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Reference Code:	2017/10/34
Creation Dates:	6 May 1987
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
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Note of telephone call from Mr. Declan O'Donovan,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
about the funeral of Finbarr McKenna, Belfast, 6 May, 1987.

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1. Mr. O'Donovan called about 6.45 p.m., having failed to contact the Secretary to the Government, to whom he had given an earlier report of events at the funeral in Belfast of Finbarr McKenna, a member of the Provisional IRA who had been blown up while handling a bomb.

2. He said that a serious situation could be developing as the funeral took a lengthy route from McKenna's home to the cemetery. There had been trouble for a period of 5-10 minutes in the Lower Falls near the Royal Victoria Hospital. Foreign Affairs had a man on the ground who had talked to Brian Feeney of the SDLP who was present. The latter said that the trouble had been contrived by Sinn Féin. A gang of youths had been waiting behind a wall, with stones and bottles pre-prepared and had attacked the security forces. These in turn had baton charged the crowd and 8 plastic bullets had been fired - 5 by soldiers and 3 by the police. Sixteen people had been injured but there were no reports of serious injury. Feeney had been rather relaxed about the situation, apart from the firing of plastic bullets. Joe Hendron had not been present but was more anxious.

3. Martin McGuinness was on the scene, appealing for calm. Adams was not present; he was away in Norway. The Tánaiste had seen the incidents on British TV: they were not pleasant but had not looked as bad as on the occasion of the Marley funeral. The Department of Foreign Affairs were recommending to the Tánaiste that he should not make a statement or respond to queries but that the Department might brief the media that the Irish side had raised in the Secretariat the large police presence (there was supposed to have been some agreement between police and relatives to allow the funeral to take place). Foreign Affairs had asked for particulars

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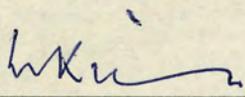
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of the numbers of police involved: they had not got this yet but it appeared to be less than at the Marley funeral. They would also indicate they were expressing concern about the firing of plastic bullets within confined spaces. Joe Hendron was likely to make a statement, expressing concern on these points.

4. Mr. O'Donovan mentioned that in the course of the House of Commons debate on security that afternoon, Mr. King had made some helpful statements as regards security co-operation and the operations of the Gárdaí and had indicated that follow-up would be left to the police chiefs.

5. I reported the particulars about the funeral to the Taoiseach. He felt that with 15 people injured and plastic bullets fired, it was necessary that the Tánaiste give some public indication of concern and say that he had asked that certain matters be raised in the Secretariat. I conveyed this to Mr. O'Donovan and understood that he would act on it.



W. Kirwan,
Assistant Secretary.

6 May, 1987.