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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

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14 March 1980

Mr Sean Farrell
Press Section
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Sean

I recently met with James Lemoyne, the second man (to Leonard Downie) at the Washington Post Bureau. Lemoyne, who is in his late twenties and has a rather serious Ivy League-type manner, works for both the Post and Newsweek, dividing his time about equally between the two.

He has recently returned from a one week visit to Northern Ireland which he visits very regularly, about once every six weeks. His usual method of operation, he told me, is on each trip to attach himself to one or other of the different power groups. Among those thus courted were Provisional Sinn Féin supporters in West Belfast, Andy Tyrie and the UDA, as well as the British Army and the RUC. In response to my suggestions that he should also cultivate the politicians he said that he did try to keep in touch with party representatives both in Belfast and at Westminster and has done a number of interviews with Hume, Paisley as well as with some of the Official Unionist MPs. He mentioned that he had found the SDLP uncharacteristically tight-lipped in the weeks since the Conference began.

His most recent visit was largely spent with the British Army in Newry, Crossmaglen and Cookstown, during which time he was given what appeared to be very ready access to the officers and other ranks both inside the barracks and on patrol. He confessed to being greatly surprised at the lack of physical restrictions placed in his way as well as by the willingness, as he saw it, of many middle and senior ranking officers to discuss informally, often in quite contradictory terms, policy issues with him.

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S. 19629 (Security Staffs)
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This is of interest
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This report which contains a no of items of interest is part-coded A & B. envelope Sh. no 80/3



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He said that while at the barracks in Crossmaglen Sir Maurice Oldfield arrived by helicopter with apparently little warning and causing no little excitement. Lemoyne gathered that this was one of a series of visits which Oldfield had been making in recent weeks to all border stations. In response to my suggestion that Oldfield did not appear to be exerting as critical a role as had been predicted Lemoyne said he had got a contrary impression. The Army attitude, as he had witnessed it, was one of tremendous respect and real concern to ensure that their view should be heard and that, in general, their perception of Oldfield as a man they felt it necessary to convince came through very clearly.

A. [This of course is not a new complaint -]

During his visit he had a number of discussions with BA Officers on the role of the UDR and had gone on patrol in Co Armagh with a UDR Regiment. Army officers spoke openly of their disquiet in regard to the UDR and of their certain knowledge that intelligence information is being passed wholesale to Loyalist paramilitaries. The official attitude seemed to be, however, that such malpractices were almost unavoidable and there was no indication of any positive determination to face up to this problem.

B.

Lemoyne said he was also struck by the number of officers with whom he spoke who dismissed suggestions that service in Northern Ireland was beneficial from a military training point of view. All his contacts seemed to regard Northern Ireland tours as highly disruptive of training and ^{as}injurious to morale. In this latter regard there is apparently a high incidence of marital problems among troops serving in the North.

He mentioned that for a future visit he would be interested in having a closer look at the security effort on our side of the border. He

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is also proposing to go back to South Armagh to examine the situation from the point of view of the locals but understandably feels it prudent (and was so advised by the BA) to wait some time to allow local memory of his being on patrol with the Army to fade somewhat.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "P. Hennessy".

Patrick P Hennessy
Press and Information Officer

c.c. Mr H Swift, Anglo-Irish