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OPERATION BANNER

AN ANALYSIS OF MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Prepared under the direction of
the Chief of the General Staff

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FOREWORD

by General Sir Mike Jackson GCB CBE DSO ADC Gen

The military operations which started in Northern Ireland in 1969 will, without a doubt, be seen as one of the most important campaigns ever fought by the British Army and its fellow Services. That campaign is the longest to date; one of the very few waged on British soil; and one of the very few ever brought to a successful conclusion by the armed forces of a developed nation against an irregular force. This publication is a reflection on that campaign that seeks to capture its essence; it does not claim to be the definitive analysis.

The great majority of officers and soldiers joining the Army aged 18 will be discharged aged 55, if not before; a total of 37 years. At the time of writing Operation BANNER has run for almost 37 years. Almost nobody in the Army has served throughout its length. Thus, whilst many have served in Northern Ireland, no-one can say they experienced all of it. Service in Northern Ireland has affected a whole generation of servicemen and women.

The immediate tactical lessons of Operation BANNER have already been exported elsewhere, with considerable success. Operations in the Balkans, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq have already demonstrated both the particular techniques and the levels of expertise learnt through hard experience, both on the streets and in the fields of Northern Ireland. This publication does not seek to capture those lessons. Instead, it considers the high-level general issues that might be applicable to any future counter insurgency or counter terrorist campaign which the British armed forces might have to undertake.

It is not intended as a history. In a small way it is a tribute to those who served there; particularly those who died or were wounded. But whilst honouring their Service it is critically important to consider what they learned. It is important to learn from their successes, which were considerable. It is no less important to learn from mistakes, where they were made, and to ensure that they are not repeated. The publication seeks to stimulate thought and will have failed if whatever is written is slavishly and unthinkingly applied to future operations.

CGS

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Cover Picture

‘The Tragedy of Ulster’ appears by kind permission of the Cuneo Estate

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

101. Northern Ireland consists of six largely rural counties and two built up areas of significant size; Belfast and Londonderry. It measures roughly 80 miles North to South and 120 miles East to West. In 1969 it had a population of about 1.8 million people. Being remote from the European mainland, it has rarely been troubled by major wars. However, it has been the focus of what became the longest major campaign in the history of the British Army. That campaign included, in Operation MOTORMAN in 1972, the largest deployment of infantry and infantry-roled troops since the Second World War. Over 3,600 people have died in 'The Troubles' which started in the late summer of 1969.[1] The Army called its operations in Northern Ireland Operation BANNER.

Figure 1-1: Northern Ireland

AIM

102. The aim of this publication is to record the major lessons from British military operations in Northern Ireland since 1969 in order to guide future commanders and staff officers.

[1] The term 'The Troubles' has been used at various times to describe events in Ireland. For the purposes of this publication it will be taken to mean the period of violent unrest in Northern Ireland which began in the late summer of 1969.

APPROACH

103. At the time of writing in 2006, Operation BANNER was still in progress. However, it was due to be closed down during 2007. Even in 2006 most majors at regimental duty had not served in Northern Ireland in the high-intensity years of the 1970s and 1980s. This publication is therefore aimed primarily at the generations of officers and soldiers who did not serve in Northern Ireland at the height of the Troubles.

104. It is sometimes said that history does not repeat itself. In so far as the precise details of any historical event or period never recur, that is true. Hence this publication is not intended to be a record of tactical detail, nor a history. There are few specific, directly repeatable lessons to be learned from Operation BANNER. However, there are many general lessons which should be applied by the Army on future operations. Those general lesssons are the primary subject matter of this publication, which is intended to be of educational rather than training value. It should be of most value either prior to, or in the early stages of, any future campaign.

THE CHARACTER OF THE CAMPAIGN

105. Writing early in the 21st Century, it is easy to underestimate the scope and scale of the campaign, particularly in its early phases. There were only three battalions of infantry in Northern Ireland in late 1969, but at the peak of the campaign in the summer of 1972 28,000 soldiers were deployed. Well over 250,000 members of the Regular Army served there during the campaign, as well as many tens of thousands in the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and its successor, the Royal Irish Regiment Home Service Force (HSF).[2] In the early 1970s rioting in Londonderry or Belfast often went on for days at a time. It was fairly common for over 10,000 soldiers to be deployed on the streets. Thousands of houses were destroyed. Over 10,000 terrorist suspects were arrested. Over 14,000 illegal weapons were used at one time or another. Over 600 soldiers have died or been killed due to terrorist action.[3] In the worst year of 1972, 102 British soldiers died or were killed – the largest number in one year since Korea.

106. However, those statistics conceal the fact that for a lot of the time much of Northern Ireland was relatively peaceful. Violence was largely concentrated in areas such as West Belfast, the Bogside and the Creggan in Londonderry, East Tyrone, Fermanagh and South Armagh. Four broad phases can be identified in Operation BANNER. Although such phases can be identified with hindsight, it is important to note three things. Firstly, those periods were not definite stages in a campaign plan. Secondly, they were not necessarily obvious at the time. Thirdly, the real situation was much more complex than the relatively simple description given below. For example, there was considerable concern about the risk of a loyalist insurgency in the early years; loyalist terrorists made a considerable effort until the early 1990s; and major public order events (such as the annual marches at Drumcree Church) occurred throughout.

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[2] Chapter 3, paras 311-313.

[3] For comparison, roughly 250 British Servicemen died in the Falklands Conflict of 1982. At the time of writing just over 100 Servicemen/women had died in Iraq since 2003.

a. The first period, from August 1969 until perhaps the summer of 1971, was largely characterised by widespread public disorder. Marches, protests, rioting and looting were the main issues.

b. The next phase, from the summer of 1971 until the mid-1970s, is best described as a classic insurgency. Both the Official and Provisional wings of the Irish Republican Army (OIRA and PIRA) fought the security forces in more-or-less formed bodies. Both had a structure of companies, battalions and brigades, with a recognisable structure and headquarters staff. Protracted firefights were common. The Army responded with operations at up to brigade and even divisional level. The largest of these was Operation MOTORMAN, which was conducted from 31 July to 1 December 1972. It marked the beginning of the end of the insurgency phase. The OIRA declared a ceasefire in 1972 which it has never broken. The PIRA began a process of transforming itself into a terrorist organisation based on a cell structure.

c. The end of the insurgency merged into the phase characterised by the use of terrorist tactics. PIRA developed into what will probably be seen as one of the most effective terrorist organisations in history. Professional, dedicated, highly skilled and resilient, it conducted a sustained and lethal campaign in Northern Ireland, mainland United Kingdom (UK) and on the continent of Europe. From 1980 onwards its political wing, Sinn Fein, involved itself in mainstream politics in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the UK. However, from 1992 or 1993 the level of violence in all three areas diminished gradually.

d. PIRA declared a ceasefire in November 1994. Except for a few relatively isolated exceptions that ceasefire has held and it led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. That was followed by a long process of political discussion, negotiation and the decommissioning of PIRA weapons. At time of writing (May 2006) it may be too soon to say that the Troubles are definitively at an end. However, it is reasonable to say that there has been over a decade of relative peace. The period since 1990 can therefore be seen as the ‘long tail’ to Operation BANNER. It is possible to consider this period as a ‘conflict resolution’ phase, but only in hindsight.

Figure 1-2: Urban Foot Patrol in the 1970s

107. For the purposes of this publication the differences between insurgency and terrorism can be considered as those of mass, means and methods. 'Insurgency' generally includes large numbers of insurgents using moderately conventional weapons, organisations and tactics. By comparison 'terrorism' is more selective and often more sophisticated in its means and methods of attack, whilst employing generally smaller numbers. These features broadly apply to Northern Ireland. A different approach would be to define terrorism as a tactic[4] and therefore a terrorist organisation as one which acts largely covertly and deploys terrorism as its main means of violence. Conversely, insurgency presupposes an insurgent body (as OIRA and PIRA could both be described in the early 1970s) which employs fairly direct action to achieve its aims although operating under the cover of the local population. These definitions also generally apply to Northern Ireland.

108. The Troubles have to some extent been a violent struggle between catholic and protestant elements. The events of 1969 could easily have turned into open civil war, but did not. The Troubles were also to a great extent a working class war, between working class republicans and working class loyalists. By and large the middle classes did not involve themselves directly in the Troubles although they, and others, showed a strong tendency towards intransigence and entrenched views. The repeated call for 'No Surrender' of British sovereignty by the loyalist community is but one fairly obvious aspect of this effect. The two communities have tended to become victims of their own views; moderate political opinion, compromise and often logic has largely been marginalised.

DEFINITIONS

109. Terms such as 'loyalist', 'republican', 'unionist' and 'nationalist' have been used widely throughout the Troubles, although not always accurately. The following definitions are used in this publication:

a. 'Northern Ireland' consists of the six counties of Ulster which remained part of the UK when the rest of Ireland was given independence in 1922.[5] The Government of Northern Ireland was established in 1921. It is usually referred to as 'Stormont' after Stormont Castle, where it sat.

b. 'Ulster' is an historic province of Ireland – the others being Munster, Leinster and Connaught. Ulster comprised the six counties now forming Northern Ireland and three others.[6] Therefore it is not strictly correct to describe Northern Ireland as 'Ulster', nor as 'The Province'.

c. The terms 'catholic' and 'protestant' are used narrowly in terms of religious observance. In practice differences between the main factions in Northern Ireland have been characterised less by religious belief than by the social, cultural and political views to which the two sections of the community adhere. In simple terms, religion has been a badge or label rather than a cause.

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[4] ADP *Land Operations,* Army Code 71819, para 0157.
[5] The Six Counties: Antrim, Down, Armagh, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Londonderry.
[6] Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.

d. ‘Nationalist’ refers to that section of the people of Northern Ireland which views itself primarily as part of the population of Ireland as a whole. They are almost entirely descended from the original inhabitants of the island, and are catholic. By extension ‘Republicans’ are those who wish to see Northern Ireland united with the Republic of Ireland. Although much nationalist sentiment is and has been republican, it is not necessarily true to say that all catholics in Northern Ireland wish, or have wished, to be part of the Republic. Republican and nationalist groups tend to have the words ‘Irish’ and ‘Republican’ in their titles – hence names such as ‘the IRA’, the ‘Irish National Liberation Army’ (INLA) and ‘Irish Republican Socialist Party’ (IRSP).

e. The term ‘Unionist’ refers to that section of the population who wish to remain part of the UK. The term ‘loyalist’ is generally used to describe paramilitary organisations which hold or adhere to unionist views. Unionists and loyalists are generally descended from Scottish settlers and are almost entirely protestant. Their organisations tend to contain the word ‘Ulster’. Examples include the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Other loyalist groups employ unionist ideology in their titles. For example, the name of the ‘Red Hand Commando’ reflects the heraldic Red Hand of the O’Neills of Ulster.

f. The Republic of Ireland (or ‘Eire’) is the sovereign state which was formed in 1922 of the 26 counties of Ireland which were given independence from the UK. Its parliament is the Dail and its Prime Minister the Taoiseach. The Government of Ireland is commonly referred to as ‘Dublin’.

g. The UK comprises Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is therefore not quite accurate to refer to Northern Ireland as ‘British’, although citizens of Northern Ireland are subjects of the UK. For the purpose of the publication the term ‘British’ will be taken to refer to British Mainland issues. ‘UK’ will be used when referring to issues which affect both Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Government of the UK is referred to as ‘Whitehall’ and the UK Parliament is referred to as ‘Westminster’.

110. As an example of everyday misuse, organisations such as the UVF and Red Hand Commandos were collectively referred to by British security forces as ‘protestant paramilitaries’. Although the great majority of their members probably were protestant, it is more accurate to refer to them as ‘loyalist paramilitaries’.

CAVEATS

111. A publication such as this is inevitably written through the prism of history, which presents some problems. The first is that of anachronism. It is easy to view the present or the recent past as the norm, without considering the situation at the time under study. As an example, individual reinforcements sent to Northern Ireland in 1970 and 1971 travelled in uniform on public transport (train and ferry) carrying their personal weapons. For their own protection they travelled in small groups rather than singly, and were issued five rounds of ammunition for self defence. More problematic for the purposes of this study is a tendency to view military operations through a doctrinal framework which was developed in the 1990s.

112. It is also difficult to know after the event whether something was known at the time; or that something could not be done at the time for reasons that are not obvious subsequently. It is also possible to speculate that if a commander had made a different decision, a given result would have occurred. That is a fallacy. One can postulate that it might, with hindsight, have been preferable to decide differently. However, it is not possible to know what the outcome of that decision would have been.

113. That is a pitfall of hindsight. It is the purpose of this publication to apply military judgement to the events of the past. That is, it is intended to develop hindsight in order to guide the judgement of future commanders and staff officers. However, that is not the same as saying that, with hindsight, a given commander should have acted differently.

114. Military terminology has changed considerably over the 37 years studied. This publication generally uses names and terminology which were most commonly used during Operation BANNER, or terms in common usage in the security forces, rather than names and terms in use at the end of the Operation.

115. This publication is the principal output of a 6-month study by a team of three officers carried out in early 2006.[7] It therefore does not discuss events after 2005 and does not attempt to be a definitive history of the campaign.

Figure 1-3: March at Drumcree in 2002

[7] In the preparation of this publication, 416 unit post-operational tour reports were read. Several thousand other documents were reviewed. The Information Corporate Memory Analysis branch of the Ministry of Defence provided 34 volumes of archive materials, which were analysed. Discussions were held with more than 20 retired or serving officers who had commanded at brigade level or above in Northern Ireland. A wide range of other individuals was also consulted, including a number who had served in Northern Ireland in 1969 or even before.

CHAPTER 2 - THE EVENTS

201. This Chapter presents a brief history of the events of the Troubles and the period leading up to them. It describes the four broad phases identified in Chapter 1, although it separates the later 1970s from the 1980s for convenience.

BEFORE 1969

202. Scottish Presbyterians began to settle in Ulster in the 16th and 17th centuries. Ulster was not formally colonised in the manner of, say, New England. The two communities of native catholics and immigrant protestants remained largely separate, attending different churches and being brought up in different cultural traditions. The protestants were generally the more affluent; they tended to have larger farms, built mills, and dominated the professions.

203. The City of Derry was effectively taken over by a group of venture capitalists from the Corporation of the City of London in 1613 and renamed Londonderry. It became the emotional centre of protestantism in Ulster. This was reinforced in 1689 when 13 apprentices prevented the governor of the city from surrendering it to King James' army. Despite being king of Great Britain, King James[1] was strongly associated in the protestant mind with catholicism. Over the years the action of the Apprentice Boys and King James' subsequent defeat at the Battle of the Boyne (12 July 1690) became associated with protestant superiority.[2] The Apprentice Boys March is held every year on 12 August. A number of other marches were added over the years and the protestant movement was institutionalised during Victorian times into the Orange Order.[3]

204. Resistance to British rule among the catholic population of Ireland developed significantly in the 19th Century. Initially termed 'Fenians' and subsequently 'Republicans', in 1905 they formed a political movement called 'Sinn Fein' with a paramilitary branch known as the 'Irish Republican Brotherhood', the 'Irish National Volunteers' and then the IRA. During Easter 1916 the IRA staged an uprising which centred on the General Post Office in Dublin. It was forcefully suppressed by the British Army which at the time saw this as rebellion, treason and an unwarranted distraction from the First World War.

205. The 26 counties of Southern Ireland were granted Home Rule in 1921: Sinn Fein was elected largely unopposed in 124 of the 128 constituencies. Independence followed in 1922. A civil war then broke out in the South, which resulted in the IRA and Sinn Fein being outlawed in the Republic. Eire was technically a Dominion of the United Kingdom until 1948.

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[1] King James II, brother of King Charles II, who ruled from 1685 to 1688.

[2] The Battle of the Boyne was fought on 1 July 1690 (in the Old Style, pre-1752 Calendar). In the New Style Calendar the date is rendered as 12 July.

