



Security Council

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LETTER DATED 14 JUNE 1989 FROM THE DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE
UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

I have the honour to enclose the text of a statement that I made to the press on 14 June following the adoption of Security Council resolution 635 (1989) on the marking of plastic or sheet explosive for the purpose of detection.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its enclosure as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) J. A. BIRCH

Enclosure

The Security Council has just unanimously adopted a resolution on marking plastic or sheet explosives so that they can be more easily detected. None of us can forget the horror of the destruction of Pan American flight 103 on 21 December last year over Lockerbie in Scotland, with the loss of 270 innocent lives. On 28 December it was established that the aircraft had been destroyed by a high performance plastic explosive. A statement was made by the President on behalf of the Members of the Security Council on 30 December strongly condemning that act of terrorism.

On too many occasions in the past the Security Council has been able to do no more than use words against such barbaric acts of terrorism by adopting condemnatory resolutions and statements. On this occasion, however, the Council has decided to go further. By this resolution the Council has shown that it is concerned not only to condemn terrorist acts against civil aviation, but also to place its authority behind the practical initiative currently being taken by the International Civil Aviation Organization to devise an international régime to mark plastic explosive so that it can be more easily detected. This should help us to prevent bombs being put on board aeroplanes, as well as bring about wider benefits in the fight against terrorism.

The current work being done on devising such a régime was the result of an initiative taken jointly by the British Government and the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, about which we have been in close touch since January. Czechoslovakia, as a significant producer of plastic explosives for peaceful purposes, has naturally been concerned to ensure that ways and means should be found to make such explosives more easily detectable. The object of our two Governments is the early conclusion of an international convention on the marking of plastic or sheet explosives. We are grateful to the Czechoslovak Government for their co-operation and goodwill in this endeavour.

The tragedy at Lockerbie last December shocked the world. It was universally condemned at the United Nations. The United Nations is committed by its Charter to the dignity and worth of the human person. Terrorism is a denial of that concept. We believe that today a step has been taken towards denying the terrorist the use of plastic explosive and in making air travel safer for us all.

