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SECURE FAX 1324

Immediate

5 November 1993

Pages: 1

TO: HQ

FROM: BELFAST

FOR: P Hennessy

FROM: R Bassett

Please pass a copy of this fax to D O'Donovan
World Cup Match in Belfast 17 November

1. I have refaxed Joint Secretary's SF 1315 to you this morning.
2. The Other Side came back with the following response

'Following our discussions yesterday, I can now advise that the security advice regarding the Republic of Ireland/Northern Ireland World Cup match is that there is no security reason why the match should not proceed at Windsor Park. Comprehensive operational measures will be put in place by the RUC consistent with the need to ensure the safety of both spectators and the two teams concerned.'

SECURE FAX 1319

21

4 November 1993

Pages: 1

TO: HQ FROM: BELFAST.
FOR: P HENNESSY FROM: JOINT SECRETARY

World Cup Match, Windsor Park

This is to confirm that we raised the FAI's request for advice to the Taoiseach and Tanaiste with the British side and gave them copy of the FAI's letter on receipt from you. We have pressed for an immediate response.

The following background information may be of interest.

We have been keeping an eye on this issue for some time (see my SF 1301 on the question of possible attendance at the match by the President). We asked the head of the Chief Conetable's private office, Mr Sillery, who visited here yesterday afternoon, if the RUC had taken a position on the question of switch of venue. So far as he was aware, they had not (this was confirmed later in a press statement by the RUC). As Mr Sillery was here, news came in of the IFA statement which referred to consultations with the RUC. We pointed out to him that the IFA were clearly linking those "consultations" to their decision. He said he was surprised and would enquire.

I also raised the matter with Minister Ancram (who has charge of sport) and some officials after yesterday's Conference. They made clear by their reaction that they had been watching the situation and were very pleased by the FIFA statement. (I expect they were conscious of the further damage to Northern Ireland's image for tourist and investment purposes that a switch of venue might cause.)

Immediate

SECURE FAX

4 November, 1993

cc PST

21

copy

A/Asa O'Leary

D Kelleher

To: Belfast From: H. Q.
For: Joint Secretary From: P. Hennessy

World Cup Qualifying Game. 17 November

1. Have faxed separately identical letters from the Chief Executive of the FAI to the Taoiseach and Tánaiste concerning the decision to proceed with the Northern Ireland v. Republic game at Windsor Park on 17 November.
2. Responsibility for ensuring that this event takes place in safety is obviously a matter for the British authorities. The letters from Mr. Connolly indicate that the FAI continue to have serious concerns regarding security for participants and spectators alike. It would be appreciated therefore if you would enquire from the other side if a security assessment has been made of the game in the light of the recent upsurge in paramilitary violence, and what conclusions were reached. In this regard it is noted from press reports that the RUC have stated "we are not offering advice on whether this football game should take place If the game goes ahead we will be taking certain measures to police it". It will be appreciated that this is unlikely to offer reassurance to those concerned that the decision to proceed does not take full account of all the relevant factors in the present very difficult security situation.
3. It is also noted from a report in today's Irish Times (attached), despite assurances regarding the limited distribution of tickets in the Republic, that a considerable number of additional tickets for the area supposedly reserved for "home" supporters may be in circulation. If correct this would inevitably heighten the risks involved.

4. As the Tánaiste wishes to respond to this correspondence as early as possible tomorrow (Friday) grateful if British side could be pressed to deal with this matter urgently.

A1247

SECURE FAX 1301

1 November 1993

Pages: 1

TO: HQ FROM: BELFAST
FOR: A/SEC O hUIGINN FROM: JOINT SECRETARY

World Cup Match, Belfast, 17 November 1993

There was a meeting here on Thursday last to discuss arrangements for the Taoiseach's forthcoming visit to Derry. In the course of it, the British side responded to the informal soundings we were asked to make of them about the possibility of the President attending the World Cup match between Northern Ireland the Republic of Ireland on 17 November (in respect of which they advised us initially to consult the British Embassy in Dublin). Brian Collinge of the Department of the Taoiseach was present for the discussion and will no doubt be reporting within the Taoiseach's Department. Sean Farrell has reported that, in raising the matter, Williams began by emphasising that in principle, the British Government welcomed visits by the President. He then invited the RUC representative present, Chief Supt. Henry Irvine, to comment on the security aspects of attendance at the match. Irvine said the situation remained tense and fairly serious. There were major security implications in the RUC delivering the President to Windsor Park, maintaining her there in safety and getting her out again. In the context of recent events there could possibly be a reaction to her presence from the attendance. Windsor Park, as he pointed out, is in the centre of a Loyalist area and is the home ground of Linfield. Martin Williams added that the police were stretched at the present time.

Williams informed me this morning (following the further events of the weekend) that the balance of the reply given last Thursday remains the same.

Comment

The British have told us that if we express a strong desire to proceed with the visit, they will wish to give a formal response from the Secretary of State. Our sense of their informal reply to our soundings is that while they do not advise against the visit, they would prefer it did not go ahead in current circumstances. That view does not necessarily apply to attendance by Ministers on which they have asked our intentions (their view will probably depend on numbers and profile of visiting party). There has been press speculation that the venue will change from Windsor Park but as yet we have no information here on that question.