

PRIME MINISTER

cc Ireland

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Northern Ireland

You may like to have, for the discussion for Cabinet tomorrow, a summary of the main points which arose from the briefing which you were given in Northern Ireland today by the Army and the RUC.

The Army

1. * ~~~~~ *
2. The Army favour the closure of a certain number (35) of border crossings, together with the necessary change in the law to allow them to be policed.
3. The Army favour improved integration of their own, and the RUC's operational control and the establishment of more joint operations rooms.
4. The Army would also like to see a Director of Operations appointed, to exercise overall day to day operational control, responsible only to the Secretary of State.
5. Possibly under the influence of Monday's events, the Army take a gloomy view of the PIRA's increasing operational and technical competence. They point out that in, e.g., the Crossmaglen area, 80 soldiers have been killed since the troubles began as against only 2 terrorists. The Army also have great respect for the PIRA's competence in, e.g., radio and electronics.

RUC

1. The RUC take a more optimistic view of the general course of the campaign against the PIRA.

* ~ * Passage deleted and
retained under Section 3(4)
AWayland, 25 March 2010

2. The RUC point out that the Garda will cooperate only with them and never with the Army.
3. The RUC go on to argue that the Garda's level of professional competence is nevertheless very low: they therefore attach importance to persuading the Irish to instruct the Garda to set up special crime and surveillance units. The RUC claim that whereas they have adapted successfully to the new type of enemy they now face, e.g., by switching the emphasis from interrogation to surveillance, the Garda have not changed their tactics, and are still using the old techniques.
4. The RUC are much less enthusiastic about the usefulness of joint operations rooms.
5. Although the RUC agree with the Army that the PIRA's new cellular structure is impossible to penetrate, they point out that PIRA members do talk loosely once an operation has been concluded, and that this can provide useful intelligence.
6. The RUC, unlike the Army (who in the border areas can move only by helicopter or on foot) are able to maintain regular road patrols by using hired unmarked vehicles.
7. The RUC claim that, if their strength were increased by 1,000, they should after 2½ years be able to relieve the Army of all but a reserve role.

To the above I would add one or two further thoughts:-

(a) There are very obvious discrepancies between the statistics of fatalities etc., which were given you by the Army and the RUC respectively: you may wish to have these figures analysed objectively.

/ (b)

(b) The fact remains that in 3 Brigade's area about 200 identified terrorists are holding down 3800 troops and 3700 UDR personnel. In the Province as a whole not more than 500 terrorists are holding down 12666 troops and 7522 UDR personnel - together with 6374 regular and 4560 part-time RUC.

(c) The RUC, who will be responsible for Ulster's law and order when the Army have left, inevitably take a rather different and longer-term view of the problem from that of the Army.

(d) You have seen the physical conditions in Crossmaglen, which are probably typical of the Army operational outposts: they are pretty dreadful. They, together with the constant tension, are perhaps not calculated to produce a very objective view of the overall problem.

(e) The fact remains that there is clearly a very deep difference of approach between the Army and the RUC, and it must be open to question whether significant improved cooperation between them can be achieved without some structural change (joint operations rooms, Director of Operations, or whatever) on the lines suggested by the Army - there has to be some way of adjudicating quickly between conflicting views in any given operational emergency.

BGC

29 August, 1979.