

Ulster Unionist Party

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Omagh Bombing motion in the Assembly



Tom Elliott Ulster Unionist MLA for Fermanagh and South Tyrone spoke today at a debate in the Assembly concerning the Omagh bombing where calls were made for the UK Government to urgently institute a process to investigate recent reports that the Real IRA terrorists were monitored and recorded by the General Communications Headquarters before the Omagh Bombing.

In a statement Mr. Elliott said,

"On the 15th August 1998 the Real IRA detonated a bomb in the Market Street of Omagh killing 29 people and two unborn twins. In addition 220 people were injured and thousands of peoples' lives were scared forever. In the ensuing years no-one has been brought to justice for this atrocious act and this is extremely regrettable and has caused untold pain to the relatives and friends of those who lost their lives and were injured. We as a society owe it to the victims of the Omagh Bomb to bring those responsible to justice and we should not shrink from taking the necessary steps in order to achieve this. However, in recognising this we must never forget who bears the sole responsibility for the Omagh Bombing - republican terrorists. Republican terrorists who paid no regard to the sanctity of human life, who were barbaric in their intent and whose cause can never ever justify any act of violence or abuse.

The Ulster Unionist Party tabled an amendment with the Speaker to this motion. In it we called for the First and deputy First Minister to urgently raise with the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach the need for the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic of Ireland to examine the scope for a cross border independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the 1998 bombing in Omagh Town Centre. I believe unless we examine the possibility for a cross border independent inquiry we will never get to the bottom of all the issues that surround this tragic event. The families of those who were killed have suffered too many false dawns to go through anymore.

I recognise and support the thrust of the Alliance Party motion but I am afraid it will be undeliverable and has the potential to jeopardise ongoing intelligence operations into dissident republican activity which has unfortunately again raised its ugly head, especially in the West of the Province. If we call for full disclosure there is the danger that live intelligence operations will be compromised and with the current levels of dissident republican activity lives may potentially be risked and this is a step that the Ulster Unionist Party is not prepared to take.

Having said that the recent revelations outlined by the BBC Panorama programme concerning the monitoring and recording of some of the Real IRA terrorists by the General Communications Head Quarters must be fully investigated and the findings openly and transparently shared with the public. These recordings may have prevented the bombing and the UK Government must thoroughly investigate the matter. However, there is no point in unnecessarily raising the hopes of the families involved - there is a likelihood that any investigation will not be what the victim's families' hope for

and again this is why we preferred the call for the examination of the scope for a cross border independent inquiry".