[3] Named after William of Orange, husband of Queen Mary II (and grandson of King Charles I) and who subsequently ruled (with Mary) as King William III. Queen Mary was the elder daughter of King James II, and was brought up in the protestant faith: she married William in 1677, and acceded to the throne of Great Britain in 1689.

206. Northern Ireland was given its own constitution the same year, in a set of measures which were seen initially as temporary pending the unification of the North and South by mutual consent. Unionists won 40 of the 52 seats in Stormont and effectively institutionalised their own position of advantage. One of Stormont's early acts was to remove the safeguards for the catholic minority. All important posts were held by protestants, and local elections were manipulated to ensure a protestant advantage. For example, in Londonderry 19,000 protestants controlled eight of the 12 wards, leaving only four for 36,000 catholics. This gave the minority effective and permanent control of the city council.

207. By the early 1960s discrimination had become institutionalised. It was not that legislation was discriminatory in itself, but rather that the way it was applied in practice discriminated against the catholic minority. In 1969 Londonderry was the most deprived city in the United Kingdom. 33,000 of the 36,000 catholics were crowded into the Victorian slums of the Creggan and the Bogside. Unemployment in Londonderry was the highest in the UK. A similar pattern applied in Belfast (with a population of 385,000) and many of the other towns throughout Northern Ireland.

208. Traditional industries such as shipbuilding, textiles and manufacturing declined after 1945. By the late 1960s poverty and social deprivation in the catholic enclaves of Londonderry and Belfast was appalling. In some cases families of 14 lived in four rooms, with children aged five woken at 2a.m. every night to roam the streets, in order to allow sleeping in shifts. This deprivation and discrimination was well known in Stormont. Captain Terence O'Neill, elected as Prime Minister in 1963, was seen as a responsible reformer with a genuine wish to improve the lot of the catholics. However, much of the protestant community had developed what seemed to be a siege mentality. They had lived through independence and civil war in the South, and had seen the Republic stagnate since independence. They felt that their economic and social advantages were at risk, as was their cultural identity. These attitudes tended to strengthen unionist and loyalist sentiments, perhaps best characterised by the expression 'No Surrender'.

209. Catholic reaction to discrimination was focussed in the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and similar movements. During the 1960s the civil rights campaign in the Southern United States had been widely televised. NICRA was raised in 1967. It was broadly moderate. It aimed at social reform such as ending discrimination in jobs and housing. The existence and activities of NICRA had the effect of strengthening loyalist retrenchment. NICRA staged a march in August 1968 which passed off peacefully.

210. However, a NICRA march on 5 October 1968 clashed with an Orange Order March. This led to rioting in Londonderry in what was the first fully-televised event of its kind in the UK. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was not well controlled, used unnecessary force and gained a bad reputation. The violence escalated from then on. A march in January 1969 was ambushed by loyalists at Burntollet Bridge. The RUC was not well prepared: 87 people were hospitalised and there was more rioting in Londonderry.

211. Captain O'Neill had introduced some genuine reforms in November 1968 but this was perceived by the unionist community as weakness. O'Neill resigned in early

1969 and was replaced by another moderate, the Rt Hon James Chichester-Clark. Violence continued to escalate through the summer of 1969. NICRA had become associated with extreme republicanism and the RUC with loyalism. This was particularly true of its reserve force, the Ulster Special Constabulary, known as the 'B' Specials.

212. The Apprentice Boys March in Londonderry was scheduled for 12 August 1969. It was felt that banning the march would cause political difficulties with the loyalists. Stormont decided to allow the march to take place. However, its decision was based on complete ignorance of the likely catholic reaction: no Stormont politician had been in the Bogside or the Creggan for several months. The march was met with a violent nationalist protest. The RUC was completely overwhelmed by the scale of the violence. Of a total strength of 3,000 across Northern Ireland, almost half of the RUC were present in Londonderry. They attempted to maintain order between over 15,000 marchers and several thousand nationalists. Violence broke out when the two sides came into contact. Petrol bombs were thrown and the first deaths occurred. Nationalists erected barricades in the streets to keep loyalists out. When the RUC entered the Bogside to take them down, they were followed by 50-100 loyalists. The RUC and loyalists subsequently withdrew, but had completely alienated the catholics in Londonderry. Violence spread across the city, then to Belfast and other towns. Rioting continue throughout 13 August. The Press, TV and NICRA reacted with inflammatory reporting. The B Specials were called out. NICRA responded by calling for 'diversions' across Northern Ireland to take the pressure off Londonderry. During 14 August the RUC lost control in Londonderry and called in the Army. 1st Battalion the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire deployed to separate loyalists and nationalists, and hence became the first Army unit to deploy onto the streets of Northern Ireland during the campaign.

THE EARLY YEARS

Figure 2-1: Foot Patrol, Early 1970s

213. Ten rifle companies were present in Northern Ireland that day. They were reinforced in just over 24 hours by the UK SPEARHEAD Battalion, 3rd Battalion the Light Infantry, which was deployed from Plymouth. By 19 August the situation had settled down to a pattern of occasional rioting and 'aggro' (from aggravation, a term used to describe minor disorder or violent behaviour often characterised by verbal abuse and stonethrowing). The Army was deployed to interpose itself between protestant and catholic areas. Catholics viewed its arrival with a mixture of suspicion and relief. Most of them felt that it was there to protect them, but the republican perception was that the British Army was an army of occupation, which reflected myths and legends about the Easter Rising.

214. Ten people were killed and 899 injured in the violence in July and August 1969. The figure included 368 policemen injured. The response from Whitehall was swift. On 19 August the British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Harold Wilson, issued the 'Downing Street Declaration', under which Whitehall undertook to continue to support Stormont 'provided that the Stormont Administration proceed energetically with its programme of reforms.' The Cameron Report[4] looked at the events of August and September. It concluded that Stormont discriminated against catholics; that the B Specials were partisan; and that the RUC used unnecessary violence, lacked discipline, were generally inept and were ineffective due to a lack of numbers. The Hunt Enquiry into policing in Northern Ireland delivered its report on 3 October.[5] It resulted in wide reform of the RUC and, in particular, recommended the disbandment of the B Specials.

215. The rest of 1969 and early 1970 was a period of sporadic rioting and public disorder. Rural areas were fairly quiet and the B Specials were effective in keeping order there. However, the Lower Falls district of Belfast and the Bogside and Creggan were seen as catholic 'No Go' areas, particularly by protestants. Violence started again with the Easter Marches over the weekend of 29-31 March 1970, with major riots in the (protestant) Shankill and (catholic) Ballymurphy districts of Belfast. Barricades were erected. Royal Engineers dismantled them once they had been cleared by baton charges. There was further violence in June with the beginning of the Orange Order marches. A genuine problem faced the security forces: a strange mixture of fanaticism, what was seen as an uncompromising desire to march in formal parades,[6] and a deep-seated importance attached to every yard of traditional protestant marching routes. Those routes often did have historical significance but also reinforced the image of protestant ascendancy in the face of the catholic community. Over the night of 27-28 June 1970 six people died and 61 were wounded by gunfire by paramilitaries. The figure included three soldiers wounded. Gunmen were increasingly using rioting as a cover for shooting, both across the sectarian divide and at the security forces. The Army estimated that 1629 rounds had been fired from catholic areas, 264 from protestant areas and 30 by the security forces. About 1600 CS gas grenades or canisters had also been used by the security forces.

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[4] 'Report of the Commission on Disturbances in Northern Ireland', Cmnd 532.

[5] Chapter 3, para 307. Lord Hunt had led the Mount Everest Expedition in 1953 and retired from the Army as a Brigadier. In 1969 he was Chairman of the Parole Board. His Committee consisted of himself and two senior police officers.

[6] Chapter 2, Figure 2-2. Officers of the Orange Order had traditionally dressed in suits, Orange Sashes and bowler hats in a way that had become recognisably sectarian.

Figure 2-2: Orange Order March

216. Violence flared up again on the evening of 3 July. An infantry company was conducting a planned house search in Balkan Street in the Lower Falls when it became encircled by rioters. A battalion operation was mounted to relieve the trapped company. Whilst that was taking place the brigade commander, circling in a helicopter, saw barricades being erected. He discussed the situation rapidly with the General Officer Commanding (GOC) and almost immediately thereafter gave orders for a large-scale area search involving four battalions.[7] In practice a curfew was in force all that night and the next day. 107 weapons, 25lbs of explosives and 21,000 rounds of ammunition were found. Four civilians died and 68 were injured. The Army fired 1427 rounds. Officially known as 'the Balkan Street Search', it rapidly passed into republican mythology as 'the Rape of the Falls'. Although intended as taking a hard line against violence, it did not in practice discriminate between those perpetrating violence and the remainder of the community.

217. The Army had been under significant pressure to 'sort out' the Lower Falls. 'Sorting out' was taken to mean imposing law and order and enabling the RUC to patrol without assistance. The Army had relatively few options open to it other than house searches. Tactically the Balkan Street Search was a limited success. However, it was a significant reverse at the operational level. It handed a significant information

[7] The Brigade Commander's helicopter had to make a forced landing because the pilot believed it had been hit by small arms fire. This may have contributed to his decision. His discussion with the Commander, Land Forces (CLF)/GOC took place soon afterwards. See also Chapter 8, para 829.

operations opportunity to the IRA, and this was exploited to the full.[8] The Government and Army media response was unsophisticated and unconvincing. The search also convinced most moderate catholics that the Army was pro-loyalist. The majority of the catholic population became effectively nationalist, if they were not already. The IRA gained significant support. It was ironic that, with Army assistance, there had been more police patrolling of the Falls in the period before the Search than there had been for many years. It was notable that Stormont ministers had called for an end to the No Go areas but did not visit to ascertain the real situation.

Figure 2-3: Public Order Operations, Early 1970s

218. During the late summer of 1970 the situation gradually deteriorated. Soldiers expressed genuine sympathy for the population as a whole. Many were astonished at what they saw as the squalor and the narrow-mindedness that was common to so many of the population in the urban areas in which they were deployed. As the year progressed there was a shift from rioting to armed violence. By early 1971 there was no doubt that the IRA, and especially PIRA, was the principal threat. By the summer of 1971 there were ten to 15 serious incidents per month. The nature of the violence had escalated, with a number of significant 'firsts'. The first British soldier to be killed in the Troubles died on 6 February 1971. The first wave of incendiary attacks took place from 4 to 10 March, and the first directional anti-personnel device ('claymore') was used on 8 May. It was against this increasing violence that the decision to reintroduce Internment was taken.

[8] At the time it was normal to refer to enemy or adversary information operations as 'propaganda', whilst referring to those of the security forces as part of an 'information campaign'. This publication uses the term 'information operation(s)' throughout.

219. Internment had been used several times before. Between 1957 and 1962 – the most recent IRA campaign - it had been applied on both sides of the Border and had been generally effective.[9] In 1971 it was not introduced South of the Border, and much of the valuable intelligence that the B Specials had previously supplied was now absent or dated. The Rt Hon Brian Faulkner, Stormont Prime Minister since 23 March 1971, persuaded the Rt Hon Edward Heath, the British Prime Minister, to support Internment, contrary to military advice.[10] The Army and RUC were poorly prepared: suspect lists were badly out of date and detention facilities were inadequate. The former led to many of the wrong people being arrested and the latter meant that those arrested could not be properly segregated during screening. In addition the Army subjected a small number[11] to deep interrogation techniques which had been developed in other theatres during the 1950s and 1960s.

220. Operation DEMETRIUS, the introduction of Internment, was in practice an operational level reverse. A considerable number of terrorist suspects were interned: the net total of active IRA terrorists still at large decreased by about 400 between July and December 1971. A very large amount of intelligence had been gained: the number of terrorists arrested doubled in six months. However, the information operations opportunity handed to the republican movement was enormous. Both the reintroduction of internment and the use of deep interrogation techniques had a major impact on popular opinion across Ireland, in Europe and the US. Put simply, on balance and with the benefit of hindsight, it was a major mistake.

221. However, the security forces took advantage of Internment to generate a significant tactical advantage. Attrition of terrorists through the remainder of 1971 and early 1972 was considerable. To that extent the security forces held the initiative in Northern Ireland. However, barricades had begun to go up again in the Creggan and the Bogside, and marches were still a major problem. NICRA's response to a ban on any given march was to hold it illegally, and to seek confrontation and publicity. The security force response was typically to prevent the march reaching given trouble spots (such as a protestant enclave) and to conduct arrest operations in order to pick up ringleaders. The IRA would sometimes use marches and demonstrations as cover to shoot at the security forces. It was this set of circumstances that led to the events of Sunday, 30 January 1972: Bloody Sunday.

222. A march planned for that day in Londonderry had been banned. The Army had put a number of manned barriers in place to stop the march entering the protestant areas of the Old City. It was also planned to mount an arrest operation as the march began to disperse, so as to arrest the ringleaders and to deter further illegal marches. The Brigade operation order said that it was anticipated that the arrest operation would take place on foot. However, one battalion commander decided to use a mixture of armoured and softskin vehicles to carry his men right up to the rioting marchers, before they debussed and started making arrests. A few moments before the operation was mounted a high velocity shot was fired at the soldiers from the area of the rioters. The operation went ahead and three platoons debussed in

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[9] Chapter 3, para 302.
[10] Chapter 4, para 405 and Chapter 8, para 828.
[11] 12 initially; 15 in total.

three different areas in the immediate vicinity of the rioters. Almost immediately shots were fired and within minutes 12 civilians were dead.[12]

223. The events of Bloody Sunday were immediately exploited by a republican information operation. The consequences ran around the world and could still be felt more than 30 years after the event. It is probably the only event in the Troubles to be the subject of two Judicial Enquiries.

224. However, those events should be seen against a background of the realisation in Whitehall that political action was required to institute adequate representation of the catholic minority at governmental and local level. A number of measures were present in an extant Stormont White Paper but they carried little weight with catholics, who were long accustomed to what they saw as the manipulation of affairs by Stormont. Whitehall had come to realise that the conditions of the 1969 Downing Street Declaration were not going to be met by Stormont. On 24 March 1972 the British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Edward Heath, announced the dissolution of Stormont and the reintroduction of Direct Rule from Westminster. This would be effected by a Secretary of State supported by a Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

225. The dissolution was announced as a 'political initiative' but in practice little was achieved politically. The Army was directed, and agreed, to take a low key approach. The protestants were concerned: unionist politicians and loyalist paramilitaries were hostile. The Army's posture had little effect on weaning the catholics from supporting the IRA. PIRA regrouped, retrained and reorganised. The level of violence increased dramatically through 1972, as Table 2-1 shows:

Ser	Statistic	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
1.	Shooting incidents	399	724	1223	1215	2718
2.	Weapons captured	78	74	52	58	101
3.	Arrests	375	229	199	233	364

Table 2-1: Operational Statistics, March-July 1972

226. By July 1972 it was reasonable to observe that a firmer stance against the IRA would have generated a better environment for political development. The 'low profile' approach had failed, an explosive situation was developing and control was being lost. On what became known as 'Bloody Friday', 21 July 1972, PIRA exploded ten bombs killing ten and wounding 130 mostly protestant civilians. The Army and Whitehall had been considering an operation to reimpose law and order throughout Northern Ireland, and particularly the No Go areas of Belfast and Londonderry, since 9 July. It would require the reinforcement of the Army by seven battalions and a

[12] A 13th died later in hospital. These remarks are based on the Widgery Report of 18 April 1972. At the time of writing the Saville Inquiry is yet to report and it is acknowledged that the findings of that Inquiry may shed a different light on the events of that day.

brigade HQ under Operation GLASSCUTTER. The operation to clear the barricades and re-impose law and order, which would last for about three months, was Operation MOTORMAN.

Figure 2-4: Operation MOTORMAN

OPERATION MOTORMAN

Operation MOTORMAN brought to an end a spiral of violence in the Province which had seen 95 terrorist-related deaths in July 1972. The catalyst for action was Bloody Friday on 21 July when bombs were planted in Belfast, with similar damage in Londonderry.

