

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2009/135/754
Creation Date(s):	29 August-3 September 1979
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

9m 30/8/79

Summary

- We have an acute problem in terms of our image internationally.
- Numerous distinguished visitors are expected: they are likely to be concerned and may require reassurance or other advice.
- In UK, there are likely to be requests for a Ministerial meeting and for extra security measures.
- Reticence about security cooperation or refusal of a meeting would in the present climate have a very negative impact but
 - there are operational, legal or political difficulties in regard to the extent to which security cooperation can be intensified in the ways likely to be suggested;
 - Government policy has always been based on assumption that political measures are required to complement security measures, and in present circumstances the emphasis is likely to be altogether on security aspects.
- There may be argument, from the presentational viewpoint, for anticipating British reaction by early announcement of any new measures considered appropriate.

1. The murder of Earl Mountbatten and other victims combined with the killings at Warrenpoint pose an acute problem in terms of the way Ireland is regarded in Britain and in the world at large. The murder of Earl Mountbatten, with his intimate links with the Royal Family and his international stature, touches a particularly sensitive nerve of British and world opinion. There will be very strong pressure on the British Government to be seen to take action. It has not been lost on the British and other media that both outrages took place in close proximity to the border, one on our soil, the other with allegations of involvement (however dubious) from the southern side of the border.

2. We are therefore unavoidably in a position where we will require, at a minimum, to defend ourselves against allegations that we are an easy field of operations for terrorism. Over the next weeks and months, an unusually large number of distinguished foreign guests are expected in Ireland. These include (in order of arrival) President Nyerere, State Secretary Lahnstein of Germany, the Foreign Minister of Spain, the Community Foreign Ministers (several times), the President of the European Parliament (Simone Veil), His Holiness the Pope, Chancellor Schmidt, the Social Affairs, Agriculture and Health Ministers of Community partners and, at the end of November, the Heads of State and Government of the Community. It is likely that in all the States in question, some consideration is being given to the possible risks involved, during a visit to this country, of an attack by one or other faction in what may be perceived as a complicated terrorist situation with dangerous international ramifications. No indications have been received in the Department of Foreign Affairs that such consideration is taking place or that there is any question of cancellation of visits, though there has been some press speculation about the Pope's visit and a suggestion in one British newspaper that Mrs Thatcher should refuse to come to Dublin in

November. It is however probable that there is concern in the capitals in question and that some reassurance, or other advice, would be welcome, depending on the assessment of the security situation.

3. In Britain, the Prime Minister was meeting with senior Ministers on the afternoon of Tuesday, 28 August. It is not yet clear what the 'Dublin dimension' of their decisions might be, but it seems likely they may include either a request for a Prime Ministerial or Ministerial meeting or a reiteration of traditional demands of security co-operation (joint RUC/Garda interrogations, joint police patrols, extradition, direct army to army contact, meetings at official level to discuss security, requests for a right of hot pursuit).

4. The present climate of opinion in Britain puts us in something of a difficulty: against the background of the present outrages it would be extremely damaging for us to be seen to be any way reticent about security co-operation. At the same time there are operational, legal or political difficulties in regard to the extent to which security co-operation can be intensified. Furthermore, Government policy has always been based on the assumption that political measures were necessary to complement security measures in rooting out the men of violence and the present climate is not likely to be propitious to a calm discussion by the British of the political aspects of the problem.

5. From a presentational point of view it would have a very negative impact to refuse a meeting with the British if they should request it. Even if we ensure through the personnel and agenda etc. that the political aspect of the Northern problem is not lost sight of, the meeting will inevitably come across in the present climate as a security meeting and unless extra security measures emerge from it it will feed rather than defuse criticism of our security performance.

/...

6. There may be an argument for anticipating British reaction by an early announcement of any new measures the Government and Minister for Justice might consider appropriate. On the assumption that the Government consider that the objections to the various major changes (paragraph 3 above) requested by the British still remain valid there may be scope for adjustments on the operational level - deployment of Garda force etc. - which would have positive impact. (Given the generally accepted threat of reprisals from already restive Loyalists, including in relation to the Pope's visit, an intensification of security may well be indispensable in any case). It would be easier to deflect British demands for legislative or unacceptable major policy changes by referring to operational improvements already made, and it would seem preferable from a presentational point of view to announce these before rather than after British representations. The security aspect of a possible Anglo-Irish meeting could then be handled on the basis of informing the British of these developments, and, if the Government were disposed to make a concession, some undertaking to review the matter at political or official level at intervals. If the British, against expectations, do not emphasise the Dublin dimension of the present events any announcement of intensified security would still be welcome from the point of view of British and world opinion, where our standing has undoubtedly been damaged in particular by the Mountbatten murder.

Department of Foreign Affairs
29 August 1979

Mr Murray.
*To see hl and
for Mountbatten file*

Summary

luk
3.9.77

Note. *CS.*
Provided by D/F-A
(in absence of their
Minister) for Govt.
meeting on 29.8.77
luk 29.8.77

- We have an acute problem in terms of our image internationally.
- Numerous distinguished visitors are expected: they are likely to be concerned and may require reassurance or other advice.
- In UK, there are likely to be requests for a Ministerial meeting and for extra security measures.
- Reticence about security cooperation or refusal of a meeting would in the present climate have a very negative impact but
 - there are operational, legal or political difficulties in regard to the extent to which security cooperation can be intensified in the ways likely to be suggested;
 - Government policy has always been based on assumption that political measures are required to complement security measures, and in present circumstances the emphasis is likely to be altogether on security aspects.
- There may be argument, from the presentational viewpoint, for anticipating British reaction by early announcement of any new measures considered appropriate.