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Title: Copy letter from Seán Ronan, Department of External Affairs, to P Berry, Secretary of the Department of Justice, regarding border incursions and spiking of border crossings by British military forces.

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14 Meán Fómhair, 1970

Confidential

An Rúnaí
An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

I am directed by the Minister for External Affairs to refer to your minute of 8th October, 1970 regarding border incidents and the spiking by British troops of certain roads in border areas and to state that following receipt by telephone on 7th October from your Minister of particulars of the border incursions into Cos. Donegal and Tyrone, particularly at Clady, oral representations were made immediately to the British Embassy. The great frequency of such incidents and the serious concern felt about them was conveyed to the Embassy and they were requested to take action to ensure that they would be stopped. The Embassy expressed regret and undertook to have the necessary action taken. In this connection I am to enclose copy of a letter dated 14th July 1970 addressed to the Minister by the British Ambassador which indicates the British position in the matter of border incursions in general.

A further opportunity of raising the specific instances described in your minute under reference occurred on 9th October when two officers of this Department met Mr. R. Burroughs, the Foreign Office representative in Belfast, at the residence of the British Ambassador here.

The subjects of border incursions and spiking of roads were raised at some length with Mr. Burroughs in the presence of the Ambassador and it was again emphasized that a serious view was being taken of these matters which provoked local feeling and, as regards spiking of roads, caused great hardship to people on both sides of the border. It was also suggested that the spiking of roads might have been over-reaction on the part of the British security forces to the deaths of two RUC policemen in Crossmaglen and that matters might even be improved if all spikes were removed. Mr. Burroughs indicated that the matter was under review and that there was some prospect of spikes being removed within a few weeks especially if full cooperation was received from the Garda Síochána. The problem of the spiking of roads had also been raised by the Ambassador at London in talks about the North in the Foreign Office on 5th October.

The British Ambassador called to the Department today and stated that his authorities had decided gradually to abandon the spiking of roads in border areas. However, as regards Crossmaglen the spikes at the border would be abandoned and on the road running along the border but a road block would be erected in the area well away from the border under a 24-hour watch. It was hoped that this road block would be withdrawn and a road spot check substituted in a couple of weeks time.

The Ambassador emphasized that the success of the operation depended to a large extent on the absence of press and political comment down here. He added that the recent blowing up of the

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customs posts at Mullen and Tullydonnell made the above decisions difficult politically for Major Chichester-Clark.

The Ambassador asked if it could be ensured that additional Garda patrols could be provided at border trouble spots, particularly at Crossmaglen.

As regards border incursions by British troops, the Ambassador put these down to lack of knowledge of localities by new units. He said, however, that stringent instructions were being reissued to the troops about border incursions. It was suggested to the Ambassador that RUC stations in border areas should be able to indicate the exact delineation of the boundary to the troops.

(SGD.) SEAN G. RONAN

Rúnaí

cc. Private Secretary to the Taoiseach
Minister for External Affairs