



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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28 July 1980

(1)

Prime Minister.

Yes please
Dear Michael, The section in the Annex (paras 8-15) on Cross Border co-operation is well worth reading. Would you like me to arrange (perhaps in early September) an oral briefing on co-operation in the intelligence field (see 'A' overleaf)?

Ans 29/7

MEETING WITH THE FERMANAGH WIDOWS

Thank you for your letter of 7 July in which you recorded the main points which were raised with the Prime Minister that afternoon by four widows from Fermanagh, Mrs Kernaghan, Mrs Howe, Mrs Morrow and Mrs Latimer. I agree that there is no need to acknowledge the letters which the four ladies left with you.

... I attach (at Annex A) a report from the security authorities in Northern Ireland which sets out the views of the Security Co-ordinator and Planning Staff, the GOC and the Chief Constable. It includes a detailed commentary on the suggestions that the widows put forward and analyses the improvements in cross-border security co-operation. Its main points may be summarised as follows:

1. The political interest in security in Fermanagh has increased as the number of terrorist attacks (but not of course their lethal effect) has subsided.
2. Although the number of attacks is less, troop levels have been maintained at the point reached last December and will not be reduced in the immediate future. The RUC have introduced a Divisional Mobile Support Unit and have strengthened staff numbers in local police stations.
3. The Security Co-ordinator and Planning Staff are undertaking an "area review" of the Fermanagh problem as their next assignment (they are at present completing the Belfast review). Sir Brooks Richards' report will be sent to the Prime Minister. The existence of these area reviews is not, of course, to be disclosed.

Interest has increased because of their lethal effect

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4. Of the 281 border crossings, 137 have been closed by the security forces. In deciding how many and which roads to close, a balance has to be struck between operational requirements and the need to avoid interfering with legitimate cross-border traffic. The main roads are watched, although not always obviously. 4 border crossings were closed earlier this year, and 8 more have been closed recently including 6 of those to which we think the widows were referring.
5. Cross-border security co-operation is good at all levels, having clearly improved since the advent of Mr Haughey. The Garda and RUC consult closely and frequently, with exchanges of intelligence and of CID investigation papers, and they both have increased their capability on the border. The Garda also operate more effectively now in the Republic and have considerably increased their finds of weapons and explosives; and they have just made significant use of the extra-territorial offences legislation.

A. | The most telling development in our campaign against terrorism lies in the field of intelligence work, and the detail of this, as you will appreciate, cannot be committed to paper. If, however the Prime Minister wishes to have a full understanding of the nature and effect of our current security operations she may need to know about this and I suggest that an oral briefing in London by the Director would be the most appropriate way.

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Copied to
rel. file

The Prime Minister expressed the wish, which Mr Atkins warmly endorses, that she might invite the four widows and their children to some such occasion as the Trooping of the Colour. I attach a list of their addresses (at Annex B). If there were financial difficulties, and unless No. 10 have hospitality funds of their own which could be called upon, it is likely that non-public funds such as the RUC Fund (administered by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland) and, in the case of the UDR widows, the Northern Ireland Special Relief Fund (a branch of the Army Benevolent Fund) or the GOC (Northern Ireland) Troops Fund could meet the cost of air fares and accommodation. Formal applications would need to be approved by their respective trustees; but we would expect no difficulty. MOD and ourselves could make the necessary applications if you would like to get in touch with us nearer the time.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

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SECURITY IN FERMANAGH

1. There was an increase in the number of terrorist attacks in Fermanagh last winter. This has now subsided to a level generally no worse, and in some respects better, than in other parts of Northern Ireland. But there remain considerable security problems in some areas of the county.

