

THE CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION

Introduction

Broadly speaking, the paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland can be divided between those affiliated to groups which support the Good Friday Agreement and those committed to bringing it down. Detailed briefing is available [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] General Officer Commanding (GOC), Lieutenant General Sir Hew Pike.

2. The mainstream paramilitary organisations whose political associates support the Good Friday Agreement and benefit from its provisions, particularly on prisoner releases, show no signs at present of wishing to return to a terrorist campaign. But the past few months have seen a relaxation in discipline and a preparedness to use unattributed terrorist violence. There are indications that PIRA are responsible for three murders and one attempted murder in recent months, while the UDA have carried out a series of 'retaliatory' attacks and UVF members have been involved in a murder and attempted murder as a result of intra-Loyalist feuding.

3. The anti-Agreement terrorist groups on both sides are working to destabilise the political process. On the Republican side a recent realignment has produced a rebadged group - Oglagh na hEireann or the 'True IRA' - which may be prepared to carry on where the Real IRA left off at Omagh. On the Loyalist side the organisations are hampered by a lack of munitions and organisation. An early decision which could face the Secretary of State could be whether to respecify the LVF under the Sentences Act because of its involvement in recent high-profile attacks. At present, only the Continuity

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IRA, Real IRA, Orange Volunteers and Red Hand Defenders are specified under the Act. All organisations mentioned in this brief are proscribed (and some others) except Oglai na hEireann under that name.

4. Sectarian tension and intimidation has increased over the past year throughout Northern Ireland, particularly in the Portadown area following the Drumcree stand-off in 1998. This year's marching season was the quietest for several years. The Orange Order have respected the rulings of the Parades Commission and so far have shown dignity and restraint. The Orange Order calls for behaviour to remain lawful and dignified have been supported by loyalist paramilitaries.

5. Paramilitary groups on both sides continue to exert influence within their own communities through so-called punishment beatings and shootings, which we normally call paramilitary assaults. There were over 228 such assaults in 1997 and more than 216 in 1998. So far this year (to 18 July) there have been a further 135 victims.

The Terrorists

Republican Terrorism

PIRA

6. The Provisional IRA are the largest and most capable terrorist grouping in Northern Ireland. They have been on ceasefire since July 1997 and support the Good Friday Agreement. There is not much sign that they have any intention of returning to a terrorist campaign in the short term, provided Sinn Fein is not excluded from the political process. Nor is there any evidence of particular pressure from the membership to do so.

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7. But despite this ceasefire strategy, PIRA remains engaged in a number of paramilitary activities and in recent months there have been disturbing signs of willingness on the part of the organisation to sanction murder of drug dealers and those who have fallen foul of the organisation. Paramilitary assaults continue, although there was a lull after the death of Andrew Kearney in July 1998, and after particular public outrage in January 1999 when paramilitary assaults reached the highest recorded level.

INLA

8. The Irish National Liberation Army carried out some of the worst atrocities of the Troubles. Following the Referendum and the Good Friday Agreement the organisation appears to have decided that the war is over, called a ceasefire and is now eligible for prisoner releases under the Sentences Act. Despite discontent at the level of Loyalist attacks on Nationalists, there is no sign of threat to this ceasefire at present.

Anti-Agreement Republicans

9. There are currently two groups on the Republican side opposed to the Good Friday Agreement. One is the Continuity IRA, linked to Republican Sinn Fein (RSF), the former Sinn Fein leadership which left the organisation in 1986 in protest at the movement's political strategy. Following recent defections this organisation does not have a credible military wing although it remains capable of isolated attacks.

10. More seriously, the Real IRA, responsible for the Omagh atrocity which claimed 29 lives in August 1998, has recently attracted most of the main Continuity IRA Northern-based military wing and has rebadged itself as "Oglaigh na hEireann" (Irish for IRA). The rebadged group announced a resumption of violence from midnight 22/23 June.

Loyalist Terrorism

UDA/UVF

11. The largest Loyalist organisation is the UDA/UFF. It is loosely structured, based on local "brigadiers", and heavily implicated in racketeering and drug dealing. Its political associates, the UDP, support the Good Friday Agreement although the party failed to win a seat in the Assembly. This led to a loss of political influence and in turn to discontent amongst members.

12. Whilst some members of the UDA advocate a return to violence in response to what they see as a series of concessions to Republicans, the organisation as a whole remains committed to a ceasefire, largely to ensure the continued release of its prisoners. Following the attempted murder of a leading figure, Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair (probably by a criminal associate), the UDA retaliated with a series of attacks, but eventually stopped in the interests of their prisoners after a warning from the Secretary of State.

UVF/RHC

13. The UVF is the most effective Loyalist terrorist organisation. It is highly centralised and was becoming increasingly active in the period before the 1994 ceasefire, when it demonstrated a bomb making capability and the ability to carry out attacks against Republican targets in Dublin as well as in Northern Ireland. Its political wing, the PUP, supports the Good Friday Agreement and won two seats in the Assembly.

14. UVF members have recently been involved in various intra-Loyalist feuds with both the UDA and the LVF. There is considerable tension between the UVF and the UDA in many areas of Belfast and it is also struggling with the LVF for influence in the Portadown area.

Anti-Agreement Loyalists

LVF

15. The LVF consists largely of former members of mid-Ulster UVF. It was founded by Billy "King Rat" Wright, a leading figure in the Portadown area. Wright was murdered in the Maze Prison in December 1997 and for a while the organisation appeared to be heading towards dissolution. It called a ceasefire and in December 1998 engaged in the only act of decommissioning so far. Following the arrest and conviction of Mark 'Swinger' Fulton, Wright's successor as leader, for possession of a firearm with intent and assault, the organisation appears to have changed tack with a series of high profile attacks. It was however inactive over the marching season.

OV/RHD

16. The Orange Volunteers and Red Hand Defenders are shadowy organisations which emerged after Drumcree 1998 and consist of "rejectionist" Loyalists, many of whom may be disaffected or former members of other Loyalist groups. The groups have been responsible for at least two deaths, including Constable Frankie O'Reilly, a Roman Catholic RUC officer in Portadown in October 1998, and Brian Service, a Catholic man in North Belfast, also in October 1998. Subsequent attacks have seen the use of pipe-bombs or grenades and have injured but not killed anyone. Whilst determined, these organisations currently appear to be frustrated by their lack of munitions and organisation, and as a result have tended to concentrate on the softest available targets.

The Security Forces

17. The security forces in Northern Ireland are under the direction of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), with the Army acting in their direct support. On 30 June 1999 the strength of the RUC was 12,517 officers, including 4,027 full or part-time Reservists. Since the Good

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Friday Agreement, routine military patrolling has been reduced by almost two thirds. Three battalions have returned to Great Britain. Until very recently there were under 15,000 service personnel on operational duties in Northern Ireland, fewer than at any time since 1970. There have been short term increases to guarantee full support to the RUC over the "marching season".

TOTAL 8 23

INCIDENTS (1/1/99 - 18/7/99) (1/1/98 - 18/7/98)

Shootings 74 147
 Bombings 54 108

CHARGES (1/1/99 - 18/7/99) (1/1/98 - 18/7/98)

Republicans 58 73
 Loyalists 122 232
 Security Forces 0 1

TOTAL 178 306

Murder 0 Republican 4 Republican
 1 Loyalist 5 Loyalist

Total 5 9

Attempted Murder 0 Loyalist 1 Loyalist
 0 Republican 3 Republican

Total 0 4

Armed Robberies (1/1/99 - 18/7/99) (1/1/98 - 18/7/98)

No of Robberies 221 193
 Amount stolen (£) 622,016 454,830

PARAMILITARY/PUNISHMENT ATTACKS (Shootings and Assaults 1/1/99 - 18/7/99)

Loyalist Republican

Shootings 25 21

Assaults 56 53

Total 81 74

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ANNEX A

SUMMARY OF SECURITY STATISTICS: 1999

DEATHS (1/1/99 - 18/7/99) (1/1/98 - 18/7/98)
 TOTAL 6 23

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TOTAL 178 306

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Total 1 9

Attempted Murder 0 Loyalist 1 Loyalist
 0 Republican 3 Republican

Total 0 4

Armed Robberies (1/1/99 - 18/7/99) (1/1/98 - 18/7/98)

No of Robberies 221 199
 Amount stolen (£) 522,016 454,930

PARAMILITARY/"PUNISHMENT" ATTACKS

(Shootings and Assaults 1/1/99 - 18/7/99)

	<u>Loyalist</u>	<u>Republican</u>
Shootings	25	21
Assaults	56	33
Total	81	54

PARADES AND MARCHES

The parades issue is a microcosm of the wider political problems in Northern Ireland, with the capacity to polarise the community, engage exceptional levels of emotion and commitment and erode confidence among both Unionists and Nationalists in the effectiveness and impartiality of HMG and the security forces.

2. Following the RUC's decision to re-route the Drumcree march away from the Garvaghy Road in 1996, massive Loyalist disorder across the Province forced this decision to be reversed - a major blow to the prestige and confidence of the security forces and to the rule of law. The Government commissioned the North Report to examine the issue of parades and make recommendations, which were implemented in the Public Processions Act 1998. North recommended that an independent body should take on the power of determining contested parades, basing its judgements on wider criteria than public order alone, including the "wider impact of the parade on relationships within the community".

3. The Parades Commission exercised its powers for the first time in 1998. In most cases it did not have to make a ruling or its ruling was accepted. In some areas, for example Londonderry, tension was lower than in previous years. At Drumcree, however, the Parades Commission's decision to re-route the parade was not accepted and a stand-off ensued, which eventually petered out in the face of public outrage after three young children of a mixed marriage were killed in a fire bomb attack on their house in Ballymoney. There has been continued violence ever since, particularly in the Portadown area. The Government has made repeated attempts to resolve the dispute, including bilateral talks, proximity talks chaired by

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Jonathan Powell and an initiative under the independent chairmanship of Frank Blair, Director of ACAS Scotland.

4. The RUC and Army have the resources and planning in place to ensure they can cope with a public order challenge from wherever it comes. The possible stand-off at Drumcree did not materialise. Following the church service a small delegation of the Portadown Lodge approached the security barrier where they spoke to an RUC superintendent. The main crowd dispersed before 2.30 pm as specified in the Parade Commission's determination. A presence has been maintained at Drumcree since 4 July and there has been only sporadic minor violence. Calls from the Orange Order for behaviour to remain lawful and dignified have been helpful.

5. In general, the Parades Commission has won acceptance in many areas of the Nationalist community. On the Unionist side there are signs of increasing frustration from the many moderate Unionists at the Loyal Orders' refusal to engage even with the Parades Commission, let alone the residents. There remains however a considerable body of Unionist opinion which sees the Commission as a sop to Nationalists and inherently biased against them.