Over the preceding months republican and then protestant No Go areas had been established. The security forces refrained from operating in these areas for fear of causing civilian casualties. Having considered a number of radical and passive military options, military planners recommended a massive insertion of force to swamp the strongholds with troops and force the IRA or loyalist paramilitaries to fight or withdraw. This was assessed to offer the best chance of neutralising the extremists and capitalising on public support in the wake of recent terrorist attacks. A major and rapid reinforcement was made from UK and BAOR to bring troop levels on the eve of Operation MOTORMAN to over 28,000 soldiers, including 5,300 UDR, supported by AFVs to provide automatic fire from under armour if required and a troop of Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers (AVRE: referred to as “armoured bulldozers”) to clear barricades. It was the largest troop concentration in Ireland since 1945.

On 28 July, following Cabinet approval the preceding day, announcements were made to warn of the Army's intentions and to give communities a final opportunity to remove the barricades. The operation was launched at 0400 hours on Monday 31 July when an outer cordon was set up around the cities. The Bogside and Creggan estates in Londonderry and the Andersonstown and Ballymurphy estates in Belfast were sealed off and troops moved in to clear the barricades. All areas were secured by 0700 hours with no security force casualties and two terrorist fatalities in Londonderry.

Operation MOTORMAN was based on the understanding that authority had to be re-established throughout the Province without alienating the populace. It broke the IRA's safe havens, from which it had been able to plan attacks and spread its influence. The security forces had expected an intense firefight but the policy of clearly signalling the Army's intentions combined with restraint on the part of the soldiers meant that heavy civilian casualties were avoided. It confirmed that the British Government would not be seen to be beaten, and broke the cycle of violence that characterised the early years of the campaign.

Operation MOTORMAN may be seen as a turning point in the campaign, changing it from a counter insurgency to a counter terrorist operation. Never again would the instances of violence approach the 1972 levels.

Figure 2-5: Operation MOTORMAN

227. The Operation was formally closed down on 1 December 1972. Tactically it had been a reasonable success. It had re-imposed the ability of the security forces to operate throughout Northern Ireland. It had demonstrated that the rule of law would be applied in all places. It had reassured moderates of all persuasions, and PIRA had lost significant face. A large number of terrorists had been detained and interned, but few of the PIRA higher command had been caught. Operationally, however, MOTORMAN was a great success. It was a major defeat for PIRA as an insurgent body. It showed the World that the British Army could operate swiftly, efficiently and even-handedly. It clearly demonstrated Whitehall's determination not to be beaten. Unusually, the British Government's information operation to support MOTORMAN was well-handled and a success.

THE LATER 1970s

228. Following MOTORMAN, PIRA were in disarray and the NIO was beginning to make progress on the political front. A Border Plebiscite was held on 8 March 1973: this showed that the majority of the population wished to remain part of the UK. More importantly, it reassured the unionist community that Whitehall did not intend to abandon them nor force them to integrate with the Republic. Elections for an Assembly with limited powers and a small Executive took place on 28 June 1973. The Chairman of the new Assembly was the former Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Brian Faulkner. The Sunningdale Conference on 6 December agreed areas of common interest between Dublin, Whitehall and the NIO. Its principles were agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly on 14 December.

229. The OIRA had declared a ceasefire in 1972; PIRA had been badly beaten and its situation deteriorated. Between May and December 1973 1,798 members of PIRA were arrested. One PIRA company had to be disbanded. Arrests include one brigade commander, eight battalion commanders and 39 members of HQ staffs. The security forces were achieving significant success.

230. 1973 and 1974 saw the release of numbers of internees as a part of a political process with the eventual goal of the reintroduction of self-government. It was intended that Internment would be phased out as part of that process. However, 1974 was dominated by the Ulster Workers Council (UWC) Strike. A small hard core of unionists were strongly opposed to the Sunningdale Agreement. A procedural motion in the Assembly on 14 May was the catalyst for a strike across Northern Ireland. Most utilities and essential services were affected, but the Workers Council was careful to ensure that minimum levels of provision were met. On 24 May Brian Faulkner persuaded the new British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Harold Wilson, to use troops to take over the distribution of fuel from the strikers, contrary to military advice. That was done on 27 May. The UWC responded by intensifying other aspects of the strike. Brian Faulkner resigned on the afternoon of 28 May and the Executive collapsed. The Sunningdale Agreement was largely dead and both the catholics and Dublin had become yet further convinced of the entrenched position of the protestant community.

231. However, PIRA survived and evolved. With many of their best men in prison, they attempted a summer offensive in 1974. In the three months from June to August 621 PIRA members were arrested, 373 were charged with terrorist offences and 61

issued with Interim Custody Orders (ie, interned). The summer offensive had been thwarted. The third quarter of 1973 was the quietest since 1971. In October and November PIRA conducted a bombing campaign on the UK mainland with bombs in Guildford, Woolwich and Birmingham. Although PIRA gained publicity it did not win sympathy or support for what was seen as an attack on innocent civilians. PIRA had, however, learned that one bomb in London had more impact than ten bombs in Northern Ireland. In early 1975 PIRA announced a ceasefire which lasted for most of the year. It was not total: violence averaged one explosion, one device neutralised and four shootings per day. In March almost all incidents were inter-sectarian (ie, republican against loyalist or vice versa) or internecine (typically 'disciplinary action' by PIRA, or inter-factional disagreements amongst the loyalist paramilitaries).

232. PIRA gradually recommenced activity but in a new, effective cellular structure. Its tactical groupings were called 'Active Service Units' (ASU) typically of four to ten men. In the last three months of 1975, 17 members of the security forces were killed and 57 wounded: the ceasefire had become meaningless. PIRA's attacks were fewer; but more selective, better conducted and more effective. This period demonstrated the emergence of PIRA as a highly effective terrorist organisation.

233. By the end of the 1970s most of the active members of PIRA and several other organisations were known to the security forces, often down to the level of 'volunteer' – equivalent to private soldier. The chief obstacle to arresting and convicting terrorists lay in the dynamics of evidence: the forensic and legal process. The security forces either had information about offences that was not strong enough to bring a conviction; or it had evidence it did not wish to use because to do so in court would reveal the 'source'. Protection of the source was a key issue. If the source was technical, the security forces often did not wish to reveal the capability of the technical means used. If the source was human, the security forces often could not reveal his or her identity. Thus it was quite common for people suspected of up to a dozen or more terrorist offences to be able to move openly in the community. This, in part led to: much greater emphasis on forensic evidence; much greater awareness of the importance of forensic evidence on the part of the Army; and equal awareness of the need to avoid leaving forensic evidence on the part of terrorist organisations.

CASUALTIES

697 British servicemen were killed by Irish terrorists between 1969 and 2006. Of those, 197 were in the UDR, seven in the Royal Irish Regiment HSF and four in the RAF. The remainder were members of the Regular Army or Royal Marines. 155 of the UDR and all of the HSF were killed off duty, as were roughly two dozen Regular Servicemen. Forty five were killed on the British mainland, five in the Irish Republic and eight in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Six were killed by loyalists, the remainder by republican terrorists.

During the same period the Army killed 301 people of whom 121 were republican terrorists and ten were loyalist terrorists. The remainder were civilians. Republican terrorists killed 2148 people, including Servicemen. 162 were other republican terrorists and 28 were loyalist terrorists. Loyalist terrorists killed 1071 people. It is ironic that republican terrorists killed 30% more republican terrorists than the Army did.

Casualty figures for this publication were derived from *Lost Lives* by McKittrick, Keltes, Feeney and Thornton, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh (Revised 2001). *Lost Lives* is the only comprehensive source available to the private citizen and is regarded as an impeccable source for its impartiality.

234. Sectarian killing had become common, but a particularly vicious feud erupted in County Armagh between South Armagh PIRA and North Armagh UVF. The two organisations probably numbered less than 30 terrorists each. Between 19 December 1975 and 12 January 1976 over 40 people were killed and 100 wounded. The main effect of this feud was to raise tension and the perception of the political need to be doing something. The last vestiges of the Sunningdale Agreement died quietly and the bulk of the population tacitly accepted Direct Rule from Whitehall, which lasted until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The RUC, which had been badly demoralised in 1969, had recovered its operational effectiveness to the point where the operational primacy of the RUC in security operations was formally re-established in 1976.

235. The political situation had reached impasse and PIRA had been forced to regroup, restructure and reorganise. Those two conditions held for much of the rest of the Troubles. Although there was to be political development, and security force activity would continue, the scene was set for a long campaign. Key events in the rest of the 1970s were: the deployment of elements of the Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment to South Armagh and subsequently the rest of Northern Ireland, from 1976; a second, less effective workers strike in 1977; and so-called 'dirty protest' by prisoners in the Maze prison. The latter was related to the issue of 'special category' conditions granted to internees, and led to the hunger strikes of the 1980s. More widely, the abstention of the one Northern Irish socialist MP at Westminster, Gerry Fitt, on a crucial vote on 28 March 1979 brought down the Labour Government. In the subsequent General Election the Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, bringing in a Conservative government that lasted until 1997.

THE 1980s

236. The military situation by 1980 was that six regular battalions were stationed in Northern Ireland on two-year tours. Three further battalions undertook Roulement Tours of four and a half months. Although this was reduced to two battalions and tours were extended to six months, this broad pattern of deployment applied through the 1980s and into the mid-1990s. The Roulement battalions operated in the most active areas of South Armagh and West Belfast. The UDR operated across wide areas where there was comparatively little terrorist activity. In 1980 it had 11 battalions mostly comprising part-timers, but the proportion of full-timers increased as absolute numbers declined, producing a more effective force of eight battalions by the end of the decade.[13]

237. PIRA's strength was fairly stable with a hard core of about 30 leaders plus 200-300 active terrorists. It broadened the nature and scope of its activity with new weapons, new methods of operations and in new areas. It developed a home-made mortar

[13] See box on the Ulster Defence Regiment on page 3-5.

capability, conducting a series of attacks on security force bases. It obtained some heavy weapons such as Russian heavy machine guns and a small number of SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles. PIRA tactics and its internal security were by now very effective and continued to improve. It enjoyed some foreign support, particularly from Colonel Gadaffi's regime in Libya. It undertook a campaign in continental Europe with attacks on Army and RAF targets in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. However, that was the practical limit of its reach and it did not sustain operations on the Continent for long. Perhaps the most spectacular aspect of its continental campaign was the planned ASU attack on an Army target in Gibraltar in March 1988. In the event three members of PIRA were shot dead by the SAS in the Territory.

238. The INLA had developed out of the rump of the OIRA. It was much smaller and less effective than PIRA. INLA was neither as skilled nor as disciplined as the PIRA and committed a number of major atrocities (such as the bombing of the Droppin Well Inn near Ballykelly on 5 December 1982) and significant assassinations (including the Rt Hon Airey Neave, blown up in his car at the Palace of Westminster on 30 March 1979). For much of the 1980s INLA was preoccupied with an internecine leadership struggle which considerably limited the movement's effectiveness.

239. Loyalist paramilitaries continued to operate against the catholic community but on a fairly limited scale. They presented themselves as the protectors of the protestant community but in practice were often little more than a collection of gangsters, a description which could also apply to a number of republican terrorists.

240. The hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981, which resulted in the death of Bobby Sands and nine others, ended quietly when their families made it clear to remaining hunger strikers that when they fell into a coma they would permit resuscitation and feeding by medical staff. This was a convenient way out of an impasse for all sides. The initial deaths had been an important information operations opportunity for PIRA, but that wore off as more died. Whitehall had stood firm in the face of the strikes. It was again determined not to be seen to be beaten, but wanted an end to the continuing bad headlines. However, whilst on hunger strike Bobby Sands had been elected as a Westminster MP, although he never took his seat in Parliament. In the by-election that followed his death his political agent Owen Carron was elected. The head of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams, was elected at the next General Election. Thus the republican movement, which had previously used an almost entirely military strategy, found itself drawn into mainstream politics almost by chance.

241. PIRA then developed its strategy into a two-track approach: 'the ballot box and the bomb'. This shift of emphasis towards politics was confirmed with the emergence of Gerry Adams as the *de facto* head of the republican movement. Sinn Fein never attracted a high percentage of the vote[14] but gradually became an accepted part of mainstream politics. This could be viewed as part of the polarisation of Northern Irish politics towards the extremes: Sinn Fein's rise was largely at the moderate Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)'s expense. Alternatively it could be seen as a process of moving extreme republicanism away from violence and towards legitimate political activity. Although resisted in some quarters, this process

[14] For example, 13.4% of the Northern Ireland vote in the 1983 British General Election.

has continued and was a factor in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. A Government ban on allowing Sinn Fein members to be heard on the media in the 1980s was easily circumvented and eventually rescinded.

242. The British Government's main military objective in the 1980s was the destruction of PIRA, rather than resolving the conflict. The Army's operations during this time had developed into a sophisticated mix of operations. The bulk of the Army, both Regular and UDR, undertook visible 'framework operations'.[15] These were primarily intended to reassure the public and deter terrorist activity, whilst assisting the development of intelligence. Given effective intelligence that could be converted into evidence, the terrorist could normally be arrested quite easily and prosecuted through the courts. This might be called a 'forensic and judicial' process, and was of course the normal procedure for the RUC.

243. On a small number of occasions operations were planned to catch terrorists undertaking serious and violent offences. Terrorists were killed on about 13 or 14 such operations, and arrested in a number of others. The most famous was that at Loughgall on 8 May 1987 when eight terrorists died.[16] Just over 40 terrorists were killed in those operations, including several of their most experienced operators. PIRA never found a solution to this tactic. The strength of public condemnation with which nationalist media reported such operations indicated the serious effect they had on PIRA.

244. The three key tenets of Army policy in the 1980s were reassurance, deterrence and attrition. Most of the attrition took place through arrest and conviction. Overt operations probably killed at most a dozen terrorists during the 1980s. The number killed in covert operations was in absolute terms not much greater. In any case attrition of individual terrorists *of itself* had little effect on the outcome of the campaign. However, PIRA seem to have been brought to believe that there was no answer to Army covert operations, and that they would not win through violence. That was probably a key factor.

245. The main political development in the 1980s was the Anglo-Irish Agreement at Hillsborough Castle signed on 15 November 1985. Its main effect was to allow Dublin to advance views and proposals on a range of issues relating to Northern Ireland in a forum (a standing inter-governmental committee) established for that purpose. It was welcomed by the catholic community and greatly disliked by the unionists, whose MPs boycotted Westminster for some months. In retrospect it can be seen as a useful stepping stone towards normalisation but, as the only major political development in a decade, scarcely a great leap forward.

246. PIRA activity levels increased towards the end of the 1980s, as did those of the security forces. However, the overall picture was one of a slow and steady return to normality which would continue well beyond the end of the 1990s.

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[15] Chapter 5, para 506.
[16] Chapter 5, Fig 5-6.

THE LONG TAIL TO THE CAMPAIGN

247. In 1990 PIRA deployed a new weapon – a Barrett .50" heavy calibre rifle – to South Armagh and for a while this grabbed headlines. It was first used at Crossmaglen on 16 March 1990. The round struck a soldier's helmet, but he was not seriously injured. Thereafter PIRA snipers killed seven soldiers in South Armagh before effective counter-measures were found. Although tragic, this episode was a relatively small blip in the statistics of the campaign.[17] PIRA declared a ceasefire in November 1994. That ceasefire was broken when Canary Wharf in London was bombed in early 1996 and one later incident in the Province resulted in the most recent death of a soldier – Lance Bombardier Restorick, shot outside Bessbrook on 12 February 1997. At time of writing it is reasonable to hope that that will be the last. The signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the laying down and decommissioning of PIRA weapons seem to indicate that for practical purposes the terrorist campaign is over. Decommissioning is as much a symbolic as a functional issue in this case.

248. That is not to suggest that Northern Ireland has achieved a state of lasting peace. The signs appear good. However, 'normality' means different things to different people. At time of writing in 2006 there are still areas of Northern Ireland out of bounds to soldiers. In 2005 Army Ammunition Technical Officers (ATO) were clearing about 30 explosive devices a month. A self-confessed high-level Sinn Fein informer was murdered in the Republic on 26 April 2006. However, the Army has withdrawn from many of its bases. It has demolished most of its observation posts (OP) and permanent vehicle check points (PVCP). Its strength in the Province is shrinking to that of a peacetime garrison; roughly the same as it was in the spring of 1969. On current plans Operation BANNER will be formally closed down in 2007.

