



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Mr Hughes, SA
Mr O hUiginn,
Secretary,
Runai Aire,

Briefing Notes for Minister's meeting with Mr Mates

Attached are two briefing notes for the Minister's meeting with Mr Mates
in relation to:

- Parachute Regiment

- Border Incursions (this is an update of material
prepared for the March, 1992
Conference).

John Brennan

26 June, 1992.

PARACHUTE REGIMENT

1. The Parachute Regiment (3 Para) were deployed in East Tyrone in April, 1992 for a three month tour. The tour ends today - 26 June. The paras will be replaced by a more "mainstream" regiment with effect from tomorrow.
2. Difficulties arising from the behaviour of the paras were the subject of repeated contacts between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Northern Ireland Office in April and May. Two major flashpoints occurred, the first of which was on 12 May when, unprovoked, members of the Parachute Regiment entered a public house in Coalisland and caused injuries to customers and damage to the premises. In a telephone conversation with Mr Mates on 15 May, the Minister noted that the officer in charge of the paras at the time had been suspended from duty but emphasised that this was not enough: "the Paras would have to be removed from contact with the public in Northern Ireland".
3. The visibility of the Parachute Regiment in Coalisland was much reduced following the incident of 12 May. However, the paras were again deployed in the town following an incident on 17 May during which soldiers from another Regiment were set upon by youths and a machine gun (since recovered) taken from them. In a confrontation with local people, members of the Parachute Regiment discharged shots which resulted in injuries to three people. The British authorities insisted at the time that the soldiers fired in the air or into the ground. The Minister for Foreign Affairs in reply to Special Notice Questions in the Dail on 19 May stated that "the use of live ammunition in such circumstances raises serious questions which we will be pursuing with the British authorities when a full report is to hand".

4. Since 17 May the Parachute Regiment has been deployed in rural areas in County Tyrone without incident. The Department of Foreign Affairs have been in touch with the British side to insist that measures be taken to ensure that the Parachute Regiment does not follow previous regiments in seeking to "settle old scores" immediately prior to ending their tour of duty. The indications are that the Regiment will withdraw without incident.

INCURSIONS

1. Hereunder is a table detailing the number of incursions by air and by land by Northern Ireland Security Forces in the period 1973 to date. There has been a significant increase in the number of reported incursions in the first five months of this year (at least 27 to date compared to 29 for all of last year).
2. When a report or a complaint about an incursion is received, it is referred to the Garda Síochána for investigation. The usual procedure is that an investigation file is prepared and submitted to the Department of Justice containing statements of witnesses, if any, the response of the RUC to the complaint and any general Garda observations. The file is then referred to the Department of Foreign Affairs for appropriate attention.
3. It is a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs to follow up reported incursions with the British authorities. Quite apart from the diplomatic role of that Department, from a legal point of view it is only with the permission of the Minister for Foreign Affairs that uniformed foreign military personnel or military vehicles can enter the State.
4. In the past, the British authorities have tended to be irritated by complaints about incursions. On occasion, they have regarded such complaints as the authorities here being finicky about "accidental" incursions of a few metres. More often than not, incursions have been explained away as "map reading errors" or "recently arrived military personnel unfamiliar with the border".

5. There is no doubt but that the difficult terrain and the fact that the location of the border is unclear in many areas is a problem for the British Army. However, we expect the British authorities to make every effort to ensure that incursions do not take place. Quite apart from being a breach of our sovereignty, such incidents cause resentment and suspicion in local border communities.

6. A separate note is attached about the most recent incursion by the British army at Derrybeg, Co Monaghan which attracted considerable media attention. Also attached is a short note prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs on each border incursion this year.

Incursions by British Security Forces 1973 - 1992

<u>Year</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Air</u>	<u>Total</u>
1973	33	43	76
1974	53	79	132
1975	36	35	71
1976	31	27	58
1977	9	24	33
1978	25	40	65
1979	24	27	51
1980	26	29	55
1981	18	38	56
1982	28	21	49
1983	13	9	22
1984	25	6	31
1985	25	10	35
1986	32	18	50
1987	34	10	44
1988	26	14	40
1989	18	18	36
1990	12	18	30
1991	17	12	29
1992	5	22	27