

CIARÁN MACAIRT
THE MCGURK'S
BAR BOMBING
POST-SCRIPT



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McGurk's Bar Bombing Post-Script

This booklet regards our battles with organs of the British state including the Ministry of Defence, the Royal Ulster Constabulary/Police Service Northern Ireland and the Office of the Police Ombudsman since the publication of my book, *The McGurk's Bar Bombing*, in 2012.

The McGurk's Bar cover-up and collusion continues to this day.

Post-Script will:

1. Discuss what I have discovered since then, buried deep in dusty archives.
2. Publish new evidence of on-going British state cover-up and collusion – nearly half a century after it buried the truth.
3. Name the person whose dirty fingerprints are all over the heinous McGurk's Bar lie.

Introduction

My name is
Ciarán MacAirt.

I am the grandson of John and Kathleen Irvine who were two of the many victims of the McGurk's Bar Massacre of 4th December 1971.

My grandmother was one of fifteen civilians murdered that night. Two children were among the dead.

My grandfather John was badly injured but rescuers pulled him from the rubble alive along with over a dozen other civilians including several more children.

At that time in the north of Ireland, the McGurk's Bar Massacre was the single greatest loss of civilian life in any murderous attack since the Nazi Blitz of Belfast a generation before.

Pro-state British extremists bombed the bar and family home.

A young newspaper boy saw them do it and saw them

escape in a car. All of the evidence proved that too.

But, before we even buried our loved ones, the British state buried the truth.

In a massive disinformation campaign involving Stormont and British governments, the British Army and Intelligence Service and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the British state conspired to blame the McGurk's Bar Massacre on the innocent civilians in the bar that night, criminalizing each and every single one, including my grandparents.

The British state allowed the real perpetrators to escape and these extremists killed many more civilians in the years afterwards.

So, the moment the bomb exploded, our campaign for truth started. Our families are still fighting for a fair and just investigation after nearly half a century.

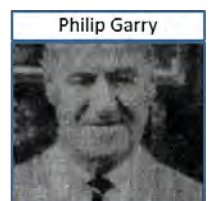
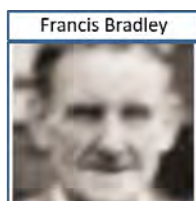
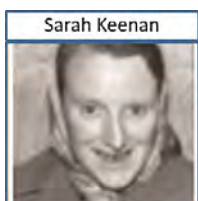
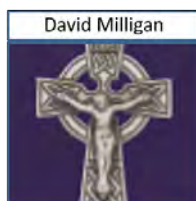
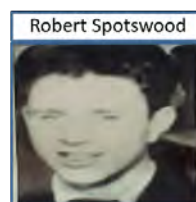
“

Before we even buried our loved ones, the British state buried the truth.”

THE VICTIMS

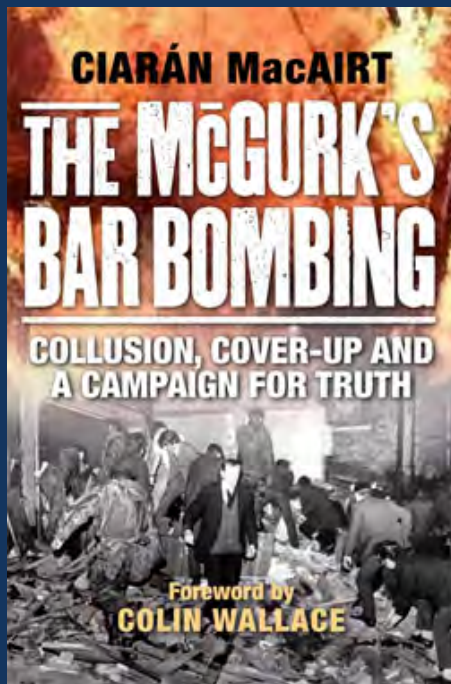
15 civilians murdered, including 2 children.

13 civilians, including more children, lucky to escape with their lives from the rubble; and 3 injured outside.



THE BOOK:

THE MCGURK'S BAR BOMBING



In my book, *The McGurk's Bar Bombing*, released in late 2012, I published a raft of critical new evidence from British archives, which proved the innocence of the victims and tracked the flow of disinformation back to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

I proved that the then Chief Constable and Head of RUC Special Branch deliberately lied to - and misled - the governments of Northern Ireland and Britain, and the General Officer Commanding the British Army in the north.

"A bomb believed to have been planted outside the pub..."

*Director of Operations Brief
8am, 5th December 1971*

The police chiefs lied that two of the victims were members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and that a bomb they were carrying exploded prematurely.

This was a heinous lie, which attempted to criminalize civilians and blame innocent victims.

But I also proved that a British Army bomb expert had informed the same General Officer Commanding, Lieutenant General Sir Harry Tuzo, within 12 hours of the attack that the bomb had been placed outside.

So, the British state and its Armed Forces knew fine rightly that our loved ones were innocent, they had no evidence to substantiate their lies and still do not.

Explosion. At 20.5hrs 2 RUC reported that an explosion had occurred at McGURK'S BAR, 61-63 NORTH QUEEN ST. A bomb believed to have been planted outside the pub was estimated by the ATQ to be between 50/50 lbs of RDX. The building was structurally demolished and surrounding buildings badly damaged. There were fatalities and thirteen injuries. The following are named dead, when possible identify.

THE KITSON EXPERIMENT

I examined how and why the British state would manufacture such horrific lies about our families.

This resulted in an examination of British counter-insurgency policy and one General Sir Frank Kitson (right), British military strategist of repute and Brigadier in charge of the British Army in Belfast at the time of the atrocity.

Former British Army Chief of General Staff, General Sir Michael Jackson, described Kitson as "the sun around which the planets revolved... and he very much set the tone for the operational style' of the British Army in Belfast.

Kitson is a hero to some and a director of terrorism to others.

In simple terms, the basic tenets of Kitson's counter-insurgency policies are (1) Information and (2) Contact.

Information: the collection and development of information and intelligence;

Contact: how to take advantage of this information to eliminate or control the enemy.