249. The road has not been smooth. In the mid-1990s the greatest threat was assessed to be that of dissident Republicans who refused to accept the ceasefire. New 'splinter' organisations such as the Real IRA (RIRA) and Continuity IRA (CIRA) emerged. Dissident Republicans were responsible for the Omagh bomb on 16 August 1998, when 28 civilians died in the largest single incident occasioning loss of life in the history of the Troubles. Loyalist marches caused trouble, most notably at Drumcree where the Army was involved in major public order operations for several successive years. Nineteen battalions were involved in public order operations at times during 1998.

250. Thanks to many factors, including a significant injection of EU regional development grants, Northern Ireland is currently a prosperous and confident place. Most of the old Victorian slums have long since gone and the number of modern, architect-designed detached houses is striking. Social conditions have improved markedly, employment is reasonably buoyant, and mass civil rights protests are things of the past. There is occasional talk of the potential for the resumption of violence. That may possibly occur. However, the social, political, economic and cultural circumstances which brought about the beginning of the Troubles are no longer present. Much of the organised crime, which was for a long time a feature of both loyalist and republican activity, is still present. On balance, the outlook for Northern Ireland has improved considerably.

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[17] Chapter 5, paras 529-530 and box.

CHAPTER 3 - THE PROTAGONISTS

301. This Chapter briefly reviews the parties to the Troubles. In 1969 the Regular Army was a highly experienced force. It had fought a number of campaigns in the long withdrawal from Empire after 1945, mostly against insurgent forces in former colonies. Campaigns had been waged in Malaya, Kenya, Aden and Cyprus. These had rarely involved over a Division, a relatively small proportion of the Army of the time. Many soldiers who had served in the Second World War were still in the Army until the mid-1960s. In 1969 the Army was reducing in size and still contained many officers and soldiers who had joined under National Service. Pay and conditions were only just being modernised with the introduction of 'pay comparability'. In addition standards of individual training were somewhat lower; for example, attendance by NCOs at tactics courses at the School of Infantry only became mandatory in the 1980s.

302. In 1969 the Republican movement consisted of about 120 men in the IRA, most of whom were veterans of the IRA campaign of 1957-1962. Fourteen were arrested on 14 August 1969; a number fled South of the Border with the Republic; and many of the rest tried to pacify rather than provoke the rioters. The IRA had been taken by surprise by the events of August 1969 and was found wanting. A popular song described the IRA as 'I Ran Away'. The first few months of violence drove many disaffected, unemployed young men into the IRA.[1] A proportion of them had little time for the older generation's talk of Marxist ideology and politics. They wanted the IRA to take direct action. The IRA was initially ill-prepared for that. However, driven by a need to regain its legitimacy as the defender of the catholic community, it started to do so. At the Ard Fheis (central council meeting) held in Dublin on 10 and 11 January 1970 it was announced that the hard-line activists had split from the main or 'official' body of the IRA, and set up its 'provisional' wing. After the OIRA ceasefire, this became the PIRA.

Figure 3-1: Republican Gunman

[1] Many individuals who rapidly rose to prominence in the republican movement were young men in August 1969. Gerry Adams was 21. Martin McGuinness was 19. Both took part in secret talks in Whitehall in 1972.

303. Training camps were set up inside the Republic. Volunteers were trained and returned to units. Weapons and explosives were procured and smuggled across the Border. Both the OIRA and PIRA grew rapidly; by July 1971 there were estimated to be about 200 members of OIRA and 500 in PIRA. Of those 700 about 130 were in Londonderry and 340 in Belfast. By the end of the year there were over 2,000 – about 1300 PIRA and 750 OIRA - of whom about 880 were active. Those numbers exclude about 400 who had already been interned. By May 1972 there were about 1700 active members of the two organisations, and a further 600 had been interned. Training levels were poor and weapons were scarce. Operation MOTORMAN was effectively the beginning of the end of the insurgent stage of the campaign. Altogether about 10,000 people were involved in the IRA between 1969 and 1972. Many could still be used for support in a number of areas. The numbers remained high through 1973: about 1600 active members plus 200 auxiliaries, 200 women and 600 youths.

304. However, PIRA was adapting and evolving. For most of Operation BANNER PIRA was the principal cause of violence. By 1978, when it had evolved fully into a cellular terrorist structure of 200-300 active members, there was no shortage of experienced men (and some women) to draw on. Despite attrition as the 1970s and 1980s went on, PIRA continued to be able to keep its numbers up. It developed efficient intelligence, quartermaster, finance and engineering branches. The latter was primarily concerned with bomb making and development. ASUs specialised, typically as bombers or gunmen. At one stage there was an all-female ASU which specialised in placing cassette incendiary devices in shops as part of PIRA's attack on commercial property. In the mid-1980s PIRA was organised into 16 principal ASUs of which ten were based South of the Border. The original brigade, battalion and company structure persisted in public for some time, not least on street art. Although PIRA declared a ceasefire in Northern Ireland in 1994, it conducted five bombing campaigns on the British Mainland in the later 1990s. Principal targets were either commercial (such as the Baltic Exchange, Bishopsgate and Canary Wharf bombs) or transport infrastructure (railway stations and motorway junctions). All of the ASUs involved were arrested, and the Police noted a considerable decline in terrorist skill levels during those campaigns.

Figure 3-2: Republican Street Art

305. By comparison, the other republican organisations such as INLA were much smaller, less well equipped and organised. They were all to some extent splinters of the IRA and therefore had some training. They tended to be organised around a small number of individuals and subject to vicious internecine feuds. They were typically dangerous but unstable.

306. There was a bewildering array of loyalist paramilitary organisations, mostly aligned to some aspect of the unionist movement. The largest was the UDA, which was perhaps the most respectable although originally an association of local vigilante groups formed in 1971. At its peak it had over 2,000 members. The most dangerous was probably the UVF, which was essentially a terrorist organisation. It had about 1,000 members at its peak. Both organisations were heavily involved in racketeering, extortion and other forms of serious crime. The loyalist movement rarely attacked the security forces. It did so on occasion in response to political activities that were unpopular with the protestant community. For example, in late 1985 and 1986 loyalists attacked the houses of over 300 members of the RUC in response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement; over 50 of them were burnt out with petrol bombs.

307. The RUC was raised in 1922. It was intended to be one-third catholic, but never recruited catholics in those numbers. By 1969 it had a total strength of 3,000, organised on a county basis with a small tactical reserve of eight platoons of about 30 men. It was badly demoralised by the events of August 1969 and needed significant rebuilding in terms of the restoration of morale, the improvement of its leadership, strength and efficiency. These were all identified by the Hunt Enquiry, which found that the key need was for effective leadership at the highest level.[2] This

Figure 3-3: Joint RUC and Army Patrol

[2] Chapter 2, para 214.

was notable by its absence early in the campaign. A new Chief Constable was brought in from London, with indifferent results. Expertise was also injected though the attachment of policemen from the mainland, one of whom – Kenneth Newman - became the Chief Constable in due course. Numbers grew steadily, but arguably it was not until Kenneth Newman took over as Chief Constable in May 1976 that the RUC really re-established itself.

308. The Army had found the RUC to be secretive, and mistrustful of outsiders – be they from the Army or politicians. That changed as the organisation matured. By 1976 RUC numbers reached 5,268. That year the detection rate for murders rose from 20% to 80% and the number of PIRA charged for terrorist offences rose from 320 to 690. In September, October and November 1976 the RUC was achieving an average of more than four convictions of terrorists per working day. The RUC had been successfully rehabilitated and its numbers continued to grow. By late 1982 its strength reached over 8,000 plus over 2,500 part-time reserves.

309. RUC Special Branch (SB) had the normal SB responsibility for countering subversion. In Northern Ireland in 1969 this was focussed almost exclusively against the IRA. Its structure was entirely inadequate to cope with the massively expanding republican movement. Its staff was seen as mediocre and was hugely overworked. Rebuilding the SB was a high priority. By 1976 or so that had largely been done, although further structural improvements were required in the 1980s to coordinate all sources of information properly and enable such information to be acted on in a timely and effective manner.

310. However, the RUC remained a largely protestant organisation and was seen as needing further reform. Chris Patten, a former Conservative minister and Governor of Hong Kong, oversaw a review in 1998 and 1999 which recommended the formation of a new police force which was more broadly-based and accountable.[3] The RUC was awarded the George Cross for its services during the Troubles. It was stood down and replaced by a new service, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Some of the recommendations of the Patten Report mirrored those in the Hunt Report 30 years before.

311. The B Specials were stood down in April 1970 and allowed to apply to join a new force, the UDR, which was to be a part of the Army. Enlistment was not automatic, as the Army took time to vet all applicants and exclude those with extremist views or connections. Like the RUC, the UDR never attracted as many catholics as it should have. The UDR was initially almost exclusively a part-time force of seven battalions. It had a cadre of regular officers and soldiers, mostly posted from other infantry regiments. 1800 UDR soldiers were available on 1 April 1970, and over 4,000 a year later. By February 1971 the UDR was capable of large scale operations, such as controlling movement into and out of Belfast in support of a major operation in the city. Its role was principally that of static security guards, local patrolling and control of vehicle movement. Its conditions of service were broadly similar to the Territorial Army (TA) with the major exception that it could not be required to serve outside Northern Ireland. In 1972 it had an establishment of 11 battalions.

[3] 'The Report of the Independent Commission for Policing for Northern Ireland', September 1999 (The Patten Report).

312. Recruiting of part-timers never reached its targets and in 1976 it was decided to raise one full-time company per battalion. Part-time strength peaked in the late 1970s at just under 6,000 but by December 1980 there were already 2,712 full-time UDR soldiers. Under the MOD 'Options for Change' White Paper at the end of the Cold War the UDR was integrated further into the Army by combining the battalions of the Royal Irish Rangers with those of the UDR to form a new regiment, the Royal Irish Regiment. The UDR became the Home Service Force element of the Regiment. Numbers were reduced with the drawdown of the security forces after the Good Friday Agreement. At time of writing the HSF was due to stand down in 2007, with the last soldiers discharged or transferred in 2008.

Figure 3-4: R IRISH HSF

313. The UDR and HSF sometimes laughingly referred to the Regular Army as the 'Redcoats'; in turn they were occasionally called 'native levies'. Locally recruited forces normally know the ground well and understand the local population. They can also, however, be partisan and can present a security risk. All these aspects could be seen in the UDR and, latterly, the HSF. Nonetheless, security breaches by members of the UDR and HSF were rare. The UDR and HSF chains of command were generally able to assess the reliability of individual members of the Regiments, and acted accordingly. The UDR and HSF performed a critical role, releasing units of the Regular Army for service in harder areas. They also did a major service by reassuring the protestant population. That was not just a matter of law and order: it was probably also a factor in ensuring that extreme loyalist violence was relatively rare because the protestant community largely did not feel itself to be at risk. In other words, the UDR served a significant operational as well as a tactical role.[4]

THE ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT

The UDR was raised on 1 April 1970 in response to the Hunt Committee report of Autumn 1969, which recommended splitting police and military functions and so disbanding the part-time Ulster Special Constabulary (the B Specials). The seven battalions of the UDR, increased to 11 in 1972, accepted some former B Specials as well as new recruits. The difference was that they were now subject to military discipline and explicitly non-secretarian.

[4] The UDR has been described as the largest infantry regiment in the British Army and the regiment which spent the longest period on active duty of any regiment since the Napoleonic Wars. Neither statement is entirely true. During the First World War many regiments had more than 11 battalions. However, no regiment served on active duty throughout the Napoleonic Wars, which only lasted for 23 years (1792-1815). Counting the HSF with the UDR, these Northern Irish soldiers served far longer on continuous active duty than any other unit of the British Army.

Initially, the UDR was successful in cross-community recruiting with 18% catholic representation but, by the late 1970s, this had dropped back to 2% due to successful intimidation by republicans. UDR soldiers, of whom about 70% were part-time members, were initially restricted to guarding key points and carrying out patrols and check points in support of the Regular Army. However, as its capability improved, so did its responsibilities. Within ten years of its formation, eight of the 11 UDR battalions had their own areas of responsibility (AOR) with full responsibility for all operations, except for crowd and riot control which were excluded from UDR tasks.

It was originally envisaged that the strength of the UDR would be 6,000 men and women but, at its peak in November 1972, it was 9,000 strong, with a gradual drop in numbers thereafter. Despite being accused in some quarters of being 'native levies' in the pay of the London government, the UDR played a major role in the campaign and its contribution should not be forgotten. As well as relieving the pressure on the Regular Army, the soldiers of the UDR provided a level of continuity and local knowledge not achievable even by resident battalions. This understanding of the local situation was not always appreciated or drawn on by Roulement units. Not least, it provided an opportunity to those who wanted to make a difference and who might otherwise have joined loyalist extremist groups. Undoubtedly, the soldiers of the UDR provided an invaluable service to the campaign despite the fact that their actions were always under scrutiny by the republican press and politicians. A very few cases of off-duty UDR soldiers involved in loyalist paramilitary activity were seized upon by its opponents but did not reflect the views of the majority.

Most UDR soldiers, both permanent cadre and part-time, accepted that they could not hide their military role and were constantly subject to intimidation and the threat of murder, particularly those catholics who chose to serve. Unlike Regular soldiers who could retire to their security force bases, the UDR soldiers lived in the community. Of the 204 UDR and R IRISH HSF soldiers killed 162, or 79%, were murdered off duty. A further 60 ex-UDR members were murdered.

In 1992 the UDR merged with the Regular Royal Irish Rangers to form the General Service (GS) and Home Service (HS) battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment. This merger brought a greater level of cross fertilisation and professionalism that had begun with the establishment of the UDR permanent cadre in the 1980s. By the late 1990s, the HS battalions had the same IS skills and responsibilities as Regular units.

314. The existence of the Border brought other parties into the conflict. The Government of Ireland, which had cooperated with Stormont during the IRA campaign of 1957-62, was deeply anti-British in the late 1960s and 1970s. Initially, therefore, there was virtually no cross-border cooperation. Internal politics in the Republic were a major factor. The Republic was set up in terms perceived as the liberation of the catholics from British oppression, of which loyalism and unionism were key parts. Thus whatever Dublin's immediate political posture, domestic opinion would tend to militate against cooperation or collaboration with Whitehall and Stormont. Furthermore, whether Fianna Fail or Fine Gael was in government in Dublin, the opposition party could always play anti-British sentiment as a political device in the Dail. Examples of where the Government of Ireland may have acted to appease domestic opinion were its attempt to bring a case against the British Government in

the European Court of Human Rights relating to Internment and the prosecution of eight SAS soldiers for illegal possession of weapons when they had crossed the border inadvertently due to a map reading error. Dublin also brought a case against the United Kingdom in 1977, relating to alleged inhuman treatment of arrested persons. The case was rejected by the Court. The Border issue took a long time to overcome. The murders of the British Ambassador to Dublin in July 1976 and Lord Mountbatten near Sligo on 27 August 1979 (the same day as the Warrenpoint bombs) created waves of public sympathy and dislike of the PIRA, which allowed some progress. By the 1980s relationships at government level were much improved. Tactical cooperation along the Border largely followed suit.[5]

315. The Irish police service, the Garda, is generally highly respected within Ireland and enjoys a different place in society from that of the RUC. IRA members fled South of the Border from the beginnings of the Troubles and had some support from the local population. It was widely believed in the North that the Garda colluded or at least turned a blind eye; as long as IRA men did not break the law in the Republic. Whilst there may have been some sympathy at an individual level, the IRA and Sinn Fein espouse a radical socialist political model and the unification of Northern Ireland with the Republic. These two aspects set the republican movement apart from much mainstream political and popular opinion in the Republic. Initially the Garda did not cooperate with the RUC; this posture softened quite early and regular meetings, direct telephone lines and similar measures were put in place. After 1979 the Garda became much more active in prosecuting terrorism. On 30 January 1982 the Garda found 50,000 rounds of ammunition in one cache - the largest amount of ammunition ever found in one operation during the Troubles. There were other equally important successes such as the arrest of the PIRA bomb maker Desmond Ellis in May 1981. However, the Garda did not deal directly with the British Army.

