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TRANSCRIPT FROM THE CHANNEL 4 NEWS ON MONDAY 19TH JANUARY, 1998 RE: BLOODY SUNDAY.

REPORTER: The army commander of the day admits mistakes may have been made.

COMMANDER: It is an awful possibility and that's a dreadful thing to have to report.

REPORTER: Good Evening. The Commanding Officer who gave the Paras the order to fire on demonstrators in Londonderry which ended in the deaths of 13 unarmed civilians 25 years ago says he never knew that another army group could also have been firing from the walls nearby. He accepts for the first time that what he thought then to have been the sound of IRA gunfire may actually have been that of fellow British soldiers. Ministers and the Ministry of Defence are still split over whether to apologise publicly for Bloody Sunday. Tonight Colonel Derek Wilford, Parachute Regiment commander at the time talks to us exclusively about apologies and responsibilities.

COMMANDER: It should be the person who is discussing it frankly.

REPORTER: And we will indeed be talking live with the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Edward Heath who breaks his silence on Ireland for the first time since he left Downing Street. The man responsible for the soldiers who shot dead 13 people on Bloody Sunday insists his men did nothing wrong. Speaking exclusively to this programme he criticises Tony Blair's plans to apologise for what happened on Bloody Sunday and calls on Sir Edward Heath, the Prime Minister of the day, to explain what happened. We shall be hearing from Sir Edward later. During the course of year long investigation, Channel 4 news has uncovered two new areas of evidence concerning Bloody Sunday. Firstly, that another regiment of the British army fired at and possibly killed demonstrators on the day and secondly, that several of the victims may have been shot after a cease fire order was given. Tonight it's still unclear what action the Government is now proposing. Mr. Wilford decided to speak out after speculation about an imminent apology. Our report tonight has been compiled by Una Ferguson and Alex Thompson.

ALEX THOMPSON: So much time has passed since the civil rights demonstration walked towards Londonderry city centre yet so few facts are agreed upon. Certainly some started stoning the soldiers and tear gas and rubber bullets were fired back. There were also some shots from the official IRA. The paratroopers stormed into the Bogside, an hour later 13 unarmed people were shot dead, 4 shot in the back. That day their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Derek Wilford gave his immediate assessment.

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DEREK WILFORD: Well what is force? If you're being fired at you return fire and they know that perfectly well.

ALEX THOMPSON: Tonight after 26 years of reflection Derek Wilford speaks exclusively to Channel 4 news.

DEREK WILFORD: My troops behaved magnificently and I don't say this in any way to protect them. I've always been absolutely honest about this. My troops did the job for which they were trained and which I expected. If my troops had run amok there would have been far more than 13 people killed. You would have been counting the dead in dozens, many dozens.

ALEX THOMPSON: But he is angry because senior army officers and Edward Heath, then Prime Minister he believes, bore ultimate responsibility for the operation and should now face public scrutiny.

DEREK WILFORD: Well I think the Prime Minister at the time should be the person who is discussing it frankly, perhaps with the aid of some of the senior Cabinet officials, the people responsible for Northern Ireland at the time and the senior army officers.

ALEX THOMPSON: To this day nobody has explained why the shot troops of the Parachute regiment were suddenly called in from Belfast to arrest rioters in the Bogside. For nearly two years the Nationalist estate had been controlled by the IRA, it was one of the no go areas for the British army.

DEREK WILFORD: We were put in to an arrest operation which I don't think had been thought out fully. The implications of which had not been thoroughly thought out. It smacked of it's time we taught these people a lesson and that's what it smacked of.

ALEX THOMPSON: And all these years, Derek Wilford's wondered if the secret plan that day was to take over the Bogside and end the no go area. If so, it never quite happened.

DEREK WILFORD: I ended up in a situation where I really controlled the Bogside. I had my battalion in there and no troops had been in there for months, it was a no go area. We occupied it and I stood there wondering what to do next. I said here I am, I control this area.

ALEX THOMPSON: The situation had turned from the violence to the surreal.

DEREK WILFORD: I said to Forde, General Forde when he asked me what I was going to do next and I said in the absence of any orders I'm going to pull back and that's what I did 10 minutes later, I pulled my troops out and I didn't pull them out because there'd been shooting, I pulled them out because I just could not leave my troops on the ground with no orders. What was I supposed to do? Just sort of sit round there, you know, twiddle my thumbs. There had to be some kind of constructive decisions made and there were none.

ALEX THOMPSON: Because he says after the shooting the British army didn't want to go on.

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DEREK WILFORD: They were offered an opportunity to take over the Bogside and regain proper control of it and they decided not to take that opportunity because there had been the shooting, I think they lost their nerve frankly.

ALEX THOMPSON: Over the past year Channel 4 news has revealed new evidence about the deaths on Bloody Sunday. The 13 marchers died at 5 separate places in less than half a square mile. We shed new light on two of them. First, what happened as demonstrators fled into this estate, Glenfadder Park. Following one soldiers testimony we now believe 7 people were shot in this car park after a cease fire order had been issued, 4 died. James Ray lying wounded by a shot in the back executed where he lay. Gerard McKinney hands in the air screaming "don't shoot" shot and killed. William McKinney shot in the back as he bent over one of the victims and Gerard Donaghy shot and killed while running away.

