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19/3/74

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1. On Saturday 1 June, The Times reported that SSNI, at his press conference in Belfast on Friday 31 May, said that "the decision to use the Army to occupy oil storage depots early on Monday morning had been taken on Friday night at 10 Downing Street in the presence of the Chief of the General Staff".

2. CGS was not invited to attend the Cabinet Meeting on the Friday night in question (nor did he expect to be); nor was he even at 10 Downing Street that night. He was told of the Cabinet decision subsequently by S of S in his office in the Ministry of Defence some time after the Cabinet meeting had ended, when S of S instructed him to take the necessary steps to implement the particular decision which had been taken that evening, to take over the oil depots "at a time to be decided by SSNI".

3. CGS was of course at the IRN Committee meeting the previous evening, Thursday, 23~~0~~ May, but as the Minutes show, no executive military action was decided on by that Committee that evening.

4. The record is certainly straight in MOD and perhaps SSNI was mis-quoted, but CGS would all the same like to make sure NIO have their record straight too. Would you please draw the attention of PS/PUS NIO to the inaccuracies of the Times' report.

3 June 1974

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