

Mr. Cairncross:

Sir Philip Allen:

This afternoon I attended the meeting of the Chiefs-of-Staff. After an exposition of the general situation at the moment the Chiefs-of-Staff considered the two outstanding formal requests of the Northern Ireland Government:-

(i) The border - The Northern Ireland Government yesterday

made a formal request for advance approval to the use of the military in or around the border towns and on the cross-border roads. The Minister of Defence asked for an assessment by the G.O.C. Northern Ireland, and after further discussion with the Northern Ireland Government the G.O.C. has sent a message to the Ministry of Defence asking for delegated authority to provide help for the police in border towns or border areas. This recommendation will be placed before the Defence Secretary and his view will be the subject of consideration by S. of S. and the Foreign Secretary and, if all are in agreement, submitted to the Prime Minister.

(ii) Cratering of roads - On Saturday, 16th August, a formal

request was received from the Government of Northern Ireland for Royal Engineers to carry out the task of rendering certain "unapproved" cross-border roads impassable to traffic to help in preventing infiltration

by armed I.R.A. Mr. Hatterley had agreed to this

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proposition subject to the international complications being cleared by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Foreign Office had no objection but pointed out that the British Ambassador in Dublin should be kept informed, although the Government of the Irish Republic should not be formally informed. When this was put to S. of S. he was not prepared to make a recommendation to the Prime Minister because he thought that the action might be regarded as provocative and alarmist and taken in fear of an Irish invasion or merely tit-for-tat for the Irish hospitals set-up on the border; he asked if the Foreign Office would look into the matter again. This they did, with the result that their agreement was confirmed yesterday.

At this afternoon's meeting it was reported that the C.G.S. had discussed the matter with Mr. Healey, who was strongly in favour of agreeing to the request of the Northern Ireland Government. In these circumstances I think we should seek the approval of S. of S. to submitting the proposal for the approval of the Prime Minister.

Use of Ulster Special Constabulary

I found that the Chiefs-of-Staff were in full agreement as to the desirability of restricting the use of the Ulster Special Constabulary so that armed special constables were not used for riot control purposes. It was thought that the Ulster Special Constabulary ought to be retained .

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- (a) for use in guarding key points in remote areas;
- (b) for border patrol work; and
- (c) for the static defence of police stations.

The Chiefs-of-Staff recognised that to enable the R.U.C. to undertake the increased task thus placed upon them, further assistance from the army would be essential. It was for this purpose that the two battalions have been placed on notice to move to Northern Ireland next Sunday. Further action on this must await political decisions.

Other Matters Discussed

It is likely that the Defence Secretary will suggest in Cabinet tomorrow the necessity, in view of the military commitment in Northern Ireland, for a drastic improvement in the intelligence work in Northern Ireland. He may make specific suggestions, but this is to be the subject of the Ministry of Defence consideration. Mr. Healey is also wondering whether the military should take over the full responsibility for guarding the border. The immediate military proposal was that this should be a joint operation with the R.U.C. on the understanding that the R.U.C. for this purpose would come under the orders of the military. I expressed a personal view that it would be worth making a feasibility study of this suggestion, but pointed out the constitutional difficulty - indeed it may well prove to be the impossible - of placing the R.U.C. under the orders of the military.

Finally it was reported to the Chiefs-of-Staff that the Defence Secretary was not happy at the processing in Whitehall of urgent decisions which have had to be taken. He has the idea of setting up

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some kind of an official "cell" which would meet daily to process these matters. I was not clear exactly what was in mind, but undertook that the Home Office would take delivery of the suggestion and give consideration to it. I do not propose to do that in this note.

18th August, 1969.