



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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6 February 1992

To: HQ
For: P Hennessy

From: Belfast Pages: 5
From: Joint Secretary

Herewith text of Mr Brooke's statement in the Commons. As you may have seen already from the live television coverage the only point of note is that the Prime Minister has indicated that he intends to invite the four leaders of the constitutional parties to a meeting with himself and Mr Brooke to discuss the present security situation.

SECURITY SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr Speaker, I will with permission make a Statement about the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

2. It is my sad duty to report that since the beginning of this month, twelve people have died in circumstances directly related to the continuation of terrorism in the Province.

3. The proscribed loyalist terrorist organisation, the UFF has admitted responsibility for two attacks, which have led to the deaths of six people. They include five, two of them teenagers, murdered in a bookmaker's office in Belfast yesterday. Two persons have been arrested in connection with the earlier UFF murder of a taxi driver at his home in North Belfast. Three persons were killed by an off-duty police officer in the Sinn Fein Advice Centre on the Falls Road. That officer subsequently took his own life. The IRA claimed responsibility for the murder of a bread delivery man in Dungannon and are believed to have been responsible for the attempted murder yesterday near Belleek of a dog warden, who was also a part-time member of the UDR. In this incident, one terrorist was killed. Following it, three persons have been apprehended by the Garda Siochana. In relation to all of these incidents vigorous follow-up action is in train and will continue.

4. I know that the whole House will wish to join me in expressing sympathy to all those who have been so suddenly bereaved. Each of these deaths represents a personal tragedy. But each is also part of a wider tragedy - in which the whole community, Protestant and Catholic, Unionist and Nationalist, shares. For let there be no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland deeply abhor, and want no part of, the wanton destruction perpetrated by that tiny minority who, without democratic, moral or spiritual authority, have taken upon themselves the right to decide who should live or die.

5. Mr Speaker, as we have seen in recent days, notably in the trade union rally in Belfast last Tuesday and in the unequivocal statement of leading churchmen, this overwhelming majority of decent people is increasingly making its voice heard and its influence felt. And individuals are coming forward - making use of the Confidential telephone and in other ways - to help the police prevent outrages and to apprehend the criminals. It is vitally important that this should continue. Terrorists - from whatever side they come - represent no one but themselves. The community has a vital role to play in making them realise that they will never achieve their objectives through violence.

6. But a particular responsibility for dealing with terrorism lies with the Government and the security forces. We will not shirk that responsibility. The House will recall the announcement last month of the arrival in Northern Ireland of substantial numbers of additional troops. The level of military reinforcement for the police will continue to be kept under review and further adjustments may be made. We will take whatever action is necessary to bring terrorism to an end. But we will not abandon the underlying principle of our security policy which is a determination to deal with terrorism under the rule of law. In accordance with that policy, the Police supported by the Armed Forces have achieved, in the last few weeks, further significant successes. A very high proportion of intended attacks is being prevented or aborted. Substantial quantities of arms and explosives (some of it clearly intended for immediate use) have been seized. In these and other situations, important arrests have been made. There will be more seizures and more arrests. The House will recall that almost four hundred people were charged with terrorist related crimes in Northern Ireland last year.

7. Last week the leaders of the four main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland agreed that, at my invitation, they would meet to consider matters of common concern in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland. No matter is of greater shared concern to the people of Northern Ireland and their political leaders than the present security situation. In view of this, and against the background of recent events, the Prime Minister has indicated that he proposes to invite the four leaders to a meeting with both of us to concentrate on that issue. This will ensure that at the highest levels of government we can hear directly from political leaders who understand and represent the views of the people in Northern Ireland who inevitably have borne the brunt of recent events.

8. The security situation in Northern Ireland is a matter for serious concern; but it is not, and will not be allowed to get, out of control. That is my conviction and that of the Chief Constable. As the Chief Constable said yesterday a number of new anti-terrorist measures have recently been introduced in Belfast. The House may be assured that, in the discharge of their responsibilities for security in Northern Ireland, the Government and the security forces will take whatever further measures are judged to be necessary and effective.

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