

Formal Government decisions (i.e. those taken by the Cabinet or Cabinet Committees) in relation to the use and deployment of (a) the R.U.C., (B) the U.S.C. and (c) the Army, including (where available) the information and evidence placed before Ministers

1. 30TH MARCH, 1969: Following the explosion at the Castlereagh Electricity Sub-Station, the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs and Inspector General (R.U.C.) met on 30th March, 1969. They decided to place key installations under police guard, and in that context authorised the use of members of the U.S.C. on a part-time patrol and rota system.
2. 20TH APRIL, 1969: The Cabinet considered the situation following disorders in Londonderry and the explosion at the Silent Valley Reservoir, on the basis of an oral report from the Minister of Home Affairs.

The Cabinet decided to extend the list of key installations to be protected, to take in vital parts of the water supply system and possibly important river or motorway bridges.

After consultation with senior police officers the Minister of Home Affairs informed the Cabinet that between 700 and 800 members of the U.S.C. were already being used to guard 39 key points. It was now considered necessary to guard a further 20 points, and it was doubtful if U.S.C. alone could be obtained in sufficient numbers (some 400 additional men) to cover this requirement. The Inspector General advised that military assistance would be very desirable for guard duties, especially at isolated places where the U.S.C. had transport difficulties.

The Cabinet decided to seek military assistance to supplement a further use of U.S.C. for the guarding of key installations. [The request was made through the Home Office, and clearance given later.]

3. 24TH APRIL, 1969: At a meeting of the Cabinet, the Minister of Home Affairs reported a number of decisions which had been taken to strengthen and re-deploy the police forces (following the explosion at Clady).

It was agreed that the Minister should announce these steps in the House of Commons that afternoon.

A discussion took place on the security cover being provided by Army units.

There was agreement that a request should be made for additional troops to extend that cover, and that the Cabinet Security Committee should discuss further with Army and police officers the extent to which key installations could be protected.

4. 25TH APRIL, 1969: At a meeting of the Cabinet Security Committee the Minister of Home Affairs reported the conclusions of a sub-committee on the extent to which key installations required protection.

[The Ministry of Defence announced that afternoon a decision to send 500 men of the First Battalion P.W.O. to Northern Ireland, in view of the additional installations requiring guards.]

5. 7TH MAY, 1969: At a meeting of the Cabinet Security Committee the Inspector General informed Ministers of his decision to create a Supplementary Police Reserve, to consist of former members of the R.U.C. under 60 years of age. The Inspector General also reported that there were now 5,000 members of the U.S.C. on part-time duty, plus 300 fully mobilised.

6. 5TH JUNE, 1969: The Cabinet Security Committee gave preliminary consideration to a phased withdrawal of the Army from guard duties.

7. 19TH JUNE, 1969: The Cabinet considered a suggestion from the Army that their men might be withdrawn from guard duty at key points by 21st July provided there was no deterioration in the situation up to or at 12th July; the run-down in protection duty not to commence at all events until after the latter date.

Ministers agreed that the proposed withdrawal should be undertaken on a more gradual basis than in the nine days between 12th and 21st July and authorised the Inspector General to discuss a modification of the time-table with the Army Authorities and to agree the order in which the responsibility for the various key installations should be transferred to the police.

8. 2ND JULY, 1969: At a meeting of the Cabinet Security Committee the Minister of Home Affairs informed his colleagues of an agreement to phase out the Army from protection of key points gradually over the period 15th July - 2nd August - subject to no renewal of attacks in the meantime.

9. 14TH JULY, 1969: The Minister of Home Affairs reported to the Cabinet Security Committee on the events of the nights of 12th and 13th July in Londonderry and Dungiven. He informed his colleagues that having regard to the serious nature of these disturbances, which had stretched R.U.C. resources to the limit, he had decided - following consultation with the Inspector General and the U.S.C. - that sections of the U.S.C. should be alerted and equipped with batons only, for stand-by duty with the R.U.C. Several hundred men would be involved and an issue of batons had already been made in all areas. 60 men of the U.S.C., equipped only with

batons, had been on stand-by duty in Dungiven from early that morning and others were on similar stand-by duty in Londonderry.

10. 17TH JULY, 1969: The Cabinet Security Committee met and decided that where units of the U.S.C. armed with batons were on stand-by duty, their officers and sergeants should be permitted to carry revolvers as usual. The Deputy Inspector General informed Ministers that members of the U.S.C. would also be carrying arms:
  - (i) on ordinary police duty in Belfast, as was the normal custom;
  - (ii) in the guarding of key points; and
  - (iii) en route from their homes to the drill hall, where their weapons were exchanged for batons and stacked under guard.
  
11. 31ST JULY, 1969: At a meeting of the Cabinet Security Committee the Minister of Home Affairs, confirming that automatic weapons appeared to have been fired in Dungiven during the disturbances there, emphasised that the local unit of the U.S.C. had adhered to instructions not to use firearms.
  
12. 3RD AUGUST, 1969: The Minister of Home Affairs and the Inspector General and Deputy Inspector General R.U.C. reported to the Cabinet on the disturbances in Belfast which were still in progress. The Inspector General informed Ministers of his intention to raise the number of R.U.C. Reserve Force platoons from 8 to 12 by "dilution" with U.S.C. to a basis of 50:50 at Constable level under R.U.C. officers.

The Cabinet decided -

  - (a) that the Minister of Home Affairs must feel free to interpret in a less restrictive way existing conditions applying to the use of C.S. so that this could be used if other methods were inadequate;
  - (b) to alert the Home Office to the possibility that military assistance might have to be invoked; and
  - (c) to support a proposal by the Army to move one of these companies on stand-by to Musgrave Street police station on a readiness basis.
  
13. 4TH AUGUST, 1969: The Cabinet were informed of the circumstances in which the contingent request for military assistance in Belfast had been withdrawn.
  
14. 5TH AUGUST, 1969: The Minister of Home Affairs informed the Cabinet of the intention to use members of the U.S.C. to guard threatened Roman Catholic houses in Protestant areas.

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It was the general view of Ministers that the maximum prudent use should be made of U.S.C. forces.

15. 13TH AUGUST, 1969: The Inspector General reported to the Cabinet on the situation in Londonderry and other places, and the Minister of Home Affairs informed his colleagues that County Inspectors of the R.U.C. had been authorised to call out members of the U.S.C. in support of the R.U.C. in circumstances which they considered favourable, carrying their normal arms.  
The Cabinet discussed the possibility that events might escalate to a point at which the police would clearly have lost control, and agreed that in such circumstances the assistance of the Army would have to be sought. This decision would be left to the Minister of Home Affairs, in consultation if possible with his fellow members of the Cabinet Security Committee.
16. 14TH AUGUST, 1969: The Cabinet Security Committee authorised a formal request for the use of troops in aid of the Civil Power in Londonderry at 4.45 p.m. in view of the latest police reports indicating their inability to cope with a rapidly deteriorating situation.
17. 15TH AUGUST, 1969: The Inspector General outlined to the Cabinet the situation which had developed in Belfast, and it was decided that an immediate request should be made for the assistance of troops in the city.
18. 16TH AUGUST, 1969: At a meeting of the Cabinet Security Committee it was agreed that the G.O.C. and the Inspector General should give special consideration that afternoon to the introduction of troops into the Ardoyne and Hooker Street/Herbert Street areas of Belfast; the possibility of sealing-off access to the Falls from the Shankill to prevent infiltration was also to be investigated.

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