Therefore, I published new evidence of the formation of information units during Kitson's tenure, which controlled the British Army's PR, propaganda, psychological operations (PSYOPS) and disinformation campaigns under the umbrella



of British information policy; and the development of the Military Reaction Force (MRF) – a covert, extra-legal Special Force unit which conducted undercover surveillance, gathered intelligence, ran agents and murdered civilians.

A direct link in secret British archives from Kitson and the MRF to the McGurk's Bar atrocity was elusive by the time of the book's publication. I knew where I could find that information, but MoD and historic investigation units denied me access to it.

I even tracked down a surviving commander of the MRF – [ex] Brigadier James Alistair McGregor – to his home in Kent and workplace in London.

I asked him to engage with me and answer questions but, of course, he did not want to help either.

I thought it was important to lay down a marker, though, as this was the direction my research was leading me.

Our families also long believed that the British Army had foreknowledge of the attack and could have prevented it.

I believe we proved collusion after the fact but collusion prior to the explosion was always going to be difficult. Again, I know where information confirming or denying that will be, but I was denied access to it by the British state.

RUNNING BATTLES

In 2011, the Office of the Police Ombudsman had disagreed. It found investigative bias against the police but stopped short of collusion. In doing so, the Police Ombudsman moved his own goalposts regarding what amounted to collusion.

A few months before, he ruled collusion in the case of the Claudy atrocity between the RUC and Catholic Church citing:

"The definition of conniving may be particularly relevant, meaning to deliberately ignore; overlook; condone; disregard; to look the other way; to be indulgent, tolerant, secretly in favour or sympathetic; co-operate secretly; or fail to take action against a known wrongdoing or misbehaviour, usually the violation of the law"

"In the absence of explanation, the actions of senior RUC officers, in seeking and accepting the Government assistance in dealing with the problem of Father Chesney's alleged wrong-doing, was by definition a collusive act." [Serials 6: 16 -17]

Despite the mountains of evidence we provided regarding omission, commission, lies and disinformation of the British Armed Forces and the McGurk's Bar Massacre, the Police Ombudsman somehow then decided that "conniving" was not important as he left this whole serial out and instead wrote:



"The essence of collusion requires that a number of elements be present. Usually, but not always, it involves an agreement between two or more parties. There is an additional requirement that a sufficiency of evidence exists to establish, on balance, that the act or omission complained of was deliberate and not merely negligent or inadvertent." [8: 66]

"In this instance, there is no evidence, which indicates that any of the investigative failures by the police, including the release of assessments of the circumstances of the bombing, which entered the public domain, resulted from agreements entered into with others." [8:69]

This was absolute nonsense even then and a glaring example of how the Office of the Police Ombudsman discriminated in its investigation of two bomb massacres - one an IRA bomb; the other, UVF.

As you will read, I have since produced even more evidence, including a secret and sordid agreement between the police and the British Army.

This critical evidence overturns the conclusions of each historic investigation of the McGurk's Bar Massacre.

Either these investigations failed to find this evidence or they found it and buried it again. Either way they failed and we are yet to receive a proper investigation.

CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

Even worse, within hours of the Police Ombudsman's publication, the then Chief Constable of PSNI, Matt Baggott, denied even this watery finding of police investigative bias. This caused, in our opinion, a constitutional crisis as the head of police denied the central finding of the organisation set up to hold police past and present to account.

His successor had to roll over and accept this finding during one of our many court battles against the police and we have been in court continually since then trying to access information and seek a proper investigation.

We had to judicially review the police to get access to the Historical Enquiry Team's (HET) report into McGurk's as they would not hand it over – no doubt as they were under pressure from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary which slated the HET, and families like ours who demanded they account for failed investigations.

When we finally got the 4th or 5th version of the HET report, it was nonsense as expected so we have been embroiled in a judicial review to get it quashed. Therefore, we had to fight to get it released and fight to get it thrown in the bin. That battle continues to this day but will benefit from the archive discoveries I have since made and publish here.

Due to the service journey we had to suffer with the police and its failure to attend to the evidence we produced, we made a complaint to OPONI in 2015, but this time about modern policing, and asked for a supplementary review to account for all of the new evidence.

In 5 years, OPONI has yet to complete that complaint or update its 2011 report and has apologised a number of times for its failures. This will end in court as well.



Niall Ó Murchú and Ciarán MacAirt

- × All of these failed historic investigations have yet to answer our simple requests for information and each ignored a mountain of new evidence I produced.
- × All of the failed historic investigations alleged that the authorities did not know where the seat of the explosion was and did not connect the neighbouring Gem Bar as a target as it was alleged to have allegiances to the Official IRA.
- × All of the failed investigations denied that there was any British Army presence in the area despite how militarised New Lodge was and despite a British Army hunt for 3 prisoners who had escaped in the area two days before the attack.

- × All of the failed investigations sought to excuse the botched police investigation even though I proved that the police created the McGurk's Bar lie and the head of the police lied to government about our loved ones.

NEW INQUEST DENIED

In 2018, the previous Attorney General denied our families a new inquest despite a book of new evidence. I have since discovered much more.

Therefore, our families will be forced to seek a judicial review of this decision if needs be too.

Since 2011, we have been fighting running battles with every facet of the British state including the Ministry of Defence, Police Service of Northern Ireland and even Information Commissioner's Office via Freedom of Information.

The British state is at war with us to this day. Information is today's battlefield and our families remain on the frontline.

INFORMATION WAR

We have been similarly blighted with an ongoing information war as well as the failed investigations and long drawn-out court cases.

All of these fit neatly with the British state and PSNI's strategy for dealing with the legacy of the past – **Denial, Delay and Death**.

They deny guilt until they can no longer; they delay campaigns for as long as possible, even in costly court battles; and they hope that family campaigners go to their grave. We have lost many family members in the past 10 years.

Even when I am successful via Freedom of Information and public interest test, there is the ubiquitous assertion that crucial files are missing or weeded without explanation.

My discovery of the Headquarters Northern Ireland files for December 1971 is a case in point.

The request for very specific information resulted in a two-year battle with the British MoD, National Archives and Information Commissioner's Office. Appeal and denial of appeal finally resulted in an Information Tribunal in London where I faced 3 barristers – thanks to Rights Watch UK, I was lucky to have secured pro bono support from a top FOIA barrister or we would not have been able to afford it.

