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Your Ref: BPS/AM/211
Our Ref: SEC9 VOL VI

17 Nov 77

Dear

You asked in your letter of 18 October about the nature of any specific threat to British Airways made by the IRA in the past. We have gone through our papers and we have been unable to trace any threats issued either specifically against British Airways as a company or issued specifically against British Airways personnel as such.

In going through the papers we had to check on dates etc and I thought the enclosed note of relevant events might be of value to you in talking to the crews.

Best of luck with the discussions.

Yours sincerely

J H ARMSTRONG

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1. The situation today where B.A. crew do not night-stop in Northern Ireland stems from a decision taken by them in May 1971 following a bomb incident at the Dunadry Hotel.
2. In May 73 following a bomb incident on the subsidiary runway the IRA were reported as saying the airport was a 'legitimate target' and threatened to destroy the 'airport and aircrafts'.
3. In July 1973 the Government decided, following an unsuccessful rocket attack on the fuel farm and a bomb explosion at the freight depot, to close the terminal building to non-passengers. At the same time searching of passengers and their baggage was instituted, vehicles and unchecked baggage were not permitted within certain distances of the airport's vital facilities, airside was sealed off from landside and extensive measures were put in hand to secure the entire aerodrome within a lighted perimeter fence.
4. In Nov 1973 at a meeting attended by your predecessor, Paul Day, NIO said "Assessment of the threat indicated that the danger to crews was minimal, the greater threat was to the aircraft".
5. Following the discovery of an explosive device on board a Manchester/Belfast flight in July 74 NASC instituted and the airlines complied with a list of eight additional security measures to increase aircraft safety including 'no hand-baggage' in the aircraft cabin.
6. In November 1974 on the replacement of British Caledonian by British Midland on the Belfast/Gatwick route security advice was that "if BMA wished to overnight stop there were no strong objections to their doing so."
7. The cul-de-sac principle whereby the airport can be approached along one route only - the others being sealed off - was instituted by the security forces following an attempted mortar attack on the airport (6 March 76) from the road opposite the terminal building. All vehicles using the airport approach road pass through a military check point.
8. One final point, and one not lost on the travelling public, whilst B.A. have not overnighed at Belfast for some 6½ years other airlines providing both scheduled and charter services have done so.