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BÉAL FEIRSTE

BELFAST

10 March 1988

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Assistant Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Assistant Secretary

I enclose a copy of a paper, given to me in confidence by the other side, which was used as general briefing for Secretary of State King and Ambassador Fenn for their conversations with the Tanaiste in relation to the Gibraltar shootings.

Yours sincerely

Padraic Collins

Padraic Collins

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1. Shortly before 1300 hours local time SAVAGE parked a white Renault car in the assembly area for the Changing of the Guard Parade.
2. He was thereafter seen to be fiddling with something in the car for several minutes.
3. About half and hour later McCANN and FARRELL crossed the border and made their way to the assembly area where they met SAVAGE. All three were seen staring at the parked vehicle.
4. At about 1530 hours, after they had climbed some way up a hill overlooking the assembly area to a point which was probably intended to be the detonating side for the car bomb, the three began to walk back towards the border.
5. As soon as they left the area a quick examination of the car was carried out by the bomb disposal expert. He observed an alteration to the car which could have been a possible indicator to a radio-controlled device. The firm conclusion was reached that the car did in fact contain a bomb and the decision was taken to apprehend the three terrorists (who by that time had been conclusively identified as McCANN, SAVAGE and FARRELL). | x
6. When challenged their response was such as to lead the military personnel operating in support of the Gibraltar police to conclude that their lives and the lives of others were under threat. The possibility that the terrorists might try to detonate the radio-controlled bomb which was believed to be in the car was a factor. In the light of their response the three were shot. They were not carrying arms. | y
7. Subsequent examination of the car revealed that it was not in fact carrying a bomb. It is now clear that the purpose of its presence in the assembly area was to block off a parking space so that when the real car bomb was subsequently driven into the area a parking space for it could beyond all doubt be made available.
8. The car bomb itself has yet to be found. A second car hired by the ASU was however found on Sunday night by the Spanish Police in La Linea. In addition to a set of three false passports it contained bomb-making equipment and the key to a third car which has still not been located. This car may contain the explosives for the bomb; alternatively they may have been hidden somewhere else in Southern Spain.

8 March 1988