

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

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Title: Note from Ambassador of Great Britain to Ireland John Peck to Taoiseach Jack Lynch on the recent killings of two Ulster Defence Regiment members and Northern Ireland Senator John Barnhill in the Strabane area, and seeking that the Irish government do more to prevent Irish Republican Army activity on their side of the border.

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Handed to the Taoiseach by the
British Ambassador yesterday.
Copy sent to Secretary of Foreign
Affairs on Taoiseach's instructions.

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15/12/71

17.5.71
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1. Ruffin

2. Ruffin
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16.12.71

I have been instructed to bring to your urgent attention two particularly shocking murders in the Strabane area.

1. On 10 December, Sergeant Smith and Mr McCormack were murdered at Lisdoon, Co Londonderry, by a man, who, joined by another man, then walked across the Border about 200 metres away.

2. On 12 December, Senator Barnhill was murdered in his home north of Strabane, 400 metres from the Border. The Official IRA have admitted responsibility, apparently justifying the murder by saying they only intended to blow his house up and he attempted to prevent them.

HMG are greatly concerned by these cold-blooded murders, and the very strong reactions of members of all parties in the House of Commons became apparent when the Foreign Secretary said yesterday that HMG would be urging the Government of the Republic to take effective action to control these people on their side of the Border.

HMG recognize that the Gardai have on occasions taken action, such as the arrest of eight men near the Killeen customs post. The fact remains that HMG regard it as intolerable that the Republic should provide a refuge from which the murderers can operate with impunity, whether the men are from the south or the north. The murders cannot be regarded as in any way a local reaction to road cratering, but are clearly acts of sheer terrorism designed to contribute to the breakdown of order in Northern Ireland.

HMG therefore wish to press most strongly that the Irish authorities should take more comprehensive and more vigorous action against the terrorists operating on the Border, especially in those areas where incidents have been most common:- the distribution of these incidents suggests that armed IRA units may be based in Dundalk, Monaghan, Ballyshannon, and Ballybofey or Stranorlar.



Specifically the action that HMG hope the Taoiseach would take is (a) to instruct the Gardai and Irish Army to take more vigorous action against the gangs operating across the Border, particularly near Strabane and the other areas to which attention has been drawn. They hope that this could provide the basis for close cooperation between security forces on both sides of the Border and for follow-up action should the RUC or Gardai obtain leads to perpetrators of these crimes; (b) to instruct the appropriate authorities to do all they can within their constitutional powers to secure effective action when extradition proceedings are instituted. HMG have noted the Taoiseach's strong view that terrorists should be charged and tried rather than interned, and consequently find it hard to accept that those against whom charges have been brought, and will be brought to trial if caught, can enjoy a safe haven from which they can perpetrate further crimes.

HMG accordingly hope that they can look to the Government of the Republic to cooperate effectively in dealing with this threat, and that in the light of recent acts of violence in the south they can regard it as a matter of common concern. They certainly regard it as a matter of major concern.

If I may add some strictly personal observations, I am bound to say that during my recent visit to the United Kingdom I was shocked by the very strong reaction among ordinary people against the activities of the IRA north and south, and by the damage that was being done to Anglo-Irish relations and Irish interests. But in particular I have been struck by the very clear statements in recent speeches, notably by Mr Childers and Mr Colley to the effect that the IRA by their activities are simply blocking all political progress.

The Foreign Secretary pointed out yesterday in the House of Commons that the Home Secretary is now in Belfast, where he hopes to make progress towards discussions with all parties. If



real progress is to be made, it seems to me an essential preliminary that all those who have an interest in a settlement should take the steps necessary in their own territory to ensure that it is not postponed indefinitely, as Irish Ministers have rightly pointed out that it will be, by the terrorism and inhumanity of the IRA.