316. The Irish Army was, by British standards, very small and not well equipped. For much of the campaign it had at most two infantry battalions in the North/Border area, and these were not deployed full-time on operations. In fact such operations were quite rare, and the Irish Army always operated in support of the Garda. Cooperation with the British Army was developed slowly and indirectly by measures such as inviting the attendance of students at the British Army Staff College or at the School of Infantry. However, joint Irish-British military operations along the Border, which might have done much to deny PIRA its safe havens in the Republic, were never conducted.

317. The rest of the World was, by and large, little more than an audience to the drama of Northern Ireland. Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany were drawn in by the PIRA campaign in Europe. France was involved indirectly by links between INLA and the French terrorist group *Action Direct*, and directly through the French Navy's seizure of the MV 'EKSUND' on 31 May 1987. 'EKSUND' was carrying 3,500 crates of arms and ammunition, including 20 SA-7s, 1,000 AKs, ten DShKM heavy machine guns and two tonnes of Semtex commercial high explosive. The French authorities believed that Libya was involved in the provision of this material. PIRA also had links with the Basque terrorist group ETA. Another country with less than desirable connections with Northern Ireland terrorists was Colombia – three republican

[5] Chapter 4, paras 411-414.

suspects were arrested by the Colombian authorities in 2001 and were convicted of having dealings with the terrorist group FARC.

318. The biggest foreign contributor to Northern Ireland was the population of the USA. The US organisation NORAID collected large amounts of cash for PIRA; for example, about £100,000 in 1974. The amount peaked during the hunger strikes in the early 1980s, with $250,000 being raised in six months. However, the quantity varied considerably and dried up whenever republican terrorists committed a major atrocity such as the Enniskillen or Omagh bombs. There was at times a view in Britain that US extradition procedures favoured members of PIRA who were on the run in the USA. However, even at the height of the hunger strikes, 60% of all media reporting in the US was pro-British. A director of NORAID was charged in the US with terrorist-related offences in October 1981. That same year Ronald Reagan, at the time a presidential candidate, publicly announced a 'hands-off' approach with regards to Northern Ireland for his administration, a policy broadly followed by all US administrations during the Troubles. Overall, US aid to Irish republicans was limited, and largely restricted to the efforts of a few individuals. The events of 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington largely removed American sympathy for terrorism world-wide, and this effect, keenly felt in Northern Ireland, forced Irish republicans further towards pursuing their cause in the political rather than the military arena.

CHAPTER 4 - STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL LEVEL ISSUES

STRATEGIC ISSUES

401. Since most of the World appeared largely content for Britain to conduct its affairs in Northern Ireland without interference, it is not clear what strategic questions were at stake. The general line of strategic direction from Whitehall appears to have been to resolve matters in Northern Ireland at reasonable cost and without undue distraction to the normal conduct of business. To that end the direction given to GOCs, at least until late 1971, was to keep Stormont in business if possible. The Border (see paras 411-414) was potentially a strategic issue, but was not regarded as such in Westminster for much of the Troubles.

402. The question of the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom should therefore be considered. Under the Ireland Act of 1949 Northern Ireland would remain a part of the United Kingdom as long as Stormont wished it to be so. However Stormont could be, and was, dissolved. The Ireland Act could potentially have been repealed or amended by an Act of the Westminster Parliament. No other part of the UK had its own parliament in 1969. The establishment of governmental institutions in Northern Ireland in 1921 gave the impression that Whitehall's role was effectively custodial. The Westminster Convention of 1928 meant that events in Northern Ireland would not normally be discussed in the House of Commons. Thus it could be said that, in Whitehall and Westminster, there was a general lack of interest in Northern Ireland, which persisted after 1969. Geography also played a part: for much of the British population, seeing the violence brought to their TV screens, Northern Ireland was a remote place with which it had little affinity. On reflection it seems unlikely that the level of violence seen in Londonderry or Belfast would have been tolerated for as long if it had occurred in, say, Bristol or Birmingham.

Figure 4-1: The Ardoyne, Belfast, 1971 (painting by David Shepherd)

403. GOC Northern Ireland reported to the Chief of the General Staff (CGS). Day-to-day direction in Whitehall was conducted by a branch of the Army's Directorate of Military Operations: MO4, subsequently MO2, until the last years of the campaign. CGS was responsible to the Secretary of State for Defence. The Prime Minister of Northern Ireland was in effect, and subsequently Secretaries of States for Northern Ireland (SSNI) were in fact, answerable to the British Prime Minister. The Chief Constable of the RUC and later the PSNI were answerable only to the Law. Thus in fact not even the British Prime Minister had complete authority over policy for Northern Ireland. The consequences of this will be considered in Chapter 8.[1]

OPERATIONAL LEVEL ISSUES

404. Operation BANNER is effectively a large scale instance of military assistance to the civil power. Whilst Stormont was in being, the GOC was required to render assistance to it. However, given its partisan composition, Stormont's intentions would tend to be partisan – for example, the urge to 'sort out' the Falls. Fortunately the GOC could interpret such requests for assistance in the light of his directive from CGS and act even-handedly.

405. Unfortunately this political and operational situation could lead to tragic consequences. For example, military advice was consistently against the reintroduction of Internment in 1971. The Northern Ireland Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Brian Faulkner, managed to persuade the British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Edward Heath, to support its introduction. His grounds were that it was increasingly difficult for him retain confidence in Stormont in the face of rising violence. That is to say, Internment was introduced largely as a result of pressure from unionist politicians. The British Prime Minister stated that it was a political decision for Stormont that could not be justified on security grounds. The consequences were severe. In practice much of the activity of the Northern Ireland Joint Security Committee in 1969-71 focussed on tactical issues, such as control of marches or the removal of barricades rather than higher level matters.

406. When Stormont was dissolved, this lack of unified approach was not resolved. SSNI was not a viceroy nor a governor general, and the GOC was not responsible directly to him. In the mid-1970s it was apparent that successive SSNIs were pursuing political initiatives with varying degrees of success, but were inconsistent between that activity and their duty as Ministers of State. The net result was incoherence. For example, during Internment successive SSNIs were ordering the release of detainees whilst the security forces were rounding them up. In many cases the same individuals were re-arrested, having broken the law again.[2] The GOC and the Chief Constable both requested that releases be linked to some behavioural advantage. For example, there might be no further releases until a ceasefire was in place. That did not occur. The terrorists took advantage of this confusion and viewed it as a sign of weakness.

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[1] Chapter 8, paras 812-817.

[2] At the time 60% of released detainees rejoined PIRA, which had an explicit rehabilitation programme for them.

Figure 4-2: Londonderry, 1969

407. The formal relationship between the Army and the RUC was not well defined. After the 'Way Ahead' paper of 1976 the Army was to act 'in support of the RUC'. The form of that support was never clear. In large areas of Northern Ireland the RUC could operate freely, and so the question was largely academic. However, in the most difficult areas, such as West Belfast and South Armagh, the RUC could not operate without very considerable support.[3] In practice the Army led operations in those areas until the early 1990s, although the form of RUC support developed continuously. Between those two extremes there was a considerable grey area. Tactically this was reflected in the extent to which the Army acted in accordance with the RUC's wishes. Issues

Figure 4-3: Rural Patrol

[3] For example, police car patrols were reintroduced in South Armagh for the first time in 17 years in 1995. The same year saw the first drink-driving operations in South Armagh. At the time all Army patrols in that AOR were accompanied by policemen, which gave the RUC a practical veto over the patrol programme, whereas the RUC would not patrol unescorted except within sight of the security bases, and then only occasionally. Ironically the register of shotgun licences was always thoroughly up to date, because no terrorist suspect wished to risk being arrested for a firearms offence.

included the extent of RUC input into the patrol programme, and whether all patrols had to be accompanied by a policeman.

408. At no stage in the campaign was there an explicit operational level plan as would be recognised today. This may appear surprising, but two major factors should be considered. The first is that campaign planning tools only appeared formally, in rudimentary form, in British Army doctrine in 1994;[4] and then in Joint doctrine thereafter. It had been entirely normal to conduct campaigns, such as the Mau Mau or the Malayan Emergency, by a series of directives. The modern understanding of the operational level of war did not exist in the British Army until the mid-1980s. The consequences are considered later.[5] The second factor was that no senior officer had the authority to write or impose a campaign plan across all the necessary lines of operation.

409. If Operation BANNER was a campaign without a campaign plan, how was it conducted? GOCs received directives from CGS. They were not the strategic directives of modern doctrine, but many of their features can be seen in them. GOCs and CLFs then issued directives for tactical operations within the theatre. The gearing of tactical operations to strategic or operational purpose was generally not particularly close. Coordination with other Government Departments was also of variable quality. The independence of the RUC and PSNI in being answerable only to the Law has been mentioned, as has the poor leadership displayed by some Chief Constables. The lack of coherence between political activity on the part of SSNI and the NIO on the one hand, and the security forces on the other, has also been described. In terms of structure and process there were regular high-level security meetings such as the Northern Ireland Joint Security Committee. Initially they were poorly run: agendas were not circulated in advance, and minutes were not kept.

410. In practice much depended on individuals, their personalities, and how they got on together. Overall the picture is of generally able and well-intentioned men doing what they believed best with a generally similar common purpose. In practice, too many things that were everybody's job were nobody's job. It could have been better. This is considered further in Chapter 8.[6]

THE BORDER

411. The Border with the Irish Republic was a problem at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. From August 1969 to the later stages of the campaign republican terrorists used the Republic as a safe haven although, as has been seen, that became less safe as the campaign progressed. The scope of the problem was considerable. In the late 1970s it was considered that PIRA simply could not survive without refuge in the Republic and the Border also offered opportunities for fundraising from smuggling activities. In 1988 ten of the 16 PIRA ASUs operated from South of the Border. At the strategic level, the lack of cooperation with the Dublin Government until the later 1980s has been mentioned. Persuading the Dublin Government to change its policies regarding the Border area would have

[4] ADP Vol 1 *Operations* (Army Code 71565 Part 1) Chapters 3 and 4, and Vol 2 *Command* (Army Code 71564) Chapter 6, paras 0628-0644.
[5] See para 409 and see also Chapter 8, paras 812-814 and 816.
[6] Ibid.

been politically very difficult, and Whitehall might have had to consider sanctions in some form or other. The key international security issue at the time was the Cold War (Eire was not part of NATO); and in the 1970s the Republic was moving towards entry into the European Community. In grand strategic terms a diplomatic stand-off between the UK and Eire on Border issues was not realistic. There was, in addition, no guarantee that any possible Dublin Government measures in the Border areas would have been effective: the Garda and Irish Army forces available were small, and republican extremism was a destabilising factor, and a potential threat, to the Dublin Government. Those living in the Border areas had ideas for their future governance that were unacceptable to both the Westminster and Dublin Governments. The alternative, patient diplomacy and political engagement over the long term, proved effective, and local cooperation between the RUC and the Garda improved progressively. This lack of a strategic approach did imply that consideration of the Border as an operational level issue for the British Army was a priority.[7]

412. The British Military Doctrine, with its renewed emphasis on the Operational Level, did not appear until 1989. The Border was clearly an operational level issue: the Border had a political dimension; it had a material influence on the overall situation (owing to the safe havens in the Republic); and action there would contribute directly to the strategic goal. The question of the Border was revisited by GOCs and CLFs on several occasions, but few lasting military initiatives resulted. To some extent, this revisiting of the Border is a positive reflection of a mindset that continues to probe and revisit issues in order to seek new solutions as the situation evolves. However, in the absence of an explicit campaign plan it also suggests the 'reinvention of the wheel' by successive senior officers because the issue was never definitively addressed. It is notable that the same candidate solutions were considered, and discarded, three times at roughly five-year intervals. That is not to criticise the individuals involved. It was probably a consequence of the absence of a single, unifying authority coupled with the lack of a developed understanding of the operational level of war in the British Army at the time.

413. Of the candidate solutions considered, the most common was that of closing the Border with a fence and security force. Estimates of up to 29 battalions were considered to be required for the security force. One proposal was to lay minefields along the Border: that was rapidly dismissed. At various times dozens of minor crossings were closed by Royal Engineer units. After a while this would be found not to work because, if not kept under continuous observation, the local population would lift the obstacles or bypass them. The policy would be discontinued and then 'rediscovered' a few years later. Closing Border crossings was generally unpopular with the local population, many of whom had legitimate farming or other business interests and family links on both sides of the Border. The Border between Northern Ireland and the Republic was no more obvious and clearly defined than, say, that between Hampshire and Wiltshire. In places it ran along streams, hedges, the side or middle of roads, and in some places even the middle of farm yards.

[7] Other, minor, strategic benefits included the agreement to allow overflight of Irish territory in certain circumstances.

414. All of these options can be seen, with hindsight, to have been tactical. With one exception there was never any operational level consideration of the Border. The exception was the decision in the mid-1988 to reorganise AORs to create a 'Border brigade' (3rd Infantry Brigade) responsible for a long strip of territory along the Border. Although well-intentioned it did not work, in part because of the resulting geography of the brigade AOR. With hindsight, an operational estimate of the campaign as a whole might have identified that the Border *area* was critical to the conduct of PIRA operations and therefore should have been the geographical focus of the campaign - where cross-governmental (social and economic) measures were to be focussed, and where, in operational level terms the PIRA was to be engaged and defeated. In practice excessive importance was attached to the immediate tactical aspects of the Border itself, rather than to the theatre-level aspects of cross-Border operations. The techniques of Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield were unknown until the 1990s and the 'Comprehensive Approach', was not developed until more recently.[8] It is not that the personalities involved were not capable; nor that these issues were not understood to some extent; but that the explicit understanding of how they might be linked into a coherent plan at the operational level was missing.

COMMAND OF OPERATIONS

415. In August 1969 HQ Northern Ireland consisted of the GOC, a Brigadier General Staff (BGS), two SO1s, four SO2s, three SO3s and very little else. From 14 August nobody had much sleep for a week. The HQ was rapidly expanded; the BGS became the Chief of Staff as a major general, and a second major general was brought in as Director of Operations. However, the division of responsibilities between the two major generals was flawed, and the quality of staff was generally insufficient. Both shortcomings were addressed, but the process took about two years to complete. This reinforces the need to conduct an estimate of command arrangements at the beginning of a campaign or major operation and to revisit that estimate subsequently.[9]

416. There were three deployable infantry brigade HQs in Britain at the time.[10] As Northern Ireland was reinforced with individual units these three HQs were deployed for short tours in various locations; for example, to command part of the Belfast TAOR during Operation MOTORMAN. At the same time a second permanent brigade HQ (HQ 8th Infantry Brigade) had been established in Londonderry, followed by HQ 3rd Infantry Brigade in February 1972. Short tours by brigade HQs had been a useful expedient initially but did not provide the continuity required for a long counter insurgency campaign. Since the great majority of Regular units in theatre were Roulement in the early 1970s (up to 25, as against four resident) it is difficult to see how the Operation could have been conducted effectively without permanent brigade HQs. As the campaign progressed the brigade HQs provided a fixed

[8] In the event, elements of an operational level solution did emerge: the economic regeneration of Newry (in the 1980s) did much to reduce the economic and social problems in South Armagh and South Down and in the Republic (through EU grants), and reduced the issue to manageable proportions. The police and Customs drive against some notorious republican racketeers in South Armagh and the Border areas in 2005-06 is evidence of progress: such operations were not considered practicable in the 1980s and 1990s.

[9] ADP *Land Operations (*Army Code 71819) Chapter 6, para 0659.

