

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2005/151/680
Title:	Telex from Press Office, Stormont Castle, Northern Ireland with text of press release by Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, concerning recent outbreaks of violence in Northern Ireland, particularly in South Armagh, and describing deployment of police and armed forces and other increased security measures to be introduced
Creation Date(s):	[2 September 1975]
Level of description:	Item
Extent and medium:	1 page
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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FOR THE ATTENTION OF HINCHY
FROM GERRY

FROM PRESS OFFICE, STORMONT CASTLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, MR MERLYN REES MP, TODAY HAD FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOC NI, LT GEN SIR DAVID HOUSE, AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF THE RUC, SIR JAMIE FLANAGAN. THEY REVIEWED THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS INCLUDING THE INCIDENTS LAST NIGHT IN WHICH SEVEN PEOPLE WERE MURDERED.

AFTER THE DISCUSSIONS THE SECRETARY OF STATE ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

"LAST NIGHT SEVEN PEOPLE WERE MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD BY PEOPLE WHOSE ONLY MOTIVATION IS TO STOKES UP THE FIRE OF SECTARIAN HATRED. THESE HORRIFYING CRIMES ARE NOT NEW TO NORTHERN IRELAND: SINCE 1969 THE TIDE OF VIOLENCE HAS EBBED AND FLOWED AND MORE THAN 1,300 PEOPLE HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES AND OVER 13,000 HAVE BEEN INJURED. WHAT IS NEW NOW IS THE NATURE OF THAT VIOLENCE. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR THE MAIN THREAT HAS BEEN FROM INTERFACTIONAL KILLINGS AND CRIMES WHICH HAVE A PURELY SECTARIAN OR CRIMINAL MOTIVATION.

ON BOTH SIDES OF THE COMMUNITY THERE ARE SMALL GROUPS OF PEOPLE, SHADY MEN AND WOMEN, WHO DISTAIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF NORMAL CIVILISED STANDARDS. NO CONCEIVABLE POLITICAL CAUSE CAN BE ADVANCED BY THE GANGSTER ELEMENTS WHO LAST NIGHT FIRED ARMALITE RIFLES INTO THE ORANGE HALL NEAR NEWTOWNHAMILTON KILLING FOUR AND WOUNDING SEVEN PEOPLE. IT IS IN SOUTH ARMAGH WHERE SOME OF THE MOST HORRIFYING CRIMES OF RECENT YEARS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED. SOME PEOPLE MAY SEEK TO EXCUSE THE KILLINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT THERE IN RECENT DAYS ON THE GROUNDS THAT "THE LEADERSHIP" HAVE LOST CONTROL OR AS REVENGE FOR OTHER SECTARIAN. BUT THIS IS PERVERTED LOGIC AND SUCH A VICIOUS CIRCLE OF DEATH IS A THREAT NOT MERELY TO INDIVIDUALS BUT TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY."

A NUMBER OF NEW MEASURES ARE BEING INTRODUCED BY THE SECURITY FORCES IN PARTS OF SOUTH ARMAGH, PARTICULARLY IN CERTAIN RURAL AREAS WHERE THERE ARE ISOLATED COMMUNITIES.

FIRST: MORE TROOPS WILL BE REDEPLOYED IN THE COURSE OF TODAY IN THIS AREA AND THE HIGHER LEVEL OF SECURITY FORCE ACTIVITY WILL CONTINUE.

SECOND: POLICE REINFORCEMENTS ARE ALREADY IN THE AREA INCLUDING SPECIAL PATROL GROUP OFFICERS.

THIRD: THE SECURITY FORCES WILL BE EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF THEIR ACTIVITIES. IT WOULD NOT HELP TO ITEMISE THIS MEASURE IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT.

FOURTH: BORDER CROSSINGS ARE BEING REVIEWED AND MORE ROADS WILL BE CLOSED AND WATCHED TO MAKE THE MOVEMENT OF TERRORISTS MORE DIFFICULT.

FIFTH: WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE AUTHORITIES OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC ABOUT THESE SERIOUS INCIDENTS.

WE HAVE ALSO CONSIDERED WHETHER A CURFEW WOULD BE HELPFUL. THE TWO MAIN PROBLEMS ABOUT A CURFEW ARE THAT IT ENTAILS A REAL RISK TO INNOCENT PEOPLE AND THAT IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE EVEN OVER SMALL AREAS. MOREOVER IT TIES UP POLICE AND SOLDIERS WHO CAN PRODUCE BETTER RESULTS BY ACTIVE PATROLLING. IT IS NOT PROPOSED TO INTRODUCE ONE AT THIS STAGE.

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO COMMIT THESE MURDERS IS SMALL. THEY MUST BE KNOWN AND INFORMATION ABOUT THEM SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE SECURITY FORCES. THIS CAN BE DONE IN COMPLETE CONFIDENCE AND IS ESSENTIAL IF INNOCENT PEOPLE ARE TO BE ABLE TO GO ABOUT THEIR NORMAL BUSINESS IN SAFETY".