

A historical photograph showing the aftermath of a bombing. In the foreground, a large pile of rubble and debris covers the ground. Several people, including men and women in mid-20th-century clothing, are walking through the wreckage. In the background, a large plume of smoke or fire rises into the sky, partially obscuring the view. The overall scene conveys a sense of destruction and the human impact of conflict.

THE MCGURK'S BAR BOMBING AND THE PLOT TO DECEIVE TWO PARLIAMENTS

by CIARÁN MacAIRT

CONTENTS

REPORT: THE MCGURK'S BAR BOMBING AND THE PLOT TO DECEIVE TWO PARLIAMENTS

REPORT.....	PAGES 3 - 9
APPENDIX 1 JOSEPH McCLORY STATEMENT.....	PAGE 10
APPENDIX 2 DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS BRIEF.....	PAGE 11
APPENDIX 3 39 BRIGADE COMMANDER'S DIARY.....	PAGE 12
APPENDIX 4 HEADQUARTERS NORTHER IRELAND COMMANDER'S DIARY.....	PAGE 12
APPENDIX 5 39 BRIGADE COMMANDER'S DIARY.....	PAGE 12
APPENDIX 6 ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY DUTY OFFICER'S REPORT.....	PAGE 13
APPENDIX 7 CURRENT SITUATION REPORT.....	PAGE 14
APPENDIX 8 PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY MEETING.....	PAGE 15
APPENDIX 9 DEFENCE SECRETARIAT 10.....	PAGES 16 - 19
APPENDIX 10 ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY SPECIAL BRANCH ASSESSMENT.....	PAGE 20
APPENDIX 11 JOINT SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING.....	PAGE 21
APPENDIX 12 DEFENCE SECRETARIAT 10.....	PAGES 22 - 23
APPENDIX 13 LETTER TO CABINET SECRETARY, MR. SIMON CASE.....	PAGES 24 - 25
THE KITSON EXPERIMENT.....	PAGE 26
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	PAGE 27

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Families of the McGurk's Bar victims have raised a complaint with British Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, and requested an immediate investigation by him.

The families have uncovered a high-level, coordinated and sustained Security Force and Civil Service plot to deceive the Parliaments of Britain and Northern Ireland about the true circumstances of the McGurk's Bar Massacre in the weeks following the attack.

Around 8:47 pm on Saturday 4th December 1971, a bomb was detonated without warning at McGurk's Bar, 81 – 83 North Queen Street, Belfast.

The blast caused the building to collapse upon those inside the pub and the family home upstairs. Those who were not crushed and asphyxiated by broken masonry were burned when gas mains caught fire beneath the rubble.

15 civilians were murdered – men, women and two children. Another 16 civilians were lucky to escape with their lives.

A team of Army bomb disposal experts attended the scene shortly after the blast but, because of the darkness and debris, they were unable to determine the exact location of the detonation.

They decided to carry out a further inspection at daylight the next day.

WITNESS

A paperboy called Joseph McClory actually witnessed the attack on McGurk's Bar and its horrific aftermath.

Joseph gave a statement to police (Appendix 1) and told them he saw a man place a parcel in the

entranceway of the bar and run back to a car which then sped off down Gt. George's Street. He gave a description of the car and how many attackers were in it.

Joseph described sparks coming from the parcel and he knew it was a bomb so he stopped a local man from turning the corner and walking towards it:

"Mister, don't go into that bar, there's a bomb there."

The local man's statement proved that Joseph saved his life as he heeded his warning and had only escaped 40 yards when the bomb exploded.

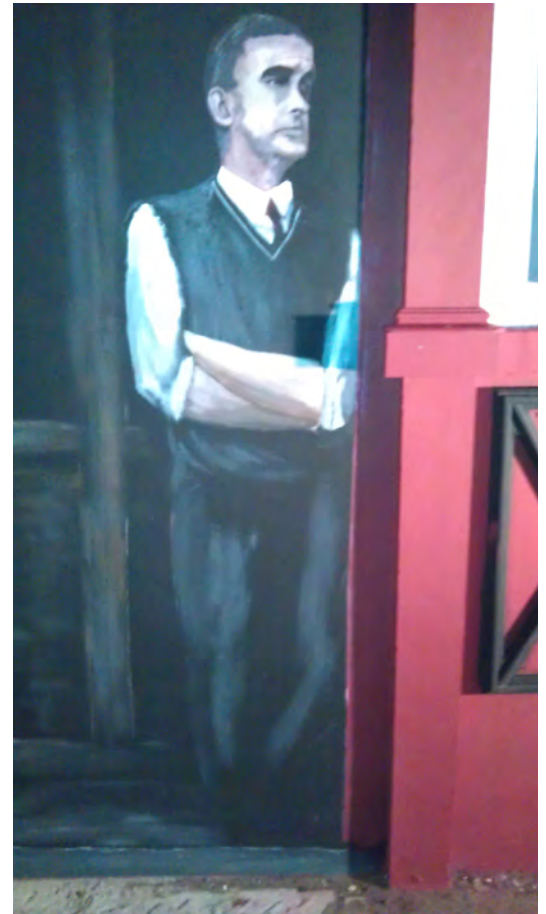
The following morning at 8 am, an Army report (Appendix 2) submitted to Lt. General Sir Harry Tuzo, the General Officer Commanding the Army in Northern Ireland, stated:

"A bomb believed to have been planted outside the bar was estimated by the ATO [Ammunition Technical Officer] to be 30/50 lb of HE [High Explosive]."

Around 3 hours later (11:05 am, 5th December 1971), the Army bomb disposal experts revisited the scene of the explosion and reported to 39 Brigade Headquarters (Appendix 3):

"As far as can be assessed from the damage and crater caused by the expl [explosion] at Gt George's St/Nth Queen St, the bomb was placed in the ground floor entrance on the corner of the building that faces into the junction. Guess size to be 40 – 50lbs."

Five minutes later (11:10 am, 5th December 1971), 39 Brigade reported to Headquarters Northern Ireland (Appendix 4):



