

CONFIDENTIAL
From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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28 April 1983

Time limited

To note.

A.S.C. 27/4

Dear John

ARMS FROM THE US FOR THE RUC

You will recall that a year ago we told the Royal Ulster Constabulary that their future requirements for personal protection weapons might be better met by a British magnum revolver under development by Sterling Armament than by the purchase of further US-manufactured Rugers, for which the US Government have not been willing to issue licences since 1979 (Mike Hopkins' letter of 12 May 1982 refers).

The RUC already have 6,000 Ruger revolvers, and now require a further 2,500 weapons to enable all uniformed Regular and Full-Time Reserve members to be equipped. They have been co-operating with Sterling for more than two years on the development of their magnum revolver. This has gone less well than we hoped. It is clear that serious design faults will need at least a year more to iron out, possibly three. This is longer than the RUC can afford to wait. It is a disappointing outcome.

We are therefore authorising the RUC to purchase Rugers instead. Experience has shown that the weapons can be obtained legally and discreetly from the US through UK agents. The FCO have consulted the British Embassy in Washington, and while the advice is against making a further demarche to the US Administration, they do not object to the RUC's obtaining more Rugers, provided this is done in such a way as to minimise the risk of attracting public attention. They can be obtained through the UK suppliers over a period of months. If questions are raised about the US Government's review, we shall maintain the line that the Police Authority for Northern Ireland purchase weapons for the RUC through legitimate dealers in the UK.

Although Sterling may be disappointed at the outcome, they have had no commitment from the RUC and must appreciate the overriding operational need. There is also a significant cost benefit in purchasing Rugers.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall in the FCO.

Yours ever

Derek Hill

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