



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/108/22

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Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Belfast

5 November 1997

Restricted Security Session

1. The Restricted Security Session commenced at 3.35pm and ended at 4.05pm
2. Present on the Irish side were the Minister for Justice Mr O'Donoghue, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Andrews, the Secretary of the Department of Justice Mr Dalton, The Garda Commissioner Mr Byrne, Mr Val O'Donnell and Steve Magner from the Secretariat. Present on the British side were the Secretary of State, Ms Mowlam, Minister of State Mr Adam Ingram, The Chief Constable Mr Flanagan, Mr John Steele of the NIO and Mr John Fisher of the Secretariat.
3. There was only one item on the agenda, namely a review of the current security situation.
4. The Chief Constable said by way of opening remark that the current leadership of the Provisional IRA were committed to the peace process and to advancement by political means. However, there were indications that there were internal difficulties within the movement.

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5. The Minister for Justice commented that he would like to put some specific considerations to the Chief Constable so that they could be addressed during his review of the current situation. The Minister said that since the last Conference in July, the IRA ceasefire had been announced and had held. Despite the fact that the current ceasefire is holding, there are elements within the IRA who are not pleased with the current peace strategy and who may seek to disrupt the process over time.
6. The Minister went on to say that nothing should be done to strengthen the hand of the dissidents. In particular, potential damage to the peace process could arise because of Unionist stalling at the inter-party talks or the advancement of the Report of the International Commission on Decommissioning. Decommissioning had been a barrier in the past and it was not appropriate to raise it again at this sensitive time. Apart from the IRA, there are others on both sides of the divide who want to disrupt the process by violence. He wanted to emphasise the need to recognise the possibility of the dissidents being encouraged either by stalling in the talks process or by decommissioning.
7. The Chief Constable, in replying to the subject of dissidents within the PIRA, said that some of them were prominent people who had demanded a meeting in Donegal some weeks ago. There had been some resignations from the IRA arising out of disaffection because of Sinn Féin's acceptance of the Mitchell Principles. The disaffected people are not joining the Continuation Army Council. The Chief Constable is convinced that no IRA munitions or weapons would leak to the CAC.

8. The Chief Constable expressed the fear that if the dissident rump continues to grow it could pose a serious threat. In the meantime the Provisional IRA were continuing to brief their local brigades to be in a state of readiness. The message being conveyed to them is that the current ceasefire is not permanent. The briefings stress the necessity for readiness for action and to update intelligence. There is still an element of targeting by the IRA and fundraising is continuing.
9. Trying to predict the future is difficult but one of the long-term effects could be that IRA activists would rally to the support of those who had resigned. The leadership will in the long run seek to avoid a split in the organisation. If, in the Chief Constable's opinion, what he called the "critical mass" of support with the organisation moves towards the dissident rump, then the leadership of the movement will follow. A great concern therefore is the possible growth of the dissident rump.
10. The Minister for Justice thanked the Chief Constable and said that his very words underlined the points that he, the Minister, had made earlier. Nothing should be done which would give succour to the dissidents. He reiterated his concern that the raising of the decommissioning issue or the stalling at talks could give support to the dissidents. The hurdle on decommissioning should not be set too high and there was no time for foot-dragging in the talks.
11. In response the Secretary of State said that the British Government is doing all it can to persuade parties to engage seriously in the talks. We should not lose sight of the

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fact that decommissioning would have to proceed parallel to the talks. Progress in the talks and the question of decommissioning have to be reviewed by the Plenary session of the talks on 1 and 3 December. She said that decommissioning was a difficulty for both sides of the Nationalist/Unionist divide. The Chief Constable said that he could not influence the talks or the question of decommissioning. As a policeman these were areas outside of his responsibility.

12. He then went on to say that the Continuity IRA are still a threat. He recalled the massive bomb in Markethill and the attempt the previous week to petrol-bomb civic offices in Foyle Street in Derry. Semtex had been used but the detonator was very crude and it failed to ignite properly. If the bomb had exploded as intended, there would have been extensive damage to personnel and property.
13. With regard to the INLA, they are still active. In September an arrest had been effected in Derry when arms were being moved from one position to another and last month in Belfast there had been an arrest of a man with a Kalashnikov in a taxi, who was, to the RUC's satisfaction, on his way to kill a particular RUC officer. He, as Chief Constable, is convinced that the INLA will continue to attack individual RUC targets.
14. As regards the Loyalists, there is growing concern about the LVF. They had been strengthened recently by defections from the UVF. Some of the people who defected had explosives expertise. However, in making their statements of threat,

they were more expressing the wish rather than their intention to carry out the threats. There are currently tensions between the UDA and the UVF. There is also internal dissension within the UDA. The booby-trap bomb which exploded under the car of a UDA man in Bangor in October was a sophisticated device. Obviously the UDA have learned from previous mistakes in this area.

