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| Title: | Correspondence between members of staff of the Office of the Minister for Justice and the Department of the Taoiseach, and WP Barbour of the Fermanagh Association of the Alliance Party, concerning border security between Counties Cavan and Donegal in the Republic of Ireland and County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland in the areas of Belcoo, Beleek, and Aghalane Bridge. |
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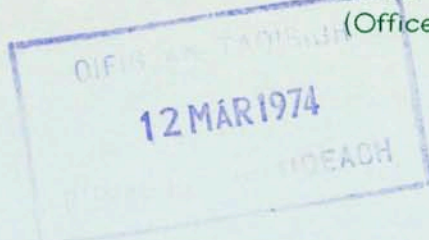


OIFIG AN AIRE DLÍ AGUS CIRT

(Office of the Minister for Justice)

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

(Dublin)



11 Marta, 1974.

Runai Priobháideach an Taoisigh.

I am directed by the Minister for Justice to refer to the letter of 21st December to the Taoiseach from Mr. W.P. Barbour, Fermanagh Association of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland in which Mr. Barbour made certain suggestions about border security near Beleek, Belcoo and Aghalane Bridge.

The Commissioner, Garda Síochána has indicated that a Garda unit with Army support is now operating permanently at Cloghore, near Beleek. The area is patrolled continuously and approaches to possible firing points on this side of the border are kept under observation by the patrols. With regard to Belcoo, the Commissioner states that there is a round-the-clock Garda check-point in Blacklion and that recently an Army unit has been supporting the Gardai there. At all times telephone contact is maintained between the R.U.C. at Belcoo, Enniskillen, Beleek etc., and Garda Stations on this side of the border.

Mr. Barbour's suggestion about rebuilding Aghalane Bridge is regarded by the Garda authorities as a worthwhile one since the bridge was the only border crossing point between the Cavan/Clones concession road to the east and the Ballyconnell/Enniskillen Road to the west. The Aghalane crossing point is about mid-way between these two roads.

Runai Aire

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

memo I decided to issue amended letter under my own signature

see note below

Uimhir.....

Mr. Kirwan

form of my letter under signature 18.4.74

It was not the intention to write again to Mr. Barbour following the letter issued to him by the Taoiseach's Private Secretary on 28th December last. His suggestions were referred to the Departments of Justice and Defence and their replies have now been received. In view of added emphasis given to the security situation since December and the suggestions emanating from the North that the Dublin Government has been inactive in this area, I think we should use every opportunity to highlight what we have been doing. I am, therefore, submitting a reply to Mr. Barbour, which incorporates the material from Defence and Justice. I had some reservations about divulging the material in the Justice reply to Mr. Barbour because of security considerations, but that Department see no objection to this course. I think we can take it that Mr. Barbour is who he says he is i.e. a member of the Central Executive on the Alliance Party.

As regards Aghilane Bridge, I have been in touch with the Department of Local Government who state that their information is that the Bridge was blown up by the British Army towards the end of 1972. The Cavan Local Authority started to erect a Bailey bridge (paid for by the Department) but the work ran into difficulties when Captain John Brooke complained that workmen from the South had crossed to the Northern side in the course of erecting the Bridge. Work was then stopped and a further explosion in December, 1973, wrecked most of the structure that had been erected at that time. No information is available as to who is responsible for this explosion but it seems that the gardai have recently informed the Department of Local Government that the British Army removed the steelwork from the Bridge and there is now very little of the structure left. In view of these circumstances, I think there is very little we can say to Mr. Barbour on this point.

Moe

(dictated 22/3/74)

27 Márta 1974

Note

Following a discussion, in another context, with the Secretary, on providing security notes to people in the North, I decided not to write again to Mr. Barbour after all. He can see for himself, in any event, the action we have taken on the ground.

*luk.
26.4.74.*

*Amended
Not issued*

27th March 1974

Dear Sir

The Taoiseach, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, has asked me to refer further to your letter in which you made certain suggestions relating to Border security.

Security arrangements in Border areas are kept under constant review jointly by the Garda Síochána and the Army so as to ensure the optimum use of available resources in manpower and equipment. A special review of the position has been carried out in the areas you mention and all reasonable steps are being taken to ensure the adequacy of security measures in these localities. The Commissioner, Garda Síochána, has indicated that a Garda Unit with army support is now operating permanently at Cloghore near Belleek. The area is patrolled continuously and approaches to possible firing points on this side of the Border are kept under observation by the patrols. With regard to Belcoo, the Commissioner states that there is a round-the-clock Garda checkpoint in Blackloin and that recently an Army Unit has been supporting the Gardaí there. At all times telephone contact is maintained between the RUC at Belcoo, Enniskillen, Beleek, etc. and Garda stations on this side of the Border.

You also referred in your letter to Aghalane Bridge. Your suggestion that this bridge should be rebuilt has been noted.

The Taoiseach appreciates the interest and concern which prompted you to write to him in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Private Secretary

Mr. W.P. Barbour
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CO FERMANAGH