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Title: Note for the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the shooting dead of Michael Joseph Leonard by the Royal Ulster Constabulary at Letter, County Fermanagh, on 15 May 1973.

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1. Michael Joseph Leonard lost his life following a shooting incident on 15 May 1973 at Letter, Co. Fermanagh, about 200 yards from the border on the Belleek/Pettigo concession road. Leonard was a disqualified driver in Northern Ireland at the time. Press reports say that the R.U.C. recognised Leonard coming out of a shop in Letter, called on him to halt and that he did not do so but got into his car and drove towards the border. In response to our request on 8 June 1973 for a report on the incident, the British informed us early this month that R.U.C. investigations were still continuing but that the preliminary inquiries had revealed that the R.U.C. had pursued the deceased because of his actions at that particular time rather than because they had positively identified him as a disqualified driver. In any event, it is not in dispute that the R.U.C. gave chase to the car driven by the deceased and in the course of the chase signalled him by siren and horn to stop. On a number of occasions the R.U.C. patrol even bumped against the rear of the deceased's car but he continued to drive towards the border and prevented the R.U.C. vehicle from passing by travelling in a zig-zag fashion along the road.

One of the constables in the R.U.C. vehicle (a station wagon) was in possession of a .303 Lee-Enfield rifle and was pointing it through the open windscreen of the landrover in the direction of the fleeing car. R.U.C. sources state that the constable intended to fire a shot over the fleeing car as a final resort. In any event the bullet entered the rear of the car through the rear of the driver's seat and entered the deceased's body in the region of the left kidney. The deceased then brought the car to a halt, got out of the car and stood beside it, he spoke to the R.U.C. constables at the scene and in a short time he collapsed. He was removed by ambulance to Enniskillen Hospital where he died shortly afterwards.

2. A further report of the incident from the British authorities is awaited but is unlikely to be available until the inquest has taken place. No date has yet been fixed for the inquest. It is considered unlikely, however, that the report will add substantially to the information already available.

3. In reply to supplementaries the Minister might make it clear that, while regretting this and all the other violent deaths in Northern Ireland since the outbreak of the troubles, he does not see that being represented at the inquest would serve any useful purpose.