

E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

PS/Dr Mawhinney (B&L) - B

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Stanley (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L)
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Innes - B
Mr Miles - B
Mr Hewitt
Mr McConnell - B
Mr Wood
Mr Masefield - B
Mr Bell - B

VISIT BY CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY

You asked for details of the incident yesterday when Congressman Joseph Kennedy had an altercation with soldiers outside the Divis Flats complex in West Belfast.

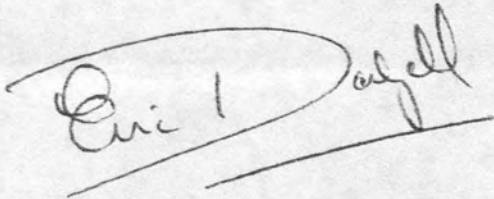
2. At approximately 1620 hours yesterday a mobile patrol from 1 Duke of Wellington's Regiment established a vehicle checkpoint in the area of Divis Flats. The patrol had stopped a car, checked it and were in the process of carrying out a search when two other cars arrived at the VCP. A number of photographers including a film crew got out and began to take close up photographs and film of the patrol members. Because of concern over the soldiers personal security the patrol commander, a corporal, asked the photographers to move off. A minor altercation developed as the patrol commander tried to put his hand over a camera.

3. Mr Kennedy then appeared from one of the cars and asked what right the soldier had to tell them what to do and grabbed the arm of the patrol commander. Mr Kennedy asked soldiers why did they not go home or words to that effect. In reply, one of the soldiers who was from Northern Ireland, pointed out that he was in his own country while another asked Mr Kennedy why he did not go home. The patrol, having provided the Congressman with a heaven sent opportunity for some media propaganda, then moved on.

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4. This was an unfortunate incident which was blown out of all proportion by the media. The Congressman should understand that security force operations in West Belfast are vital to the prevention of terrorist activity and that the policemen and soldiers involved are under considerable personal threat. The security forces have a right to expect the full co-operation of all law-abiding people. In all the circumstances, it would have been better had the soldiers avoided trading insults with Mr Kennedy.



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Law and Order Division

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