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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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12 February 1982

Prime Minister

To note

A.S.C. 12/2

Dear John,

RECENT ARRESTS AND CHARGES AGAINST TERRORISTS

My Secretary of State thought the Prime Minister might like to have some details of the recent large number of arrests of and charges against Republican terrorists in Northern Ireland. Among those charged with serious crimes are several leading members of both the Irish National Liberation Army and the Provisional IRA.

Since 4 February, 38 suspected members of INLA have been arrested and detained for up to 7 days under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. 24 of these have so far been charged, 3 with murder. Among other charges are 17 of attempted murder. 11 of the 38 are still being questioned by the police, the remaining 3 having been released without charge. Those charged with murder, including in particular Gerry Steenson, have over the last year or so, been making all the running in INLA and were responsible for a high proportion of Security Force murders in the first half of 1981.

The security forces have also chalked up a notable string of successes against the Provisional IRA in recent weeks. Since 1 January 54 suspected members of the organisation have been arrested and detained for up to 7 days under the PTA. 20 of these have been charged, 4 with murder (6 charges altogether) and 6 with attempted murder (7 charges altogether). 2 of the 54 are still being questioned. Thus on the Provisional side the news from the Province is encouraging, not least because it is accompanied by equal success elsewhere. South of the border there have been a string of important arms finds and the Garda have seriously damaged PIRA in the Monaghan Salient from where most of the cross-border attacks came. In Northern Ireland, the most important arrest may have been that of Jim Girney (charged with two murders) and responsible for Provisional Sinn Fein organisation.

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It is clear from intelligence that the Provisionals are deeply worried by what is happening , not least because of their neurotic concern about informers, but it would be foolish (and impolitic) to underestimate PIRA's ability to recover or to provoke them to a wild spectacular by claiming a victory. The facts can speak for themselves.

Now,

Stephen

S W BOYS SMITH

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