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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

20 December, 1982

This is just to record that the Prime Minister has seen and noted your letter of 14 December reporting on your Secretary of State's visit to the United States.

(Timothy Flesher)

D.A. Hill, Esq.,  
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Robin Butler Esq  
PS/Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
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14 December 1982

1) Mr G. ✓ 11/12

2) Prime Minister

VJ  
18/12

Dear Robin

*[Handwritten signature]*

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S VISIT TO THE USA,  
14-22 NOVEMBER 1982

In accordance with the procedure set out in Willie Rickett's letter of 17 February to Private Secretaries, Mr Prior has asked me to let you have an account of his recent visit to the USA.

Mr Prior was in the USA from 14 to 22 November 1982, visiting New York, Washington, and Minneapolis/St Paul, with additional calls at Columbia and on the Hyster Company at Portland, Oregon. As in his last visit to the USA in July, he sought to explain to US opinion formers the significance of recent political developments in Northern Ireland and to discourage the American public from contributing to the Provisional IRA or its agents. Although the visit had been in preparation for some months, the acquittal in New York on 5 November of five men implicated in the smuggling of arms to Ireland - generally reported as a propaganda victory for the IRA - made counter-action all the more important.

New York

Mr Prior fulfilled media engagements and addressed, over lunch, the Council on Foreign Relations. Press coverage of his visit was limited by the coincidence of the death of President Brezhnev, which drove all other issues from the headlines; but he had extremely useful interviews with the editorial boards of "Time" magazine and the "New York Times". These have already paid off in terms of favourable editorial comment on Northern Ireland issues in these two publications.

Washington

In Washington on 15, 16 and 17 November (amongst other media engagements) Mr Prior explained the Government's Northern Ireland policies to very large audiences on NBC's "Good Morning America" (6.5 million), CBS morning news (3.5 million), the Cable News

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Network (15 million maximum) and National Public Radio as well as to the editorial board of the "Washington Post". He also addressed the Heritage Foundation, a "think tank" close to the Reagan Administration. Besides a number of meetings with Congressional and State Department advisors, he met Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam and Congressman Jim Shannon, a leading figure in the moderate Congressional Friends of Ireland. (Since the new Congress does not reassemble until January most Congressional leaders were unavailable). Mr Prior also briefed information staff from our posts all across the USA, as well as others in the Washington Embassy particularly associated with Northern Ireland work.

Minneapolis/St Paul, Columbia and Portland

My Secretary of State gave press and television interviews as well as addressing audiences of influential businessmen and others at a dinner organised by the Hubert H Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and at the "Minnesota Meeting", a new but prestigious forum. His visit to Columbia was essentially a private one, but he nonetheless took on a number of media, and one minor speaking, engagements. Mr Prior made an additional visit at short notice to the Hyster Company in Portland, Oregon, in an effort to encourage the Company to maintain and, if possible, extend their operations at Irvine in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. We expect to know of their decision shortly.

In all his engagements Mr Prior emphasised that Americans who wished to help in Northern Ireland should do so by sending donations to responsible charities and not to organisations such as NORaid which supported terrorism. He explained progress on the implementation of the Northern Ireland Act 1982, stressing that time, patience, and understanding were necessary if progress towards political stability, and so toward improvements in the security situation, was to be maintained. He interpreted the Assembly election results for American audiences, putting the Sinn Fein vote in context and explaining the position of the SDLP.

Assessment

These messages were generally well received. In his meetings with Congressman Shannon and Deputy Secretary Dam both emphasised the importance from the US point of view of good Anglo-Irish relations, both for their own sake and because they eased the task of moderate Irish-Americans in persuading their compatriots not to contribute to NORaid. Mr Prior was careful not to express a preference for either side in the Irish election, but expressed his own hope that closer Anglo-Irish relations would follow in the wake of the election. He was assured that in recent political discussions with the Irish, US officials had been privately extremely helpful, urging the Irish Government to take a less dismissive attitude to the Assembly in Northern Ireland. Mr Prior also raised with Mr Dam the question of arms smuggling from the USA to Northern Ireland, and received renewed assurances of US determination to prevent gun-running. The State Department issued a statement along these lines after the meeting, of which I attach the text.

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Mr Prior considers that this visit, taken together with earlier visits by himself and other NIO Ministers, made an important contribution to our continuing effort to dissuade uncommitted Irish-Americans from offering their support, through ignorance, to terrorism in Northern Ireland. There are also considerable benefits in explaining political developments to an American audience and in providing high level support for our efforts to attract inward investment. Mr Prior considers that background briefing of the leaders of American opinion by UK Ministers and, if possible, people from Northern Ireland, is a cost-effective, if indirect, way of reaching Irish-American opinion and a valuable supplement to the continuing hard work of our Information staff in the USA in putting across HMG's view of the Northern Ireland situation. He intends to keep up this pressure and since his visit another Northern Ireland Minister, Mr Nicholas Scott, has paid a visit to the West Coast and New York with similar objectives.

Telegram Nos 3729 and 3730 were issued from Washington and No 15 from New York reporting on Mr Prior's visit.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to HM Ambassador in Washington, to whom, and to whose staff, Mr Prior has asked me to convey particular thanks for the hard work involved in organising the visit.

*Yours sincerely*

*DA Hill*

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TEXT OF STATE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ON GUN-RUNNING ISSUED  
AFTER MR PRIOR'S MEETING WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE DAM  
ON 16 NOVEMBER:

"On November 16 Deputy Secretary of State, Kenneth Dam, met with the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Prior, who is visiting the United States for regular consultations on questions of mutual concern.

During the course of their discussions, Mr Dam assured Mr Prior that the US will continue to enforce the US Arms Export Control Act and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations and will prosecute vigorously those individuals engaged in illegal arms trafficking to Northern Ireland."



4 DEC 1982

