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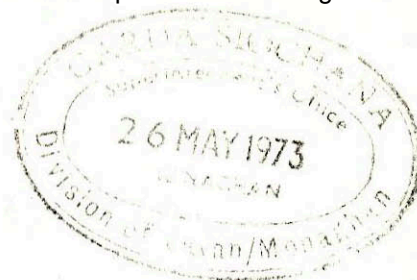
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Chief Superintendent,
Monaghan.

Detention of Six Members of British Army at Clones
on the morning of the 25th. May, 1973.

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I enclose file received from the Sergeant in-charge, Clones, setting out the circumstances under which six members of the British Army were detained at Clones on the morning of the 25th. May, 1973.

Before the men were released I was in telephonic communication with Superintendent Robinson, R.U.C., Enniskillen, who had discussed the matter with Major Philip Howes, C/O Royal Artillery, in that area. As a result the Superintendent was to give an assurance that the men were members of the British Army and were in fact detailed for patrol duty on the night of the 24/25th May, 1973.

This office report of 22nd December, 1973 referred to the detention of Francis McMahon, Clonscric, at his home by members of the R.U.C. Mr. McMahon does not wish to make a written statement in regard to the incident at his home on the morning of the 25th instant.

.....

(O. Giblin)
Superintendent

Clones Station,
Monaghan District
Co. MONAGHAN.

Confidential.

25/5/73.

Superintendent,
Monaghan.

Detention of Six ^Members of British Army at Clones on the morning of
the 25th. May, 1973.
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Statements from the undermentioned are forwarded for your information
Please :-

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Garda Mark Fitzgerald. | Stopped vehicle conveying member
of British Army. |
| 2. Sergt. J.P. McArdle. | Interviewed members of British
Army. |

The facts of this case are as follows :-

At about 1.40am. on the morning of the 25/5/73, Garda M. Fitzgerald, 16815G, who is temporarily attached to Clones Station from Crusheen, Co. Clare, was on Check Point duty at the Diamond, Clones. The member was carrying a torch and was wearing a Scotchlite Belt. While on the Diamond the member saw a vehicle approach from the Monaghan Road direction and as it approached the traffic bollard in the centre of the Diamond Garda Fitzgerald signalled to the driver to stop. The driver seemed reluctant to stop and although the member continued to flash his torch the driver of the vehicle did not stop until about 30 yards past the member and near the junction of The Diamond and Cara Street. Garda Fitzgerald then approached the driver who opened the sliding door and the member asked him his name. He replied "Massey" and when asked for his christian name he replied "Edward". When asked where he was from he said "Belfast". He was then asked to produce his Driving Licence but he stated that he did not have one with him. He was then asked to produce some identification and while searching his pockets Garda Fitzgerald looked over his shoulder. When he did this the member saw the sleeves of an Army Uniform. Garda Fitzgerald then asked the driver what he had in the back of the van and he replied "Troops". When asked what kind of troops he said "Just Troops". When he was again asked about the troops he replied "British Troops". The driver then produced his identification card showing his name as Edward Massey. Garda Fitzgerald then saw that the four men in the rear of the van were lying on the floor and that each one of them had a Rifle. They also had their faces blackened. There was a man in the front passenger seat who was in civilian attire and who gave his name as John Hilson with the rank of driver. The four men in Uniform gave their names as Harry Mullins, Alan Forsythe, Lenny Saunders, and James Faulkner. The driver of the van asked Garda Fitzgerald on a number of occasions the road to Lisnaskea. When he was asked his business in Clones he stated they were doing Check-Points in the border area, got lost when on their way back to their base at Lisnaskea R.U.C. Station. Garda Fitzgerald saw that the van was a Green Bedford, Reg. No. AIL-7571, with a white roof and bumpers. There were no markings whatever on the van. Garda Fitzgerald then asked a passing motorist to contact the Garda Station for assistance and Sergt. E. Healy arrived on the scene in a very short time. Both members then accompanied the six men and the vehicle to the Garda Station where Sergt. McArdle came on duty at 1.45am.

When Sergt. McArdle arrived in the Station at 1.45am. the member questioned the driver of the van who gave his name as Edward Massey, L/Corporal No. 24007098, attached to the 27th. Squadron, Royal Transport Corp and based at Lisnaskea with the Royal Artillery. He stated that

