



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/102/35

Creator(s): Department of Justice

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

OPENING SPEAKING POINTS

TERRORISM IS OUR COMMON ENEMY

I do not intend to mince words in addressing the issues of terrorism and security co-operation and the Irish Government's record on these matters.

Terrorism is the common enemy of all of us seated around this table and of the people we represent. We all share a common concern in tackling the problem and seeing those responsible for terrorist outrages brought to justice. Let nobody doubt that.

IRISH GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

There has been no ambivalence in the response of successive Irish Governments to the present campaign of violence. Our record speaks for itself:

- The Irish Government condemn - and have always condemned - terrorism in all its manifestations and whatever its source.
- The Irish Government has always been conscious of its duty to do everything in its power to protect all the people of this island from those who have recourse to the bullet and the bomb.

Those are the principles which have consistently informed the Government's response to terrorism and its attitude to the issue of security co-operation.

TERRORIST THREAT IS TO REPUBLIC AS WELL

- The Irish Government has no illusions about the threat which the terrorists pose to the security of our State.
- The Provisional IRA, for example, has never accepted our institutions of State or our lawfully and democratically elected Governments. Their campaign is not only directed against Northern Ireland and its institutions. Their ultimate objective is to take power - North and South.
- We have also suffered directly from the activities of terrorists on both sides of the divide. The Provisional IRA has showed no hesitation in attacking our institutions, our security forces or our citizens when it has suited their purposes. Loyalist terrorist organisations have also demonstrated their capacity to mount outrages in our jurisdiction. Those terrorist groups remain a threat to our security and to our citizens. We have a common interest therefore in defeating terrorism whatever its source or inspiration.

COMMITMENT TO DEFEAT OF TERRORISM EVIDENCED BY OUR ACTIONS

- Both the Government and our security forces have pursued the fight against terrorism by all legitimate means available in a democratic society.
- Successive Irish Governments have legislated to ensure that our security forces have the powers they need to confront the terrorist threat. They have legislated to ensure that there are means for

dealing with fugitive offenders. They have provided the additional resources which the Garda Siochana and the Defence Forces have required as a result of the campaign of violence in Northern Ireland and they have provided the prison accommodation to house those who have been caught in acts of terrorism. The Government of which I am a member will continue to take the measures and provide the resources which are necessary to confront the terrorists.

- Our security forces have shown great determination and courage in confronting terrorist violence. They have been successful in securing convictions against large numbers of those who have engaged in terrorism and have seriously disrupted the operations of those who seek to use our territory to mount, or support, terrorist activity.

CO-OPERATION IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

- Co-operation between our security forces and the security forces in Northern Ireland has been an important element of the fight against terrorism on the island as a whole. The extent of the co-operation provided by our security forces has been frequently acknowledged by those with political and operational responsibility for security within Northern Ireland.
- The Anglo-Irish Conference has made a significant contribution to improving that security co-operation by facilitating discussion between the two Governments on security matters, by being able to draw on the advice of those with operational responsibility for such matters and by strengthening and structuring day-to-day operational contacts.

- Co-operation between the security forces on both sides of the border will continue to be an important element in our common fight against the terrorists. Both Governments recognize its importance and will continue to give it priority and seek ways in which to enhance it.

NO LACK OF WILL ON OUR PART

- There have been those within the unionist political establishment who, in the past, have attempted to suggest that the Irish Government is in some unspecified way ambivalent or "soft" on terrorism. Such suggestions are deeply offensive and - given the record I have outlined - manifestly without foundation.
- They are contradicted as well by the statements made by those within Northern Ireland itself with responsibility for its security.
- Suggestions of that kind are also dangerous. They foster suspicion and encourage those who see advantage in everything that manages to maintain and strengthen division. The only persons who gain from such suggestions are the terrorists themselves.

NO EASY SOLUTION

- If the campaign of violence that we have endured in the past twenty odd years has proved anything it has proved that there are no easy answers to the task of defeating the terrorists. The defeat of terrorism will not be achieved overnight and those who are inclined to suggest that any particular measure can, of itself, defeat the terrorists misunderstand - I would suggest - the nature of the problem.

- We are always open to advice and to ideas that are put forward as to measures aimed at improving the response of the security forces on both sides of the border to the terrorist threat. But those suggestions must be capable of achieving their stated aim.
- Those of us who have political responsibility for these matters have to concern ourselves with the likely effectiveness of any measure that is proposed and must obviously take account of the advice of the professionals - those with operational responsibility in security matters - in making that assessment.
- History has shown that the negative impact of misconceived security initiatives is considerable and that they have the capacity to exacerbate a problem instead of providing its solution.
- That is not to deny the need to adapt to the changing nature of the terrorist threat. That will always be necessary and our security forces have shown that they have the capacity to adapt. We will continue to adapt our security policies when changes in the nature of the terrorist threat demand change.

NEED TO CONFRONT UNDERLYING REASONS FOR VIOLENCE

- The security forces will not - and cannot - defeat terrorism on their own. The reality, ultimately, is that the defeat of terrorism will require all of us together to play our part.
- We are being asked, within the framework of these talks, as the elected representatives of all shades of democratic opinion on this island, to

confront the causes of the division between our communities which has spawned the campaign of violence which those communities have endured for so long.

- If we can achieve a basis for a settlement which is acceptable to all those we represent, we, together, will be making an important contribution in our own right to the defeat of terrorism.

