

FRANCIS JOSEPH SEAN HUGHES

ADDRESS: 12 Scribe Road, Bellaghy, Co Londonderry

DATE OF BIRTH: 28 February 1956

BACKGROUND :

Hughes is a 24-year-old single man who is one of a family of 4 boys and 3 girls. He is a known member of the Provisional IRA and was "on the run" since the beginning of 1976.

THE CRIMES AND CONVICTIONS :

1. On the evening of 16 March 1978 2 soldiers were out on patrol near Maghera observing a farm. During this time a car drove into the farmyard and a man got out and went into the house. A few minutes later 2 men came out of the house and drove away.

Shortly after the car past the soldiers heard a voice nearby and thinking the 2 men approaching were members of the UDR one soldier spoke out identifying himself as a member of the Army. They responded by opening fire and the soldiers fell to the ground wounded. One soldier died the following day in hospital. The surviving soldier, who was wounded in the stomach, managed to return fire as the gunmen ran away.

The Army carried out a follow-up search and a tracker dog followed a trail of blood leading from the scene of the crime to a thicket in a field about 300 yards away. In this thicket, some 15 hours after the crime, Hughes was found having been shot in the thigh. A rifle was recovered in the field where the shooting took place and a .38 special short barrelled pistol with ammunition was found in a hedgerow nearby. A black beret and a pair of gloves were among other items found near to where Hughes was lying.

2. On 25 January 1977 as a Detective Constable and his wife were leaving their home in Tamlaght, Coagh, near Cookstown. As his wife opened the back door an explosion occurred blowing the door off its hinges and causing severe damage to the rear of the house. The 2 residents have been treated for shock and deafness.

Subsequent forensic examination revealed that the explosion had occurred on a step below the back door of the premises and the explosive charge was estimated to have been about 3 pounds. Various pieces of material used in the bomb were also examined and a piece of black adhesive tape was found to have a finger imprint. On 6 February 1979 a right forefinger impression of Hughes was found to match identically.

Hughes was convicted at Belfast Crown Court on 18 February 1980. His convictions and sentences were as follow:-

<u>Offence</u>	<u>Sentence</u>	
1. Attempted murder	20 years' imprisonment	} All sentences to run concurrently
2. Causing an explosion	20 " "	
3. Possessing explosive substance with intent	15 " "	
4. Murder	Life imprisonment	}
5. Attempted murder	14 years' imprisonment	
6. Possessing firearms and ammo with intent	14 years' imprisonment	

Passing sentence the Judge described Hughes as a dedicated and hardened IRA terrorist. He said that the attack on the policeman's home was "a particularly vicious offence" and that the bomb could have killed "any man woman or child who went through the door".

Through the judgment Hughes had lounged in the dock, sometimes smiling in the direction of the public gallery.

**BEHAVIOUR IN PRISON:**

Hughes has been protesting continuously since in sentence last February. He has been adjudicated on regularly for refusing to work and wear prison clothing and for disobeying orders. He appears to be highly regarded by other protesting prisoners.