

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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**Title:** Note for the information of the Minister  
[Minister for Justice, Patrick Cooney, TD]  
reporting on cross-border traffic to Jonesboro  
market in County Armagh, suggestion that  
Gardaí be used to deal with incidents of  
intimidation of customs officials and referring to  
the control of the Jonesboro market by  
Provisional IRA and the potential for  
subversive activities

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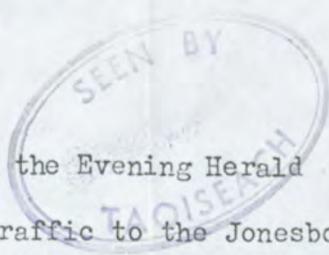
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Note for Minister's Information



1. The Deputy is probably referring to a report in the Evening Herald of Tuesday 25 February in relation to cross-border traffic to the Jonesboro Co. Armagh, market - "Armed Gardai will back up customs officials on a big drive against muscle men....." (see photo copy of press report in file pocket) and also to the Irish Independent report of 26 February (copy in file pocket). "Gardai on the Louth/Armagh border were angered last night at suggestions that armed members of the force might be called on to back up customs men....."

2. A Garda report relating to incidents on 23rd February and press reports etc says that the market was organised by the parishoners to clear a debt incurred by the parish for the reconstruction of the local church and secondary school. It is in operation for some time (Sunday 23rd February was the 25th Sunday of the market). Sites in a field are rented to traders by the parish committee and widespread publicity has been given to the market where it is possible to purchase goods of all sorts at comparatively low prices. There is heavy cross-Border traffic to the market and traders in the immediate Border area of the Republic who were worried about a possible loss of business made approaches to the Customs Officials. On the 22nd February, the Gardai were informed by the Customs Officials that they intended to prevent people from using unapproved roads to and from Jonesboro and to direct them to the main Dundalk/Belfast Road. Customs officers reported that on Sunday 23rd February (11.10 a.m.) they saw a masked man at Fluzybridge which is situated on the border between Carrickarmon, Co. Louth and Faughilitra, Co. Armagh. On the same date (11.25 a.m.), a Garda saw two masked men at Church Lane, Dromad which is about 200 yards from Flurrybridge and, at noon, three masked men approached customs officers at Feede (on a "back" road from Dundalk to Jonesboro) and ordered the customs officers away. The Surveyor, Custom and Excise, later ordered the men to return to their posts. They remained there until 6 p.m. At 5.30 p.m. an anonymous telephone call was received at Carrickarmon Customs Post. The caller said "I believe that the roads are blocked by

you now. If the cars are not withdrawn within half-an-hour, you will suffer the consequences". Nothing happened as a result of this threat.

3. As regards the appearance of the masked men, the Gardai say that the organisers of the market were in no way involved and they do not know the men's identity. Reports in the press regarding "muscle" men in operation as well as reports about long queues at Carrickarnon have been denied by the Gardai. They say that the Press report has exaggerated the incidents out of all proportion.

4. The Garda Síochána Code 76.2 provides:

"An Officer of Customs and Excise who, in the execution of his duty, requires the protection of a Garda will submit to the district officer, or member in charge in case of urgency, a written application stating the necessity for the assistance and the place and time at which it is required. Assistance should be given if circumstances permit".

5. The Gardai (C3) have stated <sup>orally</sup> verbally that the Provisional IRA have complete control over the operations of the Jonesboro market and the Gardai suspect that the very large volume of traffic in and out of the area, with little supervision by the customs officials, affords a cover for subversive activities.

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