

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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**CONFIDENTIAL** NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

A J Coles Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

1st December 1983

*ms*

Prime Minister

*A.S.C. 1/2.*

*Dear John,*

*Give copy for me to take  
to Brussels please.*

NORTH/SOUTH ANGLO-IRISH SECURITY COOPERATION

The Secretary of State mentioned to the Prime Minister this morning the outcome of a number of exchanges we have had with the Irish in the past week about North/South Security Cooperation, culminating in his discussion with Mr Barry. I understand the Prime Minister asked for some further background and a speaking note in case there were an opportunity to raise it in the margins of the forthcoming European Council Meeting in Athens.

The Prime Minister will recollect Dr FitzGerald's reference at their meeting on 7 November to the McGovern case. I subsequently wrote to you on 17 November setting out the background, and the Prime Minister agreed to the proposal that the Ambassador should call on Mr Nally to set out the sequence of events and make plain our readiness to look at any further evidence the Irish might produce; to emphasise the RUC's wish for full cooperation and confidence whilst not accepting that the RUC action in the matter required apology; and making clear our feeling that a single incident of this kind should not be allowed to impair cooperation.

The Ambassador spoke accordingly to the Irish. In these exchanges it became clear that the Irish perceived a much more fundamental disruption to North/South security cooperation than just over the McGovern case, referring for example to the Garda's lack of trust in the RUC down to the level of sergeant. Following the Darkley murders, the Irish Minister of Justice publicly referred critically to security action in the North. The Secretary of State concluded that he should have an urgent meeting with the Minister of Justice to seek ways of restoring confidence. He was naturally content that the Foreign Minister, Mr Barry, should be present if that made it easier for the Irish. In the event the Irish felt unable to agree to a meeting involving Mr Noonan, and the Secretary of State therefore met Mr Barry in Brussels on 29 November.

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On McGovern, the Secretary of State finally persuaded Mr Barry that in the absence of further evidence from the Republic there was nothing more we could do. Mr Barry said that we could now regard the issue as closed, although it might need to be re-opened at a later date if fresh evidence were produced as a result of inquiries in the Republic into political interference with the Garda. Mr Prior thinks that we can take this as meaning the Taoiseach will not raise the McGovern case with the Prime Minister at the European Council, as he did at such a meeting earlier in the year.

It would however be appropriate for the Prime Minister to emphasise to Dr FitzGerald our concern about any lack of confidence between the two forces and our disappointment that the Irish should not feel able to agree to a meeting between Mr Noonan and the Secretary of State at least until early January (we gather that the Irish Cabinet has considered the matter and concluded that there cannot be such a meeting for the time being). We hope the Prime Minister might also regret the refusal of the Garda Commissioner to meet the Chief Constable of the RUC; we have known that at a personal level they have not got on well in the past, but the Chief Constable is ready and anxious to establish the best possible cooperation at a senior level in order to foster and encourage cooperation at operational level. The press speculation in the last few days about poor security cooperation is harmful to both sides.

.....  
Mr Prior hopes that the Prime Minister may be able to secure Dr FitzGerald's agreement to quickly confirming the meeting with Mr Noonan very early in January at which these matters can be examined and the right political will created to overcome any problems. I attach a speaking note for the Prime Minister's use to this end, which as I write has not been seen by FCO Ministers.

A copy of this letter goes to Richard Bone, FCO, and to Richard Hatfield, Sir Robert Armstrong's Office.

*Yours ever,*

*John*

J M LYON

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NORTH/SOUTH ANGLO-IRISH COOPERATION

I was impressed at our Chequers meeting by the emphasis you placed on the need to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland and your readiness to examine new approaches to that end.

2. I was therefore surprised to hear that Jim Prior's proposal, after the Darkley murders, that he should meet your Minister of Justice to review security cooperation, was not accepted and that the Garda Commissioner had refused even to meet the Chief Constable of the RUC. How can security cooperation thrive if the responsible Ministers and police have such difficulty even talking to each other? Press reports of chief police officers refusing to speak to each other give an impression of petulance which brings discredit on them, the police service and both our Governments. What can I or Jim Prior say when asked about security cooperation in Parliament? (Mr Prior is top for Oral Questions on 8 December).

3. I note that Jim Prior and Peter Barry agreed that there was nothing further we could pursue at Ministerial level about the case of James McGovern. The Chief Constable remains ready to follow up any evidence the Irish provide but cannot act on mere speculation. The McGovern case, whatever its merits, cannot justify holding back on security cooperation. It is for the Irish Government to ensure that the Commissioner acts accordingly - as the United Kingdom Government will with Sir John Hermon.

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4. I welcome the renewed arrangements for liaison at Deputy Chief Constable level and below. Vital they should work effectively.

5. I believe it is entirely in the spirit of the close relations between our two countries on security, or on other matters, that Ministerial exchanges should take place if that seems necessary to one side or the other. I hope the provisional arrangement Jim Prior made with Peter Barry for him to meet Mr Noonan very early in January will restore the relationship we all want. Your help in ensuring that the arrangements are speedily confirmed would be much appreciated. (If it was easier, we should be happy with an announcement that the meeting was at your suggestion, and we should naturally be very content if Mr Barry was also present).

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