2. The RUC and the Army are continuing intensive efforts to prevent further terrorist attacks and to apprehend those responsible for earlier incidents. Although simple weight of numbers is by no means the complete answer, force levels in Fermanagh stand at the number to which they were increased at the end of last year and will not be affected by Army redeployments taking place this month when one roulement unit leaves without replacement. The RUC have recently introduced Divisional Mobile Support Units to give immediate reinforcement whenever it is required and one of these has been set up in Fermanagh; this has been welcomed locally. The RUC are also strengthening their staff in a number of police stations. They are paying special attention to the security of locally recruited members of the UDR and RUC (R), who are particularly vulnerable to attack, especially while off duty.

3. The Security Co-ordinator and his staff are about to start work on an area review of Fermanagh; which will include an examination of the strength and deployment of the security forces, the collection of information and intelligence, and cross-border security co-operation.

Local Support for PIRA in Fermanagh

4. The RUC agree that in some cases terrorists operating from across the border receive help from local inhabitants - a problem not confined to Fermanagh or even the border areas. When the RUC receive reports of such help they do all that they can to gather evidence against suspects, but the pattern of local support ^{in Fermanagh} is not so firm or regular as to make keeping a permanent watch on particular individuals an effective use of resources.

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It should be noted that the security forces receive some useful anti-terrorist information from the Catholic population in the county. There is indeed an upsurge in inter-sectarian bitterness (again not confined to Fermanagh, following the murders of 2 Catholics in Antrim and Belfast by Protestant paramilitaries. This inter-sectarian tension, which some Unionist politicians have recently inflamed rather than cooled, is of concern to the security forces and the Secretary of State, and it can only be dealt with by a calm even-handed approach to all criminal terrorist activity.

Road Closures

5. 8 more border crossings on the Fermanagh/Co Monaghan border have recently been closed, in addition to the 4 closed earlier this year. Of 281 crossings along the total length of the border 137 are now impassable to normal traffic. It is possible that the 23 minor crossings which the widows had in mind correspond roughly to a list of suggested closures which Dr Paisley left with the Secretary of State some weeks ago. The RUC and the Army carried out a comprehensive survey of all the crossings in the area before the recent closures; the 8 proposed for closure (including 6 of those we think the widows were referring to) represented those which the security forces considered could be blocked with genuine operational benefit, and without causing counter-productive interference to legitimate cross-border traffic, or irritation to those on both sides of the border whose co-operation and knowledge are needed by the security forces.

6. The security forces are, of course, alert to the possibility of the terrorist using main roads as his use of the lesser crossings is constrained. The mounting of vehicle check points on particular roads at particular times is a matter for the operational judgment of the local security force commanders in the light of the local circumstances, intelligence reports, and other operational demands. Because of the volume of traffic on some roads, checks are often more productively based on intelligence rather than speculation and surveillance operations are also mounted covertly. Ordinary citizens may thus conclude, as do the widows, that the security force effort

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inefficient; this is a difficult matter on which to persuade them otherwise.

Police Powers of Search

7. As regards Mrs Howe's comment about police powers of search under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, any police officer is empowered to enter and search any building other than a dwelling house. He may search a dwelling house provided he has been authorised so to do by an RUC officer not below the rank of chief inspector, i.e. a policeman has to consult the officer in charge of his sub-divisional police station first, but he can do this by radio very quickly. The RUC themselves are satisfied with their powers of search.

Cross-Border Security Co-operation

8. On 13 December, Mr Haughey told the Dail:

"Our Security Forces, our Garda and our soldiers will maintain the maximum security on the Border, preventing totally, if that is possible, any cross-border activity of any illegal or subversive nature. Cross-border security operations will be maintained to ensure the most effective action against violence within the rule of law."

9. The Secretary of State is in no doubt that, while there remains scope for further improvement, cross-border security co-operation, which centres on relations between the RUC and the Garda, has indeed increased since Mr Haughey became Taoiseach on 11 December 1979. It is difficult to persuade the public of this without simultaneously publicising the methods of co-operation - about which not only the Irish Government but also both police forces remain understandably sensitive - and, by so doing, jeopardising the very process which we all want to see develop and flourish.

