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Incursions

1. Since 1973 a total of 308 incursions by the British Army have been reported to the Department. This figure can be broken down as follows:-

	Total reported incursions	Reported by British authorities	Reported by other sources	Raised with British authorities	Admitted by British authorities (includes column 2)
1973	76 (43) ^{1/}	24	52	23	28
1974	132 (79)	29	103	92	51
1975	71 (35)	27	44	41	47
1976	29 (12)	13	16	14	17

^{1/} figures for aerial incursions in brackets.

Certain reported incursions have not been raised with the British authorities where it was considered that the information which could be obtained was not adequate for such an approach or where the time-lapse between the report and the incident was such that a proper investigation could hardly have been made by the British.

2. The great majority of these incursions were of a relatively minor nature in so far as they were not very deep, were not witnessed by many or any civilians and did not give rise to any incidents at the time. However, it has been represented to the British authorities that, apart from their inherent impropriety even minor incursions such as these are potential security risks in that they can be exploited for propaganda and other purposes by subversives, either at the time or subsequently.

3. In a minority of cases the incursions were of a flagrant nature and/or provoked local incidents. Such were the recent SAS incursion (separate note attached), the Longfield incursion of October 1975 in which a British patrol commandeered two civilian vehicles within the South to pursue fleeing locals who were re-opening a cratered cross-border road, the incursion of four armed soldiers in a British Army jeep into Clones in May 1974 or the occasion at Drumboat in July 1973 where British and Irish Army members faced each other at gunpoint for some 90 minutes before the British received instructions to withdraw. The cases were naturally taken up in a much more serious way with the British who on the whole tendered unreserved apologies.

4. In the past three years there has not been a consistent trend in either direction in the numbers of incursions reported to the Department. The low figure for 1975 might partly be ascribed to a falling off in British Army activity during the IRA "truce". Figures for the current year (Jan-April) show a slight increase over figures for the equivalent period last year viz:-

Jan-April		
1975	21	incursions
1976	26	incursions

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