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"THE I.R.A.'s ARMS CASH"

WORLD IN ACTION

22ND FEBRUARY, 1982.

This is Michael Flannery, a spritley 80 year old Irishman who has lived in America ever since he was a boy. To-day he is a pillar of New York's Irish-American Community a devout Roman Catholic who goes to Mass every day.

Michael Flannery is a veteran Irish Republican who has fought to get the British out of Ireland since 1916. Next month in New York he stands trial accused of conspiring to smuggle weapons to the Provisional I.R.A.. Michael Flannery is said to be the man who finances their American gun buying.

World in Action has pieced together an undercover investigation in New York by U.S. agents which they believe has broken up a major arms smuggling network. It's a trail that begins with a Mafia Arms Dealer in America and ends here in Northern Ireland with a grim ritual of killings that has claimed more than 2,000 lives since the present conflict began.

There are 20m people in America that claim Irish descent, six times the population of the Irish Republic itself. For the more patriotic among them, tonight is the social highlight of the year. It's the Annual Dinner Dance of a group called NOR AID - the Irish Northern Aid Committee. NOR AID was founded by Michael Flannery shortly after the present violence in Northern Ireland broke out and ever since, Michael Flannery has been at pains to insist that its sole purpose is charitable.

MICHAEL FLANNERY:

The reason why we are raising funds is to help the distressed people in the North of Ireland who have no other means of subsistence, most of them, and to help those who are in need of both clothes and food. These funds are distributed among the distressed in the North, those who are not making enough money to have a normal life.

But the contributors to the organisation that Mr. Flannery claims to be a "charity" are united by a common bond, they share a fierce and deep resentment of Britain's presence in the North of Ireland.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

The hunger strikers earned the status that they died for, Britain will not be convinced to leave Ireland by force or argument and it can only be concluded that they will only be convinced by force of arms. They will not break us in the Republican Movement. They will not break us and with your good help here in America we can but win. Victory to the Irish Republican Movement! Sealadaigh Abu! Good night everyone.

That dinner made \$50,000 profit which Mr. Flannery says will feed and clothe hard pressed Catholics in Ulster. The British Government has always suspected that far from being a charity that NOR AID is simply a fund raising fund for the I.R.A.. A charge that NOR Aid has always denied. But now there is independent evidence from the American Government itself. It says that NOR AID has failed to account for millions of dollars from fund raising events like this dinner.

MICHAEL FLANNERY:

This money that they are talking about, we give a receipt for every penny that we send to Ireland. We have a receipt for it to back it up.

INTERVIEWER:

The money that they say that they can't account for? It is not being spent on guns, is it?

MICHAEL FLANNERY:

Certainly not, the only reason why they are saying this is that it is a suspicion of theirs that we are not accounting for all of the money. We are accounting for all of the money.

This man says that he knows how the missing money has been spent. His name is Peter Mc Mullen, once a senior Provisional I.R.A. man. To-day he is on the run from the I.R.A. whose methods he now denounces and from the British for bombing an army barracks in Yorkshire. When he wasn't organising British bombings, Peter Mc Mullen had another role. He was sent to America to buy arms for the I.R.A..

PETER MC MULLEN:

They wanted somebody with weapons knowledge and also who knew Ireland and knew the type of weapons that they needed for the type of fighting that they were doing.

INTERVIEWER:

And who paid for these guns?

PETER MC MULLEN:

The Irish Northern Committee otherwise known as NOR AID.

INTERVIEWER:

How much has NOR AID raised over the years during the present conflict in Northern Ireland?

PETER MC MULLEN:

I'd say close to \$5,000,000.

INTERVIEWER:

Are you saying that most of that would have been used to purchase weapons?

PETER MC MULLEN:

Most certainly, yes.

