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Draft of  
G.C.15/8

CABINET MINUTES  
29.7.77

item 9

BRITISH FOREIGN MILITARY AIRCRAFT: Overflights.

Following consideration of a memorandum dated the 25th July, 1977, submitted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, it was agreed

- (1) that <sup>the</sup> present arrangements in respect of overflights by British Military Aircraft should be continued; and
- (2) that no alteration should be made in the conditions under which existing permissions to overfly were granted.

- 1. <sup>29</sup> ~~Review~~ <sup>hints</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~daily~~ <sup>(on</sup> ~~return)~~
- 2. Mr. ~~Stoke~~ <sup>Stoke</sup> ~~+~~ <sup>8</sup> ~~8~~ <sup>77</sup>
- 3. Mr. ~~Kimman~~ <sup>Kimman</sup>
- 4. Mr. ~~Murray~~ <sup>Murray</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup>
- 5. Mr. ~~Ryan~~ <sup>Ryan</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup>
- 6. Registry/re index <sup>9/8/77</sup>
- 7. c/s

h

BS  
CWDZ

P. Sullivan  
3/8/77



Oifig an Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha

25 July, 1977

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE GOVERNMENT

Overflights by Foreign Military AircraftSummary

1. The Air Navigation (Foreign Military Aircraft) Order 1952 provides that overflights by foreign military aircraft may only take place with the permission of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This Memorandum sets out the situation in respect of overflights of a sensitive nature by British military aircraft.
2. These overflights fall into the following categories:-
  - (a) meteorological research and Ordnance Survey overflights;
  - (b) mercy overflights;
  - (c) transport overflights (normally visits to this country by British Ministers);
  - (d) Clonoony salient overflights : the British authorities have standing permission for these overflights over an area of the Republic which sticks into Northern Ireland;
  - (e) "Normal" security overflights : these allow for photographic or infra-red reconnaissance of suspect objects up to a maximum of 500 metres into our airspace. Requests for permission for such overflights are made case by case by the British Embassy and the Departments of Justice and Defence are consulted before permission is granted;
  - (f) 2 kilometre security overflights : these overflights are for the purpose of compiling a photographic record of those sections of the Border where incidents most often occur. A programme of 60 flights was authorised by the Government under certain conditions in June 1976. As of 19 July, 13 of the 60 overflights have been flown.
3. The Minister for Foreign Affairs recommends to the Government that the present arrangements in respect of overflights be maintained. The Ministers for Justice and Defence have been consulted and have no objection.



Oifig an Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha

N1/28/3/5

25 July, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE GOVERNMENT

Overflights by Foreign Military Aircraft

1. The Air Navigation (Foreign Military Aircraft) Order, 1952 provides that no foreign military aircraft shall fly over or land in the State save on the express invitation or with the express permission of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Most requests for such permission are of a non-controversial nature connected with transatlantic transport by the aircraft of a wide-range of countries, with or without a refuelling stop at Shannon. The purpose of this Memorandum is to set out the situation in respect of cross-Border overflights and other overflights of a sensitive nature by British military aircraft.

2. These overflights fall broadly into the following categories;

- (a) meteorological research and Ordnance Survey overflights;
- (b) mercy overflights;
- (c) transport overflights;
- (d) Clonoony salient overflights;
- (e) "normal" security overflights; and
- (f) 2 kilometre security overflights.



3. The permission granted for Ordnance Survey and meteorological research overflights have expired and a request for a renewed permission is not expected in the next few years. These overflights are, in any event, flown at high altitude and are of a non-controversial nature. (The results of these overflights, and indeed all photographic material resulting from overflights, are available to the appropriate Irish authorities).

4. Mercy overflights are flights undertaken to convey, usually by helicopter, gravely ill persons needing urgent specialist medical attention to the place where this can best be given, normally to a hospital with particular specialist facilities. Of their nature, these flights take place irregularly and infrequently. (Similar flights are made by Irish army helicopters carrying patients to Northern hospitals with specialist facilities). Requests for permission are normally submitted at very short notice and, in view of the humanitarian aspect of these flights, it has been the practice to grant permission with a minimum of formality and delay.

5. Transport overflights normally arise in connection with visits by British Ministers for meetings here. The British Ambassador also occasionally requests the facility in connection with his periodic visits to Northern Ireland, so as to avoid the hazards inherent in travelling there by road.



6. Cloncoony Salient overflights are flights across an area of the Republic sticking into Northern Ireland, south-west of Clones. The purpose of the flights is to facilitate the transport of men and materials, the evacuation of casualties and, in particular, the shadowing of suspect vehicles across the salient. The British authorities have standing permission for such flights and this is renewed annually. The permission is subject to notification on a regular basis of the number of crossings made.

7. "Normal" security overflights have the purpose of photographic or infra red reconnaissance of suspect devices or buildings close to or on the Border, in order to ensure that there are no command wires or other booby trap devices awaiting the bomb-disposal team which will tackle the suspect object. Such overflights normally come a maximum of 500 metres into our airspace. Requests for permission for such overflights are made case by case by the British Embassy and the Departments of Justice and Defence are consulted before permission is granted.

8. Two kilometre security overflights involve the systematic aerial reconnaissance of those sections of the Border in which cross-Border incidents most frequently occur, with a view to compiling a comprehensive photographic record. The British



Embassy has stated the purposes of such a record as being:-

- (a) to identify whether there are any improvised explosive devices or command wires not otherwise detected;
- (b) to trace illegal crossing points most frequently used by terrorists;
- (c) to locate potential terrorist firing positions, or positions which have already been used;
- (d) to compile a full picture of the terrain to help operational planning in the North - for example in siting posts to observe illegal movements across the Border in both directions.

Such flights come a maximum of 2 kilometres into our airspace and typically last about 30 minutes, of which some 15-20 minutes are in our airspace. A programme of 60 overflights in this category is being flown under a permission granted with the agreement of the Government in June 1976. This permission also specified that there would be no flights over or within 2 kilometres of Irish army installations, and that the flights would be staggered over the Border areas with no two flights over the same area in any period of approximately 10 days. In order to remove a possible ambiguity in the terms of the original permission, the Government subsequently agreed informally that, within each permitted overflight, the aircraft in question might cross the Border a number of times. As of 19 July, 13 of the 60 permitted overflights in this programme have been flown.



9. The British authorities have also from time to time requested permission for "hot pursuit" overflights, which would enable them to maintain visual contact from aircraft with suspected terrorists fleeing across the Border. This suggestion has always been regarded as unnecessary and unacceptable and has always been rejected. It is possible that with the change of Government here, the British may renew their request that this kind of overflight be permitted.

10. The Minister for Foreign Affairs recommends to the Government that the present arrangements in respect of overflights be continued, and in particular that no alteration be made in the conditions under which existing permissions to overfly were granted. The Ministers for Justice and Defence have been consulted and have no objection.

11. Attached in Annex is a statistical summary of the permissions which have been granted in recent years to the British authorities for such flights. The summary does not cover high altitude transatlantic flights for which the British authorities, in common with the authorities of other countries, receive permission as a matter of routine.



Permitted Overflights of the Border by British Military Aircraft

YEAR	TOTAL	"SECURITY"	TRANSPORT	CLONOONY SALIENT	METEOROLOGICAL RESEARCH	ORDNANCE SURVEY
1973	8	8	1	1	1	1
1974	57	6	1	23	1	28
1975	146	86	2	48	1	10
1976	110	48	9	40	8	5
1977 (to 30 June)	55	25	11	19 (to 30 April)	1	1
TOTALS	376	173	22	130	8	43