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01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref.A084/299

26 January 1984

Dear Hugh,

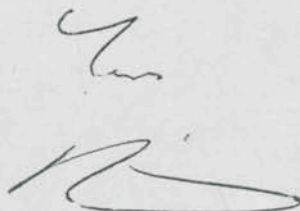
Destruction of the IRA

_____ a security consultant, has written to the Prime Minister with proposals for new security arrangements for destroying the IRA and, in particular, its ability to strike on the mainland of the United Kingdom. I enclose a copy of his letter (dated 30 December but only recently passed to us).

Since responsibility for countering terrorism on the mainland of Great Britain is principally with the Home Office, I would be grateful if you could provide Robin Butler with a draft reply which he might send on the Prime Minister's behalf, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Office.

I am copying this letter to Jim Lyon in the Northern Ireland Office and to Robin Butler at No 10.

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(R P Hatfield)
Private Secretary

H H Taylor Esq

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30th December, 1983.

The Rt.Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MA, MP,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street, London, S.W.1.

Dear Prime Minister,

Destruction of the IRA

I write this letter following discussion with Peter Shipley about ways of destroying the IRA, and in particular its ability to strike at us on the mainland. Present security policies appear to operate on a defensive posture. There seems to be no plan to seize the initiative.

I believe it is time that there was some new thinking on the subject. It seems to me monstrous that we have made so little progress in a situation in which we have a population overwhelmingly sympathetic to law and order and as much force as we need. The only lack is intelligence, without which our forces are blind.

I believe the first step is to target the IRA in this country and create a machine which is entirely devoted to crushing them. This should be under the direct control of yourself or the cabinet office to ensure that the necessary resources are immediately available. A very small team would not only be economic, but efficient. The whole of my intelligence experience tells me this. Possibly it could be a plain-clothes extension of the SAS, but with a specialist role. It should be an intelligence organisation and would not, in my view, need to have police powers. Its job would be to feed the police or military authorities with high-grade intelligence so that terrorists and their supporters could be brought to justice.

To ensure the requisite new thinking, I suggest that a small group of people not at present directly involved should meet for two or three days and have a brain-storming session which would result in positive proposals. Such a group should also consider a range of administrative and security measures as back-up, e.g., the issue of identity cards and tenants' registration.

For the group I have in mind such persons as Professor Paul Wilkinson, Sir Dick White, Sir Frank Kitson and Lord

The Rt.Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MA, MP 30th December, 1983.

Chalfont, together with a practical administrator.

A primary object of any plan should be to make the IRA feel hunted. Surely this would do much to reassure our own people.

Yours truly,

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