

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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Mr. Swift

You will be aware that there has been a marked increase in IRA activity along the border in recent months. While they retain the ability to mount operations deep in Northern Ireland nevertheless one could be persuaded by the argument that of late their campaign is acquiring the trappings of their earlier spells of violence in this century particularly the 50's. Recent significant events in the border region include:

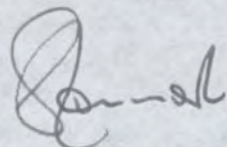
1. The killing on 12 February 1980 of two RUC men at Roslea (near the Fermanagh-Monaghan border) Co. Fermanagh by means of a landmine detonated by remote control. The attack was the third to take place in the area in a fortnight. A UDR corporal was shot dead on his farm at Kinawley last week (very close to the Fermanagh-Cavan border) and another UDR man was seriously wounded in gun attack as he returned from work the week before.
2. Explosives and bomb-making equipment were found on a farm at Anney, four miles from Ballybay, Co. Monaghan on 25 November 1979.
3. More than 30 primed cyclinder bombs and 1½ tons of explosives were located on a farm at Marley Grangebellew, Co. Louth on 5 January 1980. The farm is situated just outside Dunleer which is about 30 miles from the border.
4. A bomb factory was uncovered at a farm in a remote part of Kilkerley off the main Dundalk/Carrickmacross road on 12 January 1980 just three miles from Dundalk.
5. An RUC reservist who crossed the border to buy a Christmas turkey was shot dead near Glaslough, Co. Monaghan as he drove into the village to collect the turkey. In another incident at Glaslough more recently a man was abducted by the IRA while participating in a shooting weekend in the area. It appears that the IRA mistook their prisoner for another member of the shooting party who was subsequently escorted back to the

border by the Gardai. Barry Cowan presenter of "Scene around Six" was a member of the party and witnessed the abduction. The prisoner of the IRA was lucky to slip away from his captors in darkness and was under no doubt that mistaken identity or not he would have been shot. It is noticeable how the IRA use in particular the Monaghan geography which penetrates into Northern Ireland for their activities.

Conclusion

The IRA appear to be focusing their attention at the present time mainly around the border and stepping up their attacks against the security forces in the region. There are known elements in the border counties which have always shown a particular sympathy for their activities through the years. ~~In addition one can take account of provo activists born in Northern Ireland circulating south of the border. Finally one~~ might cautiously ^{state} ~~infer~~ that concentration on the border region by the provos infers that they may find themselves squeezed at this time by the security forces on both sides of the border and find the "easy option" of border targets the safest ploy for the present. It would appear logical to assume that the discoveries of bomb factories by the Gardai have temporarily affected part of their arsenal. However based on past performance they are likely to concentrate on rebuilding their supplies (always assuming their finances are maintained) and becoming more adventurous in the future.

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G. O'Connor

13 February 1980