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ME/120/87/JI

Mr Stephens



cc PS/PUS (L&B) - M
Mr Burns - M
Mr Chesterton - M
Mr Innes
Mr Bell - M
Mr Blackwell
Mr S Hewitt

CROSS-BORDER SECURITY CO-OPERATION

As agreed, I spoke to Mr Lillis this morning (28 April) on an informal and personal basis about the security situation in the aftermath of the Gibson assassinations. I said among other things that we were considering whether to approach the Irish side with a request for specific ideas on how to improve the policing of the border on their side. We were aware that the new Fianna Fail administration had taken a very positive line on these issues, and had in particular noticed the statements by Mr Lenihan reported in the one o'clock news programme on RTE on Sunday 26 April.

2. Mr Lillis said that he had a transcript of that interview, and offered me a copy: I attach it. It shows among other things that Mr Lenihan has said that the Irish side have not been doing enough in respect of security co-operation, and that they should now get down to professional police work including "very close surveillance, very good intelligence, very close cover on the ground between the two police forces".

3. It may well be right to approach the Irish rather more formally to ask whether they have any ideas about how they could improve their performance south of the border. Whether or not this is the case, it is clear that Mr Lenihan's interview on 26 April has given us an opening to approach the Irish now to ask how they intend to follow-up the Foreign Minister's evident desire for closer surveillance and intelligence activity on the ground by the Garda.

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E. R.

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Although the Irish will continue to argue that the situation in the Republic is very different from that in Northern Ireland, and that Garda officers cannot operate in the way that the RUC operates in Northern Ireland, nevertheless there may well be some readiness on their part to initiate some rather more effective surveillance operations by the Garda in the border region, which would go at least part of the way to meet our requirements.

4. I also asked Mr Lillis (on a personal basis, making it clear that I had no instructions whatever in this sense) whether he was aware of any constitutional or political objection on the Irish side to RUC officers' crossing the border to rendezvous with Garda officers, eg at Killeen, so that those crossing the border with an escort could be protected throughout the journey (whether or not this would have made any difference in practice in the Gibson case). Mr Lillis said that he saw no major difficulty in principle, although there would be a small problem if the RUC officers were armed - this could perhaps be resolved. But there might be a reciprocal requirement for Garda officers to travel a short distance into the North on occasion. He suspected that there was some reluctance on the part of the RUC to cross the border for this purpose.

5. The PUS may have an opportunity to follow this up this evening when he dines with the Secretariat at Maryfield.

Marty Shioh

M ELLIOTT

28 April 1987

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Report No.A...297.....

Transmitted onRTE...Radio...1...This. Week

Length

Date.....26.4.87.....

Time1.00pm...

Short TitleInterview Brian Lenihan.....

Fergal Keane:

.... We've been speaking to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan, about the killings and the increasing violence. Brian Dobson asked the Minister if he was satisfied with the security arrangements on the Irish side of the Border?

Brian Lenihan:

I am absolutely satisfied. The Gardai provided excellent security cover for Lord Justice Gibson and his wife from their landing in Dun Laoghaire. They did this in response to a request from the RUC and they brought them to the Border as requested by the RUC. Our co-operation was total and effective.

Brian Dobson:

What of James Molyneaux's claim that Lord Justice Gibson was set up by what he describes as an informant within the Gardai?

Brian Lenihan:

That sort of comment is just as outrageous as the deed itself. That sort of comment does not help. That's the type of comment that further exacerbates this whole matter because it has no justification. In fact we had a very constructive meeting on Wednesday in which I discussed in a practical way in Belfast with Mr. King and with the security chiefs in Northern Ireland and here in the Republic and we came to certain conclusions, that co-operation on the ground needed to be stepped up, so that greater professional co-operation would take place on the ground and there is complete confidence on the part of each police force for the other police force. So any mischievous remarks, such as you have mentioned, do not help and are very very dangerous and irresponsible in this type of situation.

Brian Dobson:

But it does seem that the IRA must have had inside information on Lord Justice Gibson's movements?

Brian Lenihan:

That is pure speculation. Pure speculation as far as our Garda security personnel are concerned. As far as we are concerned, we received a request from the RUC, acted promptly on it, did our job as we should have done and I don't know how it happened or where it

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Report No.A.....29.7....

-2-

Transmitted onRTE....Radio...1:....This. Week

Length

Date.....26.4.87.....

Time1.00pm..

Short Title

happened. The matter did not occur as regards any information from within our jurisdiction or any act within our jurisdiction.

Brian Dobson:

So the blame then, if that's the appropriate term, lies with the RUC, lies with the security forces in the North?

Brian Lenihan:

My job is not to apportion blame, I am not in that business. I am in the business of ensuring that as far as our jurisdiction is concerned, our security forces co-operate fully and behave themselves fully. I am satisfied that has been done.

Brian Dobson:

Nevertheless, something must be very wrong with security along the Border if this sort of attack can be mounted with such apparent ease? What scope can you see for improving cross Border security co-operation?

Brian Lenihan:

That was precisely one of the main purposes of our discussion only last Wednesday. I also believe that we need to intensify co-operation in security matters and that this intensified security, protection and organisation can take place by reason of closer liason between the respective police forces North and South of the Border and between the respective officers North and South of the Border. That needs to be intensified by more meetings, closer liason, closer organisation, closer co-ordination. In my view, that can be improved and must be improved to beat this type of organised choosing of soft targets that appears to be the new policy on the part of the Provisional IRA and other extreme groups.

Brian Dobson:

But it seems that despite the security, co-operation which has been going on under the Agreement since it was signed, despite that it seems that the IRA can, almost at will, step up the violence. As you say, select soft targets, stage this sort of bombing attack and it seems the security forces North and South are really powerless to combat them.

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CONFIDENTIAL

Report No. ...A...297.....

-3-

Transmitted on ..RTE...Radio...1...This...Week

Length

Date.....26.4.87.....

Time1.00pm...

Short Title

Brian Lenihan:

I don't accept that we have been doing sufficient in that direction and that is why I highlighted this matter at our meeting on Wednesday and I was delighted to hear that there was broad agreement in that respect and I do not accept that we have been doing enough, that instead of talking politics in regard to the Anglo Irish Agreement, we should get down to very professional, sophisticated police handling of the operation on each side of the Border.

Brian Dobson:

Is it time Minister to consider banning Sinn Fein?

Brian Lenihan:

In regard to Sinn Fein, as far as we are concerned, we have seen what the Irish people did to them in the recent general election. As far as Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland is concerned, they are discrediting themselves politically. This is a matter of dealing with men who are handling guns, explosives and devices on the ground and the way to deal with these men is by very close surveillance, very good intelligence, very close cover on the ground between the two police forces.

Fergal Keane:

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan.

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