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The Home Office today issued the following statement on behalf of the Home Secretary:

The Army's operation in Northern Ireland this morning marks the beginning of a new phase in the battle against the IRA. It was worked out against a background of close consultation between the Governments of the UK and Northern Ireland. Its significance is that it lays stress on the fact that the function of the security forces is not merely to contain disorder and violence but to search out the men and the organisation responsible. This will be pursued. In this new phase the security forces will act with the utmost vigour. This will serve as further confirmation of the determination of Her Majesty's Government to suppress violence and terrorism and to maintain the constitutional position of Northern Ireland as enacted in the Government of Ireland Act, 1949, by whatever means may be necessary.

23rd July, 1971.