

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2007/116/757
Creation Date(s):	December 1977
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

M'Maney
will you get
details for this file pl.
of approach to British
about assignment
recently
3/11
Wally

Posting of 1st Battalion, the Paratroop Regiment,
to Northern Ireland

help
P A with

HM
Bh

20
12
77

1. It was announced by the Ministry of Defence, London, on 6 ^{December} February that the 1st Battalion, the Paratroop Regiment, would shortly be posted to Northern Ireland for a four month tour of duty. The 1st Battalion was at the centre of the "Bloody Sunday" disturbances in Derry on 30 January 1972 which resulted in the deaths of 13 civilians. The battalion has not subsequently served in Northern Ireland (apart from a further tour in the second half of 1972). In normal circumstances the battalion would have served two or three tours in Northern Ireland in the period since 1972 and it is generally agreed that the unusually lengthy absence reflected a policy decision to keep the battalion out of Northern Ireland. Since "Bloody Sunday" the battalion has served in Cyprus and Berlin. The battalion is based at Aldershot and is currently engaged in fire-fighting duties in the London area.

2. The decision to reassign the 1st Battalion to Northern Ireland has been condemned by the SDLP members of Derry City Council as well as by a number of the party's spokesmen. Mr. Michael Canavan, spokesman on law and order, commented that senior British Army officers probably saw the battalion's recall to Northern Ireland as a long overdue vindication of their behaviour in Derry. The chairman of the party's constituency representatives, Mr. Seamus Mallon, issued a statement at the week-end which described the decision as the most insensitive and highly dangerous ever made by a British administration.

3. There has been persistent and apparently well-founded speculation in the press that the battalion will be posted to the south Armagh area. Mr. Seamus Mallon commented in the statement referred to above that the employment of the battalion in that area would only serve to revive the Provisional IRA in the county and lead to an escalation of violence. The Guardian of 12 December quotes a British Army spokesman as dismissing these suggestions as pure speculation. It was pointed out that there

were several "low sensitivity postings" available in Northern Ireland and that it had already been announced that the regiment would not be sent to Derry. Reference has also been made in the press to the fact that it would be highly unlikely that any of the troops involved in the "Bloody Sunday" incidents would still be serving with the regiment.