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The Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

8 August, 1989

Attention: R. O'Brien, Press Section

Der Spiegel of 7 August 1989 has two-page article on IRA terrorism in the FRG. Article describes various attacks against British Army personnel and installations and in respect of former refers to an (undated) IRA statement which had said that no attacks were aimed against Germans. Article says that this "promise" has long been "broken" and that the "fighters" from Belfast and Londonderry (sic!) "now bomb and shoot so carelessly on German soil that they also endanger the life of German citizens".

According to the article the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution has described the IRA as "an active and dangerous organisation" in this country and the Federal Attorney's Office sees the IRA actions as "a fundamental endangering of public security".

The article then describes the fatal car bomb attack on Corporal Smith in Hanover in July and how bomb debris was spread over a wide area not injuring passers-by only by chance.

The article then says that now for the first time two Irish men will stand before a German court because of such acts of violence and that McGeough and Hanratty will be accused by Federal Attorney General in a 154-page arraignment with attempted murder, explosive offences and offences against firearms laws. Special reference is made to the bomb attacks on British army barracks in Monchengladbach (1987) and Duisburg (1988) and to the fact that the two will be tried before "a special court established for this purpose" in Dusseldorf in the Autumn. (The Embassy has reported regularly on this arrest and subsequent developments in this case.)

There comes next a short description of the IRA (300 to 500 active members; about 2000 active supporters and hundreds of thousands (sic!) sympathisers) and activities including financing which due to the "drying up" of American and Libyan sources now concentrates on extortion and protection rackets.

The article states that the German terrorist organization "Rote Armee Fraktion" has been glad to be associated with the belief that it has links with the IRA but that the IRA has repeatedly denied these and in fact told the RAF to stop using the name of Patrick O'Hara for one of their units. "The Activists are also different from other terrorist groups", the writer continues,

"they have in Sinn Fein a legal political party that receives a high percentage of Catholic votes in elections. Gerry Adams sits (sic!) for West Belfast in the House of Commons". The membership structure is also unique: few intellectuals or students, or Anarchists or Marxists, but unemployed workers' children.

There follows a fairly detailed description of the two bomb attacks on the army barracks and of the arrest of McGeough and Hanratty. The police apparently found some of their guns in a flowerpot in the boot of their car and this led them to carry out searches in Gummersbach for arms where other IRA members were living under false names (this was reported on separately last week).

The article concludes that the two arrested persons have not yet made any reply to their charges but it noted that their membership in the IRA seems to have been validated by "An Phoblacht" describing them as POWs.

Thomas O. Bolster
First Secretary

c.c. Anglo-Irish Division - Mr. J. Dillon

Text of the article and Embassy translation are attached.