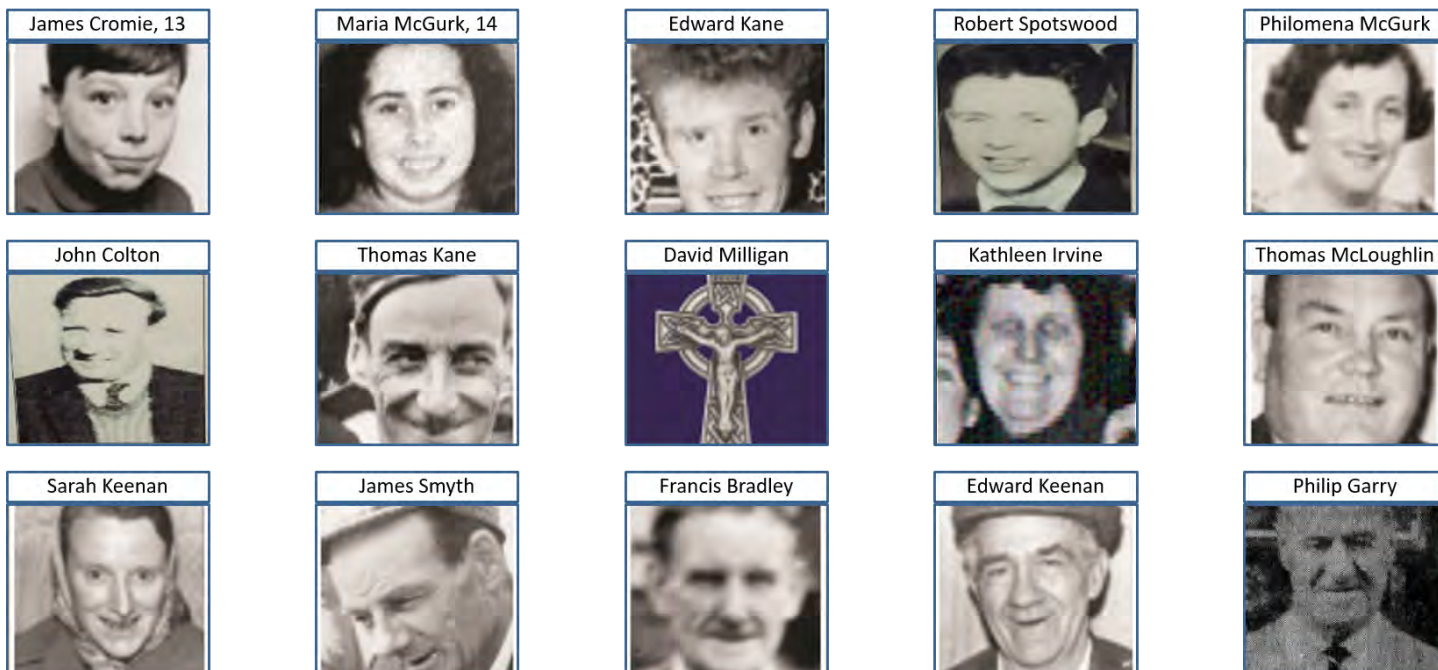
The McGurk's Bar Mural, North Queen Street, Belfast

"ATO is convinced bomb was placed in entrance way on the ground floor. The area is cratered and clearly was the seat of the explosion. Size of bomb likely to be 40/50 lbs."

This is exactly where Joseph McClory saw the bomb being planted.

The families have uncovered a high-level, coordinated and sustained plot to deceive the Parliaments of Britain and Northern Ireland

CIARÁN MACAIRT



The 15 civilians murdered in the McGurk's Bar Bombing

The British Army expert's report to 39 Brigade and HQNI was correct, it confirmed Joseph's witness statement and the ATO report to the General Office Commanding earlier that morning.

The bomb was planted outside the bar, in its entrance way, and the bar attacked.

"NOT FOR PR" (right hand Action column) ordered that this information was not to be made public, though.

In 1977, Loyalist paramilitary, Robert James Campbell, confessed to his involvement in the McGurk's Bar bombing.

His statement confirmed the details of Joseph McClory's statement and even recorded that the bombers had watched the paperboy pass their car before they planted the bomb and escaped down Gt. George's Street.

Nevertheless, even before the families of the McGurk's Bar dead buried their loved ones on cold days in December 1971, the British state buried the truth.

Despite a mountain of evidence and the witness statements of Joseph McClory and the man he saved, the British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary blamed the innocent victims for the bombing and briefed the media that the explosion was the result of a Republican own-goal.

The promotion of this devastating disinformation began with a secret agreement between then Brigadier Frank Kitson who was in charge of 39 Brigade and the RUC just a few hours after the bomb explosion and even before the identification of all of the dead.

British Army logs (Appendix 5) prove Kitson ordered Brigade:

"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."

At 8:00 am on 5th December 1971 – the exact time that British Army experts briefed the General Officer

that the bomb was believed **"to have been planted outside the bar"**, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) transmitted a Duty Officer's Report (Appendix 6), which planted the lie:

"Just before the explosion a man entered the licensed premises and left down a suitcase, presumably to be picked up by a known member of the Provisional I.R.A. The bomb was intended for use on other premises. Before the 'pick-up' was made the bomb exploded."

Even before the families buried their loved ones, the British state buried the truth.

CIARÁN MACAIRT

tracked the dissemination of this disinformation and much more in my book, *The McGurk's Bar Bombing* (Frontline Noir, 2012).

Only recently, though, I discovered significant streams of secret information which further prove:

1. The British Army and RUC knew that the bar was attacked;
2. The British Army and RUC colluded to blame the attack on the victims;
3. Senior public servants within the British Ministry of Defence then plotted to publicize the same lies in the House of Commons and mislead British Parliament; and
4. The Chief Constable of the RUC and the Head of Special Branch presented the same lies at the same time to the Northern Ireland Government.

WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT PLOT

The following archives prove that named, high-level officials within the Ministry of Defence peddled known lies about the victims and the explosion to other Departments, including the Office of the British Prime Minister.

On two occasions, British officials prepared a draft statement for the Minister of State for Defence to publish the known lies in the House of Commons and mislead Westminster Parliament.

A Current Situation Report was prepared by Ministry of Defence for the Permanent Under Secretary of Defence (PUS) meeting in Whitehall, London, on 14th December 1971 (Appendix 7).

The report, discovered by Pat Finucane Centre many years ago, recorded:

"Explosion in McGurk's Bar

Although no inquest has yet been held into the fifteen deaths caused by this explosion on 4th December the forensic evidence now available shows quite clearly that five of the victims were killed by blast – indicating that the explosion must have been inside the bar, and raising a very strong presumption that it was caused by the accidental detonation of a bomb being carried by one of the customers – as has seemed likely all along. The Minister of State for Defence is being invited to consider whether to make this point public in a written answer – in pursuance of his undertaking, in his original statement on the incident, to keep the House [of Commons] informed of any fresh information.

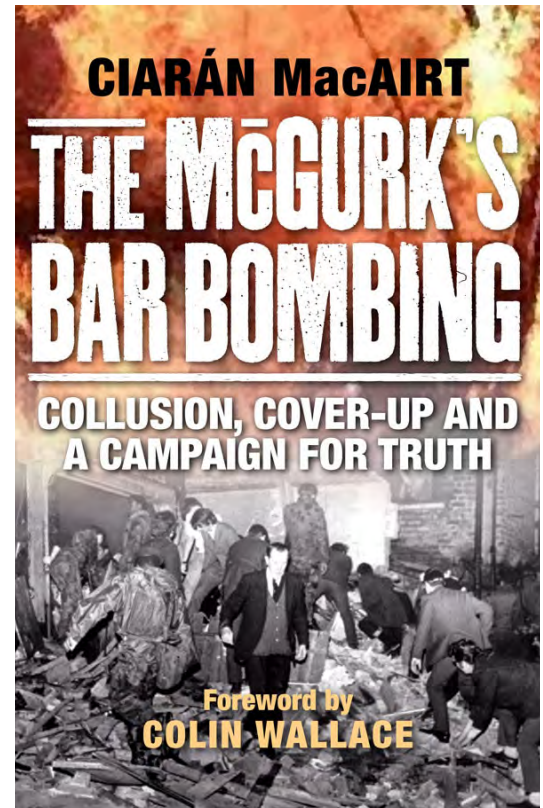
In the view of Headquarters Northern Ireland it is important to put this point on record, in order to discourage continuing speculation about who was responsible for the explosion."

