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2 km. overflights

On 4 May the British asked for clearance for five flights, along the Louth/Monaghan border with South Armagh, which would come 3 km. in and would take place between 10-16 May in order to carry out "photographic reconnaissance of suspected improvised explosive devices and command wires". Permission was granted for five flights to come in 2 km. but to keep 2 km. away from Ballyconnell and Castleblayney, where there are Irish Army camps. On 13 May the British asked for permission for five more flights, further North along the Monaghan/Armagh border, which would come in 2 km. and would take place between 17-23 May. Further information in relation to (i) the reason for the depth of incursion and (ii) the general programme of overflights, insofar as this could now be anticipated, has been requested from the British who have been told that the replies to these questions would facilitate further consideration of the request.

The British were informed that permission had been granted for the flights ~~last~~ ^{the previous} week on an ad hoc basis. However, 2 km. seemed rather far in to photograph for possible booby trap wires and we had no evidence that attempts had ever been made to bring wires more than a very short distance across the border. In these circumstances, overflights of 400 metres would seem to be sufficient but if the British authorities had additional relevant information, we would naturally wish to have it in considering the current application.

The British Ambassador said he would convey the request for additional information to his authorities. He added that for practical reasons it was clear that the flights envisaged for that week would not now take place but he imagined his authorities would re-submit the request when the additional information required was available. One flight in the series did, in fact, take place without any authorisation and in respect of which the British have tendered apologies.