[10] HQs 5th Infantry, 16th Airportable and 24th Infantry Brigades.

infrastructure into which Roulement units and reinforcement companies (passed between units as required) dropped relatively easily. HQs also developed very efficient working practices in which, for example, the authority to task assets such as ATO was routinely delegated to watchkeepers. It was observed that after the 1990s previously high levels of staff efficiency had largely disappeared from Northern Ireland brigade HQs. This was the result of the staff officers and watchkeepers, through no fault of their own, not having the experience of the many and varied incident characteristics of the higher intensity campaign, which was winding down in the early to mid-1990s.

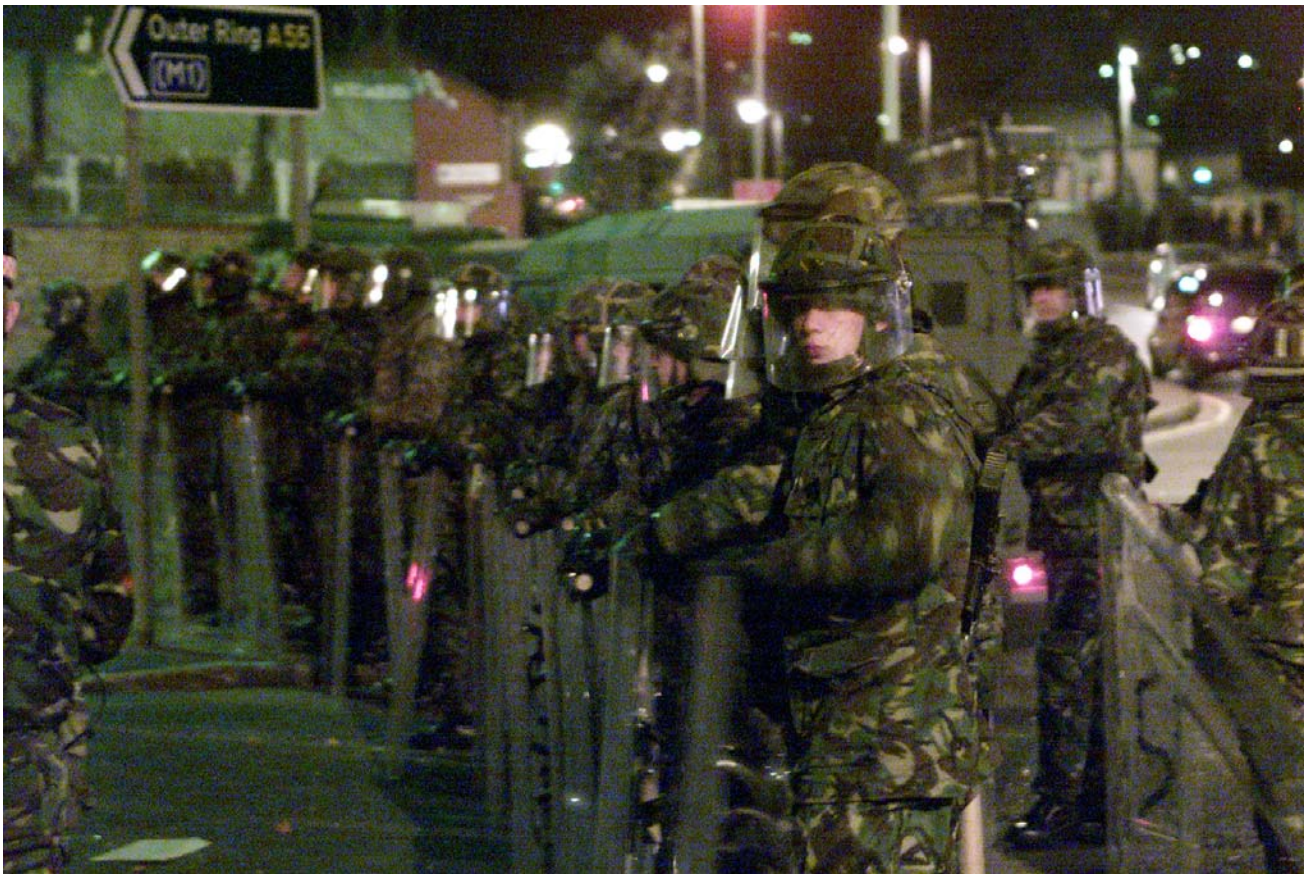

Figure 4-4: Public Order, the Ardoyne, 2001

417. As will be discussed later,[11] the training system put into place from 1972 was highly effective in preparing units for Northern Ireland. Soldiers and junior commanders were well trained up to company level, as were operations and intelligence staffs at company and battalion levels. However, several former senior officers have remarked that the preparation of company and battalion commanders was less good. These were generally capable officers and many had served in theatre before. However, they were not well trained *or educated* as to how to run an AOR, as opposed to what drills to undertake in what circumstances. In practice they often did well as a result of their personal ability and their prior experience, but their wider education could, in retrospect, have been better. It is also probably fair to remark that an explicit campaign plan, which linked strategic and operational level objectives logically to tactical activities, would have been of considerable benefit in this respect.

[11] Chapter 7, paras 724-727.

418. With a very large sample of unit, formation and theatre commanders available, some remarks can be made about command style. At the very lowest level the Army relied very heavily on its NCOs and junior officers. With the benefit of extremely effective pre-tour training, the great majority responded admirably. Indeed it could be said that its experience in Northern Ireland has been a landmark in the development of the British Army in this regard. Given the emphasis on the individual fire team within multiple patrolling, Operation BANNER was perhaps not so much a 'corporal's war' as a 'lance corporal's war'. That experience has already stood the Army in good stead in other theatres, and will probably continue to do so for a long time.

419. At unit and brigade level the early years can be described as 'laissez-faire'. Many units reported arriving in their AOR and being told simply to 'get on with it'. As the brigade structure became more permanent this evolved to the point where brigades had a very clear expectation as to what was required in which unit AOR and how it should be achieved. For example, in South Armagh in the early 1990s battalions were directed as to how many multiples were to deploy into which company AOR and to what purpose (for example, permanent OPs, patrols, base defence and reserves). Some former Commanding Officers (CO) have observed that this severely limited their freedom of operation. Others observed that this was necessary for the sake of continuity and to limit 'reinventing the wheel'. This issue will be addressed further in Chapter 8.[12]

420. At brigade and higher levels much appears to have depended on the individuals concerned. By the 1980s several GOCs and CLFs had commanded units, brigades or both in Northern Ireland. Two trends can be identified with hindsight. The first is a tendency to over-command. By the doctrine of the 1990s and later, the GOC commanded at the strategic level or perhaps the strategic/operational divide; the CLF commanded at the operational level or perhaps the operational/tactical divide. A number understood this and acted accordingly. There is ample anecdotal evidence to suggest a tendency to delve into tactical issues down to the level of the private soldier. This is clearly a matter of balance. Senior officers should visit units and talk to soldiers in order to understand what is actually happening at that level. But they should not involve themselves with the day-to-day running of units unless something is terribly wrong. If it is, action is probably required at *higher* level to resolve it.[13]

421. However, this is not just an issue of personalities. For much of the campaign subunit commanders' confidential reports were countersigned by the CLF. This was seen as an opportunity and indeed a duty to get to know every major individually. That was a significant task, given such large numbers of Roulement units. Another aspect was that, given a lack of understanding of the operational level, HQ Northern Ireland sometimes concerned itself with matters that were probably the remit of brigades. An example is a day-long briefing in the 1980s to the CLF on the future of tactical operations in the Armagh Roulement Battalion AOR. In retrospect it appears that that should have been the business of the relevant brigade commander.

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[12] Chapter 8, para 840.

[13] FM Slim's saying that there are no bad soldiers, only bad officers, is apposite.

422. Personality was an issue in another way. It is fair to observe that the leadership of some senior officers had a negative effect on their subordinates to the detriment of operational effectiveness. This was exacerbated under the stress of operations, and had a ripple effect throughout the chain of command. A separate and perhaps lesser problem was the tendency of individuals at various levels to seek short-term tactical results through positive action where a more measured approach was probably required. Operation BANNER presents a sufficiently large sample to be able to suggest that both issues were problems at times, which was exacerbated by the perception that formation command appointments in Northern Ireland came second after those in the British Army of the Rhine (in the Central Region, which did represent the Main Effort of the UK Defence Posture).

423. In the early phases of the campaign some unit commanders felt it appropriate to 'play up' local difficulties, in order to appear to make significant progress during their tour. This short term approach was soon seen to be counter-productive. One senior officer's guidance to incoming COs was along the lines of 'this is a good place to get a DSO – as long as you don't try to earn one!'.

424. The committee structure was a critical aspect of the exercise of command in Northern Ireland. Operational and intelligence committees were established right at the beginning of the campaign and persisted throughout, right down to company level in some cases. At higher levels there were the Security Policy Meetings at GOC level and Security Coordination Meetings at CLF level. Traditional terminology such as 'District (or 'Divisional') Action Committees' (DAC) and 'Sub-District Action Committees' (Sub-DAC) also persisted. This joint system was the everyday mechanics of coordination, principally between the uniformed Army and the RUC. At higher levels it included RUC SB and other agencies. It went some way to mitigate the effect of having no single authority for the campaign as a whole. Another facet was the broad range of professional working committees at HQ and brigade level which considered everything from land use through electromagnetic spectrum management to flight safety across Northern Ireland, for civilian and military users.

COTERMINOUS POLICE AND ARMY BOUNDARIES

425. One further issue at the operational level, or on the operational-tactical divide, took a very long time to resolve. The value of the Army and the police using the same boundaries was obvious, and was well known to the Army from previous campaigns. Apart from tactical and teamwork advantages, and agreed priorities, a key factor relates to the gathering and sharing of intelligence. The police, in the form of the RUC, had long established boundaries, and for them, it should be noted, terrorism was only one of several aspects of law-breaking against which they were acting. The Army's deployment was based around the areas where there was greatest need for tactical activity to defeat terrorism and to support the RUC. However, intransigence and lack of preparedness to recognise the requirements of other organisations, together with lack of political will and an absence of a single campaign authority (mentioned above) meant that this issue took over 25 years to resolve. The military principle in counter insurgency and counter terrorism – and lesson from this campaign – remains that establishment of coterminous boundaries for the police, the Army and intelligence agencies is an early prerequisite for campaign success.

LEGAL ISSUES

426. Several strands of legal issues related to Operation BANNER can be identified. The first was the legal powers available to the security forces generally and the soldier in particular. Operations in Northern Ireland were always conducted under the law, but there was considerable legislative activity, primarily in the 1970s, to equip the security forces with sufficient powers to be able to do the job required of them. The Emergency Powers Act[14] was one result. Another was the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1974. Powers had to be clarified and legal loopholes closed, all of which took time.

427. For the soldier the main issue was the guidance for opening fire which was known as 'The Yellow Card'. The Yellow Card itself has no force in law, but seeks to reflect the law of self defence and identify the circumstances when potentially lethal force may be used. It was effectively the Rules of Engagement for most operational circumstances. It was intended that so long as soldiers adhered to the contents of the Yellow Card then they would be acting within the law; and that was proven to be the case. The Card was subjected to continuous review and scrutiny, but since it was written with legal purposes in mind it was not generally found to be user friendly; at least in the early days. What seemed to be required was some form of situational trainer, perhaps similar to that produced to teach the contents of the Law of Armed Conflict or perhaps computer based. By the early 1980s GOCs and CLFs were expressing content with the powers available under the Yellow Card.

Figure 4-5: Urban Search, 1974

[14] Actually the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act of 1973, and as subsequently amended.

428. There was less contentment with the powers available for the prosecution of terrorists, although by the 1980s it seems to have been accepted that no further extension of power was likely. There were two broad areas of discontent. The first and most obvious was that the organisers of terrorism were able to place themselves beyond the effective reach of the law whilst still living openly in Northern Ireland. Some of those same individuals still do. This obvious source of frustration should be balanced against the wish to avoid introducing exceptional powers in a way which either distorts the structure of society or which is obviously discriminatory. If either case had occurred, the security forces would have appeared to be no better than the terrorists.

429. However, the second cause of frustration, which does not appear to have been made explicit at the time, was an inability to co-opt the legal machinery effectively to produce sensible changes in the law. For example, in the 1970s there was a discrepancy between maximum sentences for the possession of firearms in Northern Ireland and on the UK Mainland. Maximum sentences on the Mainland were actually higher. It was suggested in Whitehall that this discrepancy should be removed. The Westminster Attorney-General's response was to the effect that any attempt at formal comparison would tend to throw doubt on the Northern Ireland judiciary's competence. The PM postponed any further decision and the matter was dropped. However, within three years the discrepancy was removed by a different government.

Figure 4-6: Snap VCP, Early 1980s

430. There are two issues here. The first is a difference of perspective. To many soldiers the law is a tool to support the establishment and sustainment of public order and with which to conduct the campaign. To many lawyers, especially government law-makers, the law is not a tool but the fundamental basis of society. It is not to be manipulated at will. Reflection suggests that these two perspectives can both be accommodated. However, the second issue is that the machinery of government was clearly not coordinated. In practice those two views were rarely synchronised with each other. This is another example of the effect of not having a single campaign authority.

Figure 4-7: Routine Police Operations

431. A further strand of legal issues concerned the soldier who killed or injured in the course of his duty. These cases were investigated by the RUC and the numbers that came to court were very few – a dozen or so serious cases, over more than 30 years. One infamous case, known as 'The Pitchfork Murders'[15] was not an operational shooting. As the name suggests, it was murder. Those responsible were tried, convicted and jailed. Other cases centred around the key issue of whether the soldier had the right to open fire in the particular circumstances pertaining at the time. This resulted in some convictions[16]; but in the vast majority of cases the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland directed no prosecution, or the soldiers were acquitted at trial.[17] The basis on which these directions were given or acquittals made was, broadly, that the soldier had acted

[15] R v Hathaway, Byrne, Chesnutt and Snowball (1981).
[16] R v Thain (1984) R v Clegg (1993) and R v Fisher and Wright (1995). (Clegg was subsequently acquitted on retrial in 1999 but his case, which went to the House of Lords, remains a key case in the use of force).
[17] R v Foxford (1974) (acquitted on appeal) R v Jones (1974) R v MacNaughton (1975) R v Bohan and Temperley (1979) R v Elkington and Callaghan (1992).

reasonably in the circumstances pertaining at the time; and this was the case even if the soldier had in fact been mistaken. The Yellow Card attempted to interpret the law of self defence so as to give clear guidance to soldiers as to the circumstances in which they might use potentially lethal force. What might be considered as "reasonable in the circumstances" is not, however, categorical. There was, therefore, a tension between the need for simple, clear instructions and the less clear-cut concept of reasonable behaviour. This tension does not appear to have been resolved definitively. Its resolution appears to be a matter of education rather than training.

432. The concept of the 'flying lawyer' was first developed during Operation BANNER. Flying lawyers were Army Legal Services officers who were held at high readiness to move rapidly to the scene of any serious incident involving Servicemen. They gave immediate legal advice in the manner of a defence lawyer, thus protecting Servicemen from either making inadvertent admissions or from possible abuse of legal rights.

CHAPTER 5 - THE TACTICAL CONDUCT OF LAND OPERATIONS

501. Tactical operations during Operation BANNER can be broadly divided between counter insurgency or counter terrorist operations and public order operations, with limited overlap between the two. In turn counter insurgency or counter terrorist operations can be divided into overt, 'framework' operations and covert operations. The whole campaign rapidly became dominated by considerations of intelligence. By 1972 or so, most operations in Northern Ireland had some intelligence-gathering function or were tasked according to some form of information received.

502. There was very little actionable intelligence before the introduction of Internment. The RUC SB was almost completely ineffective and the traditional source of HUMINT – the B Specials - had been disbanded. The UDR was originally not allowed any role in intelligence activities. Without actionable intelligence of any appreciable quality or quantity, the security forces' main offensive option was to search occupied houses, usually conducted on the basis of low-grade tip-offs.