Despite their long standing suspicion, Governments on both sides of the Atlantic have never proved this. Then one October morning in 1979 a cargo vessel docked here in Dublin. Its listed cargo included this paper shredding machine from New York. But hidden inside were American Army issued guns. 156 of them. It was one of the biggest ever captured shipment for the Provisional I.R.A.. Among the weapons were two of these M 60 belt fed Machine Guns and 60,000 rounds of ammunition.

R.U.C. ARMS EXPERT:

The M 60 is the current American issue Squad Automatic Weapon. It was used extensively by the Americans in Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER:

But in what way is it useful for the I.R.A. in the context of Northern Ireland?

R.C. ARMS EXPERT:

It is useful in that it is an easily portable weapon and it has quite a high rate of fire - about 600 rounds per minute. As I said the weapon is easily portable and can even be fired from the hip which would make it very useful in the urban context.

In Ulster's recent past the M 60 has killed eight soldiers and policemen and has been used for numerous ambushes. The gun recovered from this Belfast house killed an S.A.S. Captain. Such killings have turned the M 60 into a prestige weapon for the I.R.A.. They have used it to great propaganda effect. In America an investigation was launched to discover how the M 60's found in Dublin were being smuggled out. New York was known to be their shipping point. U.S. Customs soon traced the man that they suspect is the shipper. They say that it is this man filmed here at last month's NOR AID Dinner in New York. He is Bernard Mc Kewan born in County Leitrim in Ireland and now President of one of NOR AID's New York Branches. Mc Kewan is expected to be charged soon with shipping the guns to Dublin. So implicating a senior NOR AID member in arms smuggling to the Provisional I.R.A.. But the identity of those financing and organising the arms smuggling network was still unknown to U.S. agents. They believe that Mc Kewan was only involved in shipping the weapons and knew little or nothing of the network behind him. In their attempt to break that network the F.B.I. mounted a major undercover operation, eventually it led to the arrest of the man who founded NOR AID, Michael Flannery. The F.B.I. also arrested three of his associates. All four men stand trial next month. The F.B.I.'s undercover plan was to plant an agent inside the I.R.A.'s American network. But that required the co-operation of this man, George De Mayo, a New York gun dealer who had close ties to one of the city's most powerful Mafia families. De Mayo has been selling guns for most of his life. In the sixties he supplied rebel forces around the world. But for twenty years he had one trusted and regular customer, the I.R.A.. Among hundreds of weapons that he had supplied was an armalite rifle recovered from the Balcombe Street siege. Eventually he was charged with conspiring to smuggle weapons to Ireland and gaoled for ten years. This long sentence gave the F.B.I. their chance to persuade De Mayo to co-operate in their undercover plan. They offered him a remarkable deal of a five year reprieve if he helped an F.B.I. agent infiltrate the I.R.A.'s network. De Mayo agreed to the deception but his identity was protected. Court documents referred only to him as the C.I. (confidential informant), or the source. World in Action has pieced together that New York undercover operation which led to next month's trial of Michael Flannery and three fellow Irish Americans.

George De Mayo was well placed to set the trap. According to the F.B.I. the Irishman to whom he had been selling guns for twenty years was this man, George Harrison. They say that Harrison was one of the I.R.A.'s main American arms procurers. He is sixty-seven and a highly respected member of Brooklyn's Irish-American Community. The F.B.I. say they doubt that he ever had a part in his life. Harrison is the second Irish-American to stand trial next month.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN:

A confidential source told us that for the past twenty years he has had dealings with Harrison in regards to furnishing him weapons, rifles, scopes, magazines for the weapons and other paraphernalia. From his dealings with not only Harrison but other people who were brought into these dealings there was no doubt in the confidential sources' mind that the guns were being furnished to the I.R.A. and that Harrison was one of the procurers in the United States for weapons. On one occasion he was shown a 20mm cannon and a remark made by Harrison to the effect that 'their' people and the confidential source believed that he meant the I.R.A. would use this weapon to shoot down British helicopters.

