

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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For: HQ From: Belfast
For: Second Secretary From: Joint Secretary

Subj: Chief Constable's assessment of Campbell/Dougan killings

1. Following a meeting with the Chief Constable, the GOC and senior security officials this morning, the Secretary of State sent John Steele over to us at 12.30pm to inform us of the Chief Constable's firm conclusion that the Campbell and Dougan killings were Provisional IRA operations and to indicate the basis on which he had reached this view.

2. The Chief Constable believes, on the basis of intelligence, that the Campbell murder was sanctioned in general terms by the Provisional IRA leadership some time ago. Authorisation was given for DAAD-type killings and Brendan Campbell, a drug dealer against whom Republicans already harboured a grudge (he is reputed to have thrown a hand-grenade at Connolly House), was one of the more obvious candidates.

3. An unsuccessful attempt was made on Campbell's life at Boucher Road several weeks ago. It had been assumed by the RUC that, as the weapon used there was traceable to previous DAAD activities, care would be taken on the occasion of the next attempt against him to use a "clean" weapon. (The initial indications we received reflected this assumption). However, analysis has revealed that the weapon used last Monday night was not clean. It had been used in the series of DAAD killings in late 1995.

4. The Chief Constable is also satisfied, on the basis of intelligence, that the Dougan killing was sanctioned at the highest levels of the Provisional IRA. The initial assumption was that INLA might have been involved, because of a number of circumstantial similarities with the Guiney murder (both attacks had taken place in the same area, both men were from Suffolk, both were UDA leaders etc). However, contacts with INLA led the RUC to rule out this theory.

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5. A raid on a house in Twinbrook later in the day uncovered three men whom the RUC firmly believe to be Provisional IRA members, clothes (with, Steele implied, relevant forensic evidence) being washed in a washing machine and discarded post office uniforms. Steele attributed the identification of this house and its occupants to "good intelligence" and implied that the individuals in question (whose names have not been released) had been under police observation for some time past. He also mentioned that there is a witness to the Dougan killing who is in a position to identify those involved.

6. The RUC are satisfied that these two killings were not the work of a splinter group or groups within the IRA but were mainstream operations which had been fully authorised. The construction which the NIO are inclined to put on them (but which, Steele emphasised, is pure speculation on their part) is that the IRA leadership believed that they could get away with DAAD-type murders and the killing of Loyalists without compromising Sinn Féin's position at the talks.

7. They may have calculated that neither of these activities would be deemed to fall within the strict parameters of the Mitchell Principles; that Sinn Féin would therefore not be expelled by the two Governments; and that, even if the UUP had walked out in protest over this, the talks process would not have been fatally damaged. The timing of the two murders (both happening within hours of each other and a week before the talks move to Dublin) may also point to a calculation on the part of the Republican leadership that, with pressure mounting daily on Sinn Féin in relation to an Assembly and other matters, it would be useful to create a distraction in the form of circumstances which would provoke a UUP walk-out, all the more so from Dublin, while leaving Sinn Féin at the table.

8. The IRA's intention, according to this theory, would have been to use "clean" weapons in order to obscure their involvement in these killings. However, a mistake was made - the gun in the Campbell murder was not clean. As for the weapon used in the Dougan killing, the forensic analysis is not yet available. We were told, indeed, that it may not be decisive, as the bullet shattered on impact. However, the RUC believe that they have sufficient forensic evidence from other sources.

9. Steele emphasised that it is intelligence which constitutes the major part of the RUC's

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case against the IRA in relation to these killings and that the forensic evidence is secondary. Whether the combined case is sufficient to achieve convictions (bearing in mind that intelligence material cannot be deployed as evidence in court) is, of course, another matter. Stephen Leach, who was also present, indicated that it was not even certain that charges would be laid.

10. The Secretary of State is to discuss the matter with the Prime Minister at 3pm this afternoon. Our understanding is that the Chief Constable's view of the matter will not be made public today but is likely to enter the public domain tomorrow through a statement made by the Secretary of State (who will be here in NI for the day). We are told that Flanagan himself is highly conscious of the political ramifications of anything he may say and that merit is seen in the Secretary of State handling the matter publicly in the first instance, though Flanagan will come under great pressure himself thereafter to elaborate on the advice given.

11. The NIO, like others elsewhere in the British system, recognise that a suitably worded statement from the IRA leadership disowning these murders could help to avert the ejection of Sinn Féin from the talks. They are very doubtful, however, that the IRA will agree to condemn the murders in the unequivocal terms which the two Governmenst would require.

12. Steele also noted the possibility that the body currently being sought in the border area might prove to have been a further IRA victim.

13. In conclusion, he hoped that, having received this confidential outline of the reasons why the Chief Constable believes firmly that the Provisional IRA were responsible for both murders, our Government will feel able to close ranks with the British Government in the run-up to a very difficult decision on Sinn Féin. We responded that our Government would certainly weigh the Chief Constable's assessment very carefully, along with other factors, in forming a view on how best to proceed.

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