We now know from subsequent files that the PUS Morning Meeting included (Appendix 8):

- Permanent Under Secretary Sir James Dunnett
- Director of Military Operations (DMO) Major General Ronald Coaker
- Chief of Public Relations (CPR) John Groves
- Head of Defence Secretariat 10 (DS 10) AW Stephens

During this meeting:

"It was agreed that the latest findings which indicated that the explosion in the McGurk Bar [sic] had been the result of a bomb in the bar (by implication in transit there) should be publicised possibly by means of a written Parliamentary Question... Perhaps Head of DS 10 will pursue the matter."



DS 10 was an important Division within the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) that provided information and policy advice to British Ministers and Military staff during the conflict in the early 70s.

I picked up the paper trail of this plot to deceive British Parliament about the true circumstances of the McGurk's Bar Massacre and recently discovered that DS 10 presented a report (Appendix 9 a-d) and draft question to the Minister of State for Defence, Lord Balniel, the following day, 15th December 1971, and copies were distributed to leading officials at 10 Downing Street, the Home Office as well as key British Military staff and MoD Divisions.

The full report records blatant and deliberate British Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary lies aimed at blaming the innocent victims of the atrocity and undermining the eyewitness testimony of Joseph McClory who saw the bombers plant the bomb and escape in a car.

You can read more here <https://mcgurksbar.com/british-army-police-lied-to-british-government/>



McGurk's Bar in the 1950s. Patrick McGurk is behind the bar, third from the left. Photo courtesy of the McGurk family.

Serial 6 of the report (Appendix 9 a-b) was redacted but MoD has finally released it following a targeted Freedom of Information request, Public Interest Test and complaint by me.

MoD fought the release of the information as it considered it a *"risk to [British] Military capability, effectiveness and security"*.

The redacted information of Serial 6 (Appendix 9b) records the despicable lie:

"6. I understand – though this should not be revealed publicly – that two of those killed have been identified as members of the Brady IRA"

In British Military documents, "Brady IRA" denoted the Provisional wing of the IRA under Ruairí Ó Brádaigh.

Compiled by DS 10's PcpI, CH Henn, the report records (Appendix 9c, Serial 8):

"It was suggested at PUS's morning meeting on 14th December that the Minister of State might wish to consider answering an arranged written question... We cannot be definite: the most we can do is reinforce the remarks the Minister of State already made, and I do not believe we can go beyond the line

of the attached (which I have cleared with the Civil Adviser to the GOC [General Officer Commanding] and with C2 (AD))"

The Civil Adviser to General Officer Commanding, Lt. General Sir Harry Tuzo, was leading civil servant, John Howe.

The Assistant Under Secretary (General Staff) Arthur Hockaday wrote and signed the bottom of the secret document (Appendix 9c):

"I think that a question and answer on the lines attached might be helpful; but I agree with DS 10 that we cannot go further than this."

The draft of the arranged question and answer is included (Appendix 9d):

"To ask the Minister of State for Defence, if he is yet in a position to make a further statement about the explosion which wrecked McGurk's Bar, Belfast, on 4th December."

"ANSWER

Investigations are not yet complete, and inquests have not yet been held. However further investigations by forensic experts and by Army ammunition technical officers have confirmed, on the basis of the pattern of debris and the effect of



General Officer Commanding Lt. General Sir Harry Tuzo (left) with Lord Carrington, Secretary of State for Defence.

the effect of the explosion on the structure, that the bomb exploded within the building. Five of the deaths were as a direct result of the blast, not as a result of the building collapsing. These conclusions are consistent with the theories that the bomb went off accidentally, perhaps while in transit."

Lord Balniel did not read out the prepared statement at this time in the House of Commons.



McGurk's Bar families and other campaigning families protest at Stormont for the Time for Truth Campaign.

STORMONT PARLIAMENT PLOT

An RUC Special Branch Assessment (Appendix 10) dated the very same day (15th December 1971) was prepared for the Joint Security Committee Meeting on the 16th and discussed as Agenda 1 by Chief Constable of the RUC Graham Shillington and Assistant Chief Constable David Johnston, Head of RUC Special Branch (Appendix 11).

The Joint Security Committee meeting included the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, and his Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, John Taylor – now Lord Kilcooney – who has upset the families on numerous occasions with his false allegations about the explosion.

Also present were the General Officer Commanding, Lt General Sir Harry Tuzo, and the Security Liaison Officer who was a member of Britain's Security Service, MI5.

Serial 5 of the Special Branch Assessment (Appendix 10) of Agenda 1 regards the McGurk's Bar Massacre:

"Circumstantial evidence indicates that this was a premature detonation and two of those killed were known IRA members at least one of whom had been associated with bombing activities. Intelligence

indicates that the bomb was destined for use elsewhere in the city."

I discovered reference to this high-level meeting in Public Records Office Northern Ireland (PRONI) nearly a decade ago and it featured in the Police Ombudsman's report of 2011 as proof that the police briefed the Northern Ireland Prime Minister and the General Officer Commanding.

Nevertheless, this is the first time that the families have secured the unredacted files as previously I was denied access to the contents due to "National Security".

Serial 2 of the RUC Special Branch Assessment discussed during the Joint Security Committee Meeting records the RUC briefing that Irish Republican Army (IRA) operations:

"... have been mounted with a reckless disregard for human life and with the apparent aims of capturing newspaper headlines and of provoking a Protestant backlash which could be used to justify their actions. In the latter aim they failed."

This denial of Loyalist violence followed the McGurk's Bar Massacre which accounted for the single

"... this was a premature detonation and two of those killed were known IRA members at least one of whom had been associated with bombing activities."

CHIEF CONSTABLE AND ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLE, HEAD OF RUC SPECIAL BRANCH

greatest loss of civilian life in any murderous attack since the Nazi Blitz of Belfast a generation before.

We can now prove that the British Army and RUC knew that McGurk's Bar was attacked and that the heinous lie that the bombing was an "own-goal" had its origin in collusion between the British Army and RUC just hours after the explosion.

BURYING THE TRUTH

In the October 2020 report, *The McGurk's Bar Bombing: Post-Script (PDF)*, I published proof that the British Armed Forces buried critical evidence in the aftermath of the atrocity and that the previous investigations by the Historical Enquiries Team and Office of the Police Ombudsman either did not find this evidence or buried it themselves.

Key evidence from the British state's own files, which overturned the findings of previous historic investigations, included information relating to:

1. British Armed Forces in the area including the discovery of a covert, offensive British Military operation in the vicinity of McGurk's Bar;
2. The seat of the explosion proving that the British authorities knew the bomb was placed outside the pub;
3. British Armed Forces' reporting of suspicious cars before and after the explosion including the British Army record of the bomb car fleeing the scene;
4. The original target, the Gem Bar.