JOE MAHON (EYE WITNESS): Jim Ray was lying in the corner, not to move again and as the Para troopers passed him (interference).

WOMAN INTERVIEWER: The radio operator passed on the call, passed on the cease fire order. At least two soldiers continued firing after that. Is that new to you?

DEREK WILFORD: Well, when you put it that way, yes that is new, that is news to me. I have to confess that and perhaps you may have guessed that I'm not aware of it in those terms. Some of them may have actually received a bullet which they should not have received because of the situation but they weren't deliberately gunned down. They were only deliberately gunned down if the soldiers thought they in fact had fire arms. I still have to go along, until someone can prove it otherwise, that my soldiers behaved in accordance with their very very best standards of keeping the peace.

RADIO MESSAGE: This is 5404 we've just heard 4 shots fired at our call sign Quebec 21. On the wall are two high volocity rounds of fire returned.

NB **ALEX THOMPSON:** And there's a second area of fresh information we revealed new evidence from army radio traffic confirmed by eyewitnesses that at least one soldier from a different regiment fired shots from the city walls into the crowd. The soldier from the Royal Anglian Regiment confirmed that. He said he saw an army sniper fire from a derelict house. So we took an audio recording of the day to a forensics sound laboratory and played it to a ballistics expert whose now retired from the army. He was in no doubt this steady controlled firing did indeed come from an army sniper but its remained secret, 3 people may have died from it, yet neither the Widgery Inquiry nor any Government has ever admitted that another regiment fired. It now raises the possibility that when the Paratroops said they came under heavy fire, it was their own side, the Royal Anglians on the walls and not the IRA.

DEREK WILFORD: I do accept now that it is possible, an awesome possibility that the shots, if they were fired from the city walls, could have been mistaken for shots being fired by the IRA and that's a dreadful thing to have to live with. Cross fire of that kind is extremely dangerous and I just simply cannot understand how snipers were up on those walls being given orders and one assumes they were given orders to fire across my front, or even between my front because you know we were scattered just like the crowd was scattered.

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ALEX THOMPSON: Effective planning of the operation depended on trust between the police, the RUC and the army. According to Derek Wilford that trust just wasn't there.

DEREK WILFORD: We were an outside battalion brought in but I don't think that the RUC and the brigade that were in Londonderry were actually very much on side and you know, at this late stage perhaps one shouldn't say it but I think that because it is a late stage one can say it without dragging up a lot of controversy is that the army did not trust the RUC.

ALEX THOMPSON: Chief superintendent, Frank Laggen, briefed senior army officers that the IRA would not be in the Bogside in any strength on the day. Laggen felt the marchers should not be confronted. Derek Wilford says his superiors told him nothing of this.

DEREK WILFORD: The Chief superintendent Laggen never in my hearing said the Paras should not do this. Had he said it in fact to the Brigadier and the Brigadier had passed that up the line then that operation might have been stopped and this is a new aspect of it, I'm glad you brought that to my attention because I was not aware of it.

ALEX THOMPSON: Looking back on the news footage after a generation of controversy Derek Wilford remains adamant that an apology now would be an act of grave disloyalty to the British army.

DEREK WILFORD: Well I just find it extraordinary. Again I have to ask, one would have to ask a series of questions. What are they going to apologise for? Are they apologising to the Government of the day? Are they apologising for the military, political machine of the day and are they trying to apologise on my behalf and my soldiers and I would have to warn them not to do so.

ALEX THOMPSON: And it is not him, he says, who needs to apologise.

DEREK WILFORD: But if people start talking about apologising then I think one would have to actually look at who was responsible for the decision to carry out that particular type of operation and to use the only troops capable of doing it, who if you like, were battle hardened troops who would take no nonsense.

ALEX THOMPSON: One man, one regiment with unshakeable loyalty to his troops but with abiding bitterness at the senior officers and politicians who he feels let the Paratroopers carry the can.

DEREK WILFORD: I think that day ended my career. I mean it certainly did mentally within myself.

ALEX THOMPSON: Though he stayed in the army for another 10 years but the full truth of what happened on Bloody Sunday has now been hidden for more than twice as long.

REPORTER: Alex Thompson and Una Ferguson reporting there. Well in response to the points raised by our report the Government here said it was still assessing the evidence submitted by the Irish authorities on Bloody Sunday and would make a full statement in due course. From Dublin a Government spokesman said it was continuing to press Britain for an

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early response to the new material. The statement adds "the Irish Government is strongly urging that a new Independent Inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday should be set up so that the truth can be comprehensively established and publicly acknowledged". Now Sir Edward Heath, who was the Prime Minister at the time of Bloody Sunday, he joins us now live from our Salisbury studios. Sir Edward before coming onto what the Colonel been talking to us about, you never talked publicly about Ireland since you left Downing Street, and I'm wondering whether given that the Government is now thinking about what to do whether to apologise, what else to do, whether they've talked to you.

SIR EDWARD HEATH: No they haven't.