- That is the task that confronts us and that is the basis on which we should approach it.

SECURITY CO-OPERATION

Speaking Note

COMMITMENT TO SECURITY CO-OPERATION

Security co-operation has always been a central element of the Irish Government's response to the present campaign of violence. The measure of that response can be seen in the commitment of resources, in the enactment and application of legal measures and in successful operations to counter terrorist activity. The following facts and figures illustrate the extent of the Government's commitment:

- Since 1970, the Irish Government has spent in the region of £2.5bn. on security related to the Northern Ireland situation. Current spending is calculated at £200m. per annum - a considerable financial commitment for a relatively small economy such as ours.
- Since 1970 close on 1,000 extra Gardaí have been assigned to the Border Divisions. Current Garda strength in these Divisions is more than double the 1970 level (1,680 as opposed to 775). At the same time there has also been a doubling of the number of Gardaí dedicated to anti-terrorist work within the Force as a whole.
- Since 1972 more than 1,500 persons have been convicted in the Special Criminal Court of subversive related offences.

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT - POSITIVE COMMENTS

The process of North-South security cooperation has also been greatly strengthened by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Agreement has provided a new

framework for reviewing and developing co-operation between the police forces on both sides of the border in response to changing trends in the terrorist threat. Security cooperation is the subject of discussion at all meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. It is acknowledged by both sides at the Conference that the current climate of security cooperation is very good. This view has been expressed publicly. For example, in a Radio Ulster interview on 20/10/91 the Chief Constable of the RUC said:

"Relations with the Gardai are at an all-time high. There is probably the best relationship we ever had. The relationship between my border Chief Superintendents and the Garda Commissioner's Border Chief Superintendents is first class as are my relations with him."

Speaking recently in Edinourgn Minister Michael Mates said:

"If there is one consequence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement that actually can be measured it is the fact that it buttresses security cooperation"

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT - NEW SECURITY MEASURES

The principal catalyst in bringing about the present excellent relationship between security forces North and South has been the open and positive approach adopted by both sides at the Intergovernmental Conference established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This positive approach has led to very significant progress on various aspects of security cooperation since the Agreement was signed in 1985. Some examples of the new level of security cooperation are:

- regular updating of a joint threat assessment on paramilitary organisations:

- programmes of Garda/RUC meetings at various levels on a regular basis to supplement daily Garda/RUC contact;
- coordinated operations in border areas such as the anti-racketeering operations carried out in recent months as a result of which prosecutions are likely to be taken;
- day in day out heavy Garda/Army cover in border areas for RUC/British Army personnel engaged in patrol duties and checkpoint refurbishment works;
- improvements to secure radio, telephone and fax communications between the Gardai and the RUC at local and HQ level;

The Irish Government, as I have already emphasised, has been fully committed at all times to enhancement of security co-operation within the framework of the Intergovernmental Conference. In terms of resources this commitment has included, as well as the things I have already mentioned, the appointment of a Garda Superintendent in each Border Division, the creation of two additional special surveillance units for anti-terrorist work, and deployment of large numbers of Gardai on countrywide searches for arms, ammunition and explosives.

ARMS FINDS

Let me further illustrate our commitment to security co-operation by reference to the achievements of the Garda Síochána in recovering arms. Since January 1985 the Gardai have recovered more ammunition and nearly as many firearms as the RUC. Including the major seizures this year in Limerick, Cork and Donegal, the Gardai have seized over 1,700 firearms, 350,000 rounds of

ammunition and 16,000 lbs of explosives. This compares with over 1,800 firearms, 250,000 rounds of ammunition and over 37,000 lbs of explosives seized by the RUC between January 1985 and August 1991, the most recent date for which we have figures.

These figures show the on-going commitment of the Irish Government to seek to deprive the terrorist of the necessary weaponry to carry out his campaign. I want to assure all here present, if that assurance is needed - and I cannot understand why it might be in the light of our record to date - that the Garda authorities are determined to make every effort to recover the outstanding weaponry before it can be used to inflict further loss of life.

COSTS

The Exchequer costs associated with the delivery of this level of security commitment have been quite significant. As Government Ministers whose unenviable task it is to decide how scarce public finances are to be allocated, year in year out, I can assure you that we do not spend millions of pounds of taxpayers money on anything unless we are convinced that it deserves that investment and are committed to its success.

As mentioned, our additional security costs arising out of the Northern Ireland situation now run at about £200 million per year. Our per capita expenditure on security related to the Northern Ireland situation is about four times that of the UK. I make the point not to start an arid contest of comparisons - there are relativities of scale involved and the utter commitment of the British Government to the maintenance of security is beyond question and clear to everybody. But it is important that the point should be appreciated as an indication that we are totally committed too and that we put our money where our heart is on the matter.

OPEN TO NEW IDEAS

In our response to the Strand II opening presentations, we indicated that we would be open to all new ideas on security matters and would be willing to discuss and further such ideas in the same spirit of cooperation which has prevailed within the Anglo-Irish Conference. I want to take this opportunity to emphasise our openness in this regard. The Irish government will welcome all suggestions for enhanced security cooperation which meet with general approval here and which find favour with the security experts in our respective police forces. We will gladly consider all possibilities of adding to what has already been achieved in the security area over the past seven years. We are conscious that lives and livelihoods on this island depend on us finding new ways in which we can work together to safeguard our communities.