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IMMEDIATE DUBLIN  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 188TO FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE  
16 AUGUST 1969

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IRISH ARMY

TOLD PECK ON THE TELEPHONE THIS MORNING THAT WE WERE TRYING TO PRODUCE SOME ASSESSMENT OF IRISH ARMY MOVES. THE MILITARY ATTACHE HAS NOW PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING USEFUL REPORT: (A) I SPOKE TO THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE IRISH ARMY, COL H W BYRNE, THIS MORNING. HE WAS FRIENDLY AND PREPARED TO TALK OPENLY AND WITHOUT EVASION ABOUT THE TROOP MOVEMENTS OF THE PAST FEW DAYS. HE ASSURED ME THAT THE PRESENCE OF COMBAT TROOPS NEAR THE BORDER IS SOLELY TO PROVIDE SUPPORT IN THE FORM OF ADMINISTRATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND LOCAL PROTECTION FOR THE 5 FIELD HOSPITALS AND TWO REFUGEE RECEPTION CENTRES WHICH HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED SO FAR. (B) I MENTIONED AN ITN REPORT IN NEWS AT TEN LAST NIGHT OF ~~1000~~ COMBAT TROOPS ENCAMPED NEAR LETTERKENNY. HE THOUGHT THIS WAS A GROSS OVER ESTIMATION AND REPEATED THE ASSURANCE THAT ONLY THOSE REQUIRED FOR SUPPORT OF THE MEDICAL AND REFUGEE ORGANIZATION HAD BEEN DEPLOYED. WITH THE VERY LOW STRENGTH OF THE IRISH ARMY - UNITS ARE NORMALLY AT 60% OR LESS OF ESTABLISHMENT - THIS DEPLOYMENT HAS AFFECTED A VERY LARGE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT ( ? WORD OMITTED) . (C) THE CALL UP OF RESERVISTS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO BRING UNITS UP TO STRENGTH FOR THE PROPOSED ANGLO-IRISH PEACEKEEPING FORCE HAS NOT BEEN STOPPED, PARTLY BECAUSE THE PROCEDURE IS VERY CUMBERSOME AND ADMINISTRATIVELY DIFFICULT TO STOP AT SHORT NOTICE, ALSO THEY MAY NEED THE ADDITIONAL MEN IF THE REFUGEE AND MEDICAL REQUIREMENT GROWS.

2. I BELIEVE THE ABOVE TO BE TRUE AS FAR AS IT GOES. IT IS THE POLITICAL AND PROPAGANDA INTENTION BEHIND THE MOVES WHICH MUST CAUSE CONCERN. THERE WAS NEVER ANY BELIEF IN ANY RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT QUARTER THAT AN ANGLO IRISH PEACEKEEPING FORCE WOULD TAKE SHAPE AND YET THE CALL UP TOOK PLACE ON THAT PRETEXT.

SIR A. GILCHRIST

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