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Title: Department of Foreign Affairs confidential memorandum regarding British Army statistics on arms and ammunition finds and properties searched given at weekly meetings of the Whitelaw Advisory Commission, most of which have not been published.

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1. At the weekly meetings of the Whitelaw Advisory Commission, statistics are given relating to (a) arms and ammunition finds and (b) properties searched. The material is classified confidential but some figures relating to finds have been published, notably in the New Statesman of 16 February 1973. British Army sources have refused to publish statistics on searches on the grounds that "they might be used as evidence of discrimination against Catholics". Some of these statistics have, however, appeared in the press, presumably as a result of leaks. A member of the Advisory Commission has placed all the statistics at our disposal for use as we see fit and they are summarised in the attached table. The Advisory Commission has been told that comparable statistics are not available for the period prior to November/December 1972.

2. The statistics on finds relate to the three month period ending 28 February 1973 while those on searches relate to the period 19 November 1972 - 28 February 1973, excluding a three week period in November/December for which no figures have been made available. (Indeed it is clear that the administration initially resisted issuing the sort of figures that would enable direct comparisons to be made between searches and finds. The joint efforts and persistence of four non-Unionist members of the Commission were eventually successful and as a "concession" to the Unionist members of the Commission who had opposed the issuing of the figures, Mr. Whitelaw agreed to make available at the same time figures relating to the "success of the Police to date in solving murders, by categories, indicating the numbers of Protestants and Catholics respectively facing charges of murder or attempted murder. For purposes of establishing patterns of discrimination the figures relating to searches and finds can be directly related and indicate that in the periods concerned only 193 Protestant as compared with 1362 Catholic owned or occupied properties were searched. In all cases, searches are said to be carried out "as a result of information received or as part of hot pursuit or a planned arrest operation". Despite the substantial imbalance, the searches of Protestant properties produced more explosives (2670 lbs./2174 lbs.) and ammunition rounds (13,115/10,253) and only slightly fewer illegally held weapons (155/121).

Department of Foreign Affairs

12 March 1973.