29 July, 1972

The Honorable
Richard M Nixon
President of the United States of America

Dear Mr. President,

The Prime Minister has asked me to pass to you the attached message.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, as amended, Sect 3.5

By JMR NARA, Date 5/5/2010
[Page 1 of 4]
Text of message from the Prime Minister to the President

I was grateful to you for your message of 6 July about Dr Kissinger’s discussions in Peking. I read this with considerable interest, and particularly in view of Sir Alec Douglas-Home’s plans to visit China in the autumn I am very glad that we can continue to exchange impressions in this way. We have also kept in touch over recent months about the situation in Northern Ireland which, you may recall, we discussed in Bermuda. I therefore wanted to let you know at once about a decision which we have taken to launch certain operations in the province, designed to neutralise the terrorists and gunmen there.

Since Her Majesty’s Government took over full responsibility for the Government of Northern Ireland in March, we have made every effort in our power to end violence, to encourage all sections of the community to take part in the search for a political solution to the problems of the province, and to work for reconciliation between them. In pursuit of these aims we have made a substantial reduction in the numbers of those interned, have conducted talks with all sections of the population, are planning for local elections later this year on the basis of proportional representation and have invited views on political solutions from all quarters with the aim of holding a conference in the autumn. At the same time the activity of the security forces has been kept to a low level even at the risk of much misunderstanding by those who felt threatened by violence. In short, everything possible has been done to set the affairs of the province on a new course.

Unfortunately, our efforts have been thwarted by the actions of the provisional IRA. Despite a brief ceasefire, they have shown that they are determined to continue their campaign of violence, that they have the deliberate aim of preventing reconciliation and that they are prepared to use every method of intimidation to deter the Roman Catholic community from joining in the search for political solutions. In doing so, they have inevitably provoked extremists among the Protestants who have responded to the IRA challenge by a measure of violence, and by setting up their own barricades. This has produced a dangerous situation in which violence is escalating, and law and order progressively breaking down. Moreover, the provisionals showed by their carefully planned and concerted campaign of explosions in Belfast on Friday, 21 July a callous disregard for the lives of men, women and
children in all communities. These murderous attacks, when added to a similar explosive campaign in Londonderry which has wrecked the centre of the city, and to a high intensity of shooting throughout Northern Ireland, have caused a level of destruction and of disorder which is bringing the life of the province progressively to a halt. At the same time the actions of the terrorists have aroused feelings of horror and revulsion among Roman Catholics and Protestants alike in Northern Ireland.

In this situation, the possibility of political progress has been receding, and the prospect has become one of an increasing domination of all sections of the community by extremists and still more destruction and violence. We have therefore decided that we must make a new and determined effort to restore law and order throughout the province. This will mean taking effective action against the terrorists: and to do so we need to end a situation in which they have safe havens from which they can come out at will to destroy and shoot, and where they can be sure of intimidating the peaceable members of their communities. We have therefore given orders for operations to be undertaken in Londonderry and Belfast to this end. Our operations are of course aimed only at the terrorists and gunmen, and we intend that all barricades, both those set up by Protestant extremists and those set up by the IRA, should come down immediately.

Meanwhile our political objectives in Northern Ireland remain the same. It is our intention that, as a result of these operations against the gunmen, political progress will be easier to achieve. Our determination to bring about peace and reconciliation among the communities in Northern Ireland is unaltered.

I am grateful to you and your Administration for having consistently shown understanding of the difficult problems we face in Northern Ireland, and the sincerity of the efforts we have been making to resolve them. I welcomed the opportunity to discuss the whole issue with Governor Reagan on his recent visit and to learn how it is regarded in the United States. I do not underestimate the Irish pressures which can be exerted there. What we are now undertaking is in no way in pursuance of a sectarian policy against the Roman Catholic minority, but is aimed simply at removing or neutralising the terrorists and providing a better chance for peaceful moves towards a political solution of the problems of the province.

29 July, 1972
Cronin relates British Prime Minister's move to Dublin to Northern Ireland situation.

ACTION REQUIRED:
- Memo for HAK
- Memo for Pres.
- Reply for signature
- For distribution/dispatch
- Memo to
- Recommendations
- Joint memo
- Reference to State
- Any action necessary
- Concurrency
- Due date: 8/4

COMMENTS: (Including Special Instructions)
- Memo to Pres./Cronin.
- Memo to Pres. (8/4)
- HAK approved second level file.
- Memo to Vice (8/12)
- HAK to Heath (8/12)
- Vice to Heath (8/12)
- Pres. and Vice to Heath.

ORIGINAL TO MR. SONNENFELD FOR HANDLING/DELIVERY

No CYS to state.