The confidential source, George De Mayo knew that Harrison was stock piling another gun shipment. The time was now right to penetrate the I.R.A.'s network. De Mayo introduced the F.B.I. agent to his old acquaintance George Harrison as an underworld arms dealer who had access to plenty of guns and who was completely trustworthy.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: Our undercover agent is a big Irish looking fellow. He has got red hair, he grew a beard, he dressed up in kind of hippie-type clothes where he would have the background of being out in the world. He has got big blue eyes and he looked as if he had just gotten off the boat.

A second Irish man was with Harrison at the meeting. He is Thomas Falvey, a 53 year old building contractor. The F.B.I. says that Falvey has been part of the I.R.A. network for the last five years. He is the third Irishman who stands trial next month.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: For the past five years as far as the confidential source knew, Falvey also acted as a chauffer for Harrison and would squire him to various political meetings in support of the Irish Republican cause. At the meeting to re-inforce the background of the undercover agent he was purported to be an individual who had contacts and could get the MAC 10 hand-held Machine Gun which Harrison was looking for.

R.U.C. ARMS EXPERT: This is the sort of weapon that the terrorists would like to get their hands on. You can see that it is about nine or ten inches long but despite that it has a rate of fire approaching 20 rounds a second. With that sort of fire power you would quite literally cut a person in half.

George Harrison asked the F.B.I. agent how many of the guns that he could supply. The agent said that he could get 350 at \$250 each.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: Harrison wasn't taken aback with the price in fact he said that within four weeks he expected \$50,000 coming in to buy weapons. Later on at the meeting he did purchase two Miniruga 14 Rifles similar to this one, and he paid \$800 cash to the confidential source for the rifles.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of impression did your undercover agent get of the amount of money that was available for the purchase of weapons?

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: Regardless of what amount was discussed they never blinked an eye and the impression that our undercover agent had was that they had unlimited funds to buy unlimited weapons.

The F.B.I. wanted to know where the weapons were being stored and who was storing them before they were shipped to Ireland. They fitted an electronic homing device in the stock of one of the Miniruga Rifles their agent had sold to Harrison. The signal led to the second floor of this house, the home of George Harrison accused of being the I.R.A.'s arms procurer. By now a huge surveillance operation was underway. Sixty of the F.B.I. agents, many of Irish descent had been assigned. Harrison's phone was being tapped and his conversation with the F.B.I. agent, recorded. They soon discovered another weapons

store. The trail led to this garage in Brooklyn and the large apartment next door. It was the home of Patrick Mullen a 43 year old bachelor and an employee of the local telephone company. Patrick Mullen, seen here at NOR AID's dinner, cashing the night's takings is treasurer of Brooklyn's branch. The F.B.I. say Mullen is the fourth Irishman to stand trial next month. Now Mullen's home came under surveillance. On at least one occasion a van was seen loading what seemed to be boxes of guns. By now the F.B.I. believed that they had built up a picture of the New York arms smuggling network. Harrison was the main arms procurer, Falvey his driver and right-hand-man, Mullen was using his home to store guns before shipment to Ireland. The question was, what was the role of NOR AID's founder Michael Flannery in the network?

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: On June 18th our undercover agent called Mr. Harrison in the evening and advised him that he had secured 47 automatic weapons, 25 Ingram MAC 10's, various semi-automatic and automatic rifles and that he could have them for Mr. Harrison on the following day on the 19th and that the price would be \$16,800. Harrison indicated that the money was no problem because he did have access to the money he needed right here in New York City.

INTERVIEWER: There was a special purchasing fund?

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: I guess that is what it was.

Harrison soon set about raising the cash. F.B.I. telephone taps showed that within ten minutes he called a house in the Queens district of New York.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: Harrison's obvious attempt to secure the necessary funds to purchase the weapons. He reached out and contacted a man named Michael. During the contact they set up an appointment for the following evening on June 19th at Michael's house and during this conversation Harrison had asked that the amount be as high as possible to which Michael agreed by saying Yeh, yeh!!

