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Incursions

1. Since 1973 a total of 381 incursions (of which 214 were aerial incursions) have been reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs (see statistics attached). Where such reports can be substantiated at the time they are invariably raised with the British authorities. All such incursions are a breach of international law and render the personnel subject to our civil and criminal law. It has been repeatedly pointed out to the British authorities that all incursions, apart from their inherent impropriety, are potential security risks in that they can be exploited for propaganda and other purposes by subversives, either at the time or subsequently. In response to our representations, the British have given repeated assurances that every effort is made to avoid incursions. Generally speaking, the Gardai - where they are satisfied that British Army personnel have inadvertently crossed the border - escort them back to the border as quickly as possible where the incursion takes place during daylight hours and the British Army personnel are in uniform.
2. On a formal basis, most incursions are dealt with by seeking, as appropriate, an explanation and apology from the British authorities. A number of incursions of a flagrant nature and/or provoking local incidents have necessitated stronger protest. The only case involving legal proceedings was that of the eight SAS men on 5/6 May 1976.
3. While there has been a significant decrease in the number of incursions during the past year or so, two recent cases might be mentioned. On 14 February 1978, Gardai on a routine patrol in Dromad Wood, Co. Louth, discovered 4 British Army personnel encamped some 20 metres on the southern side of the border. The site was camouflaged and the soldiers appeared to have been there for some time. They were armed and in uniform and had provisions, sleeping bags, etc. They were informed that they were on the southern side of the border and they returned across the border. The matter was

raised with the British who expressed regret for the incursion. On 14 March, there was a further incursion by British Army personnel in the Dromad Wood area, following which a Garda/Army patrol found spent rounds of British Army-type ammunition on this side of the border. This incursion has been raised with the British authorities and their attention has been drawn to the disturbing features of both incursions in this area.

Incursions

1973	76	(43)*
1974	132	(79)
1975	71	(35)
1976	58	(27)
1977	33	(24)
1978 (to 30 April)	11	(6)
<u>Total for 1973-</u> <u>1978</u>	<u>381</u>	<u>(214)</u>

1978

January	4	(2)*
February	2	(1)
March	5	(3)
April	-	-
<u>Total up to</u> <u>30 April 1978</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>(6)</u>

*Figures for aerial incursions in brackets