

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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SAS Incursion

1. At 10.50 p.m. on 5 May a car containing two men dressed as civilians, but one of whom had a military jacket, was stopped on the Flagstaff Road, Co. Louth, a short distance from the Border. The occupants said they were in the Army, new to the area and were out testing a car. At 2.30 a.m. on 6 May two further cars were stopped. The first contained four men in civilian clothes and the second contained two men in uniform. The total number of weapons found between the three cars comprised 4 sub-machine guns, 3 pistols, 1 sawn-off shotgun and 1 dagger. The eight men were held in custody in Dundalk overnight.

2. On the following morning the British Ambassador came, at his own request, to see the Secretary. He said he was instructed to apologise for the incursion and ask for the return of the men and their equipment. The Ambassador's explanation for the incursions was that initially three soldiers were sent in a civilian car to G.R. 091194 to establish an observation post near the H.4 border crossing. When nothing was heard from them by midnight two other cars were sent to G.R. 091194 to look for them. The total armourey consisted of 5 pistols, 4 sub-machine guns, 1 shotgun and 1 self-loading rifle. Apart from the overall discrepancy the Ambassador's account of the distribution of weapons between the cars was at variance with information available to the Irish authorities. The Secretary explained the difficulties which the incident created for us, particularly in an area where there had been a recent abduction of a person who was now in custody in Northern Ireland. He also pointed out that it was necessary to be certain of identification, not least because most of the eight were in civilian clothes and in that area one could not even be certain that those wearing uniforms were necessarily genuine soldiers. The British ambassador said he had no further information but would obviously try to obtain fuller details and convey them to us as soon as possible.

3. The Prime Minister telephoned the Taoiseach shortly after noon to ask for the release of the men. The Taoiseach told him he would immediately look into the matter.



4. In the afternoon the Minister informed the British Ambassador that the eight soldiers would be brought to Dublin and charged that evening (6 May). The charges and manner in which they would be dealt with were, of course, matters solely for the DPP who had taken his decision without reference to the Government. All necessary consular facilities and (if bail were granted), facilities to enable the soldiers to leave the Republic quickly would be granted. The Minister conveyed to the Ambassador that none of the various accounts given by the soldiers tallied with that given by the Ambassador earlier in the day. The Ambassador said his information had been hurriedly put together by an NCO and an Operations Officer at HQ NI Lisburn.

5. The eight men were charged in the Special Criminal Court under Sections 2 and 15 of the Firearms Act 1925 (possession of firearms without a certificate and possession of weapons with intent to endanger life. They were released on bail and flown back immediately to Northern Ireland. All available indications are that the case will not come up before next October, as it is the custom of the Special Criminal Court to deal with custody cases first, dealing with bail cases as time permits. If the SCC were to sit into the August vacation there is a possibility that the case would come up then, but even if the Court so sits, there is no guarantee that further custody cases will not have arisen by then thus pushing the SAS case back once more.