



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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CHUN AN TÁNAISTE AGUS AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA: TO THE TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

TO ASK THE TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IF A DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN ON THE BREAKING-OFF OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH LIBYA FOLLOWING CONTINUING LIBYAN LINKS WITH ARMS FINDS IN RECENT WEEKS.

- MARTIN CULLEN

cc A. O. Anwar

Dr. Ryan (Int.)

J.D

1/3/88

FOR ORAL ANSWER ON TUESDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 1988.

In Answer

REPLY

IN RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS ON THIS MATTER ON 8 DECEMBER LAST I EMPHASISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S OVERRIDING CONCERN IS TO ASSESS AT ALL STAGES WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS OF ENSURING THAT NEITHER LIBYA NOR ANY OTHER COUNTRY OFFERS SUPPORT OF ANY KIND, MORAL, POLITICAL OR MATERIAL TO SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS IN THIS COUNTRY. THIS REMAINS THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE UNDERLYING THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAINTAIN ITS PRUDENT AND MEASURED APPROACH BASED ON A CAREFUL ASSESSMENT OF ALL THE FACTS AVAILABLE TO IT. THE GARDAI AND FRENCH SECURITY FORCES REMAIN IN CLOSE CONTACT IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION

PTO

IS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT AS THE FRENCH JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE OPERATION ENGAGED IN BY THE "EKSUND" AND ITS CREW DEVELOPS. AS I HAVE MADE CLEAR IN RESPONSE TO EARLIER QUESTIONS THE GOVERNMENT WILL WHEN THE FULL FACTS ARE AVAILABLE TO IT CAREFULLY ASSESS WHAT FURTHER ACTION MAY BE REQUIRED.

THERE IS A WIDER TWELVE DIMENSION TO OUR CONCERNS AND I CAN ASSURE THE DEPUTY THAT THE TWELVE ARE ACTIVELY EXAMINING IN THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK HOW TO IMPROVE COORDINATION OF THEIR EFFORTS TO PREVENT THE PROVISION OF MATERIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT TO SUBVERSIVE ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE TWELVE.

MEDIA REPORTS SPECULATING ON THE ORIGIN OF RECENT ARMS FINDS IN THE STATE ARE NEITHER AN ADEQUATE NOR SATISFACTORY BASIS FOR DIPLOMATIC ACTION OF THE TYPE SUGGESTED BY THE DEPUTY.

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(MATERIAL NOT USED AS QUESTION WENT WRITTEN)

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

- Q. IS THE TÁNAISTE AWARE OF REPORTS WHICH LINK THE ARMS, AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES RECENTLY FOUND IN THE STATE WITH LIBYA AND WOULD HE NOT ACCEPT THAT THIS IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF LIBYAN DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE SUPPLYING WEAPONS TO THE PROVISIONAL IRA?
- A. I AM AWARE OF THE MEDIA REPORTS TO WHICH THE DEPUTY REFERS. AS I HAVE ALREADY SAID IN MY REPLY MEDIA REPORTS ARE NEITHER AN ADEQUATE NOR SATISFACTORY BASIS FOR DIPLOMATIC ACTION OF THE KIND SUGGESTED IN THE QUESTION.
- Q. IS THE TÁNAISTE SAYING THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE SINCE THIS MATTER WAS LAST BEFORE THE HOUSE AND THAT NOTHING IS GOING TO BE DONE DESPITE FURTHER EVIDENCE OF LIBYAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE SUPPLY OF ARMS TO THE IRA.
- A. IN MY REPLY TO QUESTIONS ON THIS MATTER ON 8 DECEMBER LAST I OUTLINED FOR THE HOUSE IN SOME DETAIL THE DIPLOMATIC ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE LIGHT OF INFORMATION CONNECTING LIBYA WITH THE CARGO OF ARMAMENTS FUND ON THE TRAWLER "EKSUND". FOLLOWING ITS APPREHENSION BY FRENCH CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES ON 31 OCTOBER, I EXPLAINED HOW THE IRISH AMBASSADOR IN ROME, WHO IS ALSO ACCREDITED TO LIBYA, TRAVELLED TO TRIPOLI TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE LIBYAN AUTHORITIES ON THE GOVERNMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS ITS UNEQUIVOCAL VIEW THAT ANY SUPPORT MORAL OR MATERIAL FOR THE IRA FROM ANY SOURCE IS UNACCEPTABLE. THE AMBASSADOR INFORMED THE LIBYAN AUTHORITIES THAT IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE PROCEEDING WITH A PROPOSED TRADE

VISIT. I ALSO EXPLAINED HOW IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION I HAD PROPOSED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE TWELVE THAT WE CONSIDER AS A MATTER OF URGENCY HOW BEST WE COULD COORDINATE EFFORTS TO PREVENT A RECURRENCE OF THE TYPE OF OPERATION ENGAGED IN BY THE "EKSUND" AND ITS CREW. BOTH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH LIBYA AND IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION THE GOVERNMENT HAVE ACTED IN A WAY WHICH WILL DEAL FIRMLY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH ANY THREAT TO THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF THE STATE. AS I HAVE SAID IN MY REPLY WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROCEED IN THIS MANNER BASING OURSELVES ON A CAREFUL ASSESSMENT OF ALL THE FACTS AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.

