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HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT



1) Mr Powell
2) Prime Minister (1)

15 June 1984

Prime Minister

You should know that, in reciprocation, the French are making certain difficulties over your protection officers in relation to Fontainebleau.

Content to await FCS reply before considering further? ARE resisting rigorously. JERS 18.6.

Yes not

Dms 18/6

FIREARMS FOR PROTECTION OFFICERS

As you will be aware, two incidents occurred during the Economic Summit involving the unauthorised possession of weapons or ammunition by protection officers. I am writing to express the Home Secretary's strong wish that these incidents should be followed up with the countries concerned.

The first incident involved two French security officers, and was by far the more serious. We understand from the City Police that these officers arrived at the Guildhall without the appropriate passes and attempted to gain admittance. Because this aroused the suspicion of the police they were searched and although they denied they were armed were found to be in possession of pistols. Their action was very dangerous and foolish. Had there been an incident during which their guns were seen, British police officers could well have thought them to be assailants. Thus their action risked confusion of a sort which could have been fatal. And of course, since no authority had been given to the French to carry firearms, the security officers were breaking the law.

This would obviously be an inappropriate subject for a formal protest, and our position is made a little more difficult by the change of plan over President Reagan's security officers. But the Home Secretary nevertheless feels that an approach to the French authorities about this unprofessional and dangerous conduct should be made, and he hopes that this can be set in hand.

The second incident involved three (not one as previously reported) American agents who were detected with pistol ammunition in their hand luggage as they left Heathrow at the beginning of this week. This was a less serious incident in security terms than that involving the French, but it was still an offence under the Firearms Act 1968 and was also, we believe, quite contrary to internationally agreed practice for the carriage of firearms on aircraft because the ammunition was concealed in hand luggage rather than declared openly. It does not inspire confidence in the Americans' adherence to the terms of the concession which they were given.

The Home Secretary does not feel that a protest to the Americans would be appropriate in this case. He would prefer instead to open discussions with the US authorities about protection arrangements for future visits and to refer to this incident in negotiations. He believes that we should point out to the Americans that events at the Summit illustrate the difficulties

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P Ricketts, Esq

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in making exceptions for one nation. The US authorities are most insistent that the protection of important visitors to the United States is the responsibility of the US authorities. Our protection officers on such trips do carry firearms because that is regarded as a matter of routine in the United States. But the US authorities relegate our protection officers to a distant and supporting role quite unlike the role they insist upon for their own people here. The Home Secretary feels therefore that we should propose, perhaps in the first instance to the Embassy in London, an understanding that exceptions to our general policy will not be available in the future because they place us in an impossible situation with other nations and dilute and confuse the responsibility which is quite properly ours.

If an understanding on these lines cannot be reached then we shall need to adopt some different and clearly understood policy which is known in advance and can be properly managed on each occasion in terms of its public presentation, the responsibilities under the law of the relevant chief officer of police, and the relationship with the security authorities of any other nations who may be involved.

I am sending a copy of this to David Barclay at No 10.

H H TAYLOR

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