

SECRETARY OF STATE'S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

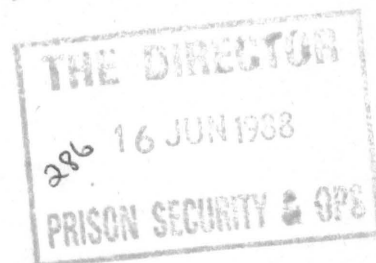
16 JUNE 1988

With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the murder of 6 soldiers in Lisburn yesterday evening.

For the past six years the Lisburn Borough Council, in conjunction with the YMCA, has organised a series of charitable running events consisting of a half marathon together with shorter fun-runs. This year some 4,500 people took part more than half of them teenagers and young children.

Shortly after the end of the run, a bomb destroyed a Ford Transit van in which six soldiers were travelling. Four were killed instantly, one died on his way to hospital, and the sixth died in hospital last night. 11 civilians including an 80 year old man and a 2 year old child were injured, but all have now been released from hospital. The soldiers killed were a sergeant, two lance corporals and a signaller from the Royal Signals, a corporal from the Green Howards, and a lance corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Next of kin have been informed. All six had come from Ebrington Barracks in Londonderry, and were giving of their own time to help in an event which over the years has raised very many thousands of pounds for deserving charities.

I know the House will wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of those brutally murdered last night.



My understanding is that the soldiers concerned travelled in the Transit van from Londonderry to Lisburn, and parked it unattended in the Leisure Centre Car Park, the start and finish point of the Runs. Five of the soldiers took part in the marathon which started at 6.30pm. One took part in the Fun Run. While it is not clear when they finished running, it is believed that the van left the car park at 8.50 and the explosion occurred at 8.59. The evidence indicates that the explosive device had been attached to the underside of the van and consisted of some 3 kilos of Commercial Explosive.

I must tell the House that while the murders of the soldiers are horrific enough, there could well have been a scale of fatalities and casualties on a vastly greater scale if the bomb had gone off in the car park itself where thousands of people were milling around, including a very considerable number of families with young children.

What this indicates is that the IRA have no depths to which they will not sink in their determination to kill, no occasion whether it be a Remembrance Service or a charitable event which they will not attack, nor the slightest concern as to how many people of all ages, men, women and children that they may murder and maim in their vile activities.



What we face in Northern Ireland at present is the ruthless efforts of the IRA to intensify their vicious and bloody campaign. The Chief Constable gave clear warning of this and the evidence of the arms shipments from Libya was further confirmation of the lengths to which the terrorists will go.

If civilised society is to survive, whether in Northern Ireland alone, or indeed in the whole of the island of Ireland, then there can be no place for terrorism. We have no choice but to do all in our power to thwart and ultimately to defeat the terrorist and in thwarting the terrorist we need the maximum vigilance and alertness.

The end of terrorism has to be our aim and while there is no short cut available we need all the resources that a democracy can bring to bear, the commitment of Government and Parliament, the skill and courage of the security forces, the whole hearted support and assistance of the whole community in ensuring that the men of violence are brought to justice and in addition the fullest co-operation and support from the Government and people of the Irish Republic.

All these we need. And the events of last night not only in what did happen, awful as they certainly were, but also in what so easily might have happened as well are the clearest message why we must not fail.

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