Q. IS IRELAND THE ONLY COUNTRY AMONG THE TWELVE MAINTAINING TRADE AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH LIBYA?

A. NO. ALL OF THE TWELVE CONTINUE TO TRADE WITH LIBYA AND ELEVEN MAINTAIN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ON A RESIDENT OR NON-RESIDENT BASIS. THAT IS NOT TO SAY HOWEVER THAT THE TWELVE ARE NOT COMMITTED TO A COMMON POLICY OF DISCOURAGING LIBYA FROM SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. DEPUTIES WILL RECALL THAT IN APRIL 1986 THE TWELVE ADOPTED MEASURES TO DISSUADE LIBYA FROM ITS POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. THE TWELVE AGREED INTER ALIA NOT TO UNDERCUT MEASURES IN THE COMMERCIAL FIELD UNDERTAKEN BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BUT DID NOT OTHERWISE DEAL WITH QUESTIONS OF TRADE.

Q. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE MEASURES UNDERTAKEN BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT IN RESTRICTING ACCESS TO TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR LIBYAN STUDENTS?

A. THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT DECIDED THAT VISAS FOR LIBYANS WISHING TO COME TO IRELAND SHOULD ONLY BE ISSUED WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THIS REMAINS THE CASE. THERE IS HOWEVER NO GENERAL PROHIBITION ON LIBYANS WHO WISH TO COME HERE AND BONA FIDE VISA APPLICATIONS FROM LIBYANS WHO WISH TO COME TO IRELAND FOR EDUCATION AND OR TRAINING PURPOSES ARE GRANTED PROVIDED THE APPLICANTS ARE NOT OTHERWISE DISQUALIFIED FROM ENTERING IRELAND.

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Note for the information of the Tánaiste

1. The proposed response to Deputy Cullen's question follows the line taken by the Tánaiste in replying to questions on 8 December arising from the "Eksund" affair. The relevant extract from the Dáil record is attached. The new elements which have arisen since then and which have clearly prompted the Deputy's question are the finding by the Gardai of a quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives at Five Fingers Beach near Malin, Co. Donegal on 25 January and consequent media comment suggesting that the material had originated in Libya. Some of these reports refer to Garda sources confirming a Libyan link.
2. The Minister for Justice has not confirmed publicly these reports and links. The Department of Justice has indicated that there is no concrete evidence to show that the weapons found in Co. Donegal had come from Libya. The assumption is that they are part of consignments landed in Co. Wicklow in 1985 and 1986. Kalashnikov rifles of the kind found in Co. Donegal are readily purchasable throughout the Middle East. They have been available on the black market since 1984 when the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic began to phase out use of them by their armed forces. The suggested reply avoids specific comment on the accuracy or otherwise of the reports suggesting a Libyan connection with the arms noting instead the uncertain and unacceptable basis which media reports provide for diplomatic action.
3. The Tánaiste will wish to be aware of an interview with Col. Gaddafi in the current US edition of "Newsweek" which according to newsagency reports quotes the Libyan leader as stating that he would "strike" in Northern Ireland, Nicaragua and Panama if Washington did not end its "meddling" in the Middle East. This report has been picked up in the newspapers and RTE news bulletins of 15 February. The European edition of "Newsweek" goes on sale in Ireland on 16 February. The reply on page one is suggested as an appropriate response to any supplementary questions prompted by such reports.
4. As in the supplementaries arising from the reply on 8 December Deputies may advert to the measures adopted in July 1986 by the previous Government. Following the refusal by the Libyans in June 1986 to accept our formal representations on the question of support for the IRA the previous Government decided on 3 July 1986 that there should be no renewal of training programmes then being provided for Libyans and that visas would be granted only with the agreement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

5. The reply to a supplementary question from Deputy Barry on this point on 8 December does not strictly speaking reflect accurately the existing situation. That reply suggested that there is a prohibition on the Libyan students coming to Ireland. The situation is that bona fide applications from Libyans who wish to come here for education and/or training purposes are granted provided the applicants are not otherwise disqualified from entering Ireland. Visas for Libyans continue however to be issued only with the agreement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. There was never any general prohibition on Libyans visiting Ireland. A suggested supplementary outlining the present situation is included at page 3.

Middle East Section
15 February 1988

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