503. Internment saw the development of considerable quantities of intelligence but, perhaps more importantly, of intelligence organisations and processes. There was a huge expansion in the numbers employed in intelligence collection, collation, analysis and dissemination, with the greatest quantitative emphasis being on collection. Infantry battalions were directed to form Close Observation Platoons (COP) in May 1977.[1] These were tasked with uniformed covert surveillance. Small, highly specialist units were raised to conduct covert surveillance and to collect HUMINT. By the end of the 1970s one Regular soldier in every eight serving in Northern Ireland was directly involved in intelligence.

504. Considerable emphasis was initially placed on screening, 'P' ('Personality') checks and pub checks. Detaining individuals for a few hours to allow screening was useful, since some individuals were quite happy to pass information in privacy if they had been detained. However, it was considered highly invasive of personal liberty. P checks were equally intrusive, and pub checks were often highly and unnecessarily confrontational. As the campaign progressed these methods were largely replaced by less intrusive methods, training in suspect recognition, and chat-ups. It took a little time to realise that the best 'chatter-up' was not necessarily the most senior member of a patrol.

505. The scope and scale of intelligence operations should be noted. In the mid-1970s an operation was targeted at the HQ of the PIRA Belfast Brigade. The chance arrest of four terrorists at a VCP whilst they were in the process of conducting a bombing attack was exploited to arrest the Officer Commanding (OC) Belfast Brigade, his second in command (who was also his technical officer); the brigade operations and explosives officers. The QM, the brigade intelligence officer and then the next brigade OC were arrested in follow-up operations. In March and April 1974 a total of 106 PIRA officers were arrested, including three successive OCs of the Belfast Brigade. This was a major factor in the defeat of the 1974 summer bombing campaign and helped destroy the remainder of the 'insurgent' PIRA. At one stage the active tour of duty of a PIRA officer from appointment to arrest was about four

[1] Uniformed close observation specialists had existed in other organisations well before that date.

weeks – roughly the same as the average time that a subaltern might survive during the Battle of the Somme.[2] The quality of intelligence became very good indeed – by the end of the 1980s PIRA was unable to mount a bombing operation in Belfast for about two years.

506. The term 'framework operations' was developed in the 1980s to describe the routine activities of the uniformed Army, although most of those activities had been undertaken or developed considerably earlier. The list includes vehicle check points (VCP), routine patrolling, searches and manning OPs.

ATTACK ON PERMANENT VEHICLE CHECK POINT R15

On Friday 1 May 1992 a a well planned and ingenious PIRA attack was launched on the Cloghogue permanent border crossing point, R15, on the main A1 road South of Newry. R15 was also located alongside the Belfast to Dublin railway line. At 0200 hours, a patrol from 2nd Battalion the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers observed what appeared to be a brown Transit van travelling South to North along the railway line. There was an interior light on in the front of the van and it was trailing a wire behind. It was heading towards the East sangar of R15 adjacent to the railway. At the same time, the soldier manning the East sangar reported on the PVCP intercom 'Proxy bomb, Back Gate' just prior to the explosion.

At Newton Bridge, 2 km South of the PVCP, a Renault Van, stolen in Dundalk two weeks earlier and containing about 2000 lbs of explosives, had been converted to run on rails by modifying its road wheels. Metal bars had been welded to the wheels to make them run flush with the tracks. A JCB digger, stolen 15 minutes earlier, was used to knock down a wall beside the road and create a ramp up to the railway line. The JCB then lifted the van onto the rails. It is assessed that the van was driven down the railway line to a point 1.7 km from the PVCP where the firing pack was attached to a command wire leading into the van.

At the same time the terrorists set up roadblocks North and South of R15 to divert vehicles away from it. The Southern group were disguised as Gardai. The van was then left in low gear to run slowly down the track. The interior light would have been used as a marker to alert the firer when the van was on target.

The force of the blast ripped the East sangar of R15 off its mountings and threw it over 10m. The soldier inside died of head injuries. The rest of the PVCP, with the exception of the hardened accommodation block, was totally destroyed and 23 other soldiers were injured. After the attack, the checkpoint was re-built on the other side of the road and designed for maximum automation with minimal troop presence.

507. Experience from other theatres such as Aden had indicated the value of 'snap' or short-term VCPs, conducted at irregular times and places. This was massively expanded in Northern Ireland to reflect greater numbers of civilian vehicles. Snap VCPs were far more likely to capture terrorists and materiel than permanent VCPs. The indirect advantage was that a prolonged programme of snap VCPs had the

[2] Fortunately for the individuals concerned, most of the PIRA officers were arrested rather than killed or wounded.

general effect, like most framework operations, of deterring and constraining terrorist movement. PVCPs were also used extensively. Unfortunately PVCPs, although useful as OPs and to an extent as patrol bases, rapidly became targets for terrorist attacks and were the targets of two of the more notable terrorist incidents of the whole Campaign – the attacks on the Derryard PVCP in 1989 and on the Buncranna Road PVCP in 1990. Snap VCPs also risked being the target of attack if their location and timing became predictable and if the tactics used were poor. In addition a snap VCP has a short useful life. After a few cars had passed through it, word would get round and even innocent traffic would avoid it.

Figure 5-1: The Divis Flats, Belfast

508. Patrol tactics showed a very rapid evolution in the early stages of the campaign. Initially a typical patrol would be of section strength with soldiers moving in file or single file. It rapidly became apparent that this was vulnerable, particularly in urban areas, to a gunman engaging an individual soldier at short range and making a quick getaway. Terrain screening usually prevented other soldiers from returning fire from their own positions. The initial response was 'parallel patrolling' in which two groups would operate along parallel routes (typically streets). This presented uncertainty to the gunman as to the location of the other group and allowed the group not in the initial 'Contact' to react quickly.

509. PIRA rapidly developed scouting, observation and early warning techniques, universally known as 'dicking', which limited the effectiveness of parallel patrolling. The next development was multiple patrolling in which a number of small teams (typically three or four teams each of four men) would operate on separate but related routes, crossing and re-crossing, doubling back and acting in what appeared to be a highly unpredictable but mutually supporting manner. Such patrolling became common and the 'multiple', a semi-permanent organisation (typically half a platoon) became the standard tactical building block within the company. Multiple patrolling rendered dicking very difficult. Assuming that patrols did not use the same

routes on a regular basis, multiple patrolling was very difficult to overcome. Further uncertainty was created in the mind of the terrorist by varying the number of teams in the multiple. The immediate benefit was that few casualties were suffered by the unit. The longer-term benefit was that it tended to deter shooting attacks.

510. Another common PIRA technique was the lure, commonly called the 'come-on'. Decoys, sometimes crude and sometimes highly sophisticated, were also used. Alertness, sound drills and experience helped limit their effectiveness.

511. After one patrol in which a soldier was killed in the early 1980s, it was discovered that patrols had used the same route and the same formation at the same time each day for several days. Within the patrol, teams had developed the habit of following each other up the same street in a formation known as 'duck patrol'. This left the rear team vulnerable, and it was a soldier in the rear team who died. The officer in charge of the patrol resigned his commission. This salutary example was used for a long time in Northern Ireland Training Advisory Team (NITAT) briefings.

512. In practice the avoidance of setting patterns became a major aspect of tactical operations. The recording of patrol routes, in both urban and rural areas, assumed considerable importance. It saved lives and aided deterrence. PIRA developed considerable patience and was prepared to wait for weeks to see whether units were setting patterns. Once a pattern had been identified and verified, PIRA could mount an attack. However, they were quite prepared to call it off at a moment's notice if any change to the pattern was detected, primarily because they believed that the attack had been compromised.

Figure 5-2: Armoured Patrol Vehicles (APV) with Top-Cover Sentries

513. Vehicles could either be a valuable part of a patrol programme or a dangerous liability. Humber 1-ton Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC), universally known as 'Pigs', were used at first. Some Saracen APCs were also used. They were replaced by armoured landrovers, initially the Armoured Patrol Vehicle (APV) and then the purpose-built 'Snatch'. The AT 105 'Saxon' was procured in the mid-1980s for use both in Northern Ireland and by UK-based NATO reinforcement brigades.[3] Armoured vehicles were very useful for the rapid movement of troops, typically to deploy or recover patrols or for Quick Reaction Forces. Operating around the fringes of a foot patrol, they added both speed of reaction and a further degree of unpredictability to patrol movements. However, when operating on their own (singly or in pairs with no foot elements) they were vulnerable to attack. PIRA developed at least two improvised anti-vehicle weapons such as the Improvised Anti-Armour Grenade (IAAG) and horizontal projectors which they deployed in some numbers until counters to them were found. IAAGs were often dropped from overhead walkways or roofs. Counters included avoiding such areas with vehicles, deploying top-cover sentries, and covering movement through such areas with foot patrols.

514. Searching was a major activity. Its importance varied throughout the campaign. A number of techniques were developed and used for differing purposes at different times. The terminology can be confusing; a simple description is given here. In the early years of the campaign, with very little actionable intelligence, house searches were a major aspect of framework operations. They were normally conducted on the basis of information received, which was often of poor reliability. Occupied house searches were hugely unpopular due to the invasion of privacy and inadvertent or sometimes deliberate damage that accompanied them. They tended to focus on catholic households, largely because there were more republican suspects than loyalist, and were perceived as evidence that the Army was biased. They probably contributed significantly to the alienation of the catholic population in the early years of the campaign. The Balkan Street Search was probably the largest, but in the months immediately following it large-scale planned search operations, typically covering a whole street, were being conducted at a rate of about one a month. Although occupied house searches were unpopular, in the early years of the campaign the Army could not simply let the hiding of weapons and explosives go unhindered. The techniques of systematic search, and the range of search equipment improved markedly in the 1970s and 1980s. Searching tended to inhibit the supply of terrorist arms and equipment at the operational as well as the tactical levels.

515. Unoccupied house searches were far less contentious, but became far more dangerous. PIRA quickly realised that booby-trapping unoccupied houses was an effective way of attacking the Army with relatively little risk of injury to civilians. There were thousands of burnt-out and derelict houses in Belfast and Londonderry in the early 1970s. In addition, in the years before Goretex waterproof clothing, there was a strong tendency for patrols in rural areas to shelter from the rain in derelict barns and sheds. The rule of 'don't go into derelicts' was strongly reinforced during pre-tour training, and saved lives.

[3] 1st and 19th Infantry Brigades. There were minor variations between the NI and NATO-roled vehicles.

516. Unoccupied house searches were one factor that led to the development of high-risk search techniques. These were conducted by specialist Royal Engineer Search Teams (REST). Another factor was the PIRA habit of booby-trapping Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and the areas around them, not least in the hope of killing an ATO. Thus tasking a REST rapidly became part of the normal response to finding a suspect IED.

517. An array of all-arms search techniques was also developed. It became normal for each infantry company to have a trained search adviser (typically the CSM) and a search team, and each battalion to have a unit search adviser (typically the RSM or pioneer platoon commander). All-arms search teams had a limited range of skills and equipment, but were a useful contribution to the search effort. In general, once they confirmed the presence of a suspect device REST or ATO was called in. All-arms search teams were particularly useful for route clearance operations. In addition every soldier in the infantry role was trained in low-level 'rummage' searching. Rummage searches resulted in a number of important finds. They also reduced the number of effective IED attacks on patrols, and further constrained the terrorists' freedom of operation. 'Winthrop' searching, named after the subaltern who invented it, was a particular technique which effectively got into the mindset of the terrorist hiding the equipment or device. Procedures were developed whereby in some circumstances the soldier making a find would not reveal the fact; the location would be passed confidentially to his CO who would consider whether or not a covert operation should be mounted.

518. Search policy became an important part of tactical guidance to commanders. Changes to policy had a dramatic effect on search activity, reflected in Table 5-1:

Ser	Year	Building Searches	Area Searches
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
1.	1977	20,724	7,908
2.	1978	15,449	2,729
3.	1979	6,452	1,951
4.	1980	4,106	2,218
5.	1981	4,104	879
6.	1982	4,045	1,164
7.	1983	1,494	1,037

Table 5-1: Search Effort for Selected Years

519. Figures given represent the average number of man-hours per week allocated to searches across Northern Ireland. As an indication of scale, if a typical search was of one multiple of about 20 men working for eight hours, the figure of 20,724 man-hours in 1977 would represent the equivalent of about 130 searches per week, across a force of about 13 battalions. That is, about ten searches per battalion per week on average.

520. Permanent overt OPs became a feature of life very early in the campaign. They provided both a degree of protection to other installations and a source of valuable intelligence. Two in particular became almost famous: that on the top of the main block of the Divis Flats in Belfast and the one in the market square in Crossmaglen – the Borucki Sangar.[4] The latter was installed in 1977 to keep the Square under surveillance after it had been used to mount a mortar attack on the nearby Army base. It was then manned continuously for over 20 years.

Figure 5-3: Permanent OP, South Armagh (R21)

521. Covert OPs had been a feature of operations along the Border from the beginning of the campaign. Although generally effective, they tied up COPs in semi-permanent tasks and their locations became predictable over the years. In the mid-1980s it was decided to erect a series of permanent hilltop OPs in South Armagh: initially the 'High Romeos' (known by their callsigns such as R21, R23) in the Forkill area under Operation CONDOR; and then the low-lying Golf towers (G10, G20 etc) covering the approaches to Crossmaglen under Operation ENTIRETY (subsequently Operation MAGISTRATE).

522. The towers were manned by rifle companies as a routine part of framework operations. They provided several benefits. Firstly, they provided 24-hour weather- and largely bullet-proof cover for surveillance operations. Secondly, they allowed the use of more sophisticated surveillance equipment, such as 'Super-Nikon' binoculars and MSTAR radar. Thirdly, they supported the development of an advanced communications network, not least because their hilltop sites typically provided very good antenna locations. Fourthly, they allowed for a continuity of observation across wide areas. Sightings of terrorist suspects could be passed from tower to tower over wide areas. The towers had mutually supporting arcs, minimising problems of dead ground. Sightings were also passed to helicopters operating in the area. Lastly, the towers provided a degree of overwatch for foot patrols.

[4] Named after Private Borucki of the Parachute Regiment, killed by an IED in Crossmaglen Square on 8 August 1976. See Figure 5-5.

523. There was a tendency in periods of high threat for the towers to concentrate on supporting foot patrols to the detriment of general surveillance, and also for observers to become mentally fixed on observing given locations. A modest amount of work study conducted in 1995 demonstrated that it was easy to treble the effectiveness of the towers if the soldiers were clearly briefed and trained in their tasks of systematic visual scanning, searching, incident reporting and logging.

524. The towers were also unpopular with the local population. The republican press repeatedly called them a visible sign of the 'occupation' of Ulster by the Army, and called for their removal. This was at least in part because South Armagh PIRA developed an information operation to have them removed.

URBAN OBSERVATION POSTS

NITAT gave advice in a 1975 précis on the siting of OPs.

These could be in derelict houses, once cleared, in unoccupied upstairs rooms in shops or in schools during holidays and at weekends. Initial reconnaissance would be carried out at first light, which would also permit preparation of the OP followed by withdrawal to gauge local reaction. The best time for occupation was in darkness at about 0430 hours with insertion covered by normal patrol activity. Once established in the OP, the three to five man team would establish a routine including observing the target area and maintaining logs and radio listening watch. Withdrawal, if the OP was not compromised, would again be at about 0430 hours, and the area would be observed for the following 48 hours to identify whether locals had discovered the position.

Especially in the early days when other intelligence sources had not been developed, valuable information was gained from urban OPs including habits of wanted terrorists, movement of arms and ammunition, locations and times of terrorist meetings and local reaction after planned operations. Most OPs also had a sniper capability, with soldiers trained to use the L42 sniper rifle or the Self Loading Rifle (SLR) with a SUIT sight. 40 Commando RM reported successful sniper shoots from OPs during its Belfast tour in Summer 1972. Quoting its post operational report:

> "Two OPs were mounted in some disused flats under cover of darkness. Shortly after their arrival one of the OPs heard some movement and then shots in the street below them. The second OP saw three men move into the street they were watching. One of these men, who was at a distance of 75m from the OP, was carrying an Armalite rifle. The OP fired one shot from a .303" sniper rifle at this man, who fell and was carried away by the other two.
>
> "Two marines were placed in an OP to give cover for a planned search which was to take place. At mid-day, and whilst the search was in progress, six gunmen appeared from a house and started to move tactically towards where the search was in progress. The OP waited until a suitable target was presented. The opportunity occurred when one gunman began to cross the road at a range of 300 metres. A sharpshooter fired one round hitting the gunman, who fell, and was quickly dragged away by his accomplices.