15. In response to the enquiry by the Minister for Justice as to the INLA's immediate intentions, the Chief Constable said that there was an element of liaison between the INLA and the Continuity IRA. Currently there is something of a schism developing within the INLA in Belfast though this has not yet broken into warfare. Their aim appears to be to get the IRSP involved in the inter-party talks in Castle Buildings. The purpose of any attacks they might carry out would be to bring attention to their military threat and therefore their right to involvement in the political discussions. He repeated his belief that the INLA would continue to attack RUC targets.
16. The Minister for Justice enquired as to the seriousness of the break-up of the CLMC. The Chief Constable responded to the effect that the break-up had little effect because, in fact, the CLMC had more or less stopped operating over the last 18 months. While he had no immediate intelligence that the Loyalists intended to breach the ceasefire, they would have no hesitation in doing so if they felt it would advance their position.
17. The Minister for Justice enquired of the Chief Constable about the security of the staff

in the Maryfield Secretariat. In response the Chief Constable said that he and his officers had reacted very quickly to the threat made by the LVF. He had been in the Secretariat the previous day to discuss security. Mr Magner expressed the gratitude of the staff of the Secretariat to the Chief Constable for his prompt attention to the question of their security.

18. The Minister for Foreign Affairs raised the question of the dropping of charges against three people who had been charged with the murder of Robert Hamill, a Catholic who was killed in Portadown in April. In response, the Chief Constable said that the critical issue in this investigation was the identification of the perpetrators. Unfortunately, some persons who had indicated that they would give evidence against the three persons had been intimidated within the Loyalist community in Portadown. While this development was very regrettable, it left the DPP with no alternative but to drop the charges. The Minister for Foreign Affairs commented that the matter had been raised in Leinster House on the previous day. The Chief Constable said that, while he appreciated the concerns, he wanted to set the record straight about suggestions in the media that the witnesses who had decided not to give evidence were members of the RUC. This was not so. The Secretary of State said that she is going to meet the Hamill family later this month. She had already met them after Robert's death.

19. The Garda Commissioner said that both forces continue to work very well together. While there had never been 100% support for the cessation of violence within the

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Republican movement, there was a group within it now who are not satisfied with the progress made in the inter-party talks. The leadership is currently in control but the dissidents had stuck their heads above the parapet and stated their opposition to the current ceasefire at the recent meeting in Donegal. The people involved were key people who were involved in very different areas of the country. A balanced reaction within political developments in future could hold things as they are. The difficulty would be a drift towards the dissidents. The dissidents themselves would do everything to undermine progress in the talks and there was a certain amount of skulduggery involved.

20. There was no indication of any of the dissidents moving to join the Continuity IRA. Their attitude was to watch and bide their time and to use lack of progress in the talks as a weapon to persuade others in the movement to their point of view. It would be necessary to wait and watch developments. New personnel had been installed to replace the people who had resigned from the IRA. The people who resigned will not be silent, they will do everything possible to undermine the peace wing in the IRA.
21. The Secretary of State reiterated that the British Government is doing all it can to make progress. It had to be remembered that if the British side pulled back on decommissioning it would cause an uproar in Loyalist and Unionist ranks. It was a judgement call but the Government would call that judgement when they saw fit.

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22. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that when he met members of the Republican movement in the last few days they expressed great concern about new extradition requests. The recent arrest of a man in Donegal had caused a great deal of difficulty for them. The example of the USA where the Government had stopped deporting people could possibly be considered by the British Government. He considered that perhaps the two Prime Ministers could discuss the matter. The Secretary of State in response said that, as she understood it, there was a considerable difference between deportation and extradition. Extradition was a legal requirement once a treaty existed. However, officials could look at the matter.
23. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that the Government is determined to tackle the issue of leaks and has established a Cabinet Committee to consider the matter, which would recommend legislation if necessary, including amending the Official Secrets Act of 1963. Sensitive documents are being paginated and the "need to know" principle is the utmost consideration in determining the distribution network.
24. Mr Dalton, in conclusion, said that there was growing unease about recent developments. If the level of unease were to emerge, it could fan flames. It was therefore necessary to be very careful about disseminating this information.

