

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES****IRELAND**

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Explosion site.

26/3/11

THE BORDER SITUATION

Dr. Fitzgerald said to Mr. Rees that he would welcome strong action to deal with the security problems in the Crossmaglen area. The object of this memorandum is to describe the current situation in the Crossmaglen and border areas and to make proposals for joint action by the Irish and British Governments.

It has been clear for some time now that the level of IRA violence near the border has been increasing significantly. The figures attached at Annex A show as an example that during the past six weeks (1 November-18 December) there has been an overall increase of over 100 per cent over the number of incidents occurring during the comparable period six months ago. In addition the proportion of IRA activity occurring near the border has increased relative to the level of violence elsewhere in the Province during the last six months. This too is shown in Annex A. The use of the comparison over six months has not been specially selected to produce atypical figures. The same comparison would be clear if other periods had been taken.

Further facts are shown in Annex B where the major incidents occurring over the last six weeks are described in outline. The ones that are listed are the occasions where the terrorists definitely used the Republic as a base for their operations. Other incidents where it is not certain that action originated in the Republic have been omitted from this list. Another area



of concern is the movement of explosives over the border. We have clear evidence that almost all the bomb incidents in the North are caused by explosives and detonators which originate in the South. Some facts to substantiate this are at Annex C. It has been suggested that explosives manufactured in the South may be sold to firms in the North and subsequently stolen and used in terrorist incidents. But explosives imported into Northern Ireland must bear the Northern Ireland colour [pink] and the sale, distribution and use of explosives in the North is subject to close and detailed police supervision. It is, therefore, clear that all the explosive which is not coloured pink must have come from outside Northern Ireland.

The general conclusion that emerges from these facts and figures is that a considerable amount of terrorist supplies and activity originates from the Republic. Indeed it can be said that over a sustained period there is at least one incident every two days which is clearly mounted from the other side of the border. It is a great handicap to the security forces in Northern Ireland that terrorists can escape across the border; that they can lay mines and fire across this land frontier.

Cooperation with the security forces in the Republic has produced most valuable liaison and exchange of information to the benefit of both sides. The technical panels which were set up by the RUC and the Gardai after the Baldonnell meeting on 18 September are proving very useful. It would however be

very helpful if we were able to consolidate, extend and quicken the progress that is being made through these channels.

One of our recent security measures has been to reduce the number of routes which are available to terrorists by blocking some of the unapproved roads. We have kept the Republic authorities informed about these measures including our proposals for road closures along the border between south Armagh and County Louth/Monaghan. We are convinced that this is the only really effective method of inhibiting the movement of terrorists by unapproved roads across the border and welcome your support.

It would also be of the greatest assistance in dealing with the situation if the appropriate Irish authorities would arrange that

- (a) The Garda and Irish army patrols would concentrate on the unapproved roads in the Crossmaglen area: and, where the roads have been blocked, inform us, through police channels, if attempts to remove the blocks appear to have been made.
- (b) Regular check points will be established, whenever possible, on the approved roads to conduct searches of traffic travelling in both directions.

Following the meeting at Baldonnell, the Joint Committee on Advance Planning has been making encouraging progress. This would be an appropriate forum for an urgent examination of the



problems of the Crossmaglen/Forkhill area. In particular in that context we propose that the Panel should report soon on:-

- (a) Cross border communications between the security forces at Crossmaglen and the corresponding Garda/Irish army posts in the Republic.
- (b) Operational meetings at subdivisional (Superintendent/Chief Inspector) level. These meetings could exchange information and intelligence quite freely, the sole outcome of which could only lead to a better knowledge of who the terrorists are and how they operate. This in turn could only enhance our joint ability to halt the terrorists' activity.
- (c) Exchanges of specialist information, particularly of forensic science, mainly a police responsibility, and bomb disposal, mainly an army problem. The latter is, of course, directed solely towards saving life and the prevention of damage and it therefore merits special attention. We would particularly like this examination to concentrate on the control of explosives and detonators.

As you know the Crossmaglen area is one where the RUC and army work closely together. In this connection we should plan to make the necessary army advice by the participation of

certain staff officers in the work of the group on the lines previously explained at Baldonnell.

We are most anxious that we should pursue these matters as urgently as possible. Without positive action by the security forces of both sides working closely together the situation in Crossmaglen and the border areas will continue to be a constant source of anxiety and challenge to both Governments.