It was an important partial win for us but illustrative of what families have to endure. We secured 20 heavily redacted logs from a file of 350+ pages. One serial proved that the British Army knew the bomb was placed outside the bar - critical evidence which smashed what we had been told before.

Nevertheless, other significant evidence was missing for the day of the McGurk's Bar attack or was withheld from us.

Neither myself nor my legal team knew exactly why as the legal arguments were held behind closed doors. Closing arguments were in public but only summarised. The information was withheld for two reasons: 1. National Security – as expected; 2. Protection of an agent/informer.

This in itself was critical information but we were stopped from accessing the detail.

To put it into context, one of our lawyers estimated the cost to the public purse in fighting the release of a single file nearly 45 years later at that stage. He conservatively estimated the cost in court time, solicitors and barristers for the MoD, TNA and ICO; and 200 hours of MoD research and redaction time at quarter of a million £ at least.

NEW EVIDENCE

All the while, since the publication of my book, I have been finding critical, new evidence.

Here is a review of this from just three sets of documents, British military logs from:

(1) The battalion resident at that time in New Lodge, 2nd Battalion Royal Regiment Fusiliers (2RRF);

(2) 39 Brigade in charge of Belfast; and

(3) HQ Northern Ireland.

SEAT OF THE EXPLOSION

That one serial from thousands of serials was critical.

It proved that an Ammunition Technical Officer (ATO), revisiting the bomb site a few hours later, was ***"convinced bomb was placed in the entrance way... The area is cratered and clearly was the seat of the explosion."***

This was a completely correct assessment by a British Army bomb expert but one that was hidden from the families and public – it was **“NOT FOR PR”** as was exclaimed in capitals, so the critical informational was to be kept secret and not published.

The preceding ATO report to Brigade gives us more detail from this British Army bomb expert:

“the bomb was placed in the ground floor entrance at the corner of the building that faces the junction”.

Exactly where the paperboy
saw it placed.

The British Army and RUC withheld this critical evidence from the Inquest.

Indeed, PSNI, HET and OPONI never found this critical information or buried it. It overturns what each says about the location of the bomb. It proves that the bar was attacked - as witnessed - and the civilians inside the bar were completely innocent.

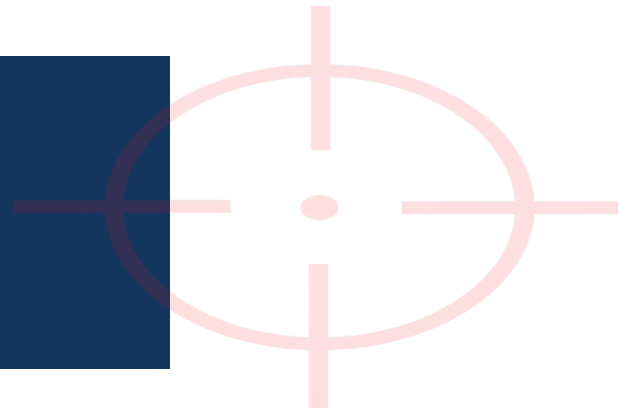
| LOG SHEET | | | | SECURITY CLASSIFICATION | | (REPEAT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) | |
|----------------|--------|----|---------------------|--|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| Formalton/Unit | | | | Date | Log Keeper(s) | Sheet No. | |
| Serial | D.T.G. | To | From | Event | Action | Page | |
| 10 | 00 | 00 | (U) | (U) | | | |
| 22 | 1030 | | 39 Bde | PR requested info on two men with GSW in RWH. 39 Bde confirm as follows: [redacted] found with [redacted] in [redacted] St. [redacted] with GSW in left hand alleges also shot in Boyle St. Neither have been arrested but the RUC are investigating the incident. Certainly NOT involved in bombing of McCurks. ATO is convinced bomb was placed in entrance way on ground floor. The area is cordoned and clearly was the seat of the explosion. Size of bomb likely to be 40/50 lbs. | PR Info | | |
| 23 | 1058 | | 39 Bde | | | | |
| 24 | 1110 | | 39 Bde | | | | |
| 25 | 1130 | | 5 Bde | | | | |
| 26 | 1050 | | RUC Mungrave St. | | | | |
| 27 | 1255 | | 8 Bde | | | | |

| LOG SHEET | | | | SECURITY CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED | | (REPEAT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) Army Form 10-68 (Rev. 1-65) | |
|----------------------------------|-------|-----|--------|--|---------------|--|-------------|
| Formation Unit HQ 39 AIRPTB. BDE | | | | Date 5 Dec 71 | Log Keeper(s) | G BRANCH | Sheet No 07 |
| Serial | O T G | To | From | Event | | Action | Dist |
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | | (6) | (7) |
| 58 | 1105 | | ATO | As far as can be assessed from the damage and crater caused by the expl at St George's St/Nth Queens St the bomb was placed in the ground floor entrance on the corner of the of the building that faces into the junction. Guess size to be 40 - 50lbs. | | | |
| 59 | 1135 | | 12 Lt | Looked at BARN GR 265722 - NTR. Searched at 0715. | | | |
| 60 | 1105 | | ATO | As far as can be assessed from the damage and crater caused by the explosion at St George's St/North Queens St the bomb was placed in the ground floor entrance on the corner of the building that faced into the junct. Guess size to be 40 - 50lbs. | | | |
| 61 | 1135 | | 12 Lt | Looked at Barn GR 265722 NTR. Searched at 0715. | | | |
| 62 | 1155 | | 3 Q | Heard 3 shots from the direction of Unity. | | 2 RRP & 1 B ³ info | |
| 63 | | | 2 RRP | Ref shots NTR. | | Redacted under FOI Exemption Sec 4(2) | |
| 64 | 1200 | | Gd Rm | [REDACTED] at 0400 approx suspicious car opposite his house, heading towards camp. No make or registration nos. | | | |
| 65 | 1210 | | 45 Odc | VOP in Magherlave Rd East, 4 shots heard approx 1 mile S of location, investigating. | | | |
| 66 | 1220 | | 1 RS | Ptl checked area of Unity for shots, spoke to several people but could find no evidence of shots. | | | |
| 67 | 1350 | | RMP | A Boy was attacked by 6 other youths, is now in Major with head wounds. Still investigating. | | No further details coming, no PNC involved at this moment. | |

"... bomb was placed in entrance way... The area is cratered and clearly was the seat of the explosion."