For example, British Military archives proved that an Ammunition Technical Officer (ATO) – a British Army bomb expert – informed 39 Brigade and Headquarters Northern Ireland (HQNI) the morning after the explosion that:

"ATO is convinced bomb was placed in entranceway on ground floor. The area is cratered and clearly was the seat of the explosion."

This is exactly where the eyewitness saw it planted by the bombers before their escape.

Furthermore, British Army archives also proved that the heinous lie that the McGurk's Bar explosion was the result of an IRA "own-goal" originated

with collusion between Brigadier Sir Frank Kitson, who was in charge of 39 Brigade, and the RUC a mere few hours after the bomb exploded and before all of the dead were identified.

Kitson ordered Brigade AT 1 AM, 5th December:

"RUC have a line that the bomb in the pub was a bomb designed to be picked up elsewhere, left in the pub to be picked up by the Provisional IRA. Bomb went off and was a mistake."

WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT PLOT... AGAIN

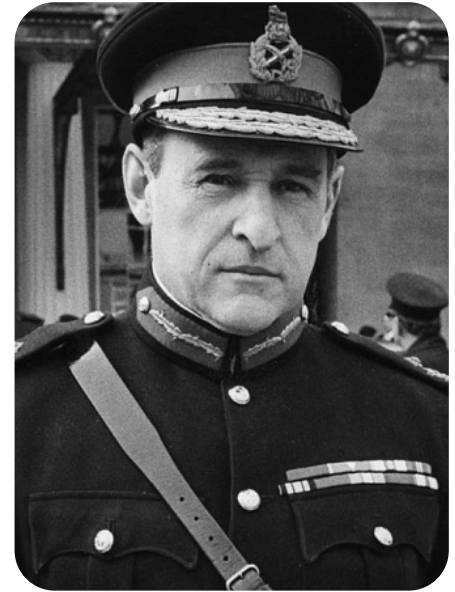
I also discovered that DS 10 tried for a second time to get Lord Balniel to publish these lies on the record in the British House of Commons.

The first time was on 14th December 1971 and the second time on 18th January 1972, the month before completion of the forensic investigation into the explosion (Appendix 12 a-b).

Therefore, not only was the plot to deceive the two Parliaments coordinated between the Security Forces, but also sustained the following month.

With false information from the British Army and RUC, and a draft cleared originally by the Civil Advisor to the General Officer Commanding, DS 10 "checked with HQ Northern Ireland that the position remains as stated" (Appendix 12a), and prepared the following statement for the Minister of State for Defence (Appendix 12b) to be read in the House of Commons on 20th January 1972:

"Inquests have not been held. However, further investigations by forensic experts and Army ammunition technical officers..."



Brigadier Frank Kitson, now General Sir Frank Kitson (Retired)

have confirmed, on the basis of the pattern of debris and the effect of the explosion on the structure, that the bomb exploded within the building. Five of the deaths resulted directly from the blast, not from the building collapsing. These conclusions are consistent with the theories that the bomb went off accidentally, perhaps while in transit."

The forensic investigation was only completed in February 1972 and in March 1972, the State Pathologist Dr Marshall informed RUC:

"All of the injuries to the bodies we examined could be accounted for by the collapse of the building and the burning of the rubble. There were no injuries... specifically due to the bomb."

Lord Balniel either chose not to make the comments on the floor of the House of Commons or ran out of time on Thursday 20th January 1972 as the statement does not appear in Hansard.

CONCLUSION

Even after nearly half a century, the lies of the British Army and RUC and the lengths to which the British state will try to cover up those lies to this day, still hurt our grieving families and our campaign for truth.

All of our loved ones were civilians: we have proved their innocence and the British state has been forced to admit their innocence; but the British state has yet to account for its lies.

It should be noted that none of the historic investigations into the atrocity by Police Service Northern Ireland, Historical Enquiries Team or Office Police Ombudsman found any of this critical evidence.

Each and every investigation failed the families and helped perpetuate the cover-up.

These files are also historically important for wider society too as they are proof that the British Army and RUC deliberately misinformed and actively misled the governments of Britain and Northern Ireland.

That is why we raised a complaint with the British Cabinet Secretary and asked him to investigate the British and RUC plot to criminalize our loved ones and to deceive two Parliaments.

This was no aberration, but a high-level, coordinated and sustained plot which buried evidence and manufactured disinformation to manipulate policy-makers and the heads of state in Britain and Northern Ireland.

INTERMENT

I believe that the main reason for this deception was to ensure the continuation of the policy of Internment without trial which began on 9th August 1971.

if the British Army and RUC admitted that British extremists bombed McGurk's Bar and killed 15 civilians, then by rights the British Prime Minister and public would demand that Protestant extremists were interned.

As I recorded in my book (pp 77-78; PRONI CAB/9/R/238/6), a few months before the McGurk's Bar Massacre and before the introduction of Internment, British Prime Minister Edward Heath had informed the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, Chief Constable Shillington and the General

"If there was any evidence of the involvement of Protestants in any form of subversive or terrorist activity, they too should be interned."

Internment was used against Irish Catholics alone at this time. As discovered by the Pat Finucane Centre, there was an *Arrest Policy for Protestants* which enshrined this discrimination and ensured:

"Protestants are not, as the policy stands, arrested with a view to their being made subject to Interim Custody Orders..." [ie. Interned without trial]



RUC CHIEF CONSTABLE GRAHAM SHILLINGTON

This *Arrest Policy for Protestants* was in place until February 1973, by which time pro-state Loyalist paramilitaries had murdered over 100 civilians.

Even by the end of Internment in December 1975, Protestant internees only accounted for around 5% of the total number (107 of 1981 people, referenced in Conflict Archive on the Internet).

History has proven how devastatingly wrong Internment was. It was as wrong as it was discriminatory.

In the aftermath of the McGurk's Bar Massacre, the British Army and RUC colluded to ensure it remained so.

"RUC have a line that the bomb in the pub was a bomb designed to be picked up elsewhere, left in the pub to be picked up by the Provisional IRA. Bomb went off and was a mistake."

BRIGADIER FRANK KITSON'S ORDER TO HIS STAFF AT 1AM, JUST OVER 4 HOURS AFTER THE EXPLOSION

APPENDIX 1 JOSEPH MCCLORY'S STATEMENT

No. 20

CORONERS ACT (Northern Ireland), 1959

Deposition of Witness taken on Thursday the 8th day
of June 1972, at inquest touching the death of
Mrs. ELIZ. PHILOMENA MCGURK and others before me J. H. S. Elliott, Esq.,
Coroner for the District of BELFAST.

as follows to me—

The Deposition of [REDACTED]
of [REDACTED] (Address)
who being sworn upon his oath, saith

About 9 pm on Saturday, 4th December, 1971, I was walking up
Great Georges Street towards North Queen Street on my way home.
I looked across towards McGurk's Bar on the corner. There were
three men in a car further down Great Georges Street. It was
white at the top and white at the bottom. I don't know what
colour it was in the middle. It had a wee Union Jack stuck in
the back window. I crossed over the road towards McGurk's Bar.
I saw a man in the doorway. He had a parcel with him. He
left it down in the doorway. This man ran down to the car. He
had a mask on his face and was wearing a long coat. It was a black
coat. I saw sparks coming out of the parcel. It was like a square
box, big with plastic paper round it. I ran up round the corner
into North Queen Street. When I got round the corner I met [REDACTED]
he lives in North Queen Street. I told him about the parcel. I
said to him, "There's a bomb round at the bar". He ran across the
road towards the flats. I had only gone a short distance along the
road when I heard the bang. The car went down Great Georges Street
after the man put the parcel in the doorway. [REDACTED]

APPENDIX 2 DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS BRIEF

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS BRIEF

01-05 DECEMBER 1971

NORTHERN IRELAND

General

1. In Belfast an explosion killed (fifteen) persons and injured thirteen. The soldiers were wounded, one of whom is seriously ill following shooting incidents. There were four border incidents.

