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Title: Note by HJ McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, of a telephone call from Ambassador of Great Britain to Ireland John Peck regarding the use of British Army troops at a civil rights march in Newry, County Down.

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NOTE

Ambassador Peck telephoned me this afternoon and said that lest we be alarmed about Army intentions in connection with the Newry March from the lunch hour broadcast, he was able to give me the following information based on a telephone call he made to Army Headquarters in Lisburn.

Ambassador Peck said that the Joint Security Committee had indicated that whilst there are numerous ways of making protests which are not unlawful, marches and processions are contrary to the law and must be dealt with. The Ambassador went on to give the following gloss on this. He said that the Civil Rights people could have any meeting they liked provided they did not proceed to and from it in formation. He assured me that the Army will be bending over backwards to avoid a clash.

In reply to a question I had put to him earlier as to whether any paratroops will be in Newry (and pointing out the extreme folly of having them there) the Ambassador said that he had ascertained that there would be some paratroops in reserve but that they would not be visible unless required. I urged on the Ambassador again that it would be extremely foolish to use paratroops in Newry this week-end.

4 Feabhra 1972