British Army Bomb Expert Reporting to Army HQ the Morning After the Massacre

TARGET GEM BAR



We were also told by successive historic investigations that the police and British Army never considered that the nearby Gem Bar was the original target for the bombers.

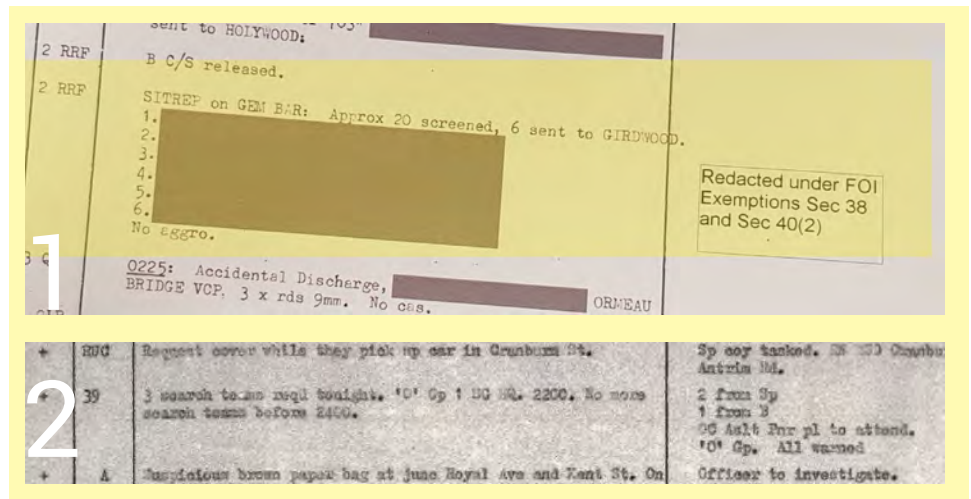
The British Army actually raided and searched the Gem Bar less than 48 hours before the McGurk's Bar explosion. It screened all of the customers and arrested 6 of them for further questioning (Image 1).

The reason that the British Army targeted the Gem Bar is simple as it appears in the British Tactical Headquarters logs I have just secured for the resident battalion, 2nd Battalion Royal Regiment Fusiliers (2 RRF).

The British Army writes in military shorthand that Gem Bar was the Headquarters of 1st Battalion, Belfast Brigade, Official IRA (OIRA), located in North Belfast (Image 2).

The British military logs then connect the Gem Bar to the explosion at McGurk's Bar within 45 minutes of the attack (Image 3).

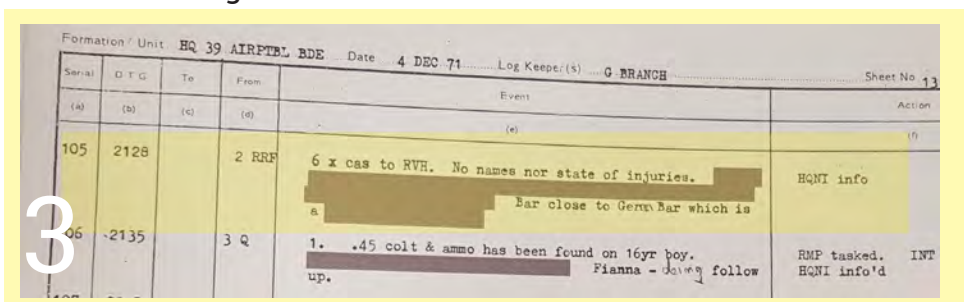
"The British Army targeted the bar 48 hours before the bombers did."



MoD has redacted part of this serial (and I am contesting its decision) as I believe it references the Gem Bar as an OIRA bar. We can still see that Brigade connects the two and informs HQ.

This simple, obvious intelligence again overturns the assertions by the historic investigations that the British authorities did not consider that the Gem Bar was the original target.

The files actually highlight the fact that British Military Intelligence considered the Gem Bar to be one of the most important OIRA targets in north Belfast and that it had targeted the bar two nights before the UVF bombers did.



Why was the British Army allegedly not watching it that Saturday night, though – especially if the British military expected IRA bomb runs on the city centre for a second weekend in a row and was still on high alert for escaped prisoners?

Again, we were told by successive historical investigations that there were no British armed forces in the area save for those in Glenravel and those dealing with intercommunal trouble in the Spamount area.

New files I discovered demolishes this.

OPERATION CLOSED DOOR

We had long contested how bombers could travel and wait at a bomb target without being stopped or seen by the British military at this particular time. Witnesses confirmed the news reports that the city centre area, especially the northside, was in lockdown due to the threat of IRA bombs and the search for escaped prisoners. Then, the area went quiet and the bar was attacked.

If we believe the confession of Robert James Campbell, the bombers waited in the area to bomb the Gem Bar but could not - no doubt because of witnesses at the door. They then made the fateful decision to drive around the corner and bomb the nearest pub – McGurk's Bar.

After sitting there for an opportunity, they lit the bomb, watched by the paperboy and escaped down Great George Street and across York Street. They then turned into a side street and abandoned the car.

A car due to pick Campbell up drove by the bombers and got off-side.

The 3 killers then walked to the second pick-up, across Great Patrick Street, close to St. Anne's Cathedral.

Successive investigations categorically said that there were no British soliders in the area to report on the car or the bombers so they easily escaped (even though they abandoned a car a few hundred yards away).

The files prove otherwise.