BELFAST

19 AIRPORT BUS AREA

2. Shooting Incidents.

a. At 1445hrs 3 Queens reported that 6 shots had been fired at CROSTHERP O'NEILL St from PALMERSTON St. There was a slight casualty (a woman struck on the arm by .22 rd.

b. At 1640hrs 1 SG reported that 1 shot had been fired at a mobile at LINS St/SPRINGFIELD. There were no casualties and no shots returned.

c. At 2215hrs 2 RRF reports that a burst of automatic shots had been fired at troops deployed on NORTH QUEEN St from WILLMAN St. There was one minor casualty. No shots were returned. There were no hits.

d. At 0010hrs 1 QLR reported that 12 shots had been fired at a foot pat on ESTORIL Rd/CRAVENS Gdns from CRAVENS Gdns. There was one minor casualty. 1 QLR 5 x 7.62 shots were returned. There was one possible hit. There was no trace.

e. At 2220hrs RUC reported that a burst of automatic shots had been fired at the RUC deployed in NORTH QUEEN ST from the area of WILLMAN ST. There were no hits.

f. At 0120hrs 2 RRF reported that 2 x 7.62 shots had been fired at a gunman seen with a rifle and challenged near the sentry at GIRDWOOD observed a hit.

g. Explosion. At 2045hrs 2 RRF reported that an explosion had occurred at McGUIRES BAR, 51-53 NORTH QUEEN ST. A bomb believed to have been planted outside the pub was estimated by the ATO 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.

JAMES CROTTY,
Mrs McGURK,
EDWARD KEENE,

APPENDIX 3

39 BRIGADE

LOG SHEET					
Formation / Unit		HQ 39 AIRPTBL BDE		Date	5 Dec 71
				Log Keeper(s)	G BRANCH
				Sheet No	
Serial	D T G	To	From	Event	Action
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
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 Georgies 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 RRF & 1 R ³ i
63			2 RRF	Ref shots NTR.	Redacted under FOI Exemption Sec 40(2)
64	1200		Gd Rm	[REDACTED] at 0400 approx suspicious car opposite his house, heading towards camp, No make or registration nos.	

APPENDIX 4

HQNI

LOG SHEET					
Formation/Unit		HQ NI		Date	5 Dec 71
				Log Keeper(s)	
				Sheet No	
Serial	D T G	To	From	Event	Action
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
22	1030		39 Bde	PR requested info on two men with GSV in RVH. 39 Bde confirm as follows: [REDACTED] found with GSV in left thigh [REDACTED] shot in Boyle St. [REDACTED] with GSV in left hand alleges also shot in Boyle St. Neither have been arrested but the RUC are investigating the incident.	PR Info
23	1058		39 Bde	Certainly NOT involved in bombing of McGurks.	
24	1110		39 Bde	ATO is convinced bomb was placed in entrance way on ground floor. The area is cratered and clearly was the seat of the explosion. Size of bomb likely to be 40/50 lbs.	NOT FOR PR
25	1130		5 Bde	[REDACTED]	
26	1050		RUC	McGrave St.	Passed to [REDACTED] 39 Bde for investigation.
27	1255		8 Bde	[REDACTED]	

APPENDIX 5

39 BRIGADE

SHEET

ation / Unit		HQ 39 AIRPTBL BDE		Date	5 DEC 71	Log Keeper(s)	G BRANCH	Sheet No	02
D T G	To	From	Event				Action		
(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)				(f)		
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		
0110		QLR	19 x 7.62 cases found at scene of shooting - looking in Cranbrook Gdns for further traces,				HQNI info'd		
0110		12 LT	[REDACTED] Pty or something inside. Request permission to search.				Redacted under FOI Exemptions Sec 38 and Sec 40(2)		
0115		RMP	Blue Mini [REDACTED]						
0115		2 RRF	Request arrest team.						
0115		1 SG	Maj SNOW. Making improvement, 2 other in RVH. 1. [REDACTED] left thigh, 2. [REDACTED] (Bottled) - injuries on head.						
0105		2 RRF	Clifton Pk Ave incident. Man with gun seen climbing fence to east of block of flats 69-93 Clifton Pk Ave. Between flats and wall of Crumlin. Challenged - dropped back on to ground outside fence, disappeared						

APPENDIX 6 RUC DUTY OFFICER'S REPORT

REDACTED (Contd.)

- (6) At 5.40 p.m. on 4th December, 1971, an armed hold-up occurred at Pim's Off-licence premises, 343 Antrim Road, Belfast.

Three youths, wearing anoraks, one of whom was armed with a gun, held up the staff and got away with £130-£140 and 6 bottles of whisky.

No shots fired and no injuries.

- (7) At 7.47 p.m. on 4th December, 1971, a call of fire was received to a fire at licensed premises known as 'The Bulls Head', 13-15 Bond Street, Belfast, in 'Markets' area, owned by Mr. Sean McKibben.

Police to the scene had difficulty in ascertaining the facts but were informed that a device had been thrown into the premises from a passing car.

The following two persons were removed to City Hospital suffering from burns:-

REDACTED (SECTION 46)

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
<http://www.proni.gov.uk>

The Archives for Family and Local History

Belfast.

Belfast.

The licensed premises were gutted by the fire.

- (8) At 8.45 p.m. on Saturday, 4th December, 1971, an explosion occurred at McGurk's Licensed Premises, 83 Great George's Street. The charge estimated at 50 lbs. completely demolished the two-storey building. Just before the explosion a man entered the licensed premises and left down a suitcase, presumably to be picked up by a known member of the Provisional I.R.A. The bomb was intended for use on other premises. Before the 'pick-up' was made the bomb exploded, 15 persons were killed and thirteen injured, 12 of whom were taken to hospital:-

Killed

- (1) James Francis Cronie, 13 years 129 North Queen Street.
- (2) Mrs. Phyllis McGurk, approx. 46 years, 83 Great George's Street.
- (3) Edward Keenan, 3 Carlisle Parade (elderly).
- (4) Mrs. Keenan, 3 Carlisle Parade (wife of above (3)).
- (5) John Bolton, Address not yet known.
- (6) Marie McGurk, 83 Great George's Street, 11 years.
- (7) Thomas McLoughlin, 127 Ardles Street.
- (8) David Mulligan, 24 Churchill House.
- (9) James Smith, 24 Alexander House.
- (10) Francis Bradley, 11 Carlisle Road.
- (11) Thomas Kane, 80 Henry Street, about 45 years

and 4 other bodies not yet identified.