he was a native of Highfield, Belfast, and was dressed in civilian attire. He stated that the Motor Van which was parked outside the Garda Station was official British Army property and that the five men who were in it were all members of the British Army. The Van was a Green Bedford, Reg. No. AIL-7571, with white roof and bumpers but there were no markings whatever on the vehicle to indicate that it was the property of the British Army. A Road Fund Licence displayed on the vehicle showed that it had been taxed until the end of September, 1973, and that the sum of £69. 50 had been paid to Fermanagh County Council in respect of the vehicle. L/Corporal Massey was in possession of a small map and he stated that they had lost their way and arrived in Clones when they were stopped by the Gardaí. He then attempted to indicate on the map the route they had taken but he was unable to do so. He pointed to a road on the map which leads from the main Clones to Newtownbutler Road to Darrybeg but as this road has been cratered for some time they could not have travelled this road with a vehicle. When it was pointed out to him that he had travelled in the Monaghan road to Clones he stated that he did not know how they got on this particular road but admitted that they had travelled for about one mile on it. After further questioning he stated that he was unable to give any assistance at all and did not know where he was. The men in the van were then questioned and they gave their names etc. as follows :- (1) John Wilson, Driver, Royal Corp of Transport, 27th. Squadron, No. 24132542, attached to the Royal Artillery at Lisnakea. He was in civilian attire. (2) James Faulkner, Gunner, No. 24304671, Royal Artillery, (3) Leonard Saunders, Gunner, No. 24181260, Royal Artillery, (4) Harry Mullins, Gunner, No. 2382980, Royal Artillery, (5) Allen Forsythe, L/Bombardier, No. 24148100. Wilson and Forsythe are natives of Scotland while the other three are English. The five occupants of the van were each in possession of a 7.62 S.L.R. and Massey also had a similar weapon which was in the van. Each member admitted that he was in possession of a loaded magazine of 15 rounds of ammunition which was in the weapon and also a spare full magazine.

The four men in uniform were lying on the floor of the van and unless the inside of the vehicle was checked they could not be seen. All of them had their faces blackened.

The only member in the van who was inclined to talk was L/Bombardier Forsythe. He stated they were on duty from 11pm. to 2am. and their function was the performance of Vehicle Check Points. He stated that the reason for the two civilians was that both were drivers and since they were using a civilian vehicle a driver in civilian attire was more suitable. He stated that the men in uniform would be dropped at different points and that the van would be driven away for some time and then return and collect them. He stated that they had not performed any check points on that night and had not stopped any vehicles at all. They were not in possession of any signs for road checks and could only produce a very poor torch which appeared totally unsuitable for stopping vehicles. There was a T/R Radio in the vehicle which they stated they used for contacting their base. He stated that they left Lisnakea and came to Newtownbutler and from there out the road towards the border at Clones. He stated that they turned right at a cross immediately before the bomb damaged Customs Station and drove along this road, over a small bridge and then to another cross. He stated they turned left at this junction and then arrived in Clones. He appeared most anxious to convince me that this was the route they had taken. In the van were a number of forms which are used by the Army on Check Points in the North and a copy of one of these is attached.

While in the Garda Station L/Corporal Massey stated that while on patrol they visited Farmer's premises but stated they had not visited any on that night.

The four members in uniform were not anxious to come into the Station and they remained in the van outside the Station while two members from Clones remained outside the van. The other two members who were in civilian attire spent most of the time they were detained in the Station

On the instructions of the District Officer the men were released at 6am. and they were then escorted to the border and were seen entering County Fermanagh safely.

At 9.30am. on the morning of the 25/5/73, Francis McMahon, Cloncorick, Newtownbutler, County Fermanagh, called at this Station and reported that members of the British Army had called to his home at 1am. on that date and tried to gain entrance by knocking on the door on several occasions. He stated that he heard a vehicle approach the house and stop and that four members of the British Army got out of it. They then went to the door of the house which is in the Republic and tried to gain entrance. While at the door, Francis McMahon was watching from an upstairs window and he saw a Green or Blue Van travel up and down the road at Clonagore which is on this side of the border on four different occasions. The van then returned and the four uniformed members got into it and it was driven off towards Keelaghy which is in Northern Ireland. As the van was leaving, Francis McMahon saw that it had the registration, letters ALL with the figures 75 but he could not get the remaining ones.

Francis McMahon was detained at his home by members of the R.U.C. on the 12th. December, 1972. A report on his detention dated the 21st. December, 1972, was sent you and it was accompanied by a sketch which shows the road to Keelaghy past McMahon's house and the shaded portion of which is in the Republic.

It does appear quite definite from what Francis McMahon has said that the men who called at his home were the same men who were later detained at Clones. To get to McMahon's house the members of the British Army would have had to travel through the Republic for a distance of about one half mile between Clonagore and Cloncorick. While they were driving up and down the road when seen by McMahon they would then have been on this side of the border as well.

After leaving McMahon's house it is very difficult to understand how these men finally ended up on the Monaghan road leading into Clones. They could have crossed either Carra or Annie's Bridge and out on to the Clones/Scotshouse road. From there they could have travelled to Annalora and then out on to the Monaghan Road. They would have entered the Monaghan road at Legakelly which would agree with what Massey said when he admitted that they had travelled about one mile on this road.

