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TEXT OF LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE IRISH FOREIGN
MINISTER DATED 4 FEBRUARY 1975

When we met just before Christmas we were in full agreement about the importance of both our countries of making things as difficult as possible for the IRA, and we discussed the movement of weapons and explosives.

Most of the arms used illegally in Northern Ireland come from foreign sources. The recent court proceedings in the United States have demonstrated beyond doubt that that country is a major supplier of arms for terrorists and it is also a source of finance. We are doing everything we can about this through diplomatic and other channels. You may have seen press reports of Jim Callaghan's forceful words on this question to a joint meeting of senators and congressmen last week. Your own outspoken statements when you were there recently were most helpful and I much appreciate them, both our countries must continue to strive to bring home to people in the States the evil uses to which contributions to IRA front organisations such as NORAID are put.

Markings on weapons are often removed by purchasers and in any case detailed records of weapon sales are not always kept. Moreover since weapons may be moved singly or even in separate parts they are easily hidden for example, inside car doors and cannot readily be found by the extent of search which is feasible at a VCP, if traffic is not to be brought to a standstill. The tracing of the movement of individual weapons is therefore difficult and it is rare for a gun to be found in transit. Nevertheless from the accumulation of a great deal of information through intelligence sources in Northern Ireland I am left in no doubt whatsoever that the great majority of illegal weapons in Northern Ireland come in from the South. The Gardai will I know face similar difficulties to those we incur in finding arms on the move, but I am very glad to note from press reports the number of caches of arms that have been found by them,

We also receive information about movement of arms for Protestant para-military organisations. These usually come in through the ports and the stringent controls which we can maintain at ports of entry into Northern Ireland have led to seizure of shipments. So far as we can discover, however, no significant supplies of weapons for the IRA enter in this way.

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I understand that information about movement of arms across the border is not often passed through police channels because it is not sufficiently precise about starting point or route, or it is too late to enable direct action to be taken. But this is something to which I hope the Gardai and RUC will direct attention in their working parties.

Some information has already been passed to you about explosives. As we have already explained it is easy to determine the source of commercial explosives because since 1 January 1972 all commercial explosive of the Frangex type entering Northern Ireland has been required to be coloured pink: that sold in the Republic of Ireland is undyed (yellowish brown).

During the whole ~~the~~ of 1973 and 1974 only 91lbs of explosives coloured pink was recovered by the Security Forces in Northern Ireland compared with 4,402 lbs undyed, and of this 1,040 lbs were found still in the original wrapping paper marked "Frangex - Irish industrial explosives Ltd Enfield, Co. Meath". Undyed Frangex is not exported legally to either Northern Ireland or Great Britain. During the period between 1 November 1974 and Christmas all commercial explosive used by terrorists discovered in Northern Ireland - some 400 sticks - was undyed Frangex. I understand moreover that in six recent incidents in Great Britain the explosive found was undyed Frangex, together with some Gelanex which was also shown by the wrapper to be of Irish origin and not imported legally. Any steps which can be taken to tighten control of these materials would clearly make a significant contribution to our common purpose.

Large quantities of home-made explosives are used in Northern Ireland. As the result of strict controls Sodium Chlorate has now virtually disappeared from industrial and agricultural use and thus from bombs. Most home-made explosive now consists of ammonium nitrate extracted by re-crystallisation from fertilisers. By adding chemicals (Polysaccharides) to these fertilisers the extraction process can be made more difficult and the Ammonium Nitrate produced is less pure and less effective as an explosive. There is, of course, a possibility that terrorists may switch to other materials if they find extraction of Ammonium Nitrate becomes too difficult but that in itself is

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not necessarily a good reason for not closing a very important loophole in our present controls. But if we do decide to take this step it should be done on both sides of the Border if it is to be effective.

We have already passed to you a good deal of information on detonators. As you know since 1971 all the detonators of British manufacture supplied legally to Northern Ireland or to the Republic have been distinctively marked and the vast majority of marked detonators of British origin found in Northern Ireland have borne the marks appropriate to the Republic.

I understand that your Ambassador asked that information which had already been provided about finds of weapons and explosives should be extended to cover a longer period. The table at Annex A now gives this information for the 12-month period ending on 1 December 1974. The information is broken down into broad sectarian classification since this was asked for but for obvious reasons we are always reluctant to do this. These figures reflect clearly the much greater use of explosives as a weapon by the IRA. Douglas Janes was asked for a similar analysis of the searches which had led to these finds. We do not have this information, however. We have statistics from Army records based on the forms of indemnity which are completed when visits (often not accompanied by searches) are made to premises: but the police do not keep comparable records.

I hope that in pursuance of our common objective our two countries can keep constantly in touch on all these subjects. The discussions now taking place between the RUC and Gardai following our talks at Baldonnel are most valuable but some aspects could be discussed usefully on a wider basis. I should like to suggest therefore that John Bourn, one of my officials in Belfast, should visit Dublin for talks accompanied by someone from the Home Office who is familiar with what has been happening in Great Britain. I am asking our Ambassador to seek to arrange this.

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SECURITY SITUATION

During the 12 month period from 30 November 1973 to 1 December 1974 1380 persons were charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland. Of these 752 were Catholics and 628 were Protestants.

During the same period 291 ICOS were made, 252 in respect of Catholics and 39 in respect of Protestants.

Finds of arms, ammunition and explosives in Catholic and Protestant areas over the same period were as follows:

	Catholic	Protestant	Total
Total weapons	670	604	1274
Ammunition (rounds)	62,968	94,519	157,487
Explosives found (lbs)	21,930	5,465	27,395
Grand Total (explosives) (i.e found and recovered from devices neutralized)	48,441	6,895	55,386