



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Speech by brief

*as a line
to complete*

Libya and the Provisional IRA.

1. The Libyans have shown signs that they wish to normalise their relations with other countries and as part of their effort they are claiming that they do not support the IRA and other terrorist groups. However, it remains to be seen whether Libya has in fact ceased all involvement with international terrorism and the IRA.
2. The weapons and explosives supplied by Libya in the early 1980s continue to be used to lethal effect by the Provisionals in Northern Ireland. During the Eksund trial in Paris earlier this year the court heard evidence of Libyan involvement in the provision of the 150 tonnes of weaponry seized on the Eksund as well as four earlier shipments of arms, ammunition and explosives, including large amounts of Semtex.
3. The Government have repeatedly impressed on the Libyan authorities their grave concern about Libya's moral and material support for the IRA. Most recently the Minister reiterated this concern in forceful terms when he had a meeting with the Libyan Foreign Minister (in an EC context) in Brussels on 12 November 1990.
4. Enquiries were made of the British authorities following recent press reports that Libya was prepared to reveal to the British details of arms shipments to the IRA. In response the British indicated that no such information has been offered by the Libyan Government.

Anglo-Irish Section
30 August 1991.

CB Sec 1.2

Mr. Farrell
To Mr. + PA.

Do 28/8

Suspect Consignment to Libya

The Minister for Justice summoned a meeting of officials from this department and Industry and Commerce today to consider information that the Netherlands police were not prepared to detain the consignment, which is apparently scheduled to leave Rotterdam today. (Early information said about 12.30 Irish on 27 August.)

The Minister directed that the Netherlands authorities be informed of the case and be asked to intervene. The Minister was anxious that everything possible be seen to be done. The export of the goods in question had not been in conformity with Irish regulations. The Department of Industry and Commerce had confirmed that, had they been approached, they would not have issued a licence for the consignment. The Minister, therefore, was concerned that the Irish authorities might come under criticism for not making every effort to halt unauthorized exports to Libya, particularly as such exports might have uses connected with the manufacture of chemical weapons.

The Minister, therefore (at 12.00), requested that the Embassy in the Hague be asked to intervene immediately with the Netherlands authorities in the above sense.

I confirmed that the Minister was aware of the Taoiseach's direction of 23 August that the matter be left in police/customs hands. The Minister thought that that direction had been overtaken by the reported decision of the Netherlands customs authorities not to detain the consignment. The Minister, therefore, requested immediate action.

In the temporary absence of the Ambassador I spoke at 12.25 to Mr. Herlihy as above. He spoke to the Netherlands Foreign Ministry who (after consultation) confirmed that the Netherlands authorities could not halt the consignment because no Netherlands laws had been broken. They would, however, consider the Irish representations. The vessel in question has apparently left its berth but is not scheduled to leave Rotterdam until tomorrow.

The detailed list of the contents of the consignment has not yet been supplied. We still have only the general description "laboratory glass and equipment".

At 16.00 Mr. Herlihy reported that the Netherlands Foreign Ministry, after extensive consultations, had confirmed that they had no legal basis on which to hold the consignment ("strategic goods regime does not apply"). A full report, with lists and photographs was being prepared and would be faxed on 28 August. They suggested that the Garda might like

Lib0827

to contact the examining magistrate (details supplied).

This information was given to Department of Justice and to Acting Assistant Secretary Connolly, by telex, for the Minister's information.

Hugh Swift

Hugh Swift
27 August 1991

cc Assistant Secretary Connolly
Assistant Secretary R. Murphy
Mr. R. Townsend
Mr. D. Donoghue

Lib0827

Briefing for Mr. O'S.
Waller.
B. Paul Bannell, Economic Director
24/8/91

Libya and the Provisional IRA.

Background

1. The Government have repeatedly impressed on the Libyan authorities their grave concern about Libya's moral and material support for the IRA. Most recently the Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterated this concern in forceful terms when he had a meeting with the Libyan Foreign Minister (in an EC context) in Brussels on 12 November 1990.
2. The Libyans have shown signs that they wish to normalise their relations with other countries and as part of their effort they are claiming that they do not support the IRA and other terrorist groups. The Chargé d'Affaires at the Libyan Embassy in Rome stated in November 1990 that "Libya now had nothing to do with the IRA and had even condemned it". In June 1991 the Libyan Foreign Minister gave Sir Teddy Taylor M.P. a letter which indicated, in somewhat vague terms, that Libya no longer supported international terrorism and the IRA. However, it remains to be seen whether Libya has in fact ceased all involvement with the IRA.
3. The weapons and explosives supplied by Libya in the early 1980s continue to be used to lethal effect by the Provisionals in Northern Ireland. During the Eksund trial in Paris earlier this year the court heard concrete evidence regarding the involvement of the Libyan authorities in the provision of the 150 tonnes of weaponry seized on the Eksund as well as four earlier significant shipments of arms, ammunition and explosives, including large amounts of Semtex.
4. Following recent press reports that the Libyan authorities were prepared to reveal to the British authorities details of arms shipments to the IRA,

enquiries were made of the British authorities who indicated that no such information has been offered by the Libyan Government. The Libyan Ambassador to the United Nations told the British on 11 June that the restoration of diplomatic links with the U.K. would have to precede any provision of information on the IRA. However, the Foreign Office has said that the British Government cannot consider restoring diplomatic links with Libya before they have evidence that links with the IRA have been broken.

Steering Note

6. Given the nature of the Minister of State's visit it is unlikely that the question of Libya's attitude to the IRA will arise, although the Libyans are known to be unpredictable in these matters and they might raise it of their own accord. If the matter is brought up, the Minister might confine himself to re-stating the Government's view that any form of support for the IRA, whether moral or material, is completely unacceptable. The Minister might also stress the grave consequences of previous arms and explosives shipments which continue to sustain the IRA's campaign of violence.

Anglo-Irish Section
20 August 1991.