If we are to believe what these men said they indicated that they were totally lost in this area but at the same time they were able to get to McMahon's house which would be much more difficult to get to than Clones. They did not perform any check points or stop any traffic on this tour of duty and neither did they visit any farms. In view of this it does appear that they were on some other mission.

Later to-day a Mr. Fisk, Belfast correspondent for the London Times and a Mr. Derrick Browne, Belfast correspondent for the Manchester Guardian, telephoned this Station and asked if we could confirm that the members of the British Army had been on an arrest mission along the border. They both asked this question since they stated that the Army Press Officer had stated that the men were going to make an arrest near the border. They were told that we had no information about this. However, it does appear that by calling at McMahon's it was their intention to either arrest McMahon or someone else that might have been at his home.

It is not known in whose name the van mentioned is registered but every effort will be made on Monday next to establish this. Should any information come to light on this matter a report will be sent you without delay Please.



Sergt. 10617.H.

(J. P. McArdle)

Statement of evidence of Garda Mark Fitzgerald,
168150, made at Clones on the 25th May, 1973.

I am a member of the Garda Síochána temporarily attached to Clones Station. At approx. 1.40 a.m. on the morning of the 25th May, 1973, I was on Checkpoint duty at The Diamond, Clones. I saw a vehicle approach The Diamond from the Monaghan Road. I signalled the vehicle to stop as it approached the traffic bollard in the centre of The Diamond. It was travelling at approx. 20 miles per hour. The driver seemed reluctant to stop, although I was wearing a Scotchlite belt and had a lighted hand torch. I continued to signal him to stop and flashed the light on and off and the driver eventually came to a halt about 30 yards past me just at the junction of The Diamond and the Cavan Road. I immediately approached the driver, he opened the door - a sliding door - and I asked him his name. He replied: 'Massey'. I asked him for his Christian name. He replied: 'Edward'. I asked him where he was from. He replied: 'Belfast'. I asked him for his Driving Licence. He said he didn't have one on him. I asked him if he could identify himself, and as he was searching his pockets I looked over his shoulder into the back of the van and I saw the sleeve of an Army Uniform in the rear of the van. There was also a man in civilian attire in the passenger seat of the vehicle. I asked the driver what he had in the back of the van. He replied: 'Troops'. I asked him what kind of troops. He replied: 'Just Troops'. I again asked him what kind of Troops, and he replied: 'British Troops'. The driver then produced an Identification Card with the name 'Edward Massey' on it. I asked saw at this stage that there were four men in British Army uniform lying down in the back of the van with their faces ~~xxx~~ blackened. Each of them had a Rifle. They gave their names as: John Hilson, who gave his Post as a Driver in the British Army. This man was in civilian attire in the passenger seat of the van. Henry Mullins, Alan Forsythe, Lenny Saunders and James Faulkner. These four were in Uniform. The driver asked me on a number of occasions the road to Lisnakea, and I didn't inform him. I asked the driver his business in Clones and he stated that they were doing Checkpoints in the Border area, got lost on their way back to base, which he said was Lisnakea R.U.C. Station. The van was a 10 cwt Bedford, Green colour, Registration No. AIL-7571. It had a white roof and white bumpers. There were no other markings on it. I asked a passing motorist to contact the Garda Station for assistance, and Sergeant E. Healy arrived in a few minutes. We accompanied them to the Garda Station, Clones. Sergt. McCardie, Clones, came on duty at 1.45 a.m. and took charge. I have read over this statement and it is correct.

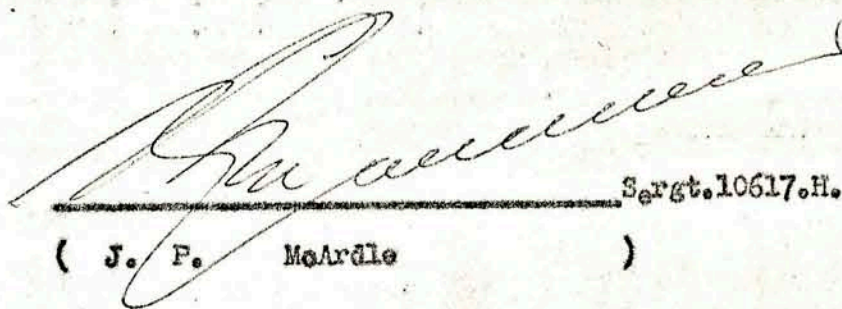
Signed: *Mark Fitzgerald* Garda
(Mark Fitzgerald) 168150

Date: 25th May, 1973.

Statement of Sergt. J. P. McArdle, 10617. H. Clones Station, made on the 25/5/73, re. detention of six members of British Army at Clones on the morning of the 25/5/73.