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Security Incidents
w.e.f - 7 November, 1997

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Incident</u>
7 November 1997	Derry	Hoax bomb warning at the "Bookworm" shop in Bishop Street.
7 November 1997	Derry	Two masked and armed men hijacked a taxi from Lincoln Court, put a black plastic bag into the car and left it outside RUC Waterside. Declared a hoax at 2305hrs.
7 November 1997	Coleraine	Petrol bomb thrown at a house in Lilac Avenue, causing minor scorch damage. Mother and two daughters asleep at the time
7 November 1997	Belfast	Bricks were thrown through window followed by petrol bombs at houses in Roden Street, Donegall Avenue, Broadway Park and Lower Rockview Street in the Village area. Minor scorch damage occurred.
	Belfast	Reports of 40 shots in the area of Connolly House, Andersonstown Road between 1700 hrs on 15/11/97 and 0300 hrs on 6/11/97. Strike marks discovered on office walls on DG McCormick & Co. Solicitors, opposite. One bullet head recovered.
7 November 1997		Shots fired in the vicinity of Connolly House, Sinn Fein Headquarters.
9 October 1997	Lurgan	Four petrol bombs were thrown at military vehicles, slight scorch damage,
11 November 1997	West Belfast	Some time between 1200 hrs on the 8th and 1500 hours on the 10th November an arson attack took place at a house in Ligoniel. The front door was smashed and petrol poured into the hall. Extensive damage downstairs. Reason for attack not yet established.
11 November 1997	Ballymoney	An attempted arson attack on Our Lady and St. Patrick's RC Church occurred some time between 1900 hours and 0840 hours on 10th November. A piece of pipe was pushed through a broken window and diesel poured in.
16 November 1997	W. Belfast	A handgun was recovered and a man arrested when a taxi driver advised police that a fare he had dropped of in Sultan Square was carrying a weapon.

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Incident</i>
16 November 1997	Lurgan	Police were attacked by a crowd as they left an Edward Street bar around 0130 hrs. During the disturbance 10 officers suffered minor injuries.
17 November 1997	Dundalk	Device found at Greenacres Shopping Centre, Dundalk following LVF warning.
21 November 1997	Belfast	Device found on the Donegall Square East side
21 November 1997	Newry	Semi automatic weapon found during house search in Newry. One arrest made
23 November 1997	Belfast	Punishment shooting occurred at Penny Farthing Bar in Donegall Street. Victim from Edlingham Street in New Lodge attacked by two assailants and shot in both legs. No arrests made.
23 November 1997	Rosslea	Suspect device discovered close to BCP 124 approx 3 kms from Rosslea. Device comprises milk churn and battery pack. Clearance operation ongoing.
23 November 1997	Coalisland	Anonymous call to Samaritans warned of an under car device at Knockmoy Park Coalisland. ATO tasked, device discovered but declared a hoax.
28 November 1997	Belfast	Two armed and masked men entered the Call-a-Cab premises on the Upper Crumlin Road, went upstairs and shot the owner, John Jackie Mahood, 3 times in the head and neck.
28 November 1997	Lisburn	In an apparent loyalist "punishment shooting" a man was shot once in each leg in a laneway beside the Lagan towpath, near Hilden Mill, Lisburn. His condition is not serious.
2 December 1997	Belfast	Anonymous male phoned the Samaritans declaring that a bomb containing 2 bags of fertiliser had been left at the RUC base near Albert Street/Divis Street. Declared a hoax at 1506 hrs.
2 December 1997	Carrickfergus	Petrol bombs were thrown at the home of Independent Councillor, Nicholas Waddy, after he spoke out about Loyalist graffiti and murals. Waddy suffered burns to his hand and his living room was extensively damaged.
4 December 1997	Larne	A petrol bomb was thrown at the window of the house of a Roman Catholic family at Fairway, Artville Larne. There was only minor damage, as the window did not break and no injuries. It is regarded as a sectarian attack.

