

TRENDS IN PARAMILITARY ACTIVITIESA. REPUBLICANSTHE PROVISIONAL REPUBLICAN MOVEMENTProvisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)

Since early 1977 the Provisionals' have re-organised their terrorist structure in a number of stages. The purpose has been to counter the difficulties which they have experienced from Security Force activity and in particular to improve their security and co-ordination.

2. Important features of this re-organisation have been the adoption of a cellular organisation to replace the more traditional battalion and company structure and the formation of the Northern Command to cover the historical nine county Province of Ulster.

3. The effect of the cellular system has been more marked in the towns than in the country where Active Service Units have all along been the basic structure. The development of Northern Command however has tended to improve the overall control of activities by the leadership throughout the Province. In most places in addition there has been a tightening up of security.

4. These improvements, which were themselves born out of weakness, have not been achieved without considerable delay and a number of set-backs. PIRA have shown themselves still highly sensitive to the risk of informers as to the reaction by public opinion throughout the community to their operations. This has affected their campaign from late 1977 to the present which has fluctuated sharply both in level and in type of violence.

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5. At present the Provisional leadership appear to be committed to a "long haul" strategy realising that they are not going to make any progress in forcing concessions out of HMG. Overall their level of violence during the last two years has shown a considerable drop, but they have managed to produce serious upsurges of activity from time to time and they are likely to retain this capability for a considerable period. At present their targetting policy is divided between attacks on the Security Forces, including prison officers, and bombing attacks on property. They have over the months shown uncertainty about bombing commercial targets. They banned such attacks after La Mon but by the Autumn realised that they were limiting their options too far. They have therefore gone back to a much broader range of targets. Their attitude to civilian casualties has also shifted somewhat. They appear still to wish to avoid them but are now prepared to take much greater risks particularly where attacks on Security Forces are concerned. The PIRA activities continue to vary considerably throughout the Province, there are large areas in which they hardly ever operate but in others there is intensive activity. The border remains an important asset to PIRA.

6. PIRA continue to have adequate supplies of men, weapons and money. Under their new system however we are likely to see a combination of fewer, but more carefully planned attacks than was the case in the early and mid 1970s.

Provisional Sinn Fein (PSF)

7. While the PSF in the South are trying to establish themselves as a political party they remain mainly a propaganda organisation in the North. They have not been successful in their efforts to promote genuine political activity in Belfast and elsewhere. They have mainly concentrated on the H Block question.

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Civil Administration

8. This Provisional term covers both PIRA as well as PSF activities and ranges from outright intimidation to more sophisticated non-military work. The Provisionals' attempts to dominate certain areas of local life have continued to rely mainly on intimidation. Their efforts at providing "public services" such as policing and postal service, have been insignificant. Their more ambitious economic activities, such as the [REDACTED] have been commercial failures. They have however done better in less ambitious fields, particularly through the control of clubs where they get protection money and often considerable proceeds from fruit machines etc. The Black Taxis remain important to them both from the point of view of prestige and of finance, although a good deal of the latter probably goes to the [REDACTED] prisoners fund rather than directly into PIRA's coffers as such. In general the bulk of PIRA funds come from robberies, mainly in the South, and from contributions from the United States. PIRA have done well in the penetration of certain community associations in the harder areas. They have, like many extremist organisations, benefitted by being more active than the moderates.

IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY/IRISH NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY

9. This small group, of which the political and military wings are even less distinct than in the case of the Provisionals continues to present a threat though much less than that of the PIRA. They are strongest in Londonderry and certain parts of West Belfast. There is some evidence of co-operation with the PIRA in local operations.

OFFICIAL REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT

10. The Officials have continued their trend towards greater concentration on political activity. Although the Official

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Irish Republican Army (OIRA) remains in being, it has not recently undertaken any major attacks on the Security Forces or property. There has been a certain amount of feuding both with the PIRA and with the IRSP/INLA.

11. In the Republic the Sinn Fein the Workers Party (SFWP) and in the North the Republican Clubs continue their conventional political work. In some Republican areas the clubs have considerable influence and have produced some effective local councillors. The most significant move by the SFWP/Republican Clubs has been a decision in favour of a majority rule devolved Government in Northern Ireland (presumably the six counties) with a Bill of Rights to safeguard the minority. At the same time the SFWP/Republican Clubs remain essentially Marxist in their political thinking although they are unclear about how this would be applied in practice.

12. The OIRA, like the PIRA, have particular areas of influence, for instance by intimidation, the control of clubs etc. There is of course considerable rivalry between them and the Provisionals on this score.

B. LOYALISTS

13. GENERAL

The Loyalist paramilitary organisations have become much less active over the past two years, particularly since the failure of the 1977 stoppage. There have been very few acts of violence against the Catholic community and generally their quiescence has reflected a feeling that the Security Forces are operating effectively against PIRA. Some of their energies have been used on internal feuding. In places they have tried to develop a more political image. They remain closely involved in protection rackets and crime.

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UDA

14. Although the UDA has maintained a latent military capability the main pre-occupation of the leader Andy TYRIE has been to launch into politics with "independence" for Northern Ireland as his theme. The UDA's proposals have attracted a certain amount of publicity here and overseas but has virtually no genuine backing in Northern Ireland.

UVF

15. The UVF has become fragmented by internal feuding. It remains an important influence among the community in the Shankill area and is capable of sporadic sectarian attacks.

19 February 1979