Injured

REDACTED

APPENDIX 7 CURRENT SITUATION REPORT

United Nations' observers to monitor the border, it is envisaged that they should again be asked whether the proposal can be taken as an admission that their own forces are incapable of policing the border effectively. It will be for consideration whether to make this point publicly as well.

Explosion in McGurk's Bar

7. Although no inquest has yet been held into the fifteen deaths caused by this explosion on 4 December, the forensic evidence now available shows quite clearly that five of the victims were killed by blast - indicating that the explosion must have been inside the bar, and raising a very strong presumption that it was caused by the accidental detonation of a bomb being carried by one of the customers - as has seemed likely all along. The Minister of State for Defence is being invited to consider whether to make this point public in a written answer - in pursuance of his undertaking, in his original statement on the incident, to keep the House informed of any fresh information. In the view of Headquarters Northern Ireland it is important to put this point on record, in order to discourage continuing speculation about who was responsible for the explosion.

Arrests of young persons

8. The GOC has agreed to see a deputation of teachers, to discuss complaints about this subject, on 16 December. The GOC intends to leave the teachers in no doubt about the extent to which the IRA have been making use of youngsters; a copy of his brief is being obtained so that the information can also be used, as appropriate, for rebutting other complaints about the arrest of juveniles.

RBC Programme

9. It is not entirely clear where the RBC now stand on their proposal to run a major debate on television, to discuss Northern Ireland, on 5 January. The Home Secretary has already mentioned the Government's misgivings about the proposal to Lord Hill, who is presumably still looking into it. Further information which has
/bunose

The National Archives		1
Ref: DEFE 13/817	115256	2

APPENDIX 8 PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY MEETING

DMO
CPR
Head of DSIO

Copies to:
APS/SofS
PS/Minister of State ✓
PS/USofS(Army)
PSO/CDS
MA/CGS
MA/DCDS(I)
AUS(GS)
DPR(Army)
BGS(Int)
Sec HOC
DefDOP

NORTHERN IRELAND: PUS's MORNING MEETING, 14 DECEMBER

In the course of the meeting the following points arose for further action:-

- a. Consideration should be given to following up publicly the very unsatisfactory statement by Mr Lynch yesterday following the murder of Senator Barnhill. Mr Lynch's references to a UN Force for border control would offer a possibility of publicising our exchanges with the Irish on control of their side of the border.
- b. It was noted that a delegation of Belfast teachers were to call on the GOC in connection with the arrest and questioning of school children. A brief was being prepared for the GOC, which would not be wholly defensive in character, and it was agreed that the MOD should see a copy of this as soon as possible.
- c. It was noted that this visit by the delegation of teachers, which would no doubt be mentioned in the Press, would provide an opportunity of getting across publicly our side of the story.
- d. We should find out the latest position regarding the proposed BBC programme on Northern Ireland under Lord Devlin's chairmanship.
- e. It was agreed that the latest findings which indicated that the explosion in the McGurk bar had been the result of a bomb in the bar (by implication in transit there) should be publicised possibly by means of a written Parliamentary Question.

2. As regards the point at a. it was left that the FCO would follow this up with Mr Maitland. No doubt Head of DSIO and CPR would like to keep in touch. As regards b. perhaps DMO could arrange for a copy of the GOC's brief to be made available within the Ministry of Defence, while on c. I assume CPR will take the lead as well as on d. On e. perhaps Head of DSIO would pursue the matter.

SECRET

FILE (EB)

D/DS 10/44/45.

Page No 1 of 3.
Copy No 19 of 19.PS/Minis-er of State.

Copies to:

- APS/Secretary of State.
- PS/US² of S (Army).
- PS/PUS.
- MA/CGS (2).
- DGI.
- DMO.
- AUS (GS).
- CIR.
- DPR (Army).
- BGS (Int).
- IO 3.
- DI 1.
- C2 (AD) - Mr Elkins-Daukes.
- D. Maitland, Esq, 10 Downing Street.
- J.T.A. Howard-Drake, Esq, Home Office.

McGURK'S BAR EXPLOSION.

1. You asked to be kept informed of developments.
2. Investigations are not yet complete, and inquests have not yet been held.
3. The RUC have interviewed two witnesses whose statements support the theory that the bomb was placed outside, or just inside, the bar by a man who got out of a car. The RUC are however unconvinced by these stories. One of them is from the small boy whose account was published in the press: when the RUC saw him his father and solicitor did most of the talking.
4. RUC forensic experts and Army ammunition technical officers both agree that the blast occurred inside the building, though with the disturbance caused to the site by heavy mechanical equipment involved in the rescue operation they are not sure quite where. But apart from the pattern of debris, initial examination has shown that 5 of those killed were killed directly by blast, not debris.
5. Evidence given at recent explosives trials has linked the North Queen Street area with the transfer of IRA bombs between those who make them and those who use them.

RETAINED UNDER
SECTION 3(4)

2/12/1975.

Page No 1 of 3.
Copy No 2998 12.

Minister of State.

Letter to: AM/Secretary of State,
Min of S (Army),
Min of S,
Min/CSG (2),
DRI,
DFO,
AMS (CS),
DPR,
DPR (Army),
DPS (Int),
DO 3,
DI 1,
CS (AD) - Mr Wilson-Jones,
S. Whitland, Reg. 10 Downing Street,
J.F.A. Howard-Drake, Reg. Home Office.

INVESTIGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS.

1. You asked to be kept informed of developments.
2. Investigations are not yet complete, and inquiries have not yet been held.
3. The TUC have interviewed two witnesses whose statements support the theory that the bomb was placed outside, or just inside, the bar by a man who got out of a car. The TUC are however unconvinced by these stories. One of them is from the small boy whose account was published in the press: when the TUC saw him his father and solicitor did most of the talking.
4. UK forensic experts and Army ammunition technical officers both agree that the blast occurred inside the building, though with the disturbance caused to the site by heavy mechanical equipment involved in the rescue operation they are not sure quite where. But apart from the pattern of shrapnel, forensic examination has shown that 5 of those killed were killed directly by blast, not shrapnel.
5. Evidence given at recent explosive trials has linked the North Queen Street area with the transfer of IRA bombs between those who make them and those who use them.

[I understand - though this should not be revealed publicly - that two of those killed have been identified as members of the Brady IRA.]

Ministry of Defence
Central Library
12 DEC 1975

Reference _____

SECRET

- 2 -

7. The incident continues to excite public interest in Northern Ireland. Certain Republican newspapers have supported the theory described at paragraph 3 above. In some versions the SAS are implicated.

8. It was suggested at PUS's morning meeting on 14th December that the Minister of State might wish to consider answering an arranged written question (picking up his assurance to Mr Rafton Pounder, MP, on 6th December (c. 936)). We cannot be definite: the most we can do is reinforce the remarks the Minister of State has already made, and I do not believe we can go beyond the line of the attached (which I have cleared with the Civil Adviser to the GOC and with C2 (AD)).

