



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2018/68/60
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	8 March 1988
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	5 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Telefón }  
Telephone } (01) 780822  
Telex 25300

Tagairt }  
Reference }

*Mr. by C Conboy*  
*mk*  
*10.3.88*  
*10/3*



AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA  
Department of Foreign Affairs

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH, 2.  
Dublin 2.



*MK*

9 March, 1988.

Mr. Dermot Nally,  
Secretary to the Government,  
Government Buildings,  
Merrion Street,  
Dublin 2.

*Taoiseach*  
*To see pl. I do not think*

*there is enough in this to*  
*justify a further statement - or*  
*yet anyway.* 913

Dear Dermot,

I am enclosing a copy of Andrew O'Rourke's report on his call to the Foreign Office yesterday on the Gibraltar shootings.

In a discussion with the Ambassador about his visit, he told me that the atmosphere was stiffer than usual. It was made clear to him that the British side were not prepared in any way to be defensive about the shootings. The people involved were known to be actively involved in subversive activities and there was a real and known threat of a major bombing taking place. There was also a stated reluctance on the part of the British to be cross-questioned about security issues.

In effect, as you will see from the report, the British had nothing to add to the formal reply given by the Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons. Their approach on this occasion, I might add, was in marked contrast to the detailed responses we received to our series of questions following the Loughgall shooting.

We might perhaps have a discussion on the various issues involved when you have had a chance to digest the enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

*Dermot Gallagher*

Dermot Gallagher,  
Assistant Secretary.

cc: PSM  
PSS  
✓ Mr. Mathews/Mr. Brosnan  
Mr. O'Donovan

Telex - 8 March, 1988

To: H.Q.  
For: Gallagher

From: London  
From: Ambassador

I called on John Boyd (T. George was also present) this afternoon.

I read to them the Government's statement and also the P.Q.'s. Boyd at the outset said he welcomed the first paragraph of the Government statement. However, he went on, it was important in commenting on events, not to put oneself on the wrong side of the argument. They were - and this was admitted by the PIRA - dealing with three proven terrorists on active service in Gibraltar. There was absolutely no doubt it was an operation designed to kill not only soldiers but also civilians. He could not do better than the Secretary of State's statement in describing the circumstances.

I had prepared a piece of paper containing a number of questions which I said were suggested by the content of the P.Q.s and press reports (see annex). I gave them copies.

Having looked through these Boyd said that there were some questions which he could not answer. He had to refer me to the statement of yesterday and whatever replies the Prime Minister made to questions to-day. He could not give me any quotes for use in the Dail and any comments he made were for background.

First of all, he said in reply to question 10 (i.e., what procedures would now be followed) that there would be, in accordance with the normal procedures, a coronor's inquest in Gibraltar, with a jury. He could not say when. In the light of this, he could not say anything in reply to question 1 (i.e., details on individual shootings, e.g. single or multiple shots).

He had no information on 2 (i.e., have eyewitness accounts been investigated. On 3 (i.e., what challenge was made by the security forces) he had no direct quote, he could only refer me to what the Secretary of State had said. On 4 to 8 (i.e., movement made by three which suggested security force lives were in danger; basis for statement that they were about to make a terrorist attack; circumstances which gave rise to suspicion that car contained a bomb; and rapid technical examination of car) he said that Savage, a known PIRA member, parked the car (with a view to blocking off a space) opposite the area where the parade takes place. There were alterations to the vehicle which are often indications of use as a car-bomb. As a result, the decision was taken to apprehend the three and their response to the challenge led to the shootings - as in Secretary of State's statement.

On the question of whether they could not have been arrested, Boyd said that he would not want to try to second guess the security people on the spot who had had to make the judgement of what action to take. I commented that we were all aware of cases, for example the Eksund capture and another French operation where action directed terrorists had been captured alive - leading in each case to the acquisition of valuable intelligence: in this case, unfortunately the result was likely to be a propaganda victory (if also a defeat in other ways) for the PIRA. In reply Boyd said (again for our background information) that the position of the security forces on the ground must be appreciated: they knew they were dealing with dangerous terrorists: they had reason to believe they were armed and they had reason to suspect they may have been in a position to trigger off an atrocity. The suggestion here - though it was not said explicitly - was that there could have been a fear in the minds of the security people that one or other of the three may have had a triggering device which could have been used to detonate a bomb.

On question 11, (i.e. third car and explosives) I was told the search for the third car and explosives is continuing.

Boyd said, in response to a request, that if there was anything further he could tell me, he would get in touch.

ANNEXE

=====

ANNEX

=====

QUESTIONS

-----

1. IS THERE ANYTHING FURTHER YOU CAN SAY ON EACH OF THE SHOTTINGS, E.G. WERE THEY KILLED BY SINGLE SHOTS OR OTHERWISE?
2. HAVE THE EYEWITNESS REPORTS OF SHOOTINGS WITHOUT WARNING, OR SHOOTINGS ON THE GROUND BEEN LOOKED INTO AND IS THERE ANY INFORMATION IN THIS REGARD? (SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE GUARDIAN OF 8 MARCH).
3. WHAT CHALLENGE WAS MADE BY THE SECURITY FORCES INVOLVED?
4. CAN ANYTHING FURTHER BE SAID ABOUT THE MOVEMENTS THEY MADE WHICH LED THE MILITARY PERSONNEL TO CONCLUDE LIVES WERE ENDANGERED?
5. APART FROM THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN SIR GEOFFREY'S STATEMENT, IS THERE ANY FURTHER BASIS FOR THE STATEMENT THAT THE THREE WERE ABOUT TO UNDERTAKE A TERRORIST ATTACK?
6. IS THERE ANY FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE THREE'S PRESENCE IN GIBRALTAR?
7. CAN ANYTHING FURTHER BE SAID ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH GAVE RISE TO SUSPICION THAT THE CAR CONTAINED A BOMB?
8. OR ABOUT THE RAPID TECHNICAL EXAMINATION OF THE CAR?
9. COULD THEY NOT HAVE BEEN ARRESTED?
10. WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES WHICH WILL NOW BE FOLLOWED?

11. IS THERE ANY RESULT IN THE SEARCH FOR THE THIRD CAR AND EXPLOSIVES?

END END END

/////

6180

END

SENT ... 18.55

E-A DUBLIN

F-