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Incident</u>
4 December 1997	Newry	Army fool patrol attacked with bricks in the vicinity of Daisy Hill Hospital. Three soldiers sustained minor injuries.
5 December, 1997	Belfast	Gerry Devlin, shot dead at St Enda's GAA Club. LVF believed to be responsible
5 December 1997	West Belfast	A 34 year old man was found in Edlingham Street, New Lodge area, with a single gunshot to his leg.
11 December, 1997	Downpatrick	At 1830 hrs one male person from Downpatrick was shot in both knees and left ankle by two masked men.
11 December 1997	Jonesborough	At 0130 hrs a man was abducted by four masked men. The man, who has no known associations, was told he would be shot but was seriously beaten and abandoned over the border.
12 December 1997	Short Strand Belfast	An 18 year old man was shot in the leg in an entry off Beechfield Street
12 December 1997	Lurgan	Two armed and masked men, dressed in boiler suits into a house in Donard Gardens, Lurgan and went upstairs. The male occupant had barricaded himself into his bedroom. The men fired two shots from a shotgun before running off. The man was not injured. He is apparently under the LVF death threat.
12 December 1997	Broughshane, Co. Antrim	A Catholic School was extensively damaged.
12 December 1997	Lurgan	Male Occupant in house escaped being shot by armed and masked men who broke into his home. He was said to have been under an LVF death threat.
16 December 1997	Belfast	Semi Automatic shotgun, three handguns and a quantity of ammunition recovered from vacant house in Sandy Row area of South Belfast. No arrests
16 December 1997	Belfast	Weapon recovered from car in Glen Road area of West Belfast. Two arrests.
16 December 1997	Belfast	Group of youths attempted to erect barricade in Ardoyne area of Crumlin, Road North Belfast. One petrol bomb and stone thrown at security forces. Soon dispersed. No injuries.

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Incident</u>
16 December 1997	Belfast	Security Forces carried out controlled explosion on suspect device at security barrier, High Street, Bessbrook. Elaborate hoax.
18 December, 1997	Newtownbutler	A suspect device was discovered in a telephone box. - a hoax.
18 December 1997	Belfast	A punishment beating took place n Hills Avenue, East Belfast. A man received serious injuries to his head, chest, legs and abdomen. He was taken to hospital.
18 December 1997	Belfast	A 20 year old man received gunshot wounds to both legs in a paramilitary-style shooting.
19 December 1997	North Belfast	There were scuffles and bricks and bottles were thrown when police tried to keep two crowds of about 30 people each apart in Mileriver Street North Belfast. Three officers received minor injuries.
24 December 1997	Lisburn	23 year old male shot in left knee by 2 men who broke into his home at Derriaghy.
27 December 1997	HMP Maze	Prisoner Billy Wright was shot dead while being transferred to the Visitor Centre at HMP Maze. Three INLA prisoners climbed over the roof of their block to a yard when Wright had boarded a mini bus. They fired, hitting Wright 5 times and then returned over the roof to their wing. Wright died later in the prison hospital. Three INLA prisoners arrested and 2 weapons recovered; since charged with murder and possession.
27 December 1997	Dungannon	Two gunmen opened fire on security staff at Glengannon Hotel. Three Staff and a 14 year old boy inside the premises were injured: one, Seamus Dillon (47), later died. LVF suspected.
27 December 1997	Ballymena	The RUC were stoned after the protest at Harryville Chapel. One bus was hijacked and set alight. Three arrests. One PBR fired in a separate incident when dispersing a crowd which had set up a burning barricade.
27 December 1997	Portadown	Around a dozen vehicles were hijacked and burned. A number of petrol bombs were thrown at the RUC. One arrest. No serious injuries.
29 December 1997	Antrim	LVF claimed responsibility for volley of shots fired at Limetree Close in an apparent show of solidarity with murdered leader Billy Wright.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Incident</u>
29 December 1997	Ballymoney	Petrol bomb thrown at front door of RC occupied house at Belford Park. Minor scorch damage caused.
2 January 1998		Two masked men, one with an automatic weapon and the other a handgun, opened fire on patrons of the Clifton Tavern, Cliftonville Road. Six people were wounded one of whom died later in hospital. He was Edward Trainor (RC 31 yrs) 20 Glanlearn Drive, Fortwilliam. UDA suspected.
1 January 1998	North Belfast	A number of shots were fired at a house at Greymount Crescent. Two masked youths are believed to have been responsible for this attack. The 5 occupants of the house were in bed at the time and were unhurt. The family living there are Roman Catholics who have been there for 12-13 years. The surrounding area is predominantly Protestant.
1 January 1998	Newtownbutler	Several shots were fired at a house at Clones Road - the home of a cleaner at the local RUC station. No injuries
2 January 1998	South West Belfast	Two masked men, one armed, burst into a house at Tates Avenue and demanded to know where the occupants were from. A man in the house is believed then to have been recognised by the would-be attackers who fled the scene on foot.
3 January 1998	Ballymena	A hijacked car driven by masked youths rammed the gates of the Catholic church at Harryville. Little damage to gates or vehicle. Incident occurred after those attending Mass had left. The customary weekly protest at this venue attracted around 2000 people.
4 January 1998	Limavady	Arson attack at Christchurch RUC Chapel destroyed 2 portacabins at rear of premises and seriously damaged changing rooms of adjoining GAA club..
4 January 1998	Belfast	LVF issued threatening statement against journalists and other staff on Sunday World newspaper.
5 January, 1998	Ardee	Quantity of spent rifle cartridges found on the banks of the Dee River - 50 yards from the main street in Ardee. A search of the riverbank uncovered 250 live rounds of rifle ammunition and 172 spent rifle cartridges of the same type.

