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I wish to put on the record of the House developments arising out of the allegations made in Court in Belfast last week that an incursion into our jurisdiction took place by members of the RUC in December 1982.

On learning of this statement on 30 March, the British Ambassador was called to the Department of Foreign Affairs and formally reminded that any action in our jurisdiction by security forces from any other State would be unacceptable to the Irish Government.

Following the announcement of the verdict in the trial of Constable Robinson, the allegation of a "cover-up" was raised at a further meeting with the Ambassador in the Department of Foreign Affairs at which other aspects of the affair were also raised.

Following consideration of the information then available and in the absence abroad of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was on an official visit to the Holy See, I asked the British Ambassador to come to see me on the 5th April. I told him that the Government viewed the statement made by Constable Robinson in Court that the RUC had operated in this State with deep concern and as a very serious departure from normal rules of inter-state conduct, harmful to the spirit and the practice of security cooperation and damaging to Anglo-Irish relations.

The Ambassador expressed his Government's concern and formally conveyed ^{its} their apologies.

He said that it is, and will continue to be, RUC policy, enshrined in explicit instructions, that members of the RUC should not cross the border while on duty. He said that the British Government is

very concerned and regrets that these instructions should have apparently been violated.

The Ambassador added further that the question of possible criminal and/or disciplinary proceedings arises, and that that issue cannot be pre-judged until the necessary enquiries have been carried out.

I expressed concern that the enquiries should be expeditiously carried out and that the Irish Government should be kept fully informed in relation to them.

It had been my intention to make no further comment on this matter before the results of the investigation by the British authorities had been given to us.

I regret, however, that a statement made by the Chief Constable of the RUC, Sir John Hermon, on Saturday, 7th April, made it necessary to make further approaches to the British authorities. These approaches were made on three separate occasions since the Chief Constable issued his statement, the first being on the same Saturday afternoon.

In the course of his statement about matters arising from the ~~trial~~ and acquittal of Constable Robinson, the Chief Constable expressed his belief that there had been no criminal conspiracy to cover up. We have told the British authorities that we can only regard this assertion as an extraordinary prejudgement of the investigation itself. ..

We have further told the British authorities that, while we can understand the Chief Constable's statement that there is a critical and proper need to protect operational methods and sources we could not accept that it would be proper to misrepresent the circumstances in which people have been killed. We have said that we believe the Chief Constable's statement in this respect to have reinforced existing concern. We have, moreover, put it to the British authorities that this statement is not helpful to the atmosphere in which security co-operation takes place.

We have also said to the British authorities that we find unsatisfactory the Chief Constable's reference to the incursion which took place. As I have already indicated publicly, the British Ambassador has said that there are explicit instructions within the RUC against such incursions and that these instructions were apparently breached on this occasion to the regret of the British authorities. The failure of the Chief Constable to advert to these instructions and to the fact that they had been breached was unhelpful.

I have sought an explanation as to what efforts were made by the RUC to contact the Garda Siochana on 12 December, 1982, before, during or after the incursion. The British authorities have said that they are unable, at present, to offer any explanation but that the matter is now subject to further enquiry. They have also indicated that it is a matter of regret to them that no contact was made by the RUC.

In response to further enquiries, we have been informed by the British authorities that neither they nor the RUC are aware of any other occasions on which members of the RUC or other Northern Ireland security forces have made unauthorised operational crossings.

I have also sought and been given an assurance that no members of the Northern Ireland security forces will cross the border in an unauthorised operational role.

The Chief Constable's statement of Saturday last was, in my opinion, a departure from the normal standard which should apply when an investigation is under way and, moreover, from the spirit of security co-operation. So far as the Irish Government are concerned, we now await from the British authorities the results of their investigations.

In the meantime, last Sunday's atrocious murder of Mary Travers and the attack on her father as they returned from Mass, emphasise the continuing need for close co-operation between the security forces, North and South, to combat violence.