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~~FERB~~ IRB  
IF } to ME  
CDP  
6/11

Ref. A084/2960

MR POWELL

VIP Visitors: Carriage of Arms by Bodyguards

In your minute of 19 October you asked me to consult further with Sir Antony Acland, Sir Brian Cubbon and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to agree a line which could be used as necessary in answer to questions in Parliament about our policy on the carriage of arms by bodyguards of VIP visitors.

--- 2. The attached draft has been agreed with all those concerned.

3. I am sending copies of this minute and of the annex to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

6 November 1984

DRAFT PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question

What is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the carriage of arms by protection officers of VIPs visiting this country?

Answer

As a general rule, and in accordance with the well understood convention of international practice, the United Kingdom as the host country is responsible for the protection of visitors from overseas for whom protection is necessary while they are in this country. The police are responsible for providing protection, and any protection officers accompanying visitors from overseas are required not to carry arms while in this country. Exceptionally, however, the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis is prepared to give permission for the carriage of arms by a narrowly limited number of protection officers accompanying a Head of State or Government on a visit to this country. Each request for permission is considered in the light of all the circumstances, and permission is given only subject to strict safeguards designed to minimise the risk of accidental injury.

DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS: Carriage of  
Firearms

Jan '80

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL



HOME OFFICE  
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
LONDON SW1H 9AT

25 October 1984

Dear Charles,

NSPM  
EDP  
25/10.

VIP VISITORS: CARRIAGE OF ARMS BY BODYGUARDS

The Home Secretary has seen Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 17 October with its recommendations for a change of policy on this subject, and your minute of 19 October recording the Prime Minister's views.

As Sir Robert points out, the statutory responsibility for the issue of firearm certificates lies with the Chief Constable (the Commissioner in London). The changes in policy have been agreed with Sir Brian Cubbon and the Commissioner. The Home Secretary is content with the recommendations on policy and we shall be taking steps to ensure that the provincial and Scottish Chief Constables are aware of the new policy.

Sir Brian Cubbon is in touch with Sir Robert Armstrong concerning the Prime Minister's point on publication of the changes.

Yours ever  
Hugh Taylor

H H TAYLOR

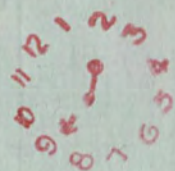
C D Powell, Esq.

CONFIDENTIAL

# Diplomatic MISSING

SECRET  
NO FOREIGN DISSEM  
NO UNCLASSIFIED

25 OCT 1980



Jan 80

firearms for  
protection  
officers

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

VIP VISITORS: CARRIAGE OF ARMS BY BODY GUARDS

The Prime Minister has considered your minute of 17 October on this subject.

Subject to the views of the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary, she accepts the recommendations in it. However, the Prime Minister's view is that we should not publicise the change in our policy since this would only encourage countries which might not otherwise have thought of it to seek permission for body guards to carry arms. At the same time, it must be likely that there will be questions at some stage in Parliament about our policy. The Prime Minister would be grateful if you could consult further with Sir Antony Acland, Sir Brian Cubbon and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to agree a line which could be used as necessary.

As I informed Richard Hatfield by telephone this morning, the Prime Minister agrees that two of President Mitterrand's body guards should be allowed to carry arms next week.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary.

J. D. ROWELL

19 October 1984

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JSGADA

D. B.

1. PRIME MINISTER

*mt*

VIP VISITORS: CARRIAGE OF ARMS BY BODY GUARDS

This matter has now been considered by Sir Robert Armstrong, with Sir Antony Acland, Sir Brian Cubbon and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Their recommendations are attached. They are consistent with the conclusions of your earlier meeting that we should probably have to have a policy of limited exceptions to the no fire arms rule. But they do represent a considerable change of policy as compared with what we do now. The exceptions would be made on the basis of a series of tests which the less trustworthy countries would not be able to pass (see para. 9).

There are two additional points to be made:

- (i) We should not publicise the change in our policy. This would only encourage countries which might not otherwise have thought of it to seek permission for armed body guards to carry arms; but at the same time
- (ii) we shall need an agreed line for use in response to questions in Parliament. Sir Robert Armstrong might be asked to examine this further and make recommendations.

An immediate decision is needed on whether two of President Mitterrand's body guards can carry arms next week. Failure to agree would risk marring the visit.

Agree to accept recommendations, subject to points (i) and (ii) above? Agree that two of President Mitterrand's body guards can be armed next week?

*C.D.P.*

*Yes mt*

18 October 1984



Ref. A084/2759

MR POWELL

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VIP Visitors: Carriage of Arms by Bodyguards

Your letter of 12 September 1984 to the Home Secretary's Private Secretary asked that this matter should be examined further by officials in the Cabinet Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office, and the views of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police sought, and the result reported to Ministers for further consideration.

2. I have discussed the matter with Sir Antony Acland, Sir Brian Cubbon and Sir Kenneth Newman.

3. Accepted international practice is that the host country is responsible for the protection of visiting VIPs, and we have hitherto made it a rule not to permit the bodyguards of visiting VIPs to carry firearms. We have in practice, however, been obliged to make exceptions to this rule in respect of Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the United States: we have on occasion sought to resist United States pressure for the President's bodyguards to be armed, but in recent years we have found it impossible to do so, given the United States insistence that, if the carriage of arms is not permitted, the visit will not go ahead, and given the fact that our police protection officers are allowed to carry arms when protecting VIPs in the United States.

