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L/3/16/MLR

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc PS/SofS (L&B)
PS/Mr Scott (L&B)
PS/PUS(B)
Mr Bloomfield 2 Sec 1.
Mr Stephens
Mr Burns
Mr Elliott
Mr Innes
Mr Chesterton
Mr Bell
Mr Blackwell
Mr George FCO
HM Ambassador, Dublin

MEETING WITH MR LILLIS AND MR RYAN

1. Mr Lillis and Mr Ryan called on PLS at Stormont Castle on 10 March to discuss cross-border security co-operation. Mr Stephens and Mr Elliott were also present.
2. Mr Lillis said that at a time when they were about to brief new Ministers there was concern on the Irish side that the Prime Minister, when she met the Irish Ambassador on 23 February, had repeatedly and forcefully expressed her dissatisfaction with the rate of progress on cross-border security co-operation. This was in direct contrast to the views which had been expressed by the Chief Constable and others, including the Secretary of State, that security matters were progressing well. It was disappointing that, if there were serious problems, the Irish had not been told of them before and that they had to learn of the UK Government's concern from the Prime Minister. Mr Dorr's report of the meeting had been personally disappointing to Dr FitzGerald. Mr Lillis wondered if the Prime Minister's disappointment reflected briefings she had been given at an earlier stage in cross-border discussions.
3. PUS reminded Mr Lillis that the British Government had always seen improvement in cross-border security co-operation as one of the most important objectives of the Agreement. The question of how good that co-operation actually was, was one which had repeatedly given rise to difficulty. There was no doubt that the Prime Minister was unhappy about the present position. Since the Agreement, terrorist activity had been at a higher level than before and it was only through the efforts of the security forces that

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casualties had been kept down. Moreover, much of the activity focussed in the border areas. The conclusion to be drawn from these two factors must be that cross-border security co-operation still needed to be improved. PUS acknowledged that good progress had been made in setting up structures and frameworks, but said that this work had not yet paid off in actual operational successes. This was the main reason for the Prime Minister's concern. It was important on both military and political grounds to be able to point to actual successes, yet none could yet be identified as arising directly out of co-operation under the terms of the Agreement. It might be that recognition of progress in setting up structures of co-operation on the one hand, and criticism of the lack of operational success on the other, explained the impression which the Irish had received that the British were not being consistent.

4. Mr Lillis said that when the Agreement was being negotiated both sides had recognised that when it was signed there was likely to be an increase in terrorist activity. The Irish had, however, taken measures to improve co-operation - they had agreed to increase three-fold the numbers engaged in surveillance - but this was happening in stages; some personnel were still undergoing training. Given this, Mr Ryan suggested it was premature to think in terms of actual operational successes.

5. PUS said that although his main concern was with the need to be able to point to operational successes, it was possible to identify a number of specific areas of security co-operation with which the British side was not happy. He recognised that the Irish had difficulties with the proposal that the RUC should be able to question suspects in the South, but this was something to which the British attached importance. They were disappointed that the Irish had not given practical co-operation in protecting the hilltop forts in South Armagh; that there was no direct link between the British Army and the Garda; and that the Irish had not taken up offers of training assistance for the police and army. Not all the recommendations agreed between the RUC and the Garda had been implemented. Surveillance in particular remained an area where the British considered that more needed to be done. Mr Lillis replied that the RUC questioning of suspects presented political difficulties which were not likely to be any less under a new administration. The difficulty over the fortifications in Armagh had arisen because the Irish had not been consulted in advance over the construction of the forts, which they did not believe would help in the fight against terrorism. In discussion the need for early consultation on projects involving the security forces of both sides was accepted, as was the desirability of the security forces tackling practical problems together without undue interference from a political level. It was agreed that in pursuing areas where progress still needed to be made full use should be made of the quadrupartite group. (Action: Mr Stephens).

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6. Commenting on another point made by the Prime Minister, PUS said that there was still an imbalance in the efforts being made North and South of the border. Two extra British battalions had been brought into Northern Ireland last year and consideration was being given to a further increase in the strength of the RUC. There were approximately 30,000 troops and police deployed in Northern Ireland, including 600 Special Branch personnel. Large numbers of both police and army were employed on surveillance. In the South there were around 12,500 police, only a small number of whom could cover the border area because of the need to deploy large numbers elsewhere to fight the increasing crime rate in Dublin and the other cities, while the Army played only a minor role. PUS suggested that it might be helpful in the context of IC meetings with new Ministers to have an up-to-date paper setting out the level of force deployed by both sides.

7. Mr Lillis asked which areas of particular concern to the British should be mentioned to Mr Haughey when he was briefing him. PUS said that a number of areas of concern had already been mentioned; others had been identified in the "Innes" paper which had been handed to Mr Lillis by the Secretary of State and at the special IC meeting on 31 October 1986. Keeping the joint threat assessment up-to-date was important, as were the intensification of surveillance and the need for better communications between the forces on both sides of the border. Concluding this part of the discussion, PUS stressed that the general need for concrete results was the main point he wanted to get across. Mr Lillis said that the discussion would be very helpful in briefing Mr Haughey who had always taken a close interest in the past in cross border security co-operation.

8. PUS went on to say that the Secretary of State was considering getting in touch with the new Irish co-chairman of the Conference (when he was named) to suggest that they meet for an informal talk in advance of a Conference meeting. Mr Lillis thought there would be no difficulty about this but undertook to report the suggestion to Dublin. PUS also said that the Government had naturally been following closely Mr Haughey's remarks about the Agreement. As the Prime Minister had explained to Mr Dorr, it was important that a new administration accepted the Agreement as a whole. Some unionists would like to see the Agreement collapse because of Mr Haughey's known reservations about Article 1. It would be helpful if Mr Haughey (assuming that he became Taoiseach) avoided saying

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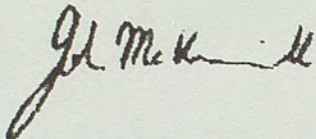
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anything to undermine Article 1 but indicated that his Government stood by the commitments entered into by their predecessors and accepted the Agreement as it stood. Mr Lillis agreed to convey this thought to Dublin.



J MCKERVILL
PS/PUS

12 March 1987

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