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DD 171100Z DUBLIN

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DESKBY 171100Z FEB

FM FCO 170930Z FEBRUARY 84

TO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

TELEGRAM NUMBER 27 OF 17 FEBRUARY

YOUR TELNO 69: BORDER ROAD CLOSURES

1. GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD ARRANGE FOR FOLLOWING REPLY FROM MR PRIOR TO MR BARRY TO BE DELIVERED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SIGNED ORIGINAL FOLLOWS BY BAG ON 20 FEBRUARY.

BEGINS:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER ABOUT THE CLOSING OF CROSS-BORDER ROADS, WHICH I RECEIVED THROUGH NOEL DORR ON 14 FEBRUARY.

I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN. AS IT HAPPENED OUR SECURITY FORCES MOVED EARLY THAT DAY IN PURSUANCE OF A DECISION TAKEN SOMETIME BEFORE, TO BLOCK THREE SMALL ROADS TO THE NORTH-EAST OF ROSSLEA IN CO FERMANAGH PREVIOUSLY CLOSED BY CRATERINGS WHICH HAD BEEN FILLED IN. THE CLOSING OF ONE OF THE ROADS WAS DELAYED BY A SUSPECTED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE. WE HAVE HAD NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THESE CLOSURES WOULD PROVE CONTROVERSIAL, AND THE DECISION WAS ONLY TAKEN AFTER CONSULTATION OF THE GARDA SIOCHANA BY THE RUC ACCORDING TO THEIR NORMAL PROCEDURES.

OUR SECURITY FORCES HAVE SEPARATELY BEEN MAKING A THOROUGH SURVEY OF CROSSING POINTS ON THE BORDER, CONSPICUOUSLY THOSE ON THE CO ARMAGH SIDE, WHERE FEARS AND TENSIONS HAVE BEEN AT A HIGH PITCH RECENTLY, FOR REASONS OF WHICH YOU WILL BE WELL AWARE. I AM NOW AWAITING A REPORT OF THIS SURVEY. I REALISE THAT ANY CLOSING OF ROADS MAY BE A SENSITIVE MATTER ON YOUR SIDE OF THE BORDER - INDEED ON BOTH SIDES, WHERE TRADITIONS OF FREE PASSAGE EXIST AMONG THE LOCAL PEOPLE. BUT THERE ARE STRONG FEELINGS TOO IN FAVOUR OF DENYING AVENUES OF FLIGHT TO THE PERPETRATORS OF TERRORIST CRIME, AND I MUST TAKE SOME ACCOUNT OF THEM TOO. THE OPERATIONAL METHODS OF OUR SECURITY FORCE COMMANDERS ARE A COMPLEX OF DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES AND ACTIVITIES, IN WHICH THE CLOSING OF ROADS INEVITABLY HAS A PLACE. IF I RECEIVE A FIRM

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RECOMMENDATION, WHICH WILL ALWAYS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED WITH THE
GARDA SIOCHANA BEFOREHAND, IT IS DIFFICULT - GIVEN THE CHANCE THAT
LIVES MAY BE SAVED - TO TURN IT DOWN.

I AM EXPECTING THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY SHORTLY, BUT
REALISING THE PRESSURES THAT YOU ARE UNDER FOR YOUR PART TOO, I
SHOULD BE GLAD TO TALK THE ISSUES OVER WITH YOU BEFORE I MAKE UP
MY MIND ON ANY RECOMMENDATIONS THAT MAY THEN BE PUT TO ME.
ENDS.

HOWE

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