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Prime Minister

Michael Alexander Esq
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10. October 1979

Dear Michael,

[Handwritten mark]

NORTHERN IRELAND - CROSS BORDER CO-OPERATION

Thank you for your letter of 8 October recording the Prime Minister's comments on my Secretary of State's minute of 5 October about his talks on that day with Ministers of the Irish Republic.

Mr Atkins hopes that the Prime Minister will not underestimate the operational value of what was achieved: we obtained most of what we wanted - either in the terms requested or in a form which the Irish were better able to concede but which we are satisfied will have the same operational benefits. This was confirmed at a meeting yesterday with the GOC and the Chief Constable.

No.
On incident related helicopter flights, the Irish produced everything we wanted. The Army are entirely happy with the limitation to five kilometers, given that that and other arrangements will be subject to monthly reviews at which, if we can justify it, we can press for an extension. Present arrangements for overflight after giving prior notice will continue; and (a point which was not mentioned in my Secretary of State's brief report of 5 October) the Irish will be stationing a helicopter of their own at Dundalk to patrol the difficult border areas. We shall, therefore, have joint patrolling by helicopters. The proposed arrangements for communication between helicopters and the Garda, and between the British Army and Garda officers specially attached to their Army, are entirely satisfactory. The arrangements for nominated senior liaison officers are probably better than the original

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idea of an exchange of liaison officers, who would not have been available on a 24 hour a day basis. The Irish would not agree to RUC officers taking part in Garda interrogations, but produced cogent evidence set out in the minute of 5 October that any confessions which might have resulted would not have been admissible in their courts anyway. Instead, the Garda Commissioner has been given clearance by the Minister of Justice to find alternative ways of achieving the same end, for example by having an RUC officer on hand in the Garda Station ready to advise how to use any available intelligence from Northern Ireland. The Garda Commissioner is evidently now in a position to proceed with other more detailed and technical aspects of co-operation. The other suggestions put forward by the Garda Commissioner are regarded by the Chief Constable as perfectly satisfactory alternatives to his own suggestions.

When the Secretary of State reviewed the conclusions of the meeting with the GOC, the Chief Constable and the Security Co-ordinator yesterday, it was agreed that the meetings have produced a quite new and substantially higher level of co-operation on which we can build at the further meetings which are to take place.

I am sending a copy of this letter to members of OD and to Martin Vile.

Yours ever,
Roy Harrington

R A HARRINGTON
Private Secretary

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