10. But it is clear to the Secretary of State, from his consultations with the Chief Constable, that the Garda have firm instructions (and assurances of support) from their Government

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that they should co-operate with the RUC. The Garda's capability is less than that of the RUC in that, except for their Special Branch and specialist units, they are an unarmed force. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the year the RUC have sensed a more positive and helpful approach by the Garda to violent crime in Northern Ireland and a more obvious determination to come to grips with terrorist activity on their side of the border. Senior Garda officers have been willing to travel north for regular and frequent consultations and there has been a greater readiness to acknowledge the fact that terrorists use the Republic for "lying low" and as a springboard for attacks on targets in Northern Ireland.

11. Intelligence gained at interviews of terrorist suspects in Northern Ireland has been used to good effect in the recovery of explosives and arms in the Republic of Ireland, and independent action by the Garda has produced many more finds. In 1980 so far, in a total of 16 finds, 63 weapons, 6,000 lbs of explosives, 123 explosive devices and 10,000 rounds of ammunition have been seized in the Republic.

12. There is regular interchange of intelligence between the Special Branches of the two Forces. In particular, the activities of terrorist suspects on the run in the Republic are closely monitored and fed back to the RUC. There is also a great deal of co-ordinated covert activity on both sides of the border and a recent exercise designed to improve the skills of special units of both Forces in trailing terrorist suspects across the border has proved very successful.

13. The Garda Task Force (plain-clothed armed officers under Special Branch command who are used for operations against terrorists, bank raiders etc) has, since the beginning of the year, been increased from two to five units. There has been a proportionate increase in the strength of the Special Investigative Unit of the Technical Bureau. Both of these units have greatly enhanced Garda capability in border security operations. In the CID field there has been a matching improvement in co-ordination of effort. There is now a free exchange of investigation papers between the two Forces so that no useful evidence is being lost on either side. The most

encouraging result of this to date is the recent arrest in County Monaghan and charging with a murder in County Armagh earlier this year, of three of the most important PIRA terrorists operating on the border; these men are known ^{to} moreover have been directly involved in the past in operations into County Fermanagh and their arrest is likely to disrupt for some time their activities of the Active Service Unit in question. This is the first murder case mounted in the Republic under the extra-territorial legislation. Given the Republic's stance on extradition and the decisions of their Judiciary (which the widows raised and of which the Prime Minister is aware), this is the best way of dealing with fugitive offenders. This case shows that the legislation can be effective.

14. The two police forces now have established arrangements for co-ordination. The Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner meet regularly - usually at 2-3 monthly intervals, the Joint Co-ordinating Committee of their deputies and others meets once a month, and the Border Superintendents meet jointly at six-weekly intervals. In all these meetings discussions are frank, uninhibited and effective. At an operational level, meetings to exchange information or to plan joint operations take place on a day-to-day basis. During operations full use is made of a direct inter-Force radio network.

15. The Garda's recent activity against terrorists in the border areas and their various finds and arrests have made it increasingly difficult for PIRA to use the territory of the Republic as a base for attacks in the North. There have been firm indications from sensitive sources that this has PIRA worried.

Compensation

16. The widows' comparison of the compensation awards they may receive for the murder of their husbands with the damages awarded to Mr O'Connor by the High Court in respect of alleged ill-treatment by the RUC is understandable.

17. The main conditions for compensation under the Criminal

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injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 are that the widows should have been dependent, and should have suffered pecuniary loss as a result of her husband's death. Each claim is individually considered; lost earnings, pensions, and the details of the financial position of each person are carefully weighed. Any award is additional to the normal social security provision for widows.

*Paragraph 18 deleted and closed, 40 years,
under a FOI Exemption.*

Wayland

1 September 2011

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Northern Ireland

Mrs Howe
Mountderby
ROSSLEA
Co Fermanagh
Northern Ireland

Mrs Morrow
Kilready
NEWTOWNBUTLER
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Mrs Latimer
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