I am a Sergeant of the Garda Síochána stationed at Clones, County Monaghan. At 1.45am. on the morning of the 25/5/73, I was called to Clones Garda Station where I had a conversation with Garda Mark Fitzgerald, 16815. G. who is on temporary transfer at Clones Station. As a result of what Garda Fitzgerald told me I questioned a man who was then in the Public Office. He gave his name as Edward Massey and stated that he was a native of Highfield, Belfast. He admitted that he was a member of the British Army attached to the 27th. Squadron, Royal Corp of Transport, and that he was a L/Corporal No. 24007098. He stated that he was attached to the Royal Artillery and was based at Lisnaska, County Fermanagh. He was dressed in civilian attire. He stated that the Motor Van which was parked outside the Station was the property of the British Army and that the five men who were in it were all members of the British Army. The Motor Van mentioned was a Green Bedford 15cwt. Reg. No. AIL-7571. The roof and bumpers were painted white and there were no markings whatever on the vehicle to indicate that it was the property of the British Army. A Road Fund Licence displayed showed that the vehicle was taxed to September, 1973, and that the sum of £69. 50 had been paid in respect of the vehicle to Fermanagh County Council. L/Corporal had a small map and he stated that they had lost their way and arrived in Clones when they were stopped by the Gardaí. He then attempted to indicate to me on his map the route he had taken but was unable to do so. He pointed to a road leading from the main Clones/Newtownbutler Road to Derrybeg and stated he must have took a wrong turning on this road. This particular road is cratered for some time and could not be used by a Motor Van. When it was pointed out to him that he had approached Clones from the Monaghan Road he stated that he did not know how he got on this road but admitted that he had travelled on it for about one mile. After further questioning he stated that he was unable to give any assistance at all and that he did not know where he was. I then went outside the Station and questioned the five occupants of the Motor Van. When questioned I ascertained the following regarding each occupant:- (1) John Hilson, Driver, Royal Corp of Transport 27th. Squadron, No. 24132542, attached to the Royal Artillery at Lisnaska. (2) James Fulkner, Gunner, No. 24304671, Royal Artillery, (3) Leonard Saunders, Gunner, No. 24181260, Royal Artillery, (4) Harry Mullins, Gunner, No. 2382980, (5) Allen Forsythe, L/Bombardier, No. 24148100, No's 2, 3, 4, and 5 are all attached to the Royal Artillery at Lisnaska. Hilson and Forsythe are natives of Scotland while the remaining three are English. Hilson was in civilian attire while all the others were in Green camouflaged Battledress. The five occupants of the Motor Van were each in possession of a 7.62 SLR. and another similar weapon in the Motor Van was the property of L/Corporal Massey. They all stated that in each weapon there was a full magazine of ammunition which contained 15 rounds and in addition each member had a second loaded magazine which gave each member a Rifle and 30 Rounds of ammunition. When I questioned the men in the Van the four who were in uniform were lying on the floor of the van and unless the inside of the vehicle was checked they could not be seen. In addition, all of them had their faces blackened. The only member of the party in the Motor Van who would answer any questions was L/Bombardier Forsythe. He stated that they were on duty from 11pm. to 2am. and their principal function was the performance of V.C.P's. (Vehicle Check Points) He stated that the reason for the two civilians was that both were drivers and since they had a civilian vehicle it was more suitable to have a member in civilian attire driving. He stated that the men in uniform would be dropped at a point where they would hold up traffic and the van would be driven away and call back later for them. When questioned as to the number of Check Points performed before entering Clones he stated that they had not performed any and had not stopped any vehicles at all. They were not in possession of any signs and could only produce a very poor torch which appeared to be totally inadequate for signalling traffic to stop. There was a T/R Radio in the Motor Van which they stated they used for contacting their base. L/Bombardier Forsythe stated that they

left Lisnaskea and came to Newtownbutler and from there cut the road towards the border at Clones. He stated that they turned right at a cross immediately before the site of the bomb damaged Customs Station and drove along this road until they crossed a small bridge and then arrived at another road junction. He stated that they turned left at this junction and after driving for a distance arrived in Clones. He was most anxious to convince me that this was the route they had taken. He also stated that they had lost their way and said that they were only at Lisnaskea for 3 weeks. In the Motor Van I saw a Five Gallon drum of Petrol and on the floor were a number of forms which would be used by the Army on the occasion of Vehicle Check Points. I took possession of one of these and a copy of same is attached. While in the Garda Station L/Corporal Massey stated that while on patrol they usually visited farmers premises but stated that on this particular tour of duty they did not visit any premises. On the instructions of the District Officer the 6 men were released at 6am. on this date and were escorted to the border where they were seen safely into County Fermanagh at Clontivrim.


Sergt. 10617.H.
(J. F. McArdle)