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Vol 3

Interview with the Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Nicholas Scott,
on the "Good Morning Ulster" Programme - 27 April, 1987

Interviewer: We have with us the Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Nicholas Scott, with his reaction to the allegation that the IRA's information had come from a mole within the Republic's Security Services.

Mr. Scott: I think that's unlikely. We know the IRA are very skillful at targetting within Northern Ireland and across border as well. They are extremely skillful on that front and I think it's much too early to come to a judgement about how they got this particular piece of information which enabled them to carry out this terrible act.

Interviewer: But you would accept that they did get exact information from somewhere.

Mr. Scott: It certainly looks like it, yes.

Interviewer: Would you care to speculate on where that came from?

Mr. Scott: No, I don't think so. It may be we will never find out. But one of the things we will be talking to the police about today, of course, will be whether they have any idea about how that information might have been obtained, as well as details about the positioning of the car and the rest of it.

Interviewer: The incident took place in what has been described as a "no-man's land".

Mr. Scott: That's not true. That's a road that is regularly patrolled and as I have said one of the things we will be interested in is about how long the car had been in that particular spot.

Interviewer: Was it not possible for the two sets of police services to meet at one point. I understand that the car had to travel on its own over a certain distance of land.

Mr. Scott: The most important thing was, or is bound to be, the actual way in which the car was able to be positioned there and detonated with such precision. If RUC men had been travelling in close proximity to Maurice and Cecily Gibson then really, we'd have just probably had dead policemen as well as a dead Judge and his wife.

Interviewer: Was the failure not to spot the risk of this parked car not a breach of security?

Mr. Scott: Well, I think one of these, these are all things that we will be talking about today, but until we've got a report from the RUC, I'm sure it would be quite wrong of me to leak the judgement as others have seen fit to do.

Interviewer: Once again, the reaction of Unionists within the context of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, is to say that a year and a half on security is no better.

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Mr. Scott: I'm absolutely convinced that if we are ever to eliminate terrorism from Northern Ireland we have to do it in co-operation with the Republic and between the two police forces in the two parts of Ireland. You'll never eliminate it without that. I know that we have made substantial progress in laying the foundations for progress and indeed I believe that this latest wave of IRA activity is in no small part due to the fact that they have been rejected by the electorate in the South; they've got diminishing support among the nationalist community in the North and they are determined to have this wave of violence, a futile but tragic reaction to that situation.

Interviewer: Can it be stopped?

Mr. Scott: Well, over a period yes. It has been wound down over the years. I've learned, I must say, in my time in Northern Ireland, never to be too elated when we get a good run of success and let's remember we have had three significant finds in the last few days, two of them by the Garda Síochána and there have been significant finds as well as these tragedies which we have experienced and I say one must never be too elated of success, never too depressed at setbacks and this is a massive and tragic setback.

Interviewer: How would you assess the implications of Lord Justice Gibson's death?

Mr. Scott: Well, it shows the ability of the IRA to murder anybody, including his wife, in pursuit of their vicious campaign. Striking at our police and our system of justice, two of the pillars of any civilised and law-abiding society. We shouldn't be surprised at that. What we've got to do, all of us, whatever our role in the Community, is to determine that this won't succeed.

Interviewer: Nicholas Scott, the Deputy Secretary of State.