

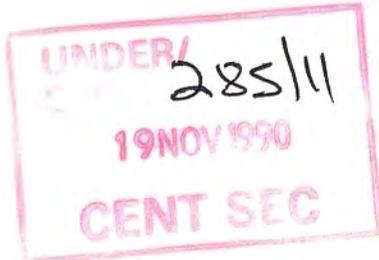
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FROM: A M DODDS
16 NOVEMBER 1990

MD/12278/90/JEC

2. Mr. Himmelfarb
3. File

cc PS/Sec of State (B&L) - B
PS/Min of State (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
Mr Pilling - B
Mr Alston - B
Mr A P Wilson - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Cooke - B
Mr Petch - B
Mr McKervill - B



Mr Ledlie - B

POSSIBLE MEETINGS WITH THE IRISH: STEVENS AND ACCOMPANIMENT

We are now, hopefully, on course for meetings between both sides on SACHR and Confidence Issues in Dublin on 21 November. There are also a number of lesser meetings agreed on subjects like joyriding and prisons which we aim to get in before the next IG Conference on 30 November. However at a delegation meeting earlier this week, the Irish made it abundantly clear that they also expected to have further discussion at official level on both the Stevens Report and Accompaniment, before the next Conference. My purpose here is to advise you and other colleagues of the nature and strength of these expectations.

STEVENS REPORT

2. Mr Alston has already explained to the Irish side that it is our side's intention that the next presentation on the Stevens Inquiry should be by the Chief Constable in the Plenary session at the next Conference. We made it plain that this approach was based on a recent internal discussion between the Secretary of State and the Chief Constable. Whatever the Irish side felt had been agreed at

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the Conference held on 17 July, there was no joint agreed record of any commitment on our part to an official discussion; indeed, neither their internal record (which we have seen), nor ours (which they have seen), makes any mention of an official discussion whatsoever. While the Irish side have now fulfilled their obligation of providing a joint record of the Conference on 17 July, there is no basis for securing our agreement to the inclusion of a passage about an official meeting on Stevens and this is well understood by our colleagues here at Maryfield.

3. For our part, we have said that understandings about present and future work should and could only be based on the discussion which had taken place at the Conference on 25 October and there was therefore little prospect of any preparatory discussion for a Conference on 30 November. However, Mr O'Donovan has informed us that Mr Collins has reaffirmed his position of wanting an official discussion to take place before the next Conference and retained strong hopes that some preparatory work might be carried out. O'Donovan said that he would pass on to Irish Ministers what he felt was "a disappointing response" from the British side and suggested that the Irish side might wish to come back once their Ministers had reflected.

4. I can quite see that the Irish side have a problem: Stevens is a big subject for them, yet they have no idea of the way in which the Chief Constable will deal with it. Very understandably, therefore, Irish officials are placed in a difficult position in trying to provide their Ministers with briefing. On the other hand, we are faced with the reality - not always fully appreciated by the Irish - that it is for the Chief Constable, and not British Ministers, to provide a resume of how action on the Stevens Report is progressing. I wonder, therefore, if there is any possibility of securing the Chief Constable's agreement to you personally informing O'Donovan of, at least, the subject heads which will be covered at the next Conference. I have in mind a one to one meeting which would fall well short of the usual official briefing arrangements and there would be no question of you stealing the Chief Constable's thunder on the actual substance and content of what he actually intends to say about the various developments.

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ACCOMPANIMENT

5. The Irish side are also quite exercised about precisely when they are going to receive the statistics relating to RUC accompaniment of UDR patrols for the 6 months ending last September, which we have promised them for the next Conference, and twice yearly therefore. We have said that while the British side were not yet in a position to give a firm date for the handover of these statistics, we aimed to do this not later than Monday, 26 November. Again, Mr O'Donovan said the Irish side felt strongly that there should be a meeting to accompany the handover of these figures, which would help them to carry out the necessary preparatory work for the next Conference.

6. Although, historically, accompaniment led to some of the most heated exchanges ever experienced at IG Conferences, I do not think that the subject is quite so sensitive at this stage as Stevens. As you know, I hope to reach a point where in future, all complaints about non accompaniment of UDR patrols will simply be noted without comment on our part and it is therefore surely in our interests to be as helpful as possible. Obviously, we are never going to be able to satisfy Irish thirst for detail, especially about accompaniment statistics in local "sensitive" areas, but I would have thought there was a fairly obvious case for standing ready to answer at least some preliminary questions about the statistics when we hand them over. Senior Assistant Chief Constable Cushley has already attended a meeting with the Irish, chaired by you on this subject and I see no reason why either he, or one of his colleagues, should not be on hand to assist when we hand the statistics across.

(Signed)

A M DODDS

16 November 1990

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