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| Reference Code: | 2005/7/634 |
| Title: | Document given to Garret Fitzgerald, Minister for Foreign Affairs, from Merlyn Rees, British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, concerning IRA activity in Border areas, particularly around Crossmaglen, County Armagh, and the origin of IRA activities in the Republic of Ireland. Includes covering letter from Seán Donlon, Department of Foreign Affairs, to A Ward, Secretary in the Department of Justice. |
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H. Kelly

1. Secretary
2. Taoiseach *ll 7/1/75*
You may wish to see -
particularly annex c on last page of this memorandum.

1974

SECRET

20 December, 1974

[It would be particularly useful to establish the validity of the assumption on the second page of the memorandum that all explosives not recovered must come from outside N. Ireland. Similarly, on this assumption, detonators which are not made here.]

Dear Ward

I enclose a copy of a document given to the Minister for Foreign Affairs by the Northern Ireland Secretary of State at a meeting in London yesterday.

25/12

A note about the meeting is being prepared and will be sent to you as soon as possible. No doubt we will then wish to consider the form of response which should be made to the British authorities.

Yours sincerely

Seán Donlon

Seán Donlon
Assistant Secretary

Mr. A. Ward
Secretary,
Department of Justice

c.c. Mr. D. Nally
Assistant Secretary
Department of the Taoiseach

THE BORDER SITUATION

Dr. Fitzgerald said to Mr. Rees that he would welcome strong action to deal with the security problems in the Crossmaglen area. The object of this memorandum is to describe the current situation in the Crossmaglen and border areas and to make proposals for joint action by the Irish and British Governments.

It has been clear for some time now that the level of IRA violence near the border has been increasing significantly. The figures attached at Annex A show as an example that during the past six weeks (1 November-18 December) there has been an overall increase of over 100 per cent over the number of incidents occurring during the comparable period six months ago. In addition the proportion of IRA activity occurring near the border has increased relative to the level of violence elsewhere in the Province during the last six months. This too is shown in Annex A. The use of the comparison over six months has not been specially selected to produce atypical figures. The same comparison would be clear if other periods had been taken.

Further facts are shown in Annex B where the major incidents occurring over the last six weeks are described in outline. The ones that are listed are the occasions where the terrorists definitely used the Republic as a base for their operations. Other incidents where it is not certain that action originated in the Republic have been omitted from this list. Another area

of concern is the movement of explosives over the border. We have clear evidence that almost all the bomb incidents in the North are caused by explosives and detonators which originate in the South. Some facts to substantiate this are at Annex C. It has been suggested that explosives manufactured in the South may be sold to firms in the North and subsequently stolen and used in terrorist incidents. But explosives imported into Northern Ireland must bear the Northern Ireland colour pink and the sale, distribution and use of explosives in the North is subject to close and detailed police supervision. It is, therefore, clear that all the explosive which is not coloured pink must have come from outside Northern Ireland.

The general conclusion that emerges from these facts and figures is that a considerable amount of terrorist supplies and activity originates from the Republic. Indeed it can be said that over a sustained period there is at least one incident every two days which is clearly mounted from the other side of the border. It is a great handicap to the security forces in Northern Ireland that terrorists can escape across the border; that they can lay mines and fire across this land frontier.

Cooperation with the security forces in the Republic has produced most valuable liaison and exchange of information to the benefit of both sides. The technical panels which were set up by the RUC and the Gardai after the Baldonnell meeting on 18 September are proving very useful. It would however be

very helpful if we were able to consolidate, extend and quicken the progress that is being made through these channels.

One of our recent security measures has been to reduce the number of routes which are available to terrorists by blocking some of the unapproved roads. We have kept the Republic authorities informed about these measures including our proposals for road closures along the border between south Armagh and County Louth/Monaghan. We are convinced that this is the only really effective method of inhibiting the movement of terrorists by unapproved roads across the border and welcome your support.

It would also be of the greatest assistance in dealing with the situation if the appropriate Irish authorities would arrange that

- (a) The Garda and Irish army patrols would concentrate on the unapproved roads in the Crossmaglen area: and, where the roads have been blocked, inform us, through police channels, if attempts to remove the blocks appear to have been made.
- (b) Regular check points will be established, whenever possible, on the approved roads to conduct searches of traffic travelling in both directions.

Following the meeting at Baldonnel, the Joint Committee on Advance Planning has been making encouraging progress. This would be an appropriate forum for an urgent examination of the

problems of the Crossmaglen/Forkhill area. In particular in that context we propose that the Panel should report soon on:-

- (a) Cross border communications between the security forces at Crossmaglen and the corresponding Garda/Irish army posts in the Republic.
- (b) Operational meetings at subdivisional (Superintendent/Chief Inspector) level. These meetings could exchange information and intelligence quite freely, the sole outcome of which could only lead to a better knowledge of who the terrorists are and how they operate. This in turn could only enhance our joint ability to halt the terrorists' activity.
- (c) Exchanges of specialist information, particularly of forensic science, mainly a police responsibility, and bomb disposal, mainly an army problem. The latter is, of course, directed solely towards saving life and the prevention of damage and it therefore merits special attention. We would particularly like this examination to concentrate on the control of explosives and detonators.

As you know the Crossmaglen area is one where the RUC and army work closely together. In this connection we should plan to make the necessary army advice by the participation of

certain staff officers in the work of the group on the lines previously explained at Baldonnell.

We are most anxious that we should pursue these matters as urgently as possible. Without positive action by the security forces of both sides working closely together the situation in Crossmaglen and the border areas will continue to be a constant source of anxiety and challenge to both Governments.

19 December 1974