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Current levels of violence in Northern Ireland

1. In the course of a visit to Belfast yesterday, David Donoghue and the undersigned discussed current levels of violence in Northern Ireland with (a) a media contact who is well informed on loyalist paramilitary activities; and (b) with SDLP Councillor Brian Feeney.
2. Our media contact made the following points of interest:
  - There has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of the intelligence apparently available to the UDA and the UVF, to the point where questions must be asked about continuing collusion between some elements of the security forces and Loyalist paramilitaries. A high proportion of UDA/UVF targets have proven subsequently to have had a Sinn Fein or IRA involvement of some kind.
  - There is also an unprecedented degree of cooperation between the UDA and the UVF (which previously viewed each other with considerable suspicion). The coordinating structure which was established last June to implement a "ceasefire", the Combined Loyalist Military Command, still holds and is believed to be behind the current spate of killings.
  - The purported "ceasefire" was arranged by Peter Robinson. Robinson's motivation was to generate kudos for the UDA and to ensure that Loyalist violence would not be blamed for any breakdown in the talks. The ceasefire did not however prevent the assassination of Eddie Fullerton (which, UDA figures claimed, was not

covered by the ceasefire as it took place outside the jurisdiction) in Donegal. This killing is believed to have been the the work of a UDA unit from North Antrim (the Ballymena area) who may also have been responsible for the recent killing of Sinn Fein Councillor O' Hagan in Magherafelt. The IRA took its revenge for the Fullerton killing, however, on the Derry UDA, whom they considered responsible for it.

- Most of the recent attacks on Sinn Fein members have been carried out by the UDA, particularly outside Belfast. Our contact confirmed, moreover, that the UDA have RPG 7 rockets, which were part of the large arms shipment which reached the UDA several years ago and which also gave rise to the arrest of UDA commander Davy Payne.
- The UDA, whose bomb-making capacity has been negligible in recent years, are believed to have developed a kind of "gas-bomb" which involves essentially two elements - fuel (e.g. petrol) and a gas cylinder. The gas in question is of the type used to aerate beer in pubs. This bomb, liable to cause considerably greater damage than the incendiary devices usually used by the UDA, was discovered in a Loyalist house in West Belfast recently. It has not so far been deployed by the UDA.
- It is believed that the UDA are paying individuals for carrying out sectarian assassinations and for other activities. In a court hearing relating to the recent planting of incendiary devices at the Westwood shopping centre, the defendants (two Loyalist teenage girls) admitted that they had each been paid £70 in this connection.

3. Brian Feeney's analysis was in a number of respects similar to the foregoing. He tended to see the current violence, however, in terms of several regional "contests". An important point of departure was the IRA "human bomb" attack on the British Army post at Coshquin in October of last year. In revenge for the five Army deaths, the regiment concerned (the King's Regiment) is believed to have leaked over one hundred "sightings" (i.e. documents with details of IRA suspects) to Loyalist paramilitaries. This led to the clearly well-researched Loyalist attack on a group of Sinn Fein/IRA members at Cappagh in March. The organiser of this attack was a Portadown loyalist named Billy Wright.
4. Mentioning conversations with some Sinn Fein colleagues on Belfast City Council, Feeney said that there is considerable unease among Sinn Fein members in Belfast at present because of the current Loyalist campaign.



Declan Kelleher  
Anglo-Irish Division

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