REPORTER: Should they not have done?

SIR EDWARD: Well it is customary, I think if the Government is going to deal with something which occurred under another Government at least to let the Prime Minister know that they were thinking of doing it and possibly ask him what his view is.

REPORTER: Do you feel there is anything to apologise for on Bloody Sunday?

SIR EDWARD: Well one has to look at the whole picture and I'm afraid that is now seldom done. What happened was that we heard about these ghastly events that I said we must have an immediate and full inquiry, independent and the Lord Chief Justice agreed that he would preside over it. He was given every facility. At first he thought he would have the meetings in Bogside, then he realised that this might put pressure on people who were giving evidence and they would refuse to do so and he moved the inquiry outside. The inquiry was handled very speedily and we got the full report which I handed over to the House of Commons in two and a half months.

REPORTER; The contention now Sir Edward is that there is now new evidence which Lord Widgery never had, that particularly there was another British army battalion involved that was unknown at the time or was not revealed to him.

SIR EDWARD: Well that may or may not be true. It's now 25 years since this happened, how is it that this is only just become known after 25 years? The fact is that Lord Widgery's report was a very balanced report and I've been saddened by some of the things which the Colonel has just been saying because the Lord Chief Justice didn't blame his forces. What he said was that they carried out their orders and they were at a very high level but there are some who fired first and this caused the trouble, they were not blame worthy.

REPORTER: But if there is no fear of being wronged in this matter should there not be a new inquiry to take account of all of the new materials that exist?

SIR EDWARD: Well that depends on whether those who have the alleged information believe that it is justified. As we've already had a very full inquiry and the 11 recommendations or the conclusions of Lord Widgery, I've got here in front of me and there certainly is no justification for opening up, if it is true that others fired well the tragedy is just the same.

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REPORTER: But it is still vital isn't it because I mean that is crucial to forming any view of what really happened if in fact the shooting was from other British soldiers and not from the IRA then the whole genesis of what happened is different.

SIR EDWARD: No I don't think so because Lord Widgery says that some of our troops did fire, that's never been questioned and they believe that they were doing what was required of them and he says that under the rules under which they were acting that was true, they were right in thinking it was required of them. That's never been challenged.

REPORTER: But you see what is also challenged is that after a cease fire had been called more people were shot dead by British troops. Again something which Lord Widgery didn't investigate and didn't have information to work on.

SIR EDWARD: No but the information which you are now using, which has been discovered you say by your people is 25 years old and it has to be examined to see whether it justified further inquiry.

REPORTER: But if it does, would you support such an inquiry?

SIR EDWARD: Well, I would want the Prime Minister to take that decision, it's a decision of the Prime Minister of the day.

REPORTER: But from it would then flow a new inquiry to which you'd be prepared to give evidence.

SIR EDWARD; I have no evidence to give. All the evidence I could give is everything that was handed to the Widgery Inquiry.

REPORTER: But ultimately the buck would stop with you wouldn't it? I mean you would have moral responsibility for whatever went wrong on that day.

SIR EDWARD: I can't accept this view at all and I was astonished to hear the Colonel saying it. It's the first time I've heard anybody in the army say they wanted to pass it off to the politicians. Now, when I was commanding a regiment I certainly didn't take that view.

REPORTER: But the politicians sent the army in. The army makes decisions on the ground that the politicians who sent them in surely then still take responsibility.

SIR EDWARD: No the politicians were absolutely justified in saying this march is illegal. Now, the Prime Minister of the other got on to me that night and I said yes but you asked me to stop these marches as illegal and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Mr. Faulkner, has stopped the Protestant marches, we're doing this in answer to your request and that was why the troops were there. Now, the Colonel has decided, Brigade commander and he had General Forde and if he'd wanted more orders he could have taken them from him, not from ringing up Westminster or ringing up Downing Street.

REPORTER: Well Sir Edward if, let's leave then the question of inquiry to one side and just move very briefly to the question of apology.

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SIR EDWARD; Well I said, I can quote you what I said in the House of Commons and it was very clear. I said the Government deeply regret that there were any casualties whatever the individual circumstances. Now you can't go further than that and that was said at the time.

REPORTER: But one could apologise for the killing of unarmed civilians on the basis of mistaken intelligence.

SIR EDWARD: Well, we hadn't at that time had the inquiry but I don't see what deep apology one can say but that the Government deeply regrets that there were any casualties whatever the circumstances. Now that includes mistakes and so on.

REPORTER: One last question Sir Edward. Obviously you'll be judged by many things, Europe in which you've obviously come out very plus, do you think Ireland was a dark chapter for you?

SIR EDWARD: No because Ireland, Northern Ireland was in a state of war and what we succeeded in doing was to have a conference which brought about the unity of Northern Ireland by establishing a coalition Government, this was in November, December, 1973 and that operated with all three parties and it went on until May of the following year. By this time Mr. Wilson had taken over and unfortunately he didn't give it the support which it needed but we were the only people, we still are the only people who had reached a Governmental solution to the problems of Northern Ireland.

REPORTER: Sir Edward thank you very much indeed for talking with us.

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