4. The fact that we had allowed President Reagan's bodyguards to carry arms when the President came to London for the Economic Summit became known and had to be confirmed by Ministers. One consequence of this is that the Government is now liable to be questioned about the carriage of arms by bodyguards for future visits, not only by Presidents of the United States but by other VIPs.

5. The problem is of immediate importance since the French Government have sought permission for the President's bodyguards to be armed when the President comes on a State Visit to this





country next week. They refer to the Reagan precedent, and to the fact that, when The Queen or the Prime Minister visits France, her bodyguards are allowed to carry arms. When the President came to London for the Economic Summit in June the French Government did not seek permission for his bodyguards to be armed, but they were armed, and one was arrested outside Guildhall.

6. The practice of other countries varies. The Irish Government claims to allow no firearms and no exceptions: we simply do not believe that President Reagan's bodyguards were not armed during his visit to Ireland this summer. Some Governments have a policy of no arms, but allow exceptions. Others (including the French Government) allow carriage of arms if the other Government concerned reciprocates.

7. The policy of successive British Governments has been not to allow foreign bodyguards to carry arms. None of us really believes that it is now open to us to stick to that policy: in the event we should always make an exception for the President of the United States (and probably for the Vice-President too); after the events of the London Economic Summit we must assume that we should not be able to make a secret of doing so; and, if we are known to be making an exception for American VIPs, we shall come under strong pressure to do so for VIPs from other countries.

8. We have considered whether and where we could effectively seal off the range of exceptions to a policy of no arms for bodyguards. We could hardly deny it to Old Commonwealth Heads of Government, who probably need it less than most, or to Heads of State or Government of European Community (EC) and NATO countries, many of whom are probably not in great need of protection in this country. By and large, the police would not feel too unhappy at the presence of armed bodyguards from those countries, since they are likely to be under reasonably effective discipline and constraints. But, if exceptional treatment was extended to Heads of State or Government from



Old Commonwealth, EC and NATO countries, it would be difficult to argue that it should not be extended also to Heads of State or Government from other allied or friendly countries whose need for protection is undeniable: could we easily refuse a request from Israel, or Jordan, or Saudi Arabia or India? Beyond that there are African leaders - Mr Mugabe, President Mobutu, and President Banda (due on a State Visit next year) - who could justifiably claim to be under a threat which could easily materialise in London. It is less easy to be convinced that armed bodyguards from Malawi, Zaire and Zimbabwe would under all circumstances act with restraint and discipline: the danger of innocent bystanders being caught up in an incident is appreciably greater in their case than that of, say, France or the Federal Republic of Germany.

9. We can see no geographical limit at which we could realistically hope to be able successfully to hold the line. We have therefore tried to think of other ways in which we could limit the risks. We suggest that this could best be achieved by a series of conditions, all of which would have to be satisfied: thus exceptions to the "no armed bodyguards" rule would be permitted:

- a. only in respect of Heads of State or Government of countries in which reciprocal facilities are or would be granted for visits by The Queen or the Prime Minister;
- b. for not more than two protection officers at any one time;
- c. only for protection officers who have undergone in advance such indoctrination and interrogation into their protection arrangements as the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis considers necessary in the circumstances.
- d. only for hand guns: no automatic or semi-automatic weapons to be carried by protection officers accompanying visiting Heads of State or Government.



We recommend that the Commissioner should retain a residual discretion to withhold permission from armed bodyguards in any case where he is not satisfied that the people involved would be suitable to carry firearms in this country in the circumstances envisaged.

10. Permission would be given in the form of a firearms certificate under section 26 of the Firearms Act 1968. This is not really apt for those arriving from abroad, since the act provides for applications to be made to the Chief Officer of police for the area in which the applicant resides. A temporary address in this country would not normally be regarded as a sufficient basis for an application from some one currently resident outside this country. But there seems to be little likelihood of the legality of the issue of a certificate being challenged on these grounds in the circumstances envisaged. We do not propose the introduction of amending legislation.

11. The statutory authority responsible for the issue of firearms certificates is the Chief Constable (the Commissioner in London). A certificate issued by a Chief Constable is valid anywhere in the country. The problem with which we are concerned is primarily a London problem, since Heads of State or Government usually come and stay in London: they may visit other parts of the country but it must be very rare for them not to spend some parts of their visits in London. Nevertheless, to provide for the possibility of visits which do not include London, we shall take steps to make provincial and Scottish Chief Constables aware of the new policy.

12. To sum up:

- a. a strictly enforced policy of no arms, no exceptions, would be the ideal option; but we do not believe that it is in practice available to us.
- b. We have to assume that, after the events of this summer, we can no longer get away with a policy of no arms and a few undisclosed exceptions.



c. It is not possible to see any geographical limit at which we could realistically hope successfully to hold the line on a range of countries for which further exceptions to a "no arms" policy might be made.

d. The least unsatisfactory alternative to a policy of no arms and no (or only a few undisclosed) exceptions is a policy of conditional exceptions as set out in paragraph 9 of this minute.

13. We invite Ministers to approve this change of policy, which has been agreed with the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis. The Commissioner has assured us that the condition at paragraph 9(c) would be sensibly applied.

14. I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary. I should be grateful for an early decision since we need to reply to the request made to us in respect of the State Visit by the President of the French Republic which begins on 23 October.

RTA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

17 October 1984

Diplomatic Missions

Armed protection for UK Govern. reps. D/S.  
Tweovms for Overseas Dip. protection  
in Britain

January 1980

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