

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

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Title: Letter from John Williams of the British Embassy to Ireland, Dublin, to HJ McCann, Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, attaching statements by British Army authorities, HQ [Headquarters] Northern Ireland, and Brian Faulkner, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, concerning the use of force by the British Army. .

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N/25/2
N/7/1

Points for T.
(1) Mr Faulkner has seen
a copy of the statement
(2) Mr T. will be for the
clear final in Mr. H. J. C.
the afternoon. Point
reference to Lord Balfour
by the same name.

26 May 1971

H J McCann Esq
Department of Foreign Affairs
DUBLIN

Dear Mr McCann,

My Ambassador has asked me to send the enclosed texts, three copies in each case:

1. Statement issued by the British Army authorities in Northern Ireland on 25 May 1971.
2. Further statement issued by H.Q. Northern Ireland in relation to questions about a particular case in which it was thought that "warning shots" might have been fired. In this case the Army had not fired "warning shots", but were engaging gunmen.
3. Statement made by Mr Faulkner this morning, 26 May.

Yours cordl,

John Williams

J T Williams

Enc: (3)

TEXT OF STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE BRITISH ARMY ON
EVENING OF 25 MAY 1971

Orders governing the opening of fire are issued to all soldiers. We do not discuss these orders but basically soldiers may fire whenever they believe life to be in danger. Soldiers do not need orders from superiors to fire when confronted with gunmen and their lives are in danger.

DFA/5
7/1
NI 25/2 ✓

ARMY STATEMENT NO. 2

A number of questions have been asked concerning the example quoted by the Prime Minister in the House this evening. The Army confirm again that the incident referred to was correct. After bringing the stolen car to a halt by ramming, shots were fired by soldiers in pursuit of the occupants who, after warnings to halt had been given, turned and appeared to be pointing a weapon. However, it is not necessary for the Army to give a warning to armed men with whom they are engaged before they open fire.

21/7/1
21/25/2

TEXT OF STATEMENT MADE BY MR B FAULKNER ON 1300 Hrs
NEWS, 26 MAY 1971

I emphasised in the House of Commons last night that the Army stood ready to react at once in any dangerous situation, and that there was no delay and constraint upon them to prevent the effective use of their fire power in engagements with armed men. I made this statement for two reasons. First, to re-assure the law abiding population of Northern Ireland that while guerilla warfare in the nature of things favours the terrorists, the Army will lose no opportunity of striking hard and fast. Second, to warn, not the hard-core IRA, - for they are past warning - but any misguided dupes on the fringe of terrorism that they could be playing with their lives. Some people have disingenuously asked what I meant when I said that soldiers would fire on those who were "acting suspiciously". It was clear from the context of my remarks that "acting suspiciously" related to circumstances in which fire-arms or explosives might be used. The man who carried a bomb which was to bring death, injury and destruction to the Springfield Road last night would, had he been seen in time, have been the sort of target the Army and I had in mind when I made yesterday's statement.

Note:

Mr. Williams called at 2.30 this afternoon and, in pursuance of the undertaking given by the British Ambassador this morning, handed me the attached letter enclosing the text of the two British Army statements in Belfast and the text of a further statement by Mr. Faulkner.

Mr. Williams said that Lord Balniel would be taking a Private Notice Question in the British House of Commons addressed to him by Mr. Kevin McNamara. While Mr. Williams could not say what reply Lord Balniel would give in Parliament, he could tell me the points that were being put up to Lord Balniel by his officials. The points were as follows:-

- i) troops open fire if there is a threat to their lives or the lives of those for whom they are responsible;
- ii) they always try to give warnings (not warning shots) whenever possible;
- iii) common law requires the use of the minimum amount of force.

- iv) there has been no change in instructions to the troops - only a change in circumstances.

I thanked Mr. Williams for this information and told him that there had already been an effort by Deputy Cluskey to raise the matter in the Dail this morning and it was bound to arise on the Taoiseach's Question this afternoon.

Mr. Williams thought that the Taoiseach could usefully use the following two points:-

- 1) Mr. Faulkner has made a corrective statement, and
- 2) the matter will be further clarified in the British House of Commons this afternoon.


26/5/71