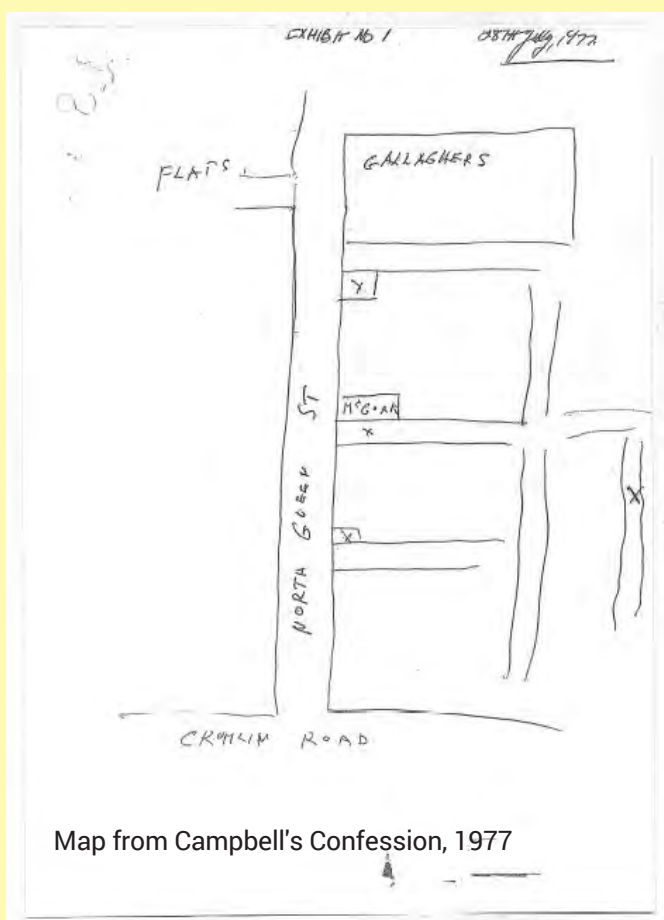
There is a reference in them to a new Vehicle Checkpoint (VCP) operation called Closed Door deployed an hour and three quarters before the bombing. Closed Door was ordered by 39 Brigade to produce an inner ring of VCPs to establish control of Irish Catholic West Belfast. There was no trouble in west Belfast at the time to warrant control of that area so the reason must be recorded elsewhere.

The logs actually record trouble in the northside of the city where the British Army was still looking for escapees.

From the map of Closed Door locations which I have, this does indeed place a VCP stranglehold on Irish Catholic West Belfast but leaves two main arterial routes in or skirting West Belfast free. Both are in Protestant areas leading into town – Shankill Road and Crumlin Road. Around this time, Campbell was being tasked to a bomb team in the Orange Hall on the Shankill Road so they would have had a clear run into the target area.

This could be coincidental or circumstantial but definitely fortuitous for a bomb team with no scout car. What it does prove is that again I have been able to find potentially crucial evidence to support the families and witnesses in British military files which was missed or ignored by state investigators.

A VCP operation Clamp was called in the minutes after the explosion as warranted by a major incident.



Map from Campbell's Confession, 1977

| | | | |
|------|---|-----|---|
| 1900 | + | B | Op Closed Door on now |
| 1925 | + | RUC | [REDACTED] has been removed Portadown. |

4. Op CLOSED DOOR.
 - a. The aim is to produce an inner ring of VCPs to estb con of West BELFAST.
 - b. The VCPs are manned by Reg Army units stationed in BELFAST.
 - c. Responsibility for manning VCPs - Appx 2.
 - d. Op CLOSED DOOR is to be ordered by HQ 39 Inf Bde. Detailed orders as to the scale of vehs to be checked, the serials to be implemented and the period of implementation are given by HQ 39 Inf Bde.
 - e. Units are to ensure that they are able to mount Op CLOSED DOOR at short notice.

BRITISH ARMY OBSERVATION POSTS

These new files also record British Military observation posts (OPs) in the days leading up to the explosion.

As contested by the families, there were indeed OPs on the high-rise flats at the bottom of New Lodge, both sitting on top of the target Gem Bar and McGurk's Bar.

Each OP on Artillery House and Churchill House reported on suspicious vehicles and incidents in the days before the attack (Images 1 and 2).

There was also a static OP at Unity flats covering the bottom of the Shankill Road at St. Peter's Hill.

Interestingly too, signals come from Red KP 9 which I had to search for in British military files (Image 3). KP is Key Point and Red denotes an important electrical installation which needed protection by the British Army.

KP Red 9 was located in Great Patrick Street and was potentially manned by 8 British soldiers on the night of McGurk's.

Sp Arty house OP reports a shop being broken into in Spaucent St.
RUC Report of shop broken into at Duncairn Gdns/H Queen St. 1

Recco Churchill OP is call sign 62.
RUC Message to be delivered to Bruslee Way (ref death of relative)
C Would like [REDACTED] (as discussed with OO).
O'Hill Refuse truck has been parked on car parked at Victoria Pda for past hour. No driver or crew to be seen. Rep to [REDACTED] 2

Recco Grey mini estate [REDACTED] one mile, parked in same spot
OP at Red 9 doing nothing. 3

It was actually hidden in plain sight during the conflict and was an exceptionally important switch house and control room for the power of the city – it is the building housing the Golden Thread Gallery today. On the night of the massacre, the bombers abandoned their car close to KP Red 9 and walked to St. Anne's in sight of the OP in order to be picked up by another car.

It will now be up to the British military to explain how or why it did not see anything the night of McGurk's Bar explosion or why these OPs were abandoned.

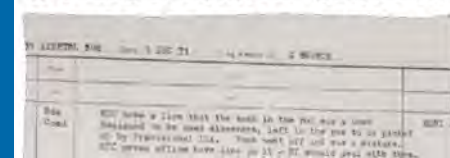
I know where to find that information but MoD alleges that it cannot locate the files. The critical records are missing if we believe MoD.

IN THE NEWS



MCGURK'S: FIRST UVF TARGET SEARCHED 48 HOURS BEFORE BOMB

MCGURK'S: RUC ARE GUILTY AS CHARGED OVER BLAME CLAIM



- Police pointed finger at people in the bar
- PSNI urged to locate source of black lie
- Evidence sparks call to quash HET report

UNMASKED:

COVERT BRITISH MILITARY OPERATION

I also discovered a covert British military "ambush OP" in the vicinity of the McGurk's Bar and family home. It should be noted that we have long queried the existence of a covert British military operation in the area that night.

Only that there was an accidental discharge at it a few hours before the explosion, we may not have known about its existence. The file is partially redacted and not reported in the usual Brigade logs as it should have been. This tells me that proper reporting procedure was not followed or the British military informed 39 Brigade by another channel such as secret signal.

