

Mr. Hill has seen.

1969/Sec.8

CONCLUSIONS OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET SECURITY COMMITTEE HELD IN STORMONT CASTLE ON THURSDAY, 17TH JULY, 1969, AT 11.30 A.M.

PRESENT:
The Prime Minister
The Minister of Home Affairs
The Minister of Education
The Minister of Development

ALSO PRESENT:
The Inspector General
The Deputy Inspector General

The Secretary to the Cabinet
The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet

Mr. H. Coote

REPORT BY INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Inspector General indicated that there had been little activity during the night and that there was nothing to report.

DEATH OF MR. SAMUEL DEVENNEY

The Inspector General alluded to the death of Mr. Devenny and warned that capital might well be made of it. The Inspector General recalled that the police had pursued a number of rioters into the Devenny home during the Londonderry disturbances in April, following which it had been alleged that the police had beaten the Devennys with batons on the way through. Mr. Devenny had spent some days in hospital at that time. An enquiry into the incident had unfortunately been obstructed and was not yet complete. Mr. Devenny had a history of heart trouble and was an outpatient at Altnagelvin Hospital. It was understood that he was out and about yesterday, but seemingly had suffered a heart attack and had died at his home in William Street today. A post-mortem was being held tomorrow and the funeral would take place on Saturday morning. The Inspector General said it was impossible to forecast what, if anything, would happen as a result of the Devenny death. The Prime Minister said it was to be hoped that the death would have a sobering effect generally. It was interesting to note that the Roman Catholic priest in his address at the McCloskey funeral had laid blame for the violence in Dungiven on his co-religionists.

CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH - ARMAGH

The Prime Minister referred to the Civil Rights march proposed for Armagh on 26th July or 2nd August and said that he had decided to approach Mr. R. H. O'Connor, M.P., instead of Senator Lennon. Mr. O'Connor had proved most helpful and had undertaken to talk to Senator Lennon and others with a view to having the march called off. He had promised to report back in due course.

EQUIPMENT

The Secretary to the Cabinet said that he had asked Mr. Brooke of the Ministry of Commerce to pursue with the Pys company the urgent supply of the radio equipment which had been ordered by the Ministry of Home Affairs for the R.U.C.

The Minister of Education reported that he had made little headway with the Ards Metal Company as the owner, Mr. Whiteside, was on holiday. He was, however, expected back and he would endeavour to contact him tonight. The Minister said that the parts for the shields were ready for assembly and as he understood the position Mr. Whiteside had arranged for two of his men to press ahead with this work over the holiday period. But the men had simply not turned up. The Deputy Inspector General said that the shields were needed as a matter of urgency because if it were necessary to call on the U.S.C. they would require to be given the same protection as the police. The Minister of Development suggested that it should be possible for the local police in Newtownards to trace these two men and the Inspector General undertook to explore this approach. The Inspector General said that a further 600 shields would be required and with this order in the offing the Ards Metal Company might be spurred to greater efforts. It was agreed that it was not worthwhile going elsewhere for the shields at this stage.

U.S.C. - SUPPLY OF ARMS

The Minister of Home Affairs reported that following his statement that members of the U.S.C. called up for stand-by duty with the R.U.C. were to be issued with batons only, the Londonderry section had registered its indignation that officers at least were not to be allowed to carry revolvers. The Inspector General explained that because of incorrect instructions this section had gone to the wrong hall and as a result had found itself virtually cut off and without arms of any kind. There was therefore in his view a case for N.C.O.'s having arms. The deputy Inspector General pointed out that Specials carrying out ordinary police duty in Belfast were armed and he was in favour of Sergeants on stand-by duty being permitted to carry revolvers. The Prime Minister said that the Home Office had been advised that batons only would be carried and that any proposed change would have to be brought to the attention of the Home Office. It was agreed that the Secretary to the Cabinet should go back to the Home Office on the question of the carrying of revolvers by officers (including Sergeants).

The deputy Inspector General said that some members of the U.S.C. had been observed carrying arms and this had given rise to criticism having regard to the terms of the Minister's press statement. He explained, however, that in certain circumstances the U.S.C. would continue to carry weapons, viz. -

- (1) On police duty in Belfast - as already mentioned.

/(2) In

Mr. Hill has seen.

- (2) In the guarding of key points where they were equipped with rifles or automatic weapons.
- (3) En route from their homes to the drill hall where their weapons were exchanged for batons and stacked under guard.

The Inspector General said that the position had since been explained to the press who now understood the position.

SAFETY OF U.S.C. ARMS

The Prime Minister asked about the safety of arms in the homes of members of the U.S.C. during absence on holiday and whether it was feasible for these to be handed in to the nearest R.U.C. station. The Inspector General said there were difficulties in this in that many stations were not operated on a full-time basis and that in any event it was safer to have the arms dispersed in the homes of the men rather than gathered together in one place. Various other suggestions were made including the handing over of rifles to section leaders and the handing in of the rifle belt to the R.U.C. It was realised, however, that any action of this kind might well be construed as a lack of confidence in the U.S.C. and it was agreed that the matter was one for discussion by the Inspector General and deputy Inspector General with U.S.C. staff officers.

COUNTY FERMANAGH MARCH

The Inspector General reported that the march planned for Saturday, 19th July, had been called off.