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN: Michael had been identified as Michael Flannery.

the following evening on June 19th agents of the F.B.I. conducted a surveillance at Michael's house. At 8.15 that evening George Harrison entered Flannery's house. At the time he entered he was carrying a blue and white plastic bag. He was in the house about fifteen minutes and then came out. He still had the blue and white plastic bag and contained in the bag and protruding from the end was a white envelope of approximately three inches across.

Shortly afterwards Harrison arrived here in Brooklyn and the home of Thomas Falvey his assistant. The F.B.I. believed that Harrison was carrying \$17,000 which he had just collected from Michael Flannery. Minutes later the F.B.I. undercover agent arrived in a van with 47 Machine Guns.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN:

After all of the guns had been emptied from the van they closed the garage door and put on the light. They inspected a few of the weapons which included 25 Ingram MAC 10 hand-held Machine Guns, assorted AK 47 attack rifles and other shoulder semi-automatic and automatic weapons. At this time when they were totally satisfied with the weapons. Mr. Harrison turned to the blue and white bag took a white envelope out which contained \$17,000. He paid him \$16,000 the agreed price for the weapons plus an additional \$100 for the rental for the van.

Harrison and Falvey were arrested immediately. A few hours later Patrick Mullen the NOR AID Branch Treasurer was arrested after Customs Agents searched his home.

CUSTOMS:

This is what we found. We found fifteen of these M 15 automatic weapons, we found some small arms ammunition and we found quite a bit of this heavy calibre ammunition for automatic weapons. We found this 20mm cannon which is a little outdated and old but is still a dangerous weapon. It fires a projectile approximately this size and I understand that it was intended to be used to shoot down Helicopters. We also found this flame thrower, this is a particularly dangerous weapon because it fires a gelatinous substance and it has an effective range of about 150 feet.

Some time later Michael Flannery was arrested on his return from morning Mass. He was charged with conspiring to smuggle weapons to the I.R.A. and was granted bail with Harrison, Falvey and Mullen. Flannery denies the charge, re-asserting that all NOR AID's money goes to charity. But Peter Mc Mullen the former I.R.A. American arms buyer whose evidence is not part of the F.B.I.'s case says that he is clear about Flannery's role.

MR. MC MULLEN:

He is the banker. I mean he doesn't actually handle weapons, probably he doesn't even see the weapons, but as far as the money is concerned for weapons he knows, and he is the one who provides the money for the weapons. And because of his total honesty he has complete control over it.

INTERVIEWER:

And he is trusted 100% by the I.R.A. leadership in Dublin?

MR. MC. MULLEN:

Yes, and in Belfast.

Evidence of the collaboration between the I.R.A. leadership and the Flannery seen here at an I.R.A. rally in Dublin emerged during the undercover operation. Documents seized in F.B.I. raids suggest the arms smuggling operation is being masterminded by a senior I.R.A. Provisional from Dublin, Joe Cahill. Cahill was once Belfast's Commander of the Provisional I.R.A.. To-day he is said to have a new role.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN:

I mean, he sets up arms deals, that is his job. He is the quartermaster for the I.R.A.. He travels all around the country, all around the world setting up arms deals.

INTERVIEWER:

Why is it necessary for a man like Joe Cahill to come to the United States?

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN:

When a couple of hundred thousand dollars is involved then they have to have somebody from Dublin to give the ok., and Joe is the man to do it.

Last Spring, Joe Cahill landed in Toronto's International Airport on board an Air France Jet from Paris. From Toronto Customs agents believe he slipped illegally over the American border and down to New York and the home of George Harrison where they suspect he coordinated the arms smuggling operation. When agents raided Harrison's home they found Cahill's Irish passport and his return air ticket. Agents believe that within hours of this raid Cahill slipped back into Canada and from there he flew home to Dublin on a forged passport. But another top I.R.A. man who came with Cahill wasn't so lucky. U.S. agents arrested him at this New York bus terminal as he stepped off a coach from Chicago. He is Eamonn O' Doherty who before coming to America was in Spain, where agents suspect he was organising an arms shipment from Basque Corillas.

