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Reference Code:	2021/93/3
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*W. J. [unclear]
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21.11.91
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ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

[Signature]

Confidential

4 November, 1991

Mr. Dermot Nally
Secretary to the Government

Dear Dermot

This is the letter I was going to send you following our telephone discussion this morning. You have since told me that the Taoiseach agreed with the general approach I outlined on the phone to you so that the letter was overstates by this. We have now handled the matter with Aer Lingus on the basis of the attached note

NDM 2/11/91

As I told you on the phone this morning, my Minister asked me to mention to you an issue which Aer Lingus have raised with us in several phone calls over the past few days about the transport to Ireland of the bodies of the two people killed in the bomb incident at the end of last week in St. Albans in Hertfordshire.

The two people who were killed are from Belfast and in principle of course their remains could be taken from London direct to Belfast for burial. However Aer Lingus are concerned that an effort will be made to bring the bodies in through Dublin and that IRA/Sinn Fein will use the occasion for some kind of propaganda demonstration. I think their concern may centre particularly on the possibility that the "image" of the airline in Britain could suffer as a result.

They have made the point to us that on previous occasions (the Stagg case in 1975 and the three who were killed in Gibraltar in 1987), British Airways refused to handle the remains, citing union difficulties. No doubt behind this they had commercial, security and image considerations in mind. Aer Lingus believe that British Airways had Home Office support in refusing to carry the bodies on these previous occasions. They are now asking that we represent their concerns in some way to the Home Office in an effort to ensure that the remains are returned directly to Belfast. They expect that the bodies will be released before the coming weekend.

Our Minister is aware of the issue and he has brought it to the attention of the Minister for Justice. As I mentioned above he asked me also to bring it to your attention.

My own view is that any Governmental intervention on a matter of this kind could be counter-productive. Sinn Fein/IRA elements, if they do bring the body through Dublin, may be expected to organise some kind of funeral demonstration but it

would seem, to me at least, to be better to handle anything that happens with a low key Garda presence rather than to allow those involved to make further propaganda, as they would undoubtedly seek to do if an effort were made by Government intervention to prevent the shipping home of the remains via Aer Lingus.

I appreciate that Aer Lingus may have some security/image concerns but I imagine that most people in Britain would accept the carriage of remains as a normal enough airline function and that if there were to be some kind of propaganda demonstration in Dublin on arrival any focus of British public opinion would be on "Dublin" or the Irish Government rather than on Aer Lingus as such. In any case there could well be security considerations of another kind to keep in mind if it were to become known that, notwithstanding the general Irish attitude towards "the dead", Aer Lingus had prevailed on the Government to intervene with the British authorities to block the return of the remains through Dublin or on their flights. The fact that this had happened would become obvious since it must be assumed that if Aer Lingus balk at carrying the remains, British Airways would also do so so that the remains would be left for the moment at least in London.

My feeling therefore is that the response to Aer Lingus could best be on the lines that while their concern is understood the direct Government intervention such as they have in mind could be counter-productive and could indeed magnify the very effects they are concerned about.

I understand that my Minister may have mentioned the matter in a general way to Mr. Brooke in private at yesterday's session of the Anglo-Irish Conference. You mentioned on the phone this morning that it might be touched on at Government. For this reason I am sending you the present letter setting out the background and my views for what they are worth.

Yours sincerely



Noel Dorr
Secretary

Mr. Dennis Wally

(for information following our
telephone discussions today)

Wally 21/11/91

Secretary,

London Bomb Explosion

I spoke to John Hartnett, Aer Lingus Cargo Manager, and told him that his concerns had been made known and considered at a high level.

I indicated that it was felt that the situation might best be handled in a low key way, minimising the opportunity for propaganda. A standoff situation where neither Aer Lingus nor BA were willing to carry the remains, with consequent delays, would have the opposite effect, putting the spotlight on a situation which, as it stands, does not have the same potential for stage management as the Stagg or Gibraltar cases.

I told him that the security aspects of this case were appreciated but suggested that the situation might not be eased if it became known - as it might in a standoff - that Aer Lingus was blocking the return of the remains on its flights.

I repeated that the concerns were understood but it was felt that direct Government intervention might only magnify the effects it was intended to control.

He said that no approach had been made as yet. If Aer Lingus was approached should it agree to carry the remains? I said that this was a question for Aer Lingus in the first instance. In developing a response, however, they might wish to bear the foregoing considerations in mind. He said that the notice received may be short. How would we wish to deal with the security aspects? I said this was a matter for the Department of Justice and that the Gardai may receive notification through their own sources but suggested that he call this office if and when he receives word. I also offered to notify him if we learn anything further about the timing/route of return. (I have flagged our interest to Consular and Anglo Irish and propose to do so to the Embassy in London.)

PSS

21 November 1991

Secretary,

- 1 John Hartnett, Cargo Manager, Aer Lingus 'phoned.
- 2 He anticipates that the bodies will be released before the weekend.
- 3 On previous occasions (Stagg in '75 and Gibraltar in '87) BA refused to handle the remains citing union difficulties but with clear underlying commercial, security and "image" considerations. These factors are uppermost in Aer Lingus' request for assistance now.
- 4 He believes that BA had Home Office support in refusing carriage. (In '75 Aer Lingus were given a contact no. at the Home Office by the supporters of Stagg.)
- 5 Aer Lingus are seeking some representation of their concerns with the Home Office before they are confronted with a fait accompli. In essence they would like to see the remains returned directly to Belfast.

PSS

20 November 1991