15 December, 1971.

C. H. Henn
C H Henn
Pcpl DS 10
MB Ext 2237.

Minister of State

I think that a Question and Answer on the lines attached might be helpful; but I agree with DS 10 that we cannot go further than this.

*A. Hockaday**Mrs (GS)*

15 Dec 71

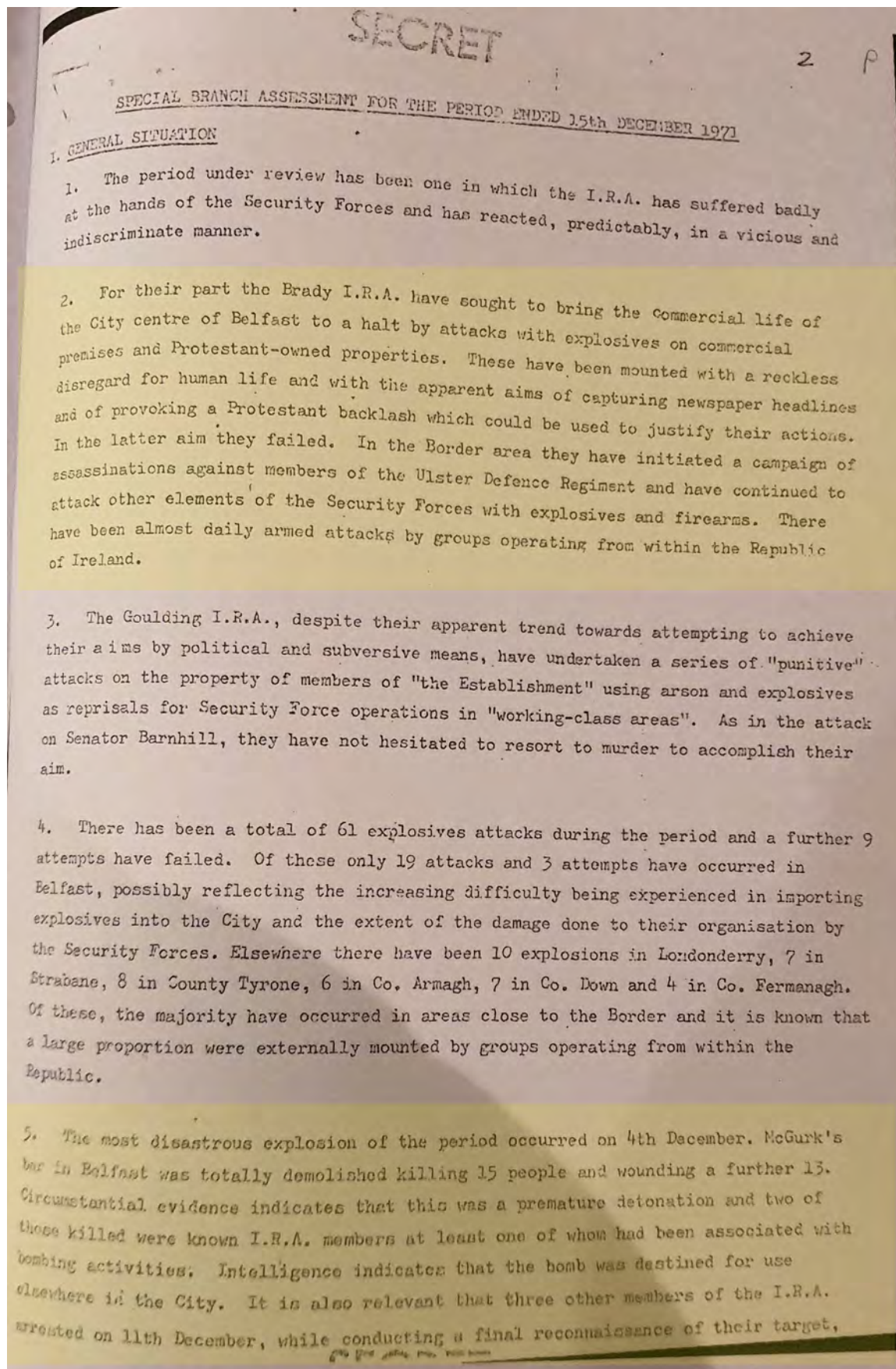
SECRET

To ask the Minister of State for Defence, if he is yet in a position to make a further statement about the explosion which wrecked McGurk's Bar, Belfast, on 4th December.

ANSWER

Investigations are not yet complete, and inquests have not yet been held. However, further investigations by forensic experts and by Army ammunition technical officers have confirmed, on the basis of the pattern of debris and the effect of the explosion on the structure, that the bomb exploded within the building. Five of the deaths were as a direct result of the blast, not as a result of the building collapsing. These conclusions are consistent with theories that the bomb went off accidentally, perhaps while in transit.

APPENDIX 10 RUC SPECIAL BRANCH ASSESSMENT



APPENDIX 11 JOINT SECURITY COMMITTEE MEETING

SECRET

1971/Joint Sec/50.

CONCLUSIONS OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT SECURITY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY
16 DECEMBER 1971 IN STORMONT CASTLE AT 10.30 AM

PRESENT:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair)
The Minister of State at the Ministry of Home Affairs
The Senior Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs
The GOC
The Chief Constable
The Government Security Adviser
The Deputy UK Representative
The Security Liaison Officer
The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Special Branch

ALSO PRESENT:

The Secretary to the Police Authority
Mr C P Milway
Mr B Cummings

Mr T Cromey

1. SPECIAL BRANCH ASSESSMENT

The Assessment reflected a stepping up of IRA activity.

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Special Branch said

(a) that field intelligence had failed to produce a single copy of the leaflet reputedly in circulation in Catholic areas warning that city and town centres would be subjected to bomb attacks before Christmas and should be avoided. It could well be deliberate rumour spreading designed to achieve its own effect on seasonal trading, though the possibility of attacks could not of course be ruled out;

(b) that there was no evidence of an IRA list of 'marked' persons.

On (a), the GOC and Chief Constable confirmed that additional watch was being kept, and it was agreed that efforts should be made, eg in the course of this afternoon's Parliamentary proceedings, to publicise the need for stores and shops to take special precautions.

The GOC said that Army strength in Strabane had been trebled.

2. SCHEDULE OF INCIDENTS AND SITUATION REPORT

Reference

E31

D/DS10/44/45

PQ 1002A
PQ 1069A

APS/Minister of State

Copy to: PS/US of S(Army)
AUS(GS)

McGURK'S BAR

1. You asked me for a supplementary answer for use on Thursday, if required, on the McGurk's Bar explosion on 4th December : as you reminded me, the Minister of State undertook when replying to the PNQ on 6th December to make a further statement if he felt that a useful purpose could thereby be served (c.936).

2. I have checked with HQ Northern Ireland that the position remains as stated in my loose minute D/DS10/44/45 of 15th December, in which I put forward with AUS(GS)'s endorsement a draft answer to a possible arranged PQ (which Ministers decided not to pursue), and I now attach a draft supplementary following the lines of that.