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN:

In the early seventies he was Chief of Staff for the I.R.A. for a short time. He is a relatively unknown person, a very shadowy kind of figure.

INTERVIEWER:

What is his job these days with the I.R.A.?

F.B.I. SPOKESMAN:

He took over from a member of the Army Council I work very close with. He is a follow up man of Joe Cahill's. In other words Joe would go and set up an arms deal and Eamonn would go and take care of all of the details - ship in and stuff like that there.

Last June O'Doherty was seen with Cahill at George Harrison's New York home. Customs agents who raided the house suspect that he was making the arrangements to ship the guns.

CUSTOMS AGENT:

We also found that he had several false passports, a false birth certificate some dentist cards and letters of introduction from a company believed to be fictitious which was based in Ireland.

INTERVIEWER:

Why would he have these fictitious papers on him?

CUSTOMS AGENT:

These papers would be of great value in establishing a cover company in order to ship weapons or something similar to Ireland at a later date.

Such a shipment may have been stopped with the arrest of Eamonn O'Doherty the I.R.A.'s liason man from Dublin. But the F.B.I. believe that his arrest for the forthcoming trial with his NORRAID associates would only temporarily halt the flow of weapons to the Provisional I.R.A.

F. B. I. SPOKESMAN:

The weapons we recovered will put them back away. This shipment was being readied to be shipped over-seas but in the totality of things this is nothing. They will miss them for a while but get them from someplace else.

INTERVIEWER:

Probably. It is like a vacuum, you pull one out and someone jumps right in his place.

(Michael Flannery)

The war in Ireland, if ever there was a just war - war for liberty and freedom and to control your own destinies - must be a just cause. And that is what the Irish are fighting for and always have been fighting for. So therefore they are waging a just war. There is a lot of things happen in war. A war is a bloody affair that shouldn't be happening with civilised peoples.

INTERVIEWER:

So lets go through the methods that you find acceptable and the methods that you find unacceptable. What about bombings in London? Do you find those acceptable?

(Michael Flannery)

Well, I do, because the only way that the British will get an idea of it is to carry the war to them.

INTERVIEWER:

You are quoted as saying once that the more British soldiers that are sent home in coffins the better - do you still feel that way?

(Michael Flannery)

I still feel that way. I have nothing against the British soldier I pity the poor fellow he is a tool in the business. But, it is the only way because, I hope that if enough coffins go back there that their people will see the ask the simple question " why did this boy die? Why did this young man who had nothing to do with it die? Why was he blown away?"

While Michael Flannery was prepared to discuss his support for the Provisional I.R.A. he was reluctant to answer the charge that George Harrison came to his house to collect money for an arms deal.

MICHAEL FLANNERY:

There is a case pending on that to say whether he was or he wasn't, the F.B.I. say that he was and its a pertinent part of the case so I am not going to discuss a case that hasn't been before the judges yet. It wouldn't be the ethical thing to do. To the case - the charge against George Harrison, who is not a member of the Irish Northern Aid....

INTERVIEWER:

There is a charge against you as well for giving him \$17,000 for which he used to purchase arms.

MICHAEL FLANNERY:

Yeh! Sure there is a charge just as false as all of the rest of the United States charges.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you give him \$17,000 that night?

MICHAEL FLANNERY:

Now you are asking me a direct question and I will give you a direct answer, I did not!

INTERVIEWER:

Its a lie.

MICHAEL FLANNERY:

Its a lie, and they know that it is a lie. Next month a jury will decide. Its verdict may also resolve a long standing question. Does NOR AID's money go to charity or to arm the I.R.A.?

ENDS.