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Incident</u>
6 January 1998	Banbridge	At 1855 hours a telephone warning was given about a car bomb to a Co. Louth radio station and another to the Samaritans in Newry at 1950hrs. The device was defused. CIRA suspected.
7 January 1998	South Armagh	Security forces found 3 long barrelled weapons in outbuildings 8k north of Caledon. The weapons appeared to have fallen out of rafters in the building and were wrapped in plastic sheeting. Two weapons (bolt action type) were in working order. The third had several parts missing. No arrests made. No ammunition found.
7 January 1998	West Belfast	A handgun was found in the grounds of Beechmount Leisure Centre by a passerby. Security forces were called to the scene and confirmed that it was a viable weapon.
8 January 1998	Howth, Co. Dublin.	Gardai found 1½ tons of HME in a shed at Howth Harbour. 4 men were arrested; one has strong links with the recently formed 32 County Sovereignty Committee - a self professed political pressure group.
11 January 1998	Belfast	Two people, one the owner and the other a doorman, Terence Enright (both Catholics) were standing outside when a car pulled up, shots were fired by the driver and by the passenger who got out of the car. The owner was unhurt but Terence Enright, the doorman was shot and died shortly afterwards from chest injuries. The car was found burnt out in a Loyalist area off the Newtownards Road. LVF suspected.
18 January 1998	Derry	RUC carried out search of the rear of Fairhill Youth Club and discovered a body, later identified as Fergal McCusker. LVF claimed responsibility
20 January 1998	Dunmurry	Jim Guiney, a prominent loyalist with links with the UDA was shot dead in his carpet shop at Kingsway. Two gunmen were involved. They made their escape in a stolen car subsequently found burnt out in Twinbrook. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by INLA.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Incident</i>
20 January 1998	Belfast	A RC Taxi Driver Larry Brennan , was shot and killed as he sat in his car outside the company offices of Enterprise Taxi on the Ormeau Road. UDA suspected.
21 January 1998	Belfast	Benedict Hughes was shot 5 times in the chest and neck as he left work and died later in hospital. UDA suspected.
21 January 1998	Belfast	John McFarland received gunshot wounds to the head after responding to a call in the Fortwilliam/Greencastle area. UDA suspected.
21 January 1998	Belfast	One man from South Belfast received gunshot wounds to the neck and stomach when two armed men burst into his home.
23 January 1998	North Belfast	A gunman approached Christopher McMahon as he was closing his bakery shop in Glengormley and shot him 3 times. He survived. UDA suspected.
23 January, 1998	West Belfast	Liam Conway, Catholic killed, off the Crumlin Road. UDA suspected.
24 January 1998	West Belfast	John McColgan, Catholic Taxi driver answered a pick up call. His body was found later in Lenadoon. LVF suspected.
24 January 1998	Enniskillen	A car bomb containing 300 lb HME exploded outside the River Club Leisure Centre. Warnings were given. There were no injuries. CIRA suspected.
25 January, 1998	Lurgan	Kieran Murtagh, Lorry driver, sustained pellet wounds from a single shotgun blast. LVF claimed responsibility.
27 January 1998	Belfast	Message from LVF - "we will resist with all force necessary the inference in our affairs by Dublin through a corss-border body with executive powers.
27 January 1998	North Belfast	A man armed with a hand gun walked into the office of Metro Cabs and pointed gun at dispatcher a RC who dived for cover.
27 January 1998	Lisburn	Paramilitary beating of a man with baseball bats studded with nails in serious injuries to an arm and leg.
29 January 1998	Belfast	A punishment attack occurred at the Rock Bar, Falls Road. The victim was shot in both legs - comfortable in hospital.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Incident</i>
29 January 1998	Coleraine	A 20 year old man was beaten in paramilitary-style attack by number of masked men in his home.
29 January 1998	Antrim	An 18 year old was attacked and beaten with a hammer outside his home in Antrim.
2 February 1998		LVF Threat to Unleash "Unholy War" Against Nationalist Community
2 February 1998	Newry	Threatening call received at DoE (NI) - warning that Protestant workers in South Armagh would be killed unless they were withdrawn.
9 February, 1998	Belfast	Brendan Campbell shot dead on Lisburn Road - he was a suspected drugs dealer. The group Direct Action Against Drugs, a cover name used by PIRA were held to be responsible.
10 February, 1998	Dunmurry	Robert Dougan shot dead outside Balmoral Textiles in Station View, Dunmurry. He was a member of the UDA, PIRA has been held responsible.
13 February 1998	W. Belfast	A man was abducted by 4 men on Whiterock Road, he was hooded and driven to waste ground at Turf Lodge. He was shot in both legs.
14 February 1998	Donaghadee	A called to Downtown Radio claiming to represent the Nationalist Reactionary Force, using an unrecognised codeword said "They were responsible for the execution of Robert Dougan as he was involved in recent sectarian attacks including the Clifton Tavern attack, claiming sectarianism is not their goal". The caller said that they will match on a quota basis threat by the LVF and UFF until the murder of Nationalist ends.
16 February 1998		Three males have been charged with murder and possession of firearms in connection with the Dougan murder.
18 February 1998	Lurgan	The body of Kevin Conway was found in a disused farmhouse in Aghalee, Lurgan. The LVF denied responsibility. It is believed that PIRA were involved and that it was an unauthorised killing settling a personal score.
20 February 1998	Co Down	500 lb car bomb exploded in Moira, Co. Down causing extensive damage. CIRA suspected.
23 February 1998	Drumad	Car bomb outside Drumad, Garda Station - defused. LVF claimed responsibility.

