

COVERING CONFIDENTIAL

Reference.....

- AS 248*
1. Dr. J.J. Baird ✓ *119*
 2. Dr. R.J. Weir later ✓ *119*
 3. Dr. R.A. Magnehead ✓ *Mr 9078*
 4. Dr. R.A. McKeeown ✓ *Mr 27-8-76*
 5. Dr. W.L. McAdam ✓
 6. Dr. R. Logan ✓ *later pl. H.R.*
 7. Dr. D. Davies ✓ *1976*
 8. Establishment Official

VISITS TO IRISH REPUBLIC

Perhaps you would be good enough to note the information in the attached note from CSMD and pass to the next person on the above list.

If you would like a copy for retention please let me know.

F J McCAUSLAND
ESTABLISHMENT OFFICER

24 August 1976

Mr. Loughdale

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To All Permanent Secretaries

VISITS TO IRISH REPUBLIC BY OFFICIALS - SECURITY

NIO have recently circulated to Heads of Division and above a reminder about the Security aspects of cross-border official visits. The recommendations do not contain anything new, but in view of the advice that the risk to officials travelling in the border area has increased, Permanent Secretaries are requested to ensure that their staff at Assistant Secretary and above are aware of the reminder which has been issued.

I set out below the relevant paragraphs from the NIO document:

1. The need for officials to take sensible precautions in arranging official visits to the Irish Republic is self evident, but it is considered advisable to provide a degree of formal guidance on the matter.
2. The security classification appropriate for information about any particular visit must depend upon the purpose of the visit, the personnel involved and the current security situation, but in general details of any official visit to the Republic, or visits in the opposition direction, should be classified at least RESTRICTED until after the return of those concerned. The details may need to remain classified if they indicate the pattern of regular visits.
3. Visits by Ministers will generally carry a higher classification according to the circumstances. It is recognised, of course, that sometimes a Minister's visit needs to be announced beforehand (eg if he is formally to attend a public function), but this does not remove the need for prudent safeguards and, in general, prior details of his travel arrangements and movements should be classified CONFIDENTIAL in such circumstances, subject to appropriate application of the "need to know" principle.
4. The advice of the Garda and the RUC is that there is now an enhanced risk to officials travelling in the border area. It is therefore essential that officials involved in arranging visits to Dublin from Belfast and in arrangements for visits by Embassy or other officials to Belfast from Dublin should be extremely cautious in discussing the details of such visits, especially on the telephone.
5. Particular risks are involved in discussing visits or other classified matters on the telephone from Northern Ireland or London with British or Irish officials in the Republic, but precautions are necessary also in discussing such visits over the telephone within the United Kingdom. It should be remembered that no standard telephone is secure and that privacy sets (scramblers) provide protection only against accidental over-hearing through crossed connections etc. Whenever possible therefore discussion of visits on the telephone should be avoided, but when, because of urgency, there is no reasonable alternative to telephone discussion, the conversation should be in carefully guarded terms, avoiding direct reference to the names of those visiting and to dates, times and travel arrangements. Indirect reference to such matters in a fashion not meaningful to someone overhearing is usually possible if both officers have before them a draft programme or other papers about the visit which can be referred to cryptically.

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6. It is not only officers involved in arranging or participating in visits who need to be mindful of the need for such precautions. Every officer who knows of plans or arrangements for a visit to the Republic must be conscious of the security considerations involved and resist the temptation to chat about the visit casually and unnecessarily, either on the telephone or within the office, to anyone who has no official need to know of the arrangements.

W E Bell

W E BELL
for Head of NICS

18 August 1976

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20 AUG 76

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