

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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PRESS STATEMENT

520876

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Peter Barry TD, referred today to a statement issued by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Tom King, on the recent remarks attributed to the head of the RUC, Sir John Hermon.

The Minister recalled that on his instructions, the British Ambassador had been summoned to the Department of Foreign Affairs on 21 October and had been received by the Secretary of the Department in the Minister's absence.

The attention of the British authorities had been drawn to press reports in the Toronto Sun of 17 October, the Houston Post of 17 October and the Irish Times of 21 October of remarks made by the head of the RUC at a police chiefs meeting in Houston, Texas. Immediate investigation of these reports had been sought, together with an explanation of the remarks attributed to Sir John Hermon. The British authorities had been informed that the remarks attributed to the head of the RUC reflecting on the security policy of the Government were completely unfounded and damaging to the efforts of both Governments to tackle the problem of Northern Ireland.

The Minister said today that in reply the British Government had stated their view that Sir John Hermon's remarks to the conference in Houston had been seriously misrepresented and had

assured the Government that they greatly appreciated the measures which have been taken in co-operation with the security forces in Northern Ireland to prevent acts of violence on both sides of the border.

The Minister noted the statement issued today by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The statement indicated that the Secretary of State had discussed the matter with Sir John Hermon and was satisfied that the speech had been seriously misrepresented in the media. The Secretary of State noted that while Sir J. Hermon had expressed concern at the scale of resources available to the Garda he had paid tribute to the force. Specifically Sir John Hermon had said it was an excellent force of fine men, that the RUC and Garda had a good relationship along the border at working level and that there was no lack of will by the Garda to combat terrorism.

It has thus been made clear that the news reports which have appeared of the head of the RUC's presentation in Houston, Texas do not represent the views of the British Government of the Government's security policy or the level of security cooperation with the Northern Ireland authorities, and that, on the contrary, the Government's policy and operational cooperation are highly valued by the British Government.

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The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland today held one of his regular meetings with the Chief Constable of the RUC and the GOC. After the meeting he discussed with Sir John Hermon the lecture given by the latter to a gathering of professional police officers in the United States on 16th October on the subject of border terrorism in an international context. The Chief Constable took the opportunity of showing to the Secretary of State the speaking notes for his lecture. It was clear that his speech had been seriously misrepresented in the media. Indeed the reporter concerned in an interview on BBC radio subsequently made it clear that the article which he wrote was an expression of opinion and included some extracts not necessarily verbatim from the Chief Constable's address. The Secretary of State noted that while the Chief Constable had expressed concern at the scale of resources available to the Garda he had paid tribute to the force. Specifically he had said it was an excellent force of fine men that the RUC and Garda had a good relationship along the border at working level and that there was no lack of will by the Garda to combat terrorism. The Secretary of State expressed his full support for the Chief Constable. He commented that it was regrettable that such widespread publicity should have been given to an unreliable report and that unnecessary controversy should thereby have arisen.