> "Two sharpshooters were on top of a high rise flat. After midnight there was a children's riot below. Four gunmen came out waiting for the Security Forces to arrive. One gunman stopped by a lamp post with a pistol. A sharpshooter fired one shot at 100 metres range, the gunman fell and was taken away by the other gunmen."

525. The terrorist threat to the Army was primarily a combination of gunmen and bombs. Improvised mortars were a threat to static installations, particularly after the development of the Mark 10, which was first used in 1979 but not deployed in large numbers until 1985.

526. There were three main kinds of IEDs: Radio Controlled IEDs (RCIED); Command Wire IEDs (CWIED); and Victim Operated IEDs (VOIED) – booby-traps. Time-delay fused IEDs were also used, particularly early in the campaign, but the lack of man-in-the-loop control presented problems for the bombers. In very simple terms, RCIEDs could be defeated by ECM; CWIEDs could be defeated by photographic reconnaissance, planned searches, rummage searches and other aspects of patrol tactics; and VOIEDs could be defeated by a high level of awareness of the threat and good drills (such as checking under cars before using them). The effectiveness of all IEDs was to some extent reduced by good drills, particularly by avoiding bunching. With the exception of a very few incidents which are discussed in Chapter 7,[5] after 1980 very few IEDs killed or wounded more than one or two soldiers at a time.

527. Gunmen were often described as 'snipers' but very rarely did any terrorist display the skills of a properly trained sniper. Four broad patterns of attack by gunmen can be identified. In the early 1970s gunmen would simply engage security forces with any number of weapons and blaze away for a while. This was largely ineffective. Up to 1972, terrorists wounded a soldier on a foot patrol in an average of one in six attacks. For attacks on sangars the rate was one in 30. That is to say, in about 390 shootings on sangars only 13 soldiers were hit. The tactic was rapidly countered by the Army by superior numbers: several battalions reported conducting what were effectively company attacks in urban areas in the period from 1970 to 1972. Terrorists rapidly learned that to stand and shoot it out with the Army did not work. The Army was better trained, equipped, organised, and could produce greater numbers given time.

528. The result was to switch, by 1972 or so, to relatively quick shoots by a small firing party (rarely more than three and often only one) at short range and then make a rapid getaway, often with the weapon or weapons being removed covertly by someone else.[6] This tactic was effectively countered by multiple patrolling. Army teams not directly involved in the shooting would move rapidly to attempt to cut off the gunman's withdrawal, improving the chance of apprehending him. PIRA obtained a small number of M60 machine guns[7] and used them in urban shoots as a prestige weapon. However, their size meant that it was difficult to conceal their

[5] Chapter 7, para 715.
[6] Often a woman, since male soldiers were not allowed to search women.
[7] Initially seven weapons, stolen from a US National Guard arsenal. They were all recovered by 1982, but more were obtained subsequently.

removal from the firing point and hence they were of limited effectiveness overall. Eight members of the security forces were killed by M60s.

529. The third pattern was long-range, multiple-weapon shoots in rural areas. This developed in the late 1980s. It often included machine guns and was sometimes conducted from across the Border. Between 1 January 1987 and 19 December 1991 there were 34 such incidents. Only four were at less than 200m, over half were at more than 500m and five were at over 1500m range. All employed automatic fire. They were very ineffective. However, on 16 March 1990 a Barrett .50" heavy calibre rifle was used on a patrol on the outskirts of Crossmaglen. Only one shot was fired, and one soldier was hit. The range was 850m. Subsequent events suggest that this was an extremely lucky shot. Few of the subsequent attacks hit at over 200m.[8]

THE SOUTH ARMAGH SNIPER

Over the 15-month period from August 1992 to December 1993, six soldiers and three RUC constables were killed by single shot attacks in South Armagh (often described in the media as 'Bandit Country') and Fermanagh. What came to be known as the South Armagh sniper gained an almost mythical reputation: a man known locally as 'Goldfinger', trained in the US, armed with the formidable Barrett .50" heavy calibre sniper rifle, and achieving single shot kills from a range of one mile.

The reality was more prosaic, although no less daring. Two PIRA ASUs were involved and, although there were some long distance shoots using the Barrett, the majority of engagements were at a range of 200 – 300m using a 7.62mm rifle. The attacks, which were carefully mounted to use dead ground away from the Army's matrix of observation posts targeted security forces on their likely movement routes near bases and vehicle check points. Many of the shots were from the back of a specially converted car which was immediately driven away to avoid leaving any forensic traces.

Republican information operations, such as the 'Sniper at Work' signs (see Figure 5-4) combined with media hype helped build the myth of the sniper. The attacks affected security force operations and had an impact on morale among some troops and police officers serving in South Armagh. Greater use was made of 'out of bounds' areas linked to covert operations. For a period, overt patrols only operated under top cover from at least two helicopters. This fixed security forces to some extent, and placed a greater burden on the usage of helicopter hours.

In April 1997, in response to a shooting against a patrol leaving Forkhill security force base when an RUC constable was hit in the leg, a special operation was mounted using an overt Army patrol as a lure. One of the sniper teams was arrested; note that shots were fired by the gunmen, not by the security forces.

For relatively few successful engagements, these IRA sniper attacks proved for a period to be an effective response to the success of the Army's border watchtowers and its electronic counter-measures. Ultimately, the best counter to them was a combination of good patrol techniques and helicopter support.[i]

[i] Chapter 5, para 530 and Figure 5-4.

[8] Chapter 2, para 247.

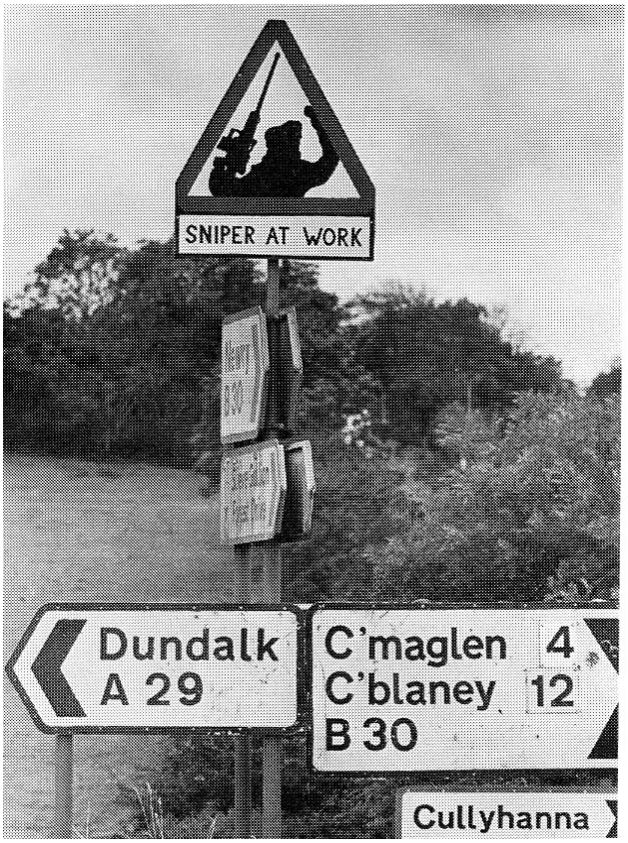

Figure 5-4: South Armagh Sniper (Silverbridge Crossroads)

530. The 'South Armagh sniper' became the stuff of legend. Most of the effectiveness of sniping is psychological, but there is no concrete evidence of 'sniping' reducing the effectiveness of Army operations in South Armagh. There is considerable evidence of units reviewing their tactics and drills, and ensuring that they were properly conducted. The CO of the unit involved in the first attack has said that if the patrol had deployed properly it would have been very difficult for the gunman to engage. A change to aviation tactics in 1991[9] severely inhibited the ability of the terrorist to get away. The combination of good tactics, planned covert operations and aviation seems to have defeated the South Armagh gunmen.

531. The first use of the Mk 10 mortar was against the security base at Newtonhamilton on 19 March 1979. However, its first major success was not until February 1985, when it was used against Newry police station. Nine policemen were killed. Mk 10s could be

Figure 5-5: Crossmaglen[10]

[9] Chapter 6, para 606.

[10] Crossmaglen police station/security force base is at the top left of the picture (taken in the 1990s). The Borucki sangar is visible just to the right of the centre of the picture, where the road which runs beside the base meets the Square.

mass-produced relatively easily and were fired in salvoes of up to about 40, although four to eight was more normal. The Mk 11 was similar in design, but half the length, hence half the weight and had twice the range. The Mk 15 was a 47kg Calor Gas bottle filled with Home Made Explosive (HME) whilst the Mk 13 'barrack buster' was effectively a 50-gallon oil drum filled with HME. Of these the Mk 10 was the weapon of choice. Since all these devices had a maximum range of a few hundred yards and were one-shot (or single salvo) weapons, relatively simple counters were found to be effective. They included: surveying possible firing points; keeping them under surveillance (from CCTV and sangars) and patrolling them irregularly; mortar alarms and attack drills; and hardening security force bases. The latter was hugely expensive and done in only a few locations, such as Crossmaglen and Forkill.

532. The provision of explosives for the terrorist was a major issue. A search of all quarries in Northern Ireland was undertaken by the security forces on 16 May 1971. The use of explosives for quarrying was strictly controlled by the RUC, and effectively dried up the source of commercial explosive to the terrorists. The response was the use of HME, mostly based on ammonium nitrate-based fertiliser with nicknames such as 'Anfo' and 'Annie', depending on their particular ingredients. Because HME is much less effective than commercial or military explosives, it was used in much larger quantities. This led to the use of cars to deliver the bomb – hence the proliferation of the car bomb in the early 1970s. It also led to massive culvert bombs using milk churns or similar containers to store and transport the explosive. Another response was the use of very small incendiaries – typically in music cassettes – for attacks on commercial property etc. These were sometimes strapped to plastic petrol containers for enhanced incendiary effect. 'Suicide' bombs were not used. Vehicle-borne bombs were sometimes delivered by drivers under duress (eg where the terrorists held a family member hostage). This tactic caused considerable public outrage, particularly when the driver was killed by the bomb, and was discontinued.

Figure 5-6: Bomb Attack: Loughgall Police Station, 8 May 1987

533. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) operations developed enormously in response. By the mid-1970s Northern Ireland had become the source of world class EOD expertise. Royal Army Ordnance Corps (and subsequently Royal Logistic Corps) ATOs and Ammunition Technicians (AT) (often known by their appointment title 'FELIX') developed a considerable body of knowledge and exported it elsewhere: for example, to the Metropolitan Police. That knowledge has been distilled into EOD doctrine and techniques which are widely applicable. In particular, prophylactic initiation was never used as a policy in Northern Ireland due to the obvious counters available to the terrorist.

534. Major operations were mounted at national level both to control the availability of fertiliser and to prevent the smuggling of commercial explosive from other countries. Some tons of Semtex were obtained by PIRA in the 1980s. This was generally used sparingly, sometimes as a booster to an HME device. The movement of large quantities of explosive, typically from across the Border, became a major logistic operation involving convoys, reconnaissance, deception and rehearsal. Such movements became a target of military interdiction operations. These might be general framework operations, such as multiple snap VCP operations across a wide area and long timeframe, or a series of VCPs mounted at bridges along river lines. On one occasion a tanker containing 12,000kg of HME was stopped at a VCP.

Figure 5-7: ATO at Work

535. Such, then, was the broad extent of framework operations. The term 'framework operations' developed during the 1980s to describe overt activities which were already being conducted, and explicitly to link them to covert activities. Analogies such as that of 'the beaters and the guns' were used. The doctrine of 'reassurance, deterrence and attrition' was adapted to explain that, by and large, framework operations reassured and deterred, whilst covert operations caused attrition. This was simplistic. Many covert operations served to deter and reassure, whilst most attrition was in the form of overt arrest operations.

536. This lack of clarity in the concept of operations can be identified in retrospect through the framework of doctrine, and particularly the philosophy of mission command. This will be considered later.[11] However, it should be noted that there was a lack of a long-running, planned, systematic and clear thread of purpose for much of the campaign. That thread of purpose should have explicitly linked tactical activities to the overall concept of operations at the campaign level. Its absence seems to have resulted in much seemingly purposeless activity. Several former senior commanders have pointed out that much patrolling was apparently done for the sake of it and 'to dominate the ground'. Reassurance and deterrence did have value, but the way in which patrol programmes achieved reassurance and deterrence was often unfocussed and inefficient. An element of that inefficiency was at times due to RUC attitudes to patrolling.[12] However, it is difficult to measure the deterrent effect of patrolling, and the consequences of not doing so.

537. The Army deployed in 1969 because of a huge public order problem, with which the RUC could not cope. Initially public order was the major tactical activity. By the late 1980s the RUC had taken over responsibility for most public order activities, with the Army in support. This was greatly helped by the fact that the scale of disorder very rarely reached that of the early years.

538. It is true that the 'Box' formation used in colonial policing was initially used in Northern Ireland in 1969, and that the banners used to order the rioters to disperse were written in Arabic. (This appears to have happened in both Londonderry and Belfast to at least two different units). Although amusing it is more useful to observe what happened thereafter. The Box had worked where the major tactic was to shoot the ringleaders. This was not considered appropriate in Northern Ireland and therefore arrest or 'snatch' squads were used. The Box was found to be unmanoeuvrable and made it difficult for snatch squads to exit and re-enter quickly. In addition the Box presented a very easy target for gunmen. The Army rapidly adapted to a combination of manned shield walls and snatch squads. The gunman threat was countered by placing marksmen on roofs and in upper storeys. For planned operations, teams of marksmen were infiltrated behind the main body of the rioters. The marksmen would make their presence known once the riot had fully developed, making it very difficult for any gunmen to make a getaway. This tactic was generally successful, but on at least one occasion the extraction of the Army marksmen proved to be challenging.

539. Republicans and loyalists rapidly developed techniques of their own, including the ability to call out large numbers of rioters at short notice – for example, in response

[11] Chapter 8, paras 831-840.
[12] Chapter 4, para 407.

to an occupied house search. Rioters soon realised that soldiers with batons were outranged by bricks and petrol bombs. They were quite prepared to use hockey sticks, cudgels, and baseball bats in return. The security forces responded with CS gas and water cannon. CS gas became unpopular because it drifted into and hung around in nearby homes. Water cannon had limited effect initially – once a rioter is wet, he is wet and can choose to carry on rioting.

540. The next response was baton rounds. The first were made of wood, but splintered and were therefore unsuitable. The next were rubber, but these were relatively ineffective because the range at which they would knock a man off his feet was less than the range of a brick or petrol bomb. The first generation of polypropylene baton rounds was not much better. The later generation of more powerful polypropylene baton rounds were certainly effective, but ran an increased risk of serious injury to the rioters. This resulted in court cases, including referral to the European Court of Justice. The need to have non-lethal weapons in the Army's armoury was clear before the Northern Ireland Campaign; the lesson was that a process of research and development for such weapons is required in order that effectiveness can be maintained. Large-scale rioting was eventually countered by a combination of measures: skilful siting of shield walls; containing the riot on the rioters' home ground (where they were less likely to cause damage to property); threatening the rear of the rioting body with mobile patrols; allowing routes for the rioters to disperse; and limited use of CS and baton rounds to keep the rioters at an appropriate distance.

541. For a time petrol bombers were considered to be a threat to life and therefore a legitimate target for opening fire under the Yellow Card. The counters to petrol bombers were a combination of baton rounds (to keep the petrol bomber at a distance) and the deployment of fire extinguishers behind shield walls.

542. Tactical operations in Northern Ireland developed into a complex mixture of overt and covert, active and passive, technical and human measures. Some of the technical aspects are considered further later. The way in which this overall process was developed is one