I have asked the British Ministry of Defence for further information about the exact location in York Street for this offensive British military OP as it could have had sight of the target area and indeed escape route of the bombers.

As an offensive British Army operation was indeed in place that night, this would explain a military Out-of-Bounds (OOB) order for the area as we have again long argued.

What that covert operation was is obviously essential.

Who manned the ambush OP could be critical too.

The last surveillance and ambush OP in the area was the night before with the Military Reaction Force.

1645 + C Accidental discharge in the York St ambush OP. 1 x 9mm - no cas - [REDACTED]

in [REDACTED] area - leaflets were circulated
2. Rumour: they will try to finish off remainder of City Centre 12 Dec.
3. 1012. 3 men from CHURCHILL are in [REDACTED] and will be leaving at approx 1600 (noon call) - not yet deemed as [REDACTED] on [REDACTED].
They believe the [REDACTED] called the Army to investigate a shooting incident in Ardilea St. Based on pocketphone net.
2 RFP info
3 Q info
2 RFP & 1 QP info to take action
Supplied with 1 QP

So, I have proved the MRF was already deployed in the area around that time and working on similar 2 RRF operations.

Historic investigators told our families for years that there were no British soldiers in the area at all, and definitely no Special Forces. They were wrong.

If you look at the map of the area (below), the target Gem Bar and McGurk's Bar were overlooked by Churchill House and Artillery House. Glenravel and Unity are there too. The bombers sat in a strange car under the noses of the British military who were looking for suspicious vehicles and people in the aftermath of bomb warning and escaped prisoners.

The ambush OP is close by, in York Street, and potentially covering the same area and the escape route. The bombers then abandoned the car close to KP Red 9 and walked within sight of the guarded OP.

So, after being told for nearly half a century that there were no British Army units in area, we now see that, within ½ km, the area is potentially surrounded, with a covert, offensive British military operation in the vicinity of McGurk's Bar.



SUSPECT CARS AND A NEW WITNESS

We now know from these files that the British Army had indeed logged suspect cars in the area before and after the bomb explosion.

We would expect that from Observation Posts (OPs) covering the area even if a British military Out-of-Bounds was in place to accommodate the ambush OP.

The RUC on York Road reported a green Cortina outside the police station before the explosion (1).

Two anonymous callers reported the same registration of a green Cortina (or Viva which looked similar) in the minutes after the explosion (2).

The Royal Military Police reported a green Cortina in the minutes after the bomb driving in the same area of York Road (3).

The green Cortina may be the car that was supposed to pick up Campbell but fled the scene.

The following morning, the British Army reported that a local person gave information to one of its officers (4).

This information regarding a two-tone car and the bomb location matched what we later learned from the paperboy. **Neither the inquest, the historic investigations nor families were told of this corroborating evidence which also named the target too.**

Suspect Car Evidence Not Given to the Original Inquest

1 2000 + RUC 2 cars opp from York Rd RUC with 2 men inside it. Green Cortina [redacted] White VW 1500 [redacted]

2 Vehicle Enquiries OPONI Report 2011

Records show that on 4 December 1971 police received information, via two anonymous telephone calls, reporting possible suspect motor vehicles. The first call was at 8.46pm stating that there had been an 'explosion at McGurk's, premises demolished, car involved Green Fiat'. The caller provided the car registration number. Another call received at the same time by police reported a green Cortina as 'acting suspiciously in York Road'. The registration number was the same as that provided by the previous caller.

3 RMP Suspect car: [redacted] dark green cortina seen in York Rd. McGurk's
RUC McGurk's Bar N Queens St/Gt George St - bar - severe damage - ground floor. RC bar. Bldg on fire. 2 RRF worried for RE eqpt and damage. Op Clamp put on, 2 x VCPs/band less bands E of river.

4 A person came up to an RUC with info re explosion was by pub for half hour, saw large dark car with white patch on left front side, noticed before explosion. Thinks bomb placed in off license entrance. Informant reckoned bomb was intended for Hanagans Bar which is on corner of North Queen St. [redacted] thinks maybe Brennan's Bar junc North Queen St/Frederick St. Informant would not give name and has left.

McGurk's Bar Mural (below) features in the film, I Am Belfast



'MISSING' FILE SURRENDERS ITS

SECRET

A number of absolutely critical files following the attack are missing. I queried this and the British Ministry of Defence informed me that it does now know what happened to its own logs.

Nevertheless, if we look at the file before the allegedly missing log sheets, which would have covered the sighting of a suspect vehicle and the escape of the bombers, we can make out the carbon imprint of the missing file beneath.

The British Army battalion's Tactical Headquarters (Tac HQ) and Call Sign 19 report immediately, which proves that there was indeed over-watch of the area.

You will also note the faded copy of a missing log sheet. And if you look above serial 40, you will discern missing serial 52 recorded minutes after the explosion. Call Sign 19, it appears, reported that a:

"Black car with headlights on went into the city centre with 3..."

“
Black car with headlights on went into city centre with 3...
”

Serial 52 of 'Missing' Log Sheet 5

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION (REPEAT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) Army Form 856 (Path of 50)

