

FROM: P N BELL
 BRITISH SECRETARY
 13 FEBRUARY 1997

DESK IMMEDIATE

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
 PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
 PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
 PS/PUS (B&L) - B
 PS/Sir David Fell - B
 Mr Thomas - B
 Mr Steele - B
 Mr Leach - B
 Mr Stephens - B
 Mr Watkins - B
 Mr Wood (B&L) - B
 Mr Beeton - B
 Mrs Collins - B
 Mr Hill - B
 Mr Lavery - B
 Mr Maccabe - B
 Mr Priestly - B
 Mr Webb - B
 Mr Lamont - RID - B
 HMA, Dublin - B

290/96



MR PERRY - B

THE MURDER OF LANCE BOMBARDIER RESTORICK

The Irish have quizzed me this morning about the possibility that the round that killed the Lance Bombardier was an accidental discharge. This story was, the Duty Officer told me last night, being put round by UTV; Mr Donoghue claims to have heard it "from RUC sources" this morning. I did my best last night, on the basis of my conversations with the Duty Officer, to say this was emphatically not the Army view. I drew his attention to the unambiguous statement in this morning's Duty Officer's report, which we normally pass to the Irish side as a matter of routine.

2. As well as strongly encouraging Mr Donoghue not to give any credence to these stories on the Irish side, I added ad hominem that it would win the Irish no friends here if the idea got around that they were seeking to extenuate, or explain what we believe to be a straight IRA murder. Despite my obvious and increasing irritation,

Mr Donoghue nevertheless persisted in asking whether there was any RUC confirmation that the negligent discharge story was completely false "in order to reassure Dublin". So, if there is anything further I can say at this afternoon's delegation meeting to enable me to shoot this canard to smithereens, I should be most grateful. Otherwise, I shall simply, and with increasing bad temper, reaffirm that, in our view and that of the experts, this is a clear IRA murder, fitting into the whole pattern of their recent attacks on the security forces.... No less significant, perhaps, is the absence of an IRA denial.

3. Mr Donoghue also asked me what was the Secretary of State's attitude. I referred him to this morning's 'Good morning Ulster', which he had not heard, when he had explained that Mrs McElroy "had said it all" (though not, I think, on UK-wide media unfortunately). The Secretary of State's response was, like that of everyone else here, one of "quiet disgust". Mr Donoghue confirmed that that was the Irish side's view too. As to the impact on the Loyalist ceasefire? I simply explained that the ceasefire had been under strain for some time, and now was inevitably under more strain. Again, I referred him to Mr Irvine's words on 'Good morning Ulster' explaining that, notwithstanding the problems or indeed the ambiguities of the Loyalist position, the "CLMC ceasefire is in force". I added that we were urgently putting together material that would demonstrate the success of the security forces against the IRA over the post-ceasefire period. The more we could point up their successes (not forgetting some spectacular successes of the Garda), the stronger would be the hand of those in the Loyalist community arguing against abolishing the ceasefire. I hope he took my hint; I shall repeat it.

4. I should be grateful for further advice on anything else arising from this murder that I can say to the Irish this afternoon, including any practical support we may expect from the Irish. I shall, of course, repeat our gratitude for the firm public stand taken by Mr Bruton.

[Signed]

P N BELL

PH/9817