19 December 1974

# SUMMARY OF ALL BORDER INCIDENTS

Department of Foreign Affairs

## 1. DFA/5 ALL INCIDENTS

DATE	SHOOTING INCIDENTS	MORTAR ATTACKS	MOR-BOMBS USED	BOMBS PLANTED	OTHER(1) INCIDENTS	TOTAL	MILITARY CASUALTIES	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(1,2, 4 & 5)	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Injured</u>
1974. 1 MAY TO 18 JUNE	22	1	15	9	6	38	1	1
1974 1 NOV TO 18 DEC	35	4	26	14	26	79	3	6

## 2. SHOOTING INCIDENTS. A COMPARISON

PERIOD	BORDER	TOTAL FOR REMAINDER OF THE PROVINCE	RATIO
Six Weeks from 1 May 1974	22	485	1 : 22
Six Weeks from 1 Nov 1974	35	351	1 : 10

NOTE (1) Other incidents include armed robberies, armed hijackings and arson



MAJOR BORDER INCIDENTS - NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 1974

Date	Location	Incident	Comment
2 Nov 74	Border crossing south of Forkill	Shots were fired at an OP from the Republic of Ireland. Fire was returned	Garda informed through RUC
2 Nov 74	Middletown	Shots were fired at a VCP from the Republic. Fire was not returned.	Garda informed through RUC
6 Nov 74	Killeen crossing on A1(T)	Shots were fired at an RUC patrol investigating an explosion in the cab of a lorry blocking the approved crossing	Garda informed
7 Nov 74	Killes (Londonderry Enclave)	Shots were fired at a patrol near the reservoir. Fire was returned and an ambulance was seen to drive up to the border in the Republic	Garda informed
7 Nov 74	Clady	Shots were fired at a VCP in Clady by the occupants of a car which came over the Dunaloob crossing from the Republic and returned there after the shooting.	Garda informed.
8 Nov 74	Dundalk and Portadown	A train was hijacked in the Republic and then sent driverless down the line until it crashed on a bend in Portadown.	
8 Nov 74	Near Rosslea	An ambush bomb partially exploded near a foot patrol on the border. The command wires led back into the Republic.	



Date	Location	Incident	Comment
9 Nov 74	South of Keady	A civilian couple crossing the border on an approved road were hijacked by 7 armed men. The car was taken into the Republic for 20 minutes, returned with a bomb loaded, and the owner ordered to drive to RUC Keady. A soldier compelled the owner to park in a field where the bomb exploded harmlessly.	
10 Nov 74	Middletown	Shots were fired at the VCP from the Republic. Fire was returned and one possible hit reported.	Garda informed
16 Nov 74	Aughnacloy	A patrol saw 2 armed men in the Republic. They challenged and the gunmen opened fire. Fire was returned and one man was seen to fall, and was then helped to a getaway car.	Garda confirmed that a terrorist was hit, but gave no more details.
24 Nov 74	South of Middletown	A command wire detonated bomb partially exploded near a blocked border crossing. Command wires led across the border. One soldier was slightly wounded.	
25 Nov 74	Middletown	Mortar and small arms fire was directed at a VCP from fire positions in the Republic. Some mortar bombs landed in the town but there were no casualties.	Garda informed.

Date	Location	Incident	Comment
1 Dec 74	Aughnacloy	Shots were fired sporadically over a one hour period at the VCP from the Republic. Fire was returned and a gunman was reported hit. Several civilians waiting at the VCP had to be escorted to shelter.	Garda informed
2 Dec 74	South of Forkill	A Garda officer informed the RUC that he had seen a number of men fire shots at a helicopter in the North.	
3 Dec 74	Omeath	Two armed youths hijacked a lorry south of the border, loaded a polythene bag and ordered the driver to park it north of the Omeath approved crossing.	
5 Dec 74	Middletown	Two armed men hijacked a lorry in the Republic and left it blocking the road on the Republic side of the approved crossing.	Removed b its drive later the same day.
5 Dec 74	Drummuckavall south of Crossmaglen	Forty shots were fired at an OP from the Republic. Fire was returned.	Garda informed
6 Dec 74	South of Crossmaglen	Shots were fired at a helicopter by 2 gunmen who escaped northwards by car.	Garda informed and established VCPs
7 Dec 74	South of Crossmaglen	A patrol searching a derelict building came under fire from a mortar and small arms. The terrorist fire positions were on the border and they escaped into the Republic when fire was returned. One soldier was slightly wounded.	Garda informed



Date	Location	Incident	Comment
11 Dec 74	Middletown	Terrorists fired about 160 rounds from 2 or 3 positions in the Republic at the VCP over a 15 minute period. Fire was returned.	
14 Dec 74	Clady	Shots were fired from the Republic at a foot patrol in the village. Fire was not returned.	Garda VCP is located nearby. They appeared to investigate.
16 Dec 74	Gortmullan south of Lisnaskea	Shots were fired at a UDR foot patrol from the Republic and later some men thought to have been involved were seen in the same area.	