

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2010/19/1686
Creation Date(s):	1972
Extent and medium:	1 page
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

British Army "Yellow Cord" Instructions

Instructions by the Director of Operations for opening fire in Northern Ireland.

General Rules

1. These instructions are for the guidance of Commanders and troops operating collectively or individually. When troops are operating collectively soldiers will only open fire when ordered to do so by the Commander on the spot.

2. Never use more force than the minimum necessary to enable you to carry out your duties.

3. Always first try to handle the situation by other means than opening fire. If you have to fire: a. Fire only aimed shots. b. Do not fire more rounds than are absolutely necessary to achieve your aim.

4. Your magazine/belt must always be loaded with live ammunition and be fitted to the weapon. Unless you are about to open fire no live round is to be carried in the breach and the working parts must be forward. Company Commanders and above may, when circumstances in their opinion warrant such action, order weapons to be cocked with a round in the breach where appropriate and the safety catch at safe.

5. Automatic fire may be used against identified targets in the same circumstances as single shots if, in the opinion of the Commander on spot, it is the minimum force required and no other weapon can be employed as effectively. Because automatic fire scatters, it is not to be used where persons not using firearms are in, or may be close to, the line of fire.

Warning before firing

6. Whenever possible a warning should be given before you open fire. The only circumstances in which you may open fire without giving warning are described in paras. 13, 14 and 15 below.

7. A warning should be as loud as possible, preferably by loud-hailer. It must: a. Give clear orders to stop attacking or to halt, as appropriate. b. State that fire will be opened if the orders are not obeyed.

You may fire after due warning

8. Against a person carrying what you can positively identify as a firearm but only if you have reason to think that he is about to use it for offensive purposes and he refuses to halt when called upon to do so and there is no other way of stopping him.

9. Against a person throwing a petrol bomb if petrol bomb attacks continue in your area against troops and civilians or against property, if his action is likely to endanger life.

10. Against a person attacking or destroying property or stealing

firearms or explosives, if his action is likely to endanger life.

11. Against a person who, though he is not at present attacking has: a. in your sight killed or seriously injured a member of the security forces or a person whom it is your duty to protect and b. not halted when called upon to do so and cannot be arrested by any other means.

12. If there is no other way to protect yourself or those whom it is your duty to protect from the danger of being killed or seriously injured.

You may fire without warning

13. When a hostile firing is taking place in your area, and a warning is impracticable: a. against a person using a firearm against you or those whom it is your duty to protect or b. against a person carrying what you can positively identify as a firearm if he is clearly about to use it for offensive purposes.

14. At a vehicle if the occupants open fire or throw a bomb at you or those whom it is your duty to protect or are clearly about to do so.

15. If there is no other way to protect yourself or those whom it is your duty to protect from the danger of being killed or seriously injured.

Action by guards and at road blocks/checks

16. Where warnings are called for they should be in the form of specific challenges, as set out in paragraphs 17 and 18.

17. If you have to challenge a person who is acting suspiciously you must do so in a firm, distinct voice saying 'Halt — Hands Up'. a. If he halts you are to say 'Stand Still and Keep Your Hands Up.' b. Ask him why he is there and if not satisfied call your Commander immediately and hand the person over to him.

18. If the person does not halt at once, you are to challenge again saying 'Halt — Hands Up' and if the person does not halt on your second challenge, you are to cock your weapon, apply the safety catch and shout: 'Stand Still I Am Ready To Fire.'

19. The rule covering the circumstances for opening fire are described in paragraphs 8—14. If the circumstances do not justify opening fire, you will do all you can to stop and detain the person without opening fire.

20. AT a road block/check you will NOT fire on a vehicle simply because it refused to stop. If a vehicle does not halt at a road block/check note its description, make, registration number and direction of travel.

21. In all circumstances where you have challenged and the response is not satisfactory you will summon your Commander at the first opportunity.

Revised November 1972.

Note

This copy obtained in a
We have not officially
the British authorities.

British left-wing magazine
received a copy from