CH Henn

C H HENN
DS 10
MB Ext2237

18 January 1972

McGURK'S BAR?

Inquests have not been held. However, further investigations by forensic experts and Army ammunition technical officers, [since my statement to the House on 6th December] have confirmed, on the basis of the pattern of debris and the effect of the explosion on the structure, that the bomb exploded within the building. Five of the deaths resulted directly from the blast, not from the building collapsing. These conclusions are consistent with theories that the bomb went off accidentally, perhaps while in transit.

APPENDIX 13

Ciarán MacAirt

info@papertrail.pro

Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Simon Case

c/o Public Correspondence Team,

Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall,

London, England, SWA 2AS

10th December 2020

Re: Complaint and Request for an Investigation by the Cabinet Secretary, Mr Simon Case

Dear Mr. Case,

My name is Ciarán MacAirt and I wish to raise a serious complaint and seek an immediate investigation by you.

Official documents disclosed to me recently under the 2000 Freedom of Information Act prove that Government Departments and agencies knowingly abused their power by (1) deliberately suppressing true information; (2) recklessly creating and/or circulating false information with the intent of deceiving Parliament, the Press and the Public; and (3) consciously and/or irresponsibly causing harm to the families of those murdered or injured in the McGurk's Bar atrocity in Belfast on 4th December 1971.

15 civilians – men, women and two children – were murdered in McGurk's Bar when Loyalist paramilitaries bombed the pub and family home. Another 16 were badly injured and lucky to escape with their lives. At that time in the United Kingdom, it was the single greatest loss of civilian life in any murderous attack since the Nazi Blitz a generation before.

The complaint regards my discovery of a high-level, coordinated and sustained plot by public servants and Government Departments to deceive and mislead the Parliaments of Northern Ireland and Great Britain in 1971/1972.

The immediate ramifications of the deceit were devastating and felt to this day, not only by our families, but the country as a whole.

The disclosed archive material proves that named, high-level officials within the Ministry of Defence peddled known lies about the victims and the survivors of the McGurk's Bar bombing. At

the time, the British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) blamed the innocent victims for the explosion although I have recently discovered a significant stream of new evidence which proves:

- (1) The British Army and RUC knew that the bar was subjected to an external attack;
- (2) The British Army, the Intelligence Services and RUC colluded to blame the explosion on the victims themselves;
- (3) Senior public servants within the British Ministry of Defence then plotted to publicize the same lies in the House of Commons and mislead the British Parliament.
- (4) The Chief Constable of the RUC and the Head of Special Branch presented these lies at the same time to the Northern Ireland Government and misled it.

I fully accept that the role of the RUC may be outside your remit, but it is clear that the Army knew the RUC information was false, but not only failed to challenge the disinformation being circulated by the police, but also altered its own factual information to facilitate and support the police account.

I am a grandson of two of the victims. My grandmother, Kathleen Irvine, was murdered and my grandfather, John, badly injured. I am also an advocate with the charity, Paper Trail (Legacy Archive Research), and act on behalf of many of the McGurk's Bar victims' family members.

I have compiled a report and appended the archival evidence to facilitate your investigation and can provide you with further evidence and information if you require.

I am certain that you fully accept that Crown servants should not be required to do anything unlawful; and that they would be in breach of their duty if they deliberately withheld relevant information from their Minister, or if they gave their Minister information that is either false or misleading.

It follows that there is a duty on Crown servants to take all reasonable steps to check the accuracy of information obtained from other sources such as the Armed Forces and the police before submitting it to Ministers.

Yours sincerely,

Ciarán MacAirt

THE KITSON EXPERIMENT

In my book, *The McGurk's Bar Bombing*, 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:

1. **Information:** the collection and development of information and intelligence;
2. **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.

As well as tracking the dissemination of the McGurk's Bar disinformation throughout these information units, I have since proved that Kitson's own dirty fingerprints are all over the McGurk's Bar cover-up.

Kitson ordered Brigade AT 1 AM, 5th December:

"RUC have a line that the bomb in the pub was a bomb designed to be picked up elsewhere, left in the pub to be picked up by the Provisional IRA. Bomb went off and was a mistake."

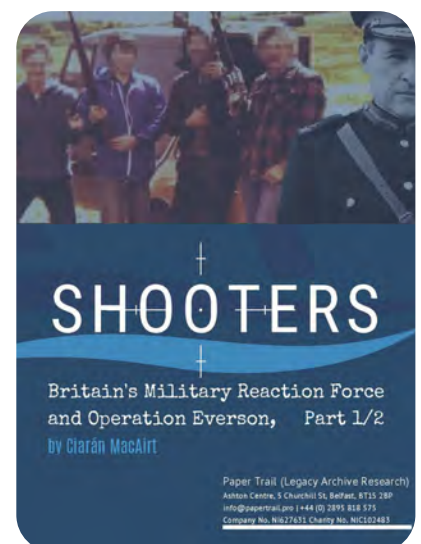
We now know too that the British Army had a covert military operation in the vicinity of McGurk's Bar and Kitson's MRF were operating similar in the area the night before.

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.

You can read about these battles in *The McGurk's Bar Bombing: Post-Script*, which is downloadable for free from www.mcgurksbar.com.

Kitson's dirty fingerprints are all over the McGurk's Bar cover-up.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CIARÁN MacAIRT AT A PROTEST IN SCOTLAND

Ciarán MacAirt is author of the critically acclaimed book, *The McGurk's Bar Bombing*. His grandmother, Kathleen Irvine, was murdered in the attack and his grandfather, John, badly injured.

His second book, *Trope: Essays and Articles*, is out now, with all proceeds going to the charity, Paper Trail.

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. It is also a social enterprise that offers specialized legacy archive research to the legal profession.

Ciaran 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 or who were injured.

MacAirt is also an activist with the families of the Time for Truth Campaign which demands that the British and Irish Governments:

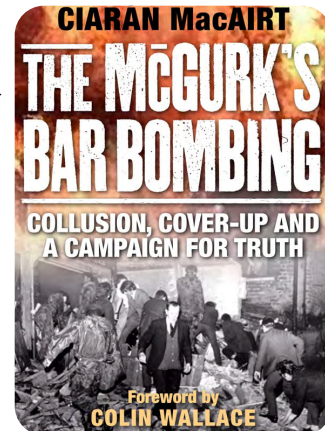
- (1) Implement and properly resource the Stormont House agreement;
- (2) Fund the court's legacy inquests as set out by the Lord Chief Justice Declan Morgan;
- (3) Properly resource the Office of the Police Ombudsman.

BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

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 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. Foreword by Colin Wallace.



TROPE: ESSAYS AND ARTICLES

One recurring theme of this collection by Irish author, Ciaran 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. Foreword by Fr. Seán McManus.



THE MCGURK'S BAR BOMBING AND THE PLOT TO DECEIVE TWO PARLIAMENTS

by CIARÁN MacAIRT  **Paper Trail**
LEGACY ARCHIVE RESEARCH