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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

*Mr Powell*

31 December 1984

*Dear Tim,*

Extradition of Irish Terrorists from the United States:  
Letter to the Prime Minister from the Reverend Ian Paisley MP

Thank you for your letter of 18 December enclosing a copy of Dr Paisley's letter to the Prime Minister of 14 December about the extradition of Irish terrorists from the United States.

Dr Paisley's letter was clearly prompted by the remarks the day before of a New York Federal judge in announcing his refusal of the extradition of Sean Doherty who had been convicted in Belfast in 1981 of the murder of an Army officer the previous year. With seven others he had escaped from Belfast prison while awaiting sentence. We are already exploring with the Americans the possibilities of Congressional action to ensure the extradition of Irish terrorists from the United States. Our Embassy in Washington has been in close contact with the attorney handling the Doherty case, and with officials at the Departments of Justice and State, to see how the Doherty decision might be reversed. Sir Geoffrey Howe raised the issue with Mr Shultz in Brussels on 14 December.

In his letter Dr Paisley also referred to the question of American arms sales to the RUC. In 1979 in response to pressure from Speaker O'Neill (who was anxious not to be outflanked by the "greener" Congressman Biaggi) the Carter Administration placed the authorisation of shipments of firearms on the RUC "under review", and ceased to authorise further exports. Although response to our concerns on Northern Ireland, the Reagan Administration has continued to keep the matter "under review". We have periodically looked at the possibility of seeking to have the ban removed, but the disadvantage of provoking further controversy about the RUC, which continues to receive a bad press in the United States, has seemed so far to outweigh any possible advantages which might accrue from such an attempt. Understandably, the present position is regarded as offensive by unionists, but in practice the Americans turn a blind eye to the RUC's indirect importation of American revolvers (through importers in Great Britain) which greatly reduces the effects of the ban. The official position of the State Department remains unsatisfactory, but we suggest that the issue is less urgent

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than that of terrorist extradition, on which we would prefer Congressional minds to focus. We further suggest, therefore, that the Prime Minister should not be drawn on the arms issue in her reply to Dr Paisley. The Northern Ireland Office agree.

/ I enclose a draft reply to Dr Paisley for the Prime Minister's signature. It has been agreed with the Northern Ireland Office, to whom I am copying this letter.

*Yours Sincerely,  
Colin Budd*

(C R Budd)  
Private Secretary

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10 Downing Street

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FROM  
PRIME MINISTER

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Reverend Ian Paisley

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

Thank you for your letter of 14 December about the extradition of IRA terrorists from the United States.

I share your concern at the recent US court judgment rejecting our application for the extradition of the Provisional IRA terrorist Sean Doherty. The Government has made clear its disappointment at the decision. But it must be remembered that the US Government has no control over the decisions of US courts.

I can assure you, however, that the implications of the Doherty decision are being <sup>pushed actively with the</sup> actively considered on <sup>US Government</sup> both sides of the Atlantic. President Reagan shares our commitment to the defeat of terrorism and to our two Governments' working closely to that end.

Enclosures-flag(s).....