

✓ MRS 3/12
 1. Mr. Bombard
 2. SEC 11



cc: PS/Secretary of State (L) - M
 PS/Mr Scott (B & L) - M
 PS/PUS (B & L) - M
 PS/Sir Ewart Bell
 Mr Brennan - M
 Mr Bourn
 Mr Buxton
 Mr Burns - M
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Gilliland
 Mr Lyon - M
 Mr Bickham
 Mr Carlisle
 (without enclosures)

PS/Secretary of State (B)

RECLOSURE OF CROSS-BORDER ROADS

The RUC have requested authority under Section 19(2)(d) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 to reclose a cross-border road, designated L54, in the Gortoral area of Kinawley which has been re-opened illegally. Authority for the closure was originally given under the Special Powers Act. Although closures under the old Act are still technically valid, it is our policy to obtain a new authorisation for closure under the Emergency Provisions Act when a crossing closed under the old Act has been illegally re-opened or by-passed.

2. The police have also recommended that another cross-border road, designated L39 at Leitrim Bridge, near Newtownbutler, should be reclosed. In this case an order under the Emergency Provisions Act is already in existence, and the police are not legally obliged to come to us with their proposals for reclosure or modification. Nevertheless, it is customary for them to do so.

3. The locations of both these crossings are indicated on the attached maps (Flags A and B).

L54 GORTORAL BRIDGE, KINAWLEY (GRID REFERENCE 206277)

4. This border crossing point is located on the border between Co Fermanagh and Co Leitrim. It was closed by the Army in January/February 1974 by the placing of large concrete blocks and a Braithwait Tank. At some time, date unknown, the Army installed a wooden foot-bridge to provide pedestrian access. The Security Forces have recently successfully re-closed several other border crossing points in the Kinawley area. This concerted effort by the Security Forces

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prompted the illegal re-opening of Gortoral Bridge on 28 October 1984. Several Braithwaite Tanks, which had previously been sited on the bridge, were pushed into the hedgerow. This opened the bridge to vehicular traffic which now provides a direct route between Kinawley in the North (3 miles from the border) and Swanlinbar in the South (1 mile from the border). However in illegally re-opening the main bridge, the existing wooden footbridge, which was already giving cause for concern because of its unsafe condition, was destroyed.

5. The police report that the bridge is now being used regularly by the general public, and there is a very real concern that it is also being used by terrorists. The RUC believe steps must be taken to prevent it being used by terrorists in vehicles.

6. The attached sketch maps Flags C and D show the intended method of closure. It is proposed that the existing bridge, which straddles the border, should be cut on the Northern side to prevent plant being brought up from the south to remove the other security works. These will consist of a large crater being excavated between the severed bridge and a new zig-zag arrangement of Braithwaite Tanks - an arrangement which has proved in other locations to be very difficult to remove. Sufficient space will be left alongside the first Braithwaite Tank and the crater to allow pedestrian access. This question of access is particularly important as, it is estimated that 10 children use this crossing every day to get to school, and there is heavier pedestrian traffic at weekends and holidays. Plans are being prepared to install a new pedestrian footbridge and it is hoped that work on this will be commenced within the next month.

*the SdS's
letter to
and
contacts
with Mr
Barry Myles.*

7. Cutting the road bridge would mean that pedestrians access would be prevented until the new footbridge could be installed. To avoid this the Army have been asked to erect a temporary footbridge, which will be removed once the new, purpose-built footbridge is in operation.

L39 LEITRIM BRIDGE, NEWTOWNBUTLER

8. This cross-border road is located on the western side of the Monaghan salient. It was first closed in 1971 but was subsequently re-opened. On 11 March 1980 the Secretary of State signed a re-closure order under Section 19(2) of the the EPA 1978 and the necessary work was carried out between 19-21 March 1980. During the early part of 1983 a single Braithwaite Tank was placed at the crossing point

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to prevent it being used by motor vehicles.

9. The RUC have information which indicates that the road has recently been used by terrorists and they are concerned that it might be used again in the near future. The problem is that following the installation of the Braithwaite Tank in 1983, an irrigation ditch on the Republic's side of the crossing was improved by their drainage authorities in connection with the Lecky/Finn Drainage Scheme. During subsequent work a new culvert was built and, as a result, it became possible for vehicular traffic to easily by-pass the existing Braithwaite Tank. At present the by-pass route is over extremely boggy ground which may remain in this state for the duration of the Winter. However, given a period of good weather it would be useable by most vehicles and the terrorist threat, particularly to RUC Newtownbutler and the Kilturk PVCP, both within easy reach of this crossing point, would be greatly enhanced.

10. The Police and Army Engineers agree that the provision of 2 additional Braithwaite Tanks, strategically placed and tied into the present Tank, (as indicated on the attached sketch Flag E) will effectively prevent the crossing being used by vehicular traffic. The existing Braithwaite Tank has not previously been interfered with.

11. I am satisfied that the security forces have made a detailed and realistic study of these crossing points, and of the threats which they pose in their present conditions. The police intend to maintain a covert security force presence at both locations in the period after their re-closure, as experience shows this is when they are most at risk of being illegally re-opened. Although there is always the risk that attempts might be made to re-open them, I support the recommendation that action should be taken to close them effectively at this time. If the Secretary of State is content with the proposed arrangements I recommend that he should approve them and sign the necessary order in respect of L54 which is attached opposite.

12. In accordance with the normal practice in such cases, the Garda have been informed that the RUC wish to reclose these crossings. If the Secretary of State is content, we will arrange for the DFA

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to be informed of the decision to re-close these two crossings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul [unclear]", written over the typed name "Paul [unclear]".

Law and Order Division

6 December 1984

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