EMPHASIZED MY PERSONAL CONCERN OVER THE MATTER. HE QUOTED NIMETZ'S LETTER OF 15 JUNE TO BIAGGI (PARA 6 OF YOUR TELEGRAM UNDER REFERENCE) AND SAID WE FOUND IT HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE ADMINISTRATION NOW APPEARED READY TO REVERSE THEIR POSITION. AS MY MESSAGE MADE CLEAR, WE VERY MUCH HOPED THAT VANCE WOULD RECONSIDER HIS DECISION.
3. THE PUS SAID HE WAS IN NO DOUBT THAT IF THE DECISION COULD NOT BE REVERSED, IT WOULD BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND THERE WOULD BE A STORM OF PROTEST IN THIS COUNTRY. IT COULD NOT FAIL TO BOOST PIRA'S MORALE: IT WOULD STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF PROTESTANT EXTREMISTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND: AND IT WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE IRISH GOVERNMENT TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT COOPERATION BETWEEN THE RUC AND THE GARDA. IT WAS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE US GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT SEEM TO BE EQUATING PIRA AND THE RUC. THE PHRASE IN THE PROPOSED PRESS GUIDANCE QUOTE OUR POLICY REMAINS ONE OF STRICT IMPARTIALITY IN THE TRAGIC COMMUNAL CONFLICT THERE UNQUOTE (YOUR TELNO 2027) WOULD CERTAINLY CONVEY THIS IMPRESSION. IF THE US DECISION WAS IN FACT IRREVOCABLE WE WOULD AT LEAST EXPECT IT TO BE EXPLAINED IN TERMS WHICH DID NOT CAST DOUBT ON THE RUC'S IMPARTIALITY, AND WE WOULD EXPECT IT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH A FORTHRIGHT CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM.
4. BREWSTER SAID HE WELL UNDERSTOOD OUR CONCERN. HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER VANCE HAD MADE ANY COMMITMENT, AND IF SO TO WHOM,

AND HE

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AND HE COULD NOT THEREFORE COMMENT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DECISION BEING REVERSED. IF FOR ANY REASON IT COULD NOT, HE WONDERED WHETHER THERE MIGHT BE ANY POSSIBILITY OF SUSPENDING OUR REQUESTS UNTIL THE MATTER COULD BE SORTED OUT.

5. PENDING VANCE'S REPLY, IT IS HARD TO COMMENT ON THE DRAFT PRESS GUIDANCE CONTAINED IN YOUR TELNO 2027. HOWEVER, AS INDICATED ABOVE, WE WOULD TAKE STRONG EXCEPTION TO THE FINAL ANSWER. IT WOULD BE REASONABLE FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO DECLARE ITSELF IMPARTIAL AS BETWEEN THE CONFLICTING POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. BUT THERE SHOULD CERTAINLY BE AN UNEQUIVOCAL CONDEMNATION OF TERRORISM, AND WE WOULD HOPE, OF THE PROVISIONAL IRA IN PARTICULAR.

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