



“LETHAL ALLIES: British Collusion in Ireland”

MAIN FINDINGS

1. The Step Inn pub bombing, Keady, 16 August 1976

Ten days before the bombing, RUC Special Branch had reliable, sourced, intelligence that the Portadown UVF had a bomb ready for use in County Armagh but they failed to move in and prevent the attack - leading to the deaths of Elizabeth McDonald (a mother of three young boys) and Gerard McGleenan, aged 22.

After the bombing, the RUC failed to make any arrests, despite knowing all the names of the main players. The HET has called RUC actions in this case “catastrophic”.

Detail:

- 10 days before the bombing, RUC Commander (Southern Division) ordered British Army surveillance of a police officer's farmhouse (James Mitchell) where intelligence indicated the bomb was being stored
- Time-limited surveillance was mounted on the farm
- A police officer (John Weir) scouted the intended route to a bar in County Monaghan (Renaghan's) where on 15 August Hibernians would normally congregate to celebrate a Catholic holy day (Feast of the Assumption)
- Weir was stopped by Gardai who, alerted by the RUC, told him they were mounting extra security
- On being informed, Weir retraced his steps to warn the rest of the gang
- At Mitchell's farm, the gang told Weir they already knew the RUC were aware of the bomb's existence
- Instead of scattering, the gang merely shifted their target
- Military surveillance was lifted and the bomb attack went ahead
- It detonated in the small town of Keady, outside the Step Inn
- Elizabeth McDonald, the bar's owner, was killed outright
- A young man who lived opposite, Gerard McGleenan, was killed as he crossed the street
- Special Branch knew the names of the four men in the bomb car, others involved and where the device had been stored - yet made no arrests
- The bomb car itself had been taken from a serving RUC officer, held-up in a UDA bar on the Shankill Road
- The RUC officers who (a) scouted the route (Weir) and (b) stored the bomb (Mitchell) were not questioned or arrested
- Weir remained in the force, even after he was identified as having been on Mitchell's farm just before the bombing
- Mitchell remained on in the force for a further ten months after the Step Inn bombing
- A subsequent investigation of this attack, ordered by the Chief Constable of the RUC, was dropped with no action taken
- The two bereaved families were not informed of the background until they received HET reports
- They are now taking complaints to the Police Ombudsman while litigation is pending in the High Court against the Chief Constable

2. Other attacks/murders

The RUC refused the Garda Síochána access to a key witness in the investigation into the December 1975 UVF car bombing in Dundalk which killed two people.



RUC officers suppressed information from the courts that Joseph Lutton, convicted of four murders (after two indiscriminate attacks on two County Armagh bars – the Eagle and Clancy's in May 1976) was a police officer.

The UDR status of William Leonard, convicted of murdering Gertrude and James Devlin (and who attempted to murder their daughter, Patricia) was suppressed and withheld from the courts.

The RUC failed to investigate ballistic evidence linking the Rock Bar gun-and-bomb attack (in which all the assailants were police officers) to at least 10 other high-profile murders.

The RUC failed to charge, or even question, Robin Jackson, a long-time multiple murderer/RUC agent, about the murder of Portadown man Martin McVeigh, despite arresting him in possession of the murder weapon.

Disciplinary action was not taken against two senior officers Jackson claimed had assisted him to evade arrest despite a Detective Inspector's recommendation.

At least one RUC man and one UDR man were directly involved in the planning and execution of a gun-and-bomb attack on Donnelly's Bar in South Armagh in which three people died.

The RUC failed to question two notorious loyalists (Robin Jackson and RJ Kerr), jointly involved with two RUC officers convicted of the murder County Antrim shopkeeper William Strathearn.

RUC failure to inform ANY families of the established involvement of members of security forces in the murder of their relatives.

The RUC failed to question loyalist Edward Sinclair who told them he had witnessed an RUC officer (Joseph Lutton) carrying a sub-machine gun after hearing shots fired that killed Sinclair's neighbour, Denis Mullen (RUC also failed to question Lutton although he was already in jail for an unrelated series of murders).

After two men (Colm McCartney and Sean Farmer) were shot dead at a fake UDR checkpoint in County Armagh, there was no effective RUC investigation at all. This incident took place shortly after a very similar attack. The HET concludes that, given there was indisputable evidence of collusion in the first incident, the second "should have rung alarm bells all the way to the top of Government" but nothing was done: "the murderous cycle continued.

3. Other Serious Concerns

The Director of Public Prosecutions decision not to charge Jackson with Patrick Campbell's murder despite at least three items of evidence against him (ID parade, contradictory claims, breaking down in police car).

The DPP's decision not to charge him, at this early stage in his bloody career, with possessing information likely to be of use to terrorists when he was found in possession of ammunition and the names and addresses of dozens of Catholics.

The DPP's decision not to charge Jackson in relation to the Miami Showband Massacre although his fingerprints were found on a weapon used in the attack.

The DPP's questionable decision not to charge a UDR man, William Leonard, with the attempted murder of Patricia Devlin (he was convicted of murdering her parents, Gertrude and James). Leonard also escaped four bombing charges.

The DPP's decision to drop charges against Edward Sinclair of murdering Peter and Jenny McKearney although he made admissions and was found in possession of the murder weapon.

The DPP's decision not to charge four police officers, who had launched a gun-and-bomb attack on the Rock Bar, with attempted murder.

The RUC's failure to investigate the hundreds of losses of weapons from UDR men's homes and British Army bases and arsenals.



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