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Incident</u>
23 February 1998	Portadown	A 300/400 lb HME bomb exploded at the junction of Market Street, High Street and Edward Street, causing extensive damage to the town. There were no casualties. A 30 minute warning was given. There is some confusion as to whether the codeword given was a recognised one and whether the claims were made on behalf of Continuity or Provisional IRA. CIRA is suspected.
23 February 1998	Armagh	A male caller to UTV/BBC claimed that a bomb had been left in Scotch Street. City Centre was searched and a controlled explosion was carried out on a suspicious car but it was declared a hoax.
23 February 1998	Lisburn	A male caller to Newsline claiming to represent PIRA warned of a bomb in Wellworths or Woolworths. The town centre was evacuated and the area searched but nothing was found.
23 February 198	Belfast	A male caller to UTV using an old LVF codeword claimed that a bomb had been placed in the Europa Hotel. Sinn Fein conference was in progress at the time. Nothing found.
23 February 198	Belfast	A car belong to a member of the PUP was set alight outside his home at Wolfe Street, Mountpottinger. The car was destroyed. Four persons were seen running away.
23 February 1998	Strabane	A car stopped by police at Owenreagh Park was found to contain a handgun, gloves, and a hammer. Two male occupants were arrested.
23 February 1998	Co. Cavan	Garda uncovered 250lbs of explosives across the border from Lisnaskea. Technical officers made device safe. CIRA suspected.
25 February 1998	Dublin	A male caller to the RTE newsroom using recognised codeword claimed that the IRA was not responsible for the bomb at Portadown and that their complete cessation of military operations remained intact.

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Incident</i>
25 February 1998	Various Locations	Telephone bomb warnings at the following locations confirmed as hoaxes: Belfast-Dublin Railway line at Newry Craigavon town centre Shankill Leisure Centre Fermanagh Technical College, Enniskillen Armagh Technical College Livestock and Meat Commission, Malone Road, Belfast.
25 February 1998	Belfast	One male person was shot in both knees at an entry of Vulcan Gardens, Short Strand.
26 February 1998	Belfast	A letter bomb exploded in the Returned Letters Department of Tomb Street sorting office injuring four people, one badly. The device was identical to two others sent to known Republicans on 19 February, but it is not yet known to whom the parcel was addressed. The badly injured man was treated for injuries to his stomach and arm.
28 February 1998	North Belfast	Break in and suspected arson attacks at Hazelwood Integrated College. Following an explosion (suspected hand grenade) two Policemen and two civilians were treated for shock. INLA claimed responsibility.
28 February 1998	Carnlough, Co Antrim	Bomb in village, parts of which were closed for 11 hours as device was defused. It was in a beer keg. A warning was given but responsibility is unclear - Loyalist paramilitaries are suspected.
2 March 1998	Co. Louth (Hackballscross)	Car with false NI registration plates containing 600 lbs of HME with wiring intact was found concealed in a derelict barn. CIRA suspected.
3 March 1998	Poyntzpass Co. Armagh	Damien Trainor (Catholic) and Philip Allen (Protestant) shot dead in the Railway Bar at 9 pm. LVF suspected.

Opening Comments by Minister for Justice,
Equality and Law Reform

The principal business of the restricted session is to hear the assessments of the Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable, and I would suggest, if everybody else is agreeable, that we proceed, straight away, to hear the police assessments. We can raise any questions we may have afterwards.

