

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

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NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr Ken Maginnis MP telephoned me in great agitation this afternoon about the dismantling of a Permanent Vehicle Checkpoint (PVCP) in his constituency. Work on this had started earlier today. He had intervened with the Commander of Third Brigade to have it stopped, which it had been for a time. But following his later meeting with Commander, Land Forces, work had been re-started. Demolition of the PVCP aroused the strongest possible feeling in Fermanagh and would put directly at risk the lives of a number of his constituents. He was seeing the Northern Ireland Secretary later in the day but, meanwhile, wanted an assurance that work would be suspended.

I said that I was not aware of the particular case, although I knew that the military authorities took the view that aggressive patrolling provided better security than static checkpoints. This was basically a military decision and not one which should be subject to political intervention. I would, however, speak to the Northern Ireland Secretary's office and establish the position. I could make no promises that there would be any action.

I subsequently spoke to the Northern Ireland Secretary's Principal Private Secretary, who confirmed the position as described by Mr Maginnis. He said that the Northern Ireland Secretary was most reluctant to intervene but would be seeing Mr Maginnis later this evening. He did not think that any irrevocable action over the PVCP would be taken meanwhile. I asked him to inform Mr Maginnis of our conversation.

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CHARLES POWELL

3 July 1989