



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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N1/22

Gary Mr Burgess  
Reset PA on N1/22  
DD 14/2

CONFIDENTIAL

PSM

Shootings at Maguire's Bridge, Co. Fermanagh

The Minister raised with me this morning two aspects of this incident:

- Had the IRA claimed responsibility or were there any indications that they were responsible?
- Had we given any consideration as to whether he should attend the RUC funerals?

In regard to the first point, there was no indication this morning from the Department of Justice or the Secretariat in Belfast that the Provos were responsible. There was a reference to the IRA in a Northern newspaper but this was speculative.

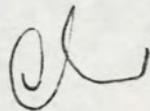
As to the second point, my view is that three considerations should be borne in mind:

- The murder of RUC men is sadly a frequent occurrence. The Minister, therefore, might consider attending only in particularly tragic or unusual circumstances, e.g., where a number of RUC officers are killed. Otherwise the question would arise of attending each and every funeral. (It might, of course, be possible for a representative of the Minister to attend in every case.)
- Perhaps a stronger point is the feelings of the private family, the local community and the RUC. There could be a feeling on the part of the family and local protestant community at least of intrusion by the Minister into private grief.

- Thirdly, there are security considerations. It is likely that the RUC would be extremely worried if not totally negative on security grounds.
- In addition, the Minister might bear in mind that Northern Ireland Ministers have not been attending these funerals.

With these considerations in mind, I would be extremely doubtful about attendance by the Minister in the present case. (Incidentally, we are assuming the RUC man shot is Protestant, but we are not yet certain of this.)

There is a stronger argument for the Minister attending a Catholic RUC funeral. It would be most likely to be acceptable to the family and it would be a significant mark of support not only for the RUC but for Nationalist participation in the RUC. We will get back to you as soon as we have established more about the identity of the dead RUC man in this case. In the meantime, you might query the PSM in Justice as to whether the Gardai will be represented in some way at the funeral or whether they intend to send a wreath etc. (We have made this point to the Department of Justice in the past but they responded that they felt it was a matter which should be raised between the Ministers.) A text of the statement made by the Minister this morning has now been typed up by Press Section and is attached.



Declan O'Donovan  
12 February 1986

cc:- PSS ( I spoke to Keating about this ).  
Mr. O Tuathail (on return)

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

" I have learned with deep sorrow of the killings of an RUC officer and another man at Maguires Bridge yesterday evening and of the injuries to three British soldiers caused by a booby-trap explosion at Castlewellan, Co. Down.

I want to express my condemnation of these brutal acts.

My resolve and the resolve of the Irish Government is made all the firmer in our efforts to bring peace and reconciliation to Northern Ireland".

The Minister has expressed his sincere sympathy to the bereaved families and his concern for the injured British soldiers.

12 February 1986