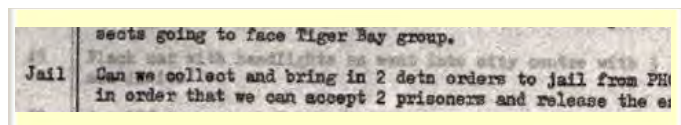
LOG SHEET

Formation/Unit: 2 RRF Date: 4 Dec 71 Log Keeper(s): [REDACTED] Sheet No. 4

| Serial | DTG | To | From | Event | Action | Sign |
|--------|------|-----|------|--|-----------------|------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) | (g) |
| 39 | 2010 | + | C | Minor aggro at Stumps. [REDACTED] was investigating break in at U M St. A crowd formed both Prots and Cats. Prots moved to U Canning St. 2 more sects being sent to Buffer as a result of rumours that Prots in Canning St were collecting bottles. | OO info'd | |
| 40 | 1850 | + | Jail | Plan. [REDACTED] to clear to clear Hillman St. Then to ptl it. 2 other sects going to face Tiger Bay group. Black car with headlights on went into city centre with 3. Can we collect and bring in 2 detn orders to jail from PHC 2 in order that we can accept 2 prisoners and release the escort. | Sp Coy tasked. | |
| 41 | 2000 | + | RUC | 2 cars opp from York Rd RUC with 2 men inside it. | All coys info'd | |
| 42 | 2015 | + | Bde | Green Certina. [REDACTED] with fractured arm. White VW 1500 [REDACTED] | | |
| 43 | 2038 | + | C | All quiet now in Buffer | | |
| 44 | 2030 | + | 60B | An foot ptl in his area of responsible. | | |
| 45 | 2047 | Bde | + | Bang wait out. Pub belonging to Mr McGurk at 83 N Queen St. Totally demolished. Believed 6 men drinking in pub and family of 6 upstairs. | | |
| 46 | 2050 | + | 19 | Fire, amb required and gas. | | |
| 47 | | + | 19 | Crowd from Arty Hse coming to help clear the wreckage. | | |
| 48 | 2050 | 4 | Co | 1 pl to go from Sp coy crowd at the wreck and get all items. | | |

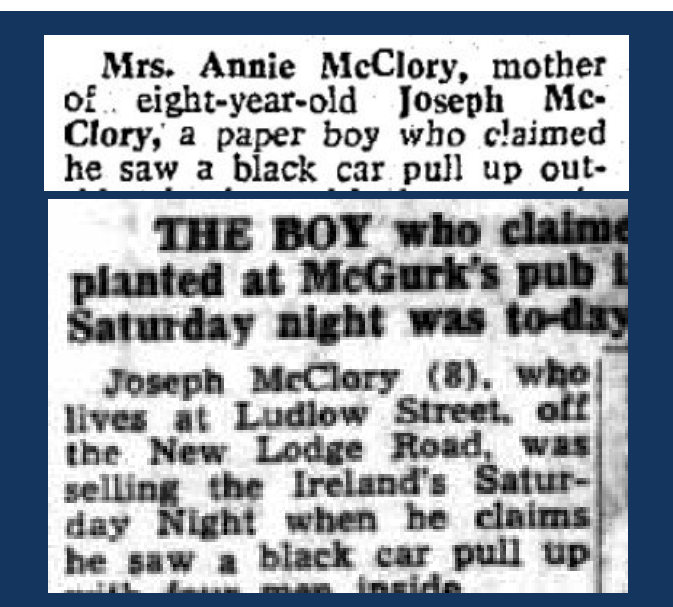
(15043) D3/90392 24m 3/71 G.W.R.L.S.

The British Armed Forces and historic investigations never reported this critical information relating to a suspect black car leaving the scene in the direction of the bomber's escape route.



This description of a black car matches the description Joseph McClory gave to his mother in the immediate aftermath of the massacre and she reported to the media in the days following.

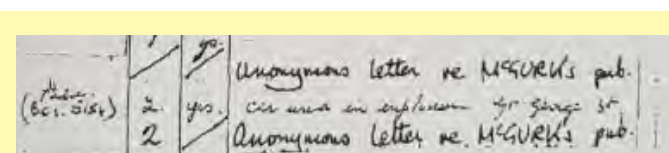
The British MOD alleges it has lost the file but we have recovered this critical evidence.



As well as a suspect vehicle leaving the scene of the explosion, I also expected to discover the recovery of the abandoned vehicle in the missing files. This may be another reason why it has "disappeared".

We know, of course, that a car was recovered and examined as we have this snippet of an RUC finger print ledger which tells us that two prints were recovered from the: **"Car used in explosion Gt. George St"** This critical evidence was recorded along with other articles of information in the case.

These prints and the car disappeared from the investigation and the RUC failed to submit them as evidence to the inquest.



"The balance of public interest is outweighed by the risk to [British] Military capability, effectiveness and security."

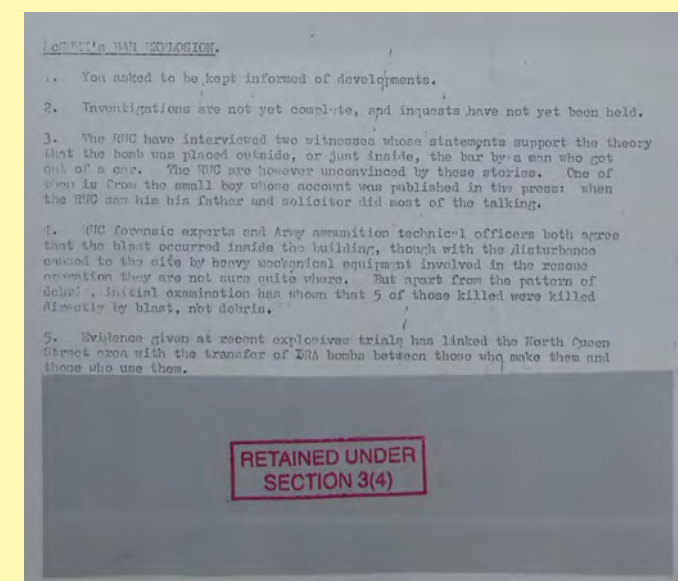
MoD reason for withholding evidence in the McGurk's Bar Massacre in Aug. 2020

MoD WITHHOLDING EVIDENCE TODAY

The British Ministry of Defence is deliberately hiding critical evidence relating to the McGurk's Bar Massacre and its cover-up by the British state to this very day.

Among many other files, the MoD is denying us access to a redacted serial of a high-level policy document which proved that the British Army and RUC lied directly to the British government and the Office of the Prime Minister days after the attack and tried to undermine the young eyewitness.

The British MOD has recorded that it will not lift the redaction due to the:



"risk to [British] Military capability. effectiveness and security" - yet another outrageous cover-up.

WHO LIED?

So, who lied and where did the big lie begin?

I have tracked it back from newspapers, government speeches, British military and police files to its origin.

It began with collusion between the British Army and RUC.

At 1am, just over 4 hours after the explosion and before all of the victims had been identified, including my own grandmother, the Brigade Commander (Bde Comd) of 39 Brigade informed his staff and HQNI that the:

“RUC have a line that the bomb in the pub was a bomb designed to be used elsewhere, left in the pub to be picked up by the Provisional IRA. Bomb went off and was a mistake. RUC press office have a line on it – NI should deal with them.”

We now know - and they knew then - that this was an egregious, heinous lie that criminalized innocent civilians. It is the reason why our families have had to fight and claw for scraps of truth and justice from the British table for nearly half a century.

“RUC have a line that the bomb in the pub was a bomb designed to be used elsewhere, left in the pub to be picked up by the Provisional IRA. Bomb went off and was a mistake. RUC press office have a line on it – NI should deal with them.”

Brigade Commander, 39 Brigade

| SECURITY CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED (REPEAT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------------------|----------|------|--|--|--|---------------|--|
| LOG SHEET | | | | | | | | | |
| Formation Unit | | HQ 39 AIRPTBL BDE | | Date | | 5 DEC 71 | | Log Keeper(s) | |
| Serial | | D.T.G. | | To | | From | | Event | |
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | | | | | Action | |
| 12 | 0100 | | Bde Comd | | | RUC have a line that the bomb in the pub was a bomb designed to be used elsewhere, left in the pub to be picked up by Provisional IRA. Bomb went off and was a mistake. RUC press office have line on it – NI should deal with them. | | HQNI info'd | |
| 13 | 0110 | | QLR | | | 19 x 7.62 cases found at scene of shooting - looking in Cranbrook Gdns for further traces. | | HQNI info'd | |

CONFIDENTIAL

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN BELFAST : BY COMMANDER 39 AIRPORTABLE BRIGADE

Introduction

1. Operations in Belfast since 9 August have been carried out on the basis of so weakening the IRA that a future political initiative can be launched under favourable circumstances. Despite the clumsiness of the Security Force machine good progress was made in September, October and November, largely because both wings of the IRA were also clumsy, and indeed much too big for the purpose for which they were designed to fulfill. It is likely that having fined down the enemy organizations to the extent that we have done, future successes will be increasingly hard to achieve from an operational point of view, unless we are able to make our own organization very much more efficient. As you know we are taking steps to do this in terms of building up and developing the MRF and we are also steadily improving the capability of Special Branch by setting up cells in each Division manned by MIO/FINCOs and by building up Special Branch's records with Int Corps Sections.

Who was the Brigade Commander?

He was the same person who had revamped the British military's information and PSYOPS units and had deployed the killer gang, the Military Reaction Force, on to the streets of Belfast.

It was the same person who wrote on the very day of the McGurk's Bar Massacre:

“It is likely that having fined down the enemy organizations to the extent we have done, future successes will be increasingly hard to achieve from an operational point of view, unless we are able to make our own organization very much more efficient. As you know, we are taking steps to do this in terms of building and developing the MRF and we are steadily improving the capability of Special Branch...”

GENERAL SIR FRANK KITSON

The Brigade Commander was none other than Brigadier Frank Kitson, now retired General Sir Frank Kitson.

Kitson's dirty fingerprints are all over the McGurk's Bar cover-up. We now have the proof. There it is.

The McGurk's Bar cover-up began with a sordid, secret agreement between the British Commander of 39 Brigade and the Royal Ulster Constabulary to blame the innocent civilians killed and injured in McGurk's Bar and family home.

The victims' only crime was that they were Irish Catholics.

This is the ugly face of British state collusion and sectarianism, and it is alive and well to this very day.

That is why we demand an independent investigation, which questions Kitson under caution immediately and before he dies.

Kitson's guilt and stature within the British military and the guilt of the RUC, explains why the British state and the PSNI are fighting us tooth and nail to try to stop us getting the truth.

It may take precious time and a tremendous toll on our families' physical and mental health, but after nearly half a century, the British state is failing and we will prevail.



About The Author

Paper Trail (Legacy Archive Research) is a registered charity that offers free and independent advocacy and training to victims and survivors of the conflict in Ireland and Britain.

Paper Trail is also a social enterprise that offers specialized and targeted legacy archive research to the legal profession.

Ciarán MacAirt is founder and manager of Paper Trail.

Paper Trail evolved from forensic research into his own grandmother's murder during the conflict and his support of other families who lost loved ones.

He is also an activist with the families of the Time for Truth Campaign.

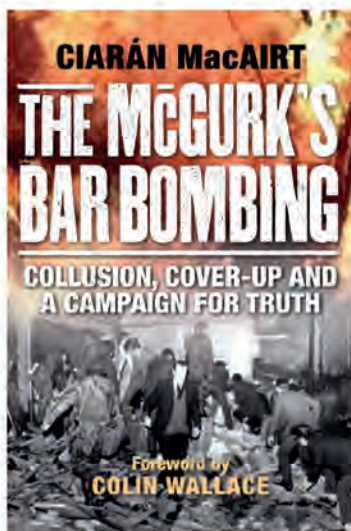
He is author of the critically acclaimed book, *The McGurk's Bar Bombing*. His second book, *Trope: Essays and Articles*, is out now, with all proceeds going to the charity, Paper Trail.



Trope: Essays and Articles: One recurring theme of this collection by Irish author, Ciarán MacAirt, is that war is a dirty business and we are diminished by the death of each and every victim.

Another is that behind the horror, behind the terror, are human love stories but those who are left behind are starved of truth – the very basic, human need to know what happened to their loved ones.

MacAirt is an award-winning writer and human rights activist. These essays and articles represent a personal journey and find him trudging from the killing fields of World War 1 to the back-streets of Belfast where death-squads roamed.



The McGurk's Bar Bombing: On December 4th 1971, pro-state, British extremists of the Ulster Volunteer Force planted a no-warning bomb on the doorstep of a family-run bar in north Belfast, killing 15 men, women and children; before the families had buried their loved ones, the British state buried the truth.

Ciarán MacAirt's grandmother, Kitty Irvine, was one of 15 civilians murdered in the McGurk's Bar Massacre.

His painstaking, meticulous research has uncovered historic documents hidden in archives which cast a cold light on collusion and cover-up by the State. It is a paper trail that goes to the highest levels of the Government, police and military and proves that society must learn from the lessons of the past.



THE MCGURK'S BAR BOMBING POST-SCRIPT

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