

From The Rt Hon Tony Blair

February 2016

Dear Lawrence,

I write in response to your letter of 27 January in which I note that you seem to accept one of the main points in my written evidence, which is that I did not try to prevent the UK victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism from receiving compensation.

I declined your request to appear before the Committee because having accepted your earlier invitation to provide written evidence, I had already given you the facts of the matter. As I said then, simply repeating in person the information I have already provided would not achieve any advance in the cause of the victims and their families.

However, having read your follow-up questions I think for the sake of clarity it is worth repeating that the issue of compensation for the victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism was not raised with me in government, as far as I am aware. I never raised the issue of IRA victims with President Bush in any meeting in 2008 with him and I did not raise any detail about the Lockerbie compensation. I was not even in Government at the time.

Please find attached my responses to your questions.

Yours ever,

Tony

1 When in office, why did your government choose not to espouse the claims of the UK victims to seek compensation from the Libyan Government?

The issue of compensation for the victims of IRA terrorism made possible by the provision of materiel by the Gaddafi regime was not an issue raised with me, as far as I am aware. And of course a statutory compensation scheme for victims of terrorism in Northern Ireland was already in existence, having been set up by a previous government. The needs of victims were therefore being addressed through the existing structures and mechanisms.

2 How many meetings did you have with Colonel Gaddafi a) whilst in office and b) after leaving office?

AND

3 Was the issue of compensation for the UK victims of IRA terrorism discussed at any of these meetings?

Twice before June 2007 and six after.

As I have already explained, the issue of compensation for the victims of IRA terrorism made possible by the provision of materiel by the Gaddafi regime was not raised with me, as far as I am aware.

4 Was the issue of Lockerbie compensation discussed at any of these meetings?

I certainly raised it in March 2004 when I expressed the importance I attached to the Libyan decisions to accept responsibility and pay compensation.

5 Fean's email to your office in 2008 stated: "TB should explain what he said to President Bush [...] to keep his promise to Col Q to intervene after the President allowed the US courts to attach Libyan assets." Did you make a commitment to Colonel Gaddafi? If so, what action did you take as a result?

As I have said previously, I did not raise any points of detail or substance. I merely expressed the hope that once they had resolved the issue, it was important to move on.

6 Your letter states that you: "did not raise any detail about the Lockerbie compensation" with President Bush, but also states that you had "expressed the hope that if they were able to resolve the issue, it was then important to move on [. ..]". These appear to be contradictory statements. Did you discuss the Lockerbie compensation with President Bush prior to the US-Libya Claims Settlement Agreement?

They are not contradictory. I did not raise any points of detail or substance. I merely expressed the hope that once they had resolved the issue, it was important to move on.

7 Were you aware that by encouraging the US to reach agreement with Libya on the US-Libya Claims Settlement Agreement, this would lead to the UK victims being excluded from the compensation deal, even though a large number of them were named on the writ that was at that time in the US courts?

As I have said previously, not only did I not raise the issue of IRA victims with President Bush in any meeting in 2008 with him, I did not raise any detail about the Lockerbie compensation. I was not even in Government at the time. I would simply have expressed the hope that if they were able to resolve the issue, it was then important to move on to see how the two countries i.e. the USA and Libya could cooperate together.

I have also said to you that I never tried to get the Americans to exclude the claims of IRA victims. I did not raise this issue with President Bush. The email from former Ambassador Vincent Fean to my office evidences no such thing, it was simply a reflection of government policy at the time. I was in favour of the USA having good relations with Libya for the same reason as I favoured the UK having such relations: it assisted in the fight against terrorism.

The decision by the US not to include British victims was, I believe, because they were precluded legally from such an action.

8 Did you keep notes of your discussions with Colonel Gaddafi and President Bush? If so, could you provide copies to the committee?

I did not keep notes.

9 What is your response to the argument made by the IRA victims that you should have pushed for their inclusion in the settlement reached between the US and Libya?

As I have said, as far as I am aware, this was not an issue that was raised with me. Neither was it an issue on which my intervention was sought as far as I'm aware. I was not in government at the time of the settlement but I believe the IRA victims were precluded legally from such an action in the US.

10 In your evidence to the FAC, you separated the issue of compensation for the family of Yvonne Fletcher, and the Lockerbie victims, from the claims of the UK victims of IRA terrorism, why?

As I understand it, there was a legal requirement under a number of UN Security Resolutions for Libya to pay compensation for Lockerbie and the inquest into Yvonne Fletcher's murder concluded that Libyan nationals were responsible. This is what differentiated them from the UK victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism. And, as I have said, as far as I am aware, the latter was not an issue that was raised with me.

11 We assume that your reference to the pre-existing statutory compensation scheme was in respect of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland). Is it not the case that GB victims were not eligible for compensation under that scheme, and that the compensation offered was significantly more modest than that provided under the US-Libya Claims Settlement Agreement?

I can't speak to the differences in compensation and I thought GB victims were eligible under a different scheme but in any event as I have said previously, this was not an issue that was raised with me, as far as I am aware. Neither was it an issue on which my intervention was sought as far as I'm aware.

I was not in government at the time of the settlement and I believe the IRA victims were precluded legally from such an action in the US.