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Copies to: Mr. Hogg (6)
Mr. King
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Mr. North ✓

D/MIN(A)GR/2460

MINISTER OF DEFENCE FOR ADMINISTRATION

HOME SECRETARYNORTHERN IRELAND

At Victor Stonham's request I have spoken to the Commander-in-Chief Northern Ireland myself and asked him for a detailed account of how he will perform his task in Londonderry if he is instructed to act in support of the civil power.

2. General Freeland told me that he anticipated that he would be called upon to act in this capacity before 1800 hours today. The Londonderry principal police station is being besieged by a large crowd which has not yet surrounded the building. The front ranks of the crowd are being just contained by the RUC but their suspicion is that the back ranks of the crowd which are swelling will soon move round the flanks of the RUC into the Waterloo Place area and threaten the police station with occupation. The police station is, of course, the command centre of Londonderry, without it and its communications network law and order would completely break down in the town.

3. The 1st and 2nd Companies of the Battalion of the Prince of Wales Own, stationed at Sea Eagle, would move in from their location just the other side of the town bridge. They would expect to do so before the police station was finally surrounded and therefore would not need to take positive action against the crowd. They would then throw a tight cordon around the police station, through which they would expect the exhausted officers of the RUC to withdraw; a third company would secure access from the police station to Sea Eagle over the town bridge; the fourth company would remain in reserve.

4. It would be General Freeland's hope that having held the police station by use of British troops, rested and regrouped the RUC could take whatever initiative was necessary to push back the crowd from the area immediately surrounding the police station. He accepts that it may not be possible for this action to be taken by the constabulary and may fall to the lot of British troops. This would, of course, change the nature of the operation from a defensive to an offensive role.

5. The Commandant of the RUC in Londonderry told General Freeland that this action would be necessary unless immediate reinforcements for the garrison of the police station can be obtained. Since it is General Freeland's view that no such reinforcements can be forthcoming he expects a request within the hour. General Freeland confirms that this specific task having been accomplished his general obligation would be to separate and keep separated the factions within Londonderry.

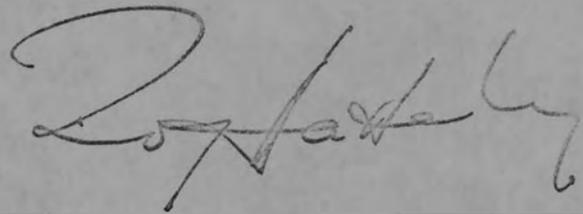
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6. General Freeland also confirms that the troops initial action will all be based on the use of their anti-riot weapons which I described to Victor Stonham over the telephone. General Freeland says, however, that it is conceivable, although highly unlikely, that the crowd will not be contained either by these methods or by the use of CS gas which will be fired into the crowd both by troops on the ground and from helicopters overhead. In the altogether unlikely event of the troops facing the prospect of being overrun by the crowd, General Freeland would regard it as his duty to instruct them to open fire. The crowd would of course first be warned it was their intention to open fire, and if this extreme situation came about it would be contained in as limited a way as appeared necessary to achieve the objective.

7. As I said to you earlier today, once this initial objective was achieved British troops would be used to ensure that the opposing factions were kept apart. General Freeland and I agreed that in no circumstances would British troops be asked to enter Bogside.



14th August, 1969

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