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Reference Code:	2018/68/69
Creation Dates:	26 August 1988
Extent and medium:	4 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
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THE PRIME MINISTER

26 August 1988

Dear Charlie,

Thank you for your message of sympathy for the families of the soldiers so brutally murdered in the early hours of last Saturday. It was much appreciated.

Having now had the opportunity to study the two papers which you sent me with your letter of 29 July, I should like to thank you again for the prompt and positive way in which you have carried out your undertaking to look afresh at the critically important intelligence dimension of our security co-operation. I found much to encourage me in your papers and it is in the same spirit that I offer the following comments on particular aspects of them. Their importance and urgency need no emphasis given the sharp rise in IRA attacks in the past few weeks and the quantities of arms in their hands. We are facing a major terrorist offensive and it is crucial that we step up our joint efforts to counter it.

As your papers recognise, my major concern is to see a marked increase in the availability of what has come to be known as pre-emptive intelligence. I am convinced that this is the key to improving the effectiveness of all counter-terrorist effort and not least our co-operation in that field. By pre-emptive intelligence I mean intelligence about terrorist intentions in both short and long term. We

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need intelligence which enables us to frustrate their plans, seize their operatives, or their arms, or simply save lives, for instance by re-routing a journey. We also need intelligence about their longer-term thinking and capabilities.

As we both know from recent experience, the Provisional IRA have developed over the years into a very dangerous organisation and the concentration of terrorists in Northern Ireland and the Republic is one of the biggest in the world. Those who have managed to escape justice have acquired wide experience of mounting all forms of terrorist activity from procurement to bombings. They will only be beaten by similar expertise on your part and ours. I do not underestimate the value of information obtained by routine police work, for example sightings of known terrorists - the bulk of the information exchanged daily by the RUC and Garda. But this is no substitute for intelligence about terrorist intentions gained by systematic penetration of their organisation. Given the terrorists' awareness of security needs, especially in the border areas, it must be extremely difficult for local Garda to learn much in this field. And while it is important that all police personnel are involved in the acquisition of intelligence, it is only the specialist units, those involved in surveillance, technical operations and agent running, who will be able to get the kind of hard-core pre-emptive intelligence needed. Inevitably, and especially in the case of surveillance, there has also to be a heavy investment of resources such as vehicles, secure radio systems and overtime. I am very encouraged by your determination to devote more resources to penetrating PIRA and by your readiness to concentrate more on the Dundalk area.

It is, of course, for you to decide where your officers can best be sent for training. As you know, we in this country have provided training in the past and would be happy to help again, for instance with surveillance training of the kind provided to seven Garda officers last October, or training in handling information sources, such as was

provided most recently in 1983. Any such help could be arranged, as preferred, either bilaterally or under the aegis of TREVI, which we both value, or possibly with the US or Canada. I personally hope that you will be able to make real use of the training offers we have made, since our courses are directly relevant to the type of task that your people face as well.

Another point I should like to stress relates to operational co-operation. Experience in recent years has convinced us that the exchange of intelligence is not enough. What is needed is an increasing degree of joint investigation; and joint operations to acquire sources of intelligence whether technical or human. We know that on our own we cannot succeed; by working more closely together our strengths can be used to best advantage. In this very sensitive area you can be assured that our involvement in such forms of collaboration would be very carefully protected as it has been on previous occasions.

As the next step to our shared effort I would like to suggest that discussions take place on the pooling of intelligence on important areas of PIRA operations; for instance the structure and operations of PIRA's Southern Command. The Security Service, Metropolitan Police Special Branch and RUC can make contributions and I am sure that with the intelligence available to the Garda a valuable survey could be carried out, which would enable all of us to target individuals more effectively both for investigation and as potential agents.

There is one other point I should like to raise with you. Now that the IRA have acquired large stocks of arms, many hidden in the Republic, it becomes critically important to prevent these arms crossing into Northern Ireland. Can I ask you most earnestly to institute much more rigorous examination of north-bound traffic? Clearly, for us to do much more on our side would simply present a new and ready-made target to the terrorists.

In the end, as we both recognise, it will be results that count. Some useful results are already being achieved on both sides of the border, and I in no way undervalue what has been done, or the positive changes you have outlined. Equally we both recognise that there is a great deal more to be done; in order to do it we have to work ever more closely together. The current crisis underlines the urgency of the need. We have made a start. We must maintain the momentum. I shall want to keep in close touch with developments, as I am sure you will, and I welcome your intention to hold regular reviews of progress.

We have a number of other concerns which we are pursuing and on which I shall write to you shortly.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Stalter

Mr. Charles Haughey, T.D.