Perhaps, Commissioner, you would begin by giving us an assessment of what has been a very troublesome period since our last meeting.

Some possible questions for the Chief Constable to answer

Loyalist Groups

Since our last meeting, both the LVF and the UDA have greatly increased their activities.

● What is the Chief Constable's view of the level of threat now posed by these organisations both North and South of the Border? Could he give some indication of the numbers involved in these organisations; has the LVE increased its support base outside of Portadown? Is any information available on its relationship with other loyalist paramilitaries? Has the leadership issue been settled "post Billy Wright"?

● Are the UFF/UVF active? We had inconclusive reports that there was UDA/UFF targeting of republicans in Donegal.

Provisional IRA and other republican groups

♦ At our previous meeting, we touched on the level of disagreements within the organisation at the present peace strategy and the risk that dissidents might move over to more militant groups, such as the so-called 32 County Committee or the CIRA. These groups must be viewed as particularly dangerous in view of what would appear to be their access to large bombs such as the one that exploded at Markethill, the unsuccessful one in Banbridge and the two that exploded in Moira and Portadown. These appear to have been CIRA-driven attacks. However, there are indications that the 32 County grouping also has the capacity to cause major disruption to the peace process.

● What would the police assessment be of the level of expertise within these organisations and would they have any information on the number and quality of PIRA dissidents who may have defected to them?

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- What would his prognosis be of the strength of the PIRA ceasefire?
- Are there any indications that the 32 County Committee are active in Northern Ireland? If so in what activity are they involved?
- Has there been any evidence of an increase in numbers of the INLA following its killing of Billy Wright?

The murder of Kevin Conway in Aghalee

- It seems to us that this was a freelance operation, possibly settling a personal grudge in criminal, rather than terrorist related matters. Can the Chief Constable give us any information in the case? We note that the main suspect has been released from police custody.

Murders of Catholics in late 1997/early 1998

- Can the Chief Constable give us some indication of the progress in his investigation? Are charges likely to be brought against any persons in the near future? There seems to be a perception abroad that progress is slow in these matters in contrast to the developments connected with republican killings.

Response to security situation

- Could the Chief Constable and the Commissioner give some indication of the security response being planned in the context of the deteriorating security situation - bearing in mind that this matter will be raised in more detail in the Plenary session as a confidence building measure.

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Review of the Security Situation

Briefing Note

Overview

1. In the period since the date of the previous Conference on 5 November, 1997, there has been a marked escalation in paramilitary activity by both loyalist and republican terrorist groups. An increase in the level of sectarian type attacks had already been noted towards the end of the year, and this was exacerbated by the killing of Billy Wright by the INLA in the Maze Prison on 27 December, 1997. There then followed a period of sectarian tit for tat killings with nationalists bearing the brunt of a concerted loyalist campaign by the UDA/UFF and the LVF. The position stabilised somewhat at the end of January with a restoration of the status quo by the UDA/UFF and the temporary expulsion of their political wing, the UDP from the Talks process. Two high profile killings attributed to PIRA has led to the suspension of Sinn Fein from the Talks until 9 March, 1998. It is suspected that the killing of Kevin Conway in mid-February in Lurgan was linked to PIRA, though it occurred after Sinn Fein's expulsion from the Talks. The brutal killing of two men in the Railway Bar on 3 March with suspicion falling on the LVF has disturbing undertones reminiscent of the Greysteele and Loughinisland killings some years ago.
2. The new year was also marked by a return to the use of car bombs by both republican and loyalist groups. On 6 January, a 500 lb device was defused in the centre of Banbridge, Co. Down. On 24 January, a car bomb with 300 lbs of HME exploded outside the River Club Leisure Centre in Enniskillen. On 20 February a 500 lb car bomb exploded in Moira, Co. Down and three days later at noon on 23 February, a 300/400 lb device caused extensive damage in the centre of Portadown. Later that day, a bomb containing 250 lbs of HME and almost ready for use was found by the Gardai at Redhills, Co.

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Cavan. On 2 March, the Gardai discovered a car bomb containing about 600 lbs of HME, again almost ready for use in a car in a derelict barn at Hackballscross, Co. Louth. All of these devices are suspected to be the work of the CIRA. Loyalist paramilitaries (LVF) are believed to have planted a car bomb outside the Garda station at Dromad, Co. Louth on 23 February. It was defused. They are similarly suspected of being responsible for a bomb in Carnlough, Co. Antrim on 27 February, containing 35 kgs of HME, a timer and detonator. It was also defused. Both loyalist and republican groups have also been responsible for a large number of hoax bomb alerts across Northern Ireland and in this jurisdiction.

3. Another significant development during the period was the discovery by the Gardai of 1½ tonnes of HME in a disused fishing shed at Howth Harbour, Co. Dublin on 8 January, 1998. Four people were arrested and two of them have strong links with the newly formed 32 County Sovereignty Committee - see further note below.
4. Punishment attacks have also been a feature of renewed paramilitary activity are the last number of months. Since the restoration of the PIRA ceasefire on 20 July, 1997 to 25 February, 1998, there have been 109 punishment style attacks, of which 33 have involved shooting incidents. In recent month the proportion of shootings as compared with beatings has increased notably.

Provisional IRA

5. On 23 February, following the Portadown bomb and the device found at Redhills, a caller to RTE at 10.30 pm using a recognised IRA codeword said. "We reiterate that the complete cessation of military operations which began on Saturday, 20 July last year remains intact". The statement also referred to attempts by others to dictate the IRA agenda by using outdated codewords and technology. In relation to the killings of prominent loyalist figures a statement issued by the IRA to RTE on 13 February said that "Contrary to

speculation surrounding recent killings in Belfast, the IRA cessation of military operations remains intact".

6. The better view at the moment is that the PIRA ceasefire is holding firm and is still supported by a majority of activists. However, there are worrying reports of defections including some senior figures to the 32 County Committee. On the evidence so far it seems reasonable to assume that the CIRA is responsible for the recent bombing activity.

Continuity Army Council/Continuity IRA

7. According to security sources, the CIRA remain an active threat, capable of launching major bomb attacks. There have been recent media reports that the organisation has acquired bombing skills and equipment through defections to its ranks by disaffected members of the Provisional IRA. There has also been press speculation that it has developed links with the Basque separatist movement, ETA and claims that the latter are supplying the CIRA with advice and supplies. The Gardai are sceptical about the ETA link. They also say that while there may be cooperation between members of the three republican groups PIRA/CIRA/32 County Committee in mounting bombing attacks, it is at a local and personal level. It is not believed that such cooperation is in any way sanctioned by the Provisional IRA.
8. In a recent statement, the CIRA (Derry Brigade) condemned the talks and Sinn Fein's involvement in them. It went on, "the Continuity IRA, rather than even think about decommissioning or signing up to such (Mitchell Principles), would firmly argue that while the British presence remains, backed by loyalist death squads, the nationalist population will always require a trained, disciplined and dedicated volunteer citizen army, if only for defensive purposes".

32-County Sovereignty Committee

9. In December, 1997, Ms. Bernadette Sands McKeivitt, sister of Bobby Sands, announced that she was one of the leading figures in a newly established organisation, the "32 County Sovereignty Committee". Ms. Sands-McKeivitt is reported as saying that the group is not opposed to the ceasefire, but disagrees with the Mitchell principles, as they could only lead to a recognition of Northern Ireland. The organisation claims that it defends the ideal of the 32-county sovereignty of Ireland. The group is continuing to organise a series of recruitment meetings around the country. It is understood that the group has no military wing and it has not been directly linked with any acts of violence since its foundation. However, as already noted one of those arrested following the seizure of a large-scale explosives cache in Howth in January 1998 was a member of the organisation. Sinn Fein is reported as dismissing the groups as "tiny".

Irish National Liberation Army

10. The INLA has not responded to the PIRA ceasefire to-date. It continues to pose a threat and retains a capacity to mount isolated attacks on selected targets following its most recent internal feud. Three of its members killed Billy Wright in the Maze Prison on 27 December last. The organisation also claimed responsibility for the killing of prominent UDA loyalist Jim Guiney on 19 January, 1998. More recently, it carried out an attack on the RUC in Belfast on 28 February, 1998 with a crude home made grenade device.

Loyalist Paramilitary Groups

11. The CLMC umbrella body under which the Loyalist ceasefire was organised has not been disbanded. It was believed that the ceasefire would, nevertheless, remain intact. However, it is clear from the UDA involvement in sectarian killings (which lead to the temporary expulsion of the UDP from the talks) that the ceasefire has come under some strain. The position seems to have stabilised at this time.

12. The LVF who are a maverick group and were never aligned with the CLMC, remain unpredictable and continue to pose a threat in Northern Ireland and in this jurisdiction. The killing of its leader has prompted the organisation to return to random shootings and bombings. Another worrying development is the assistance which the LVF is suspected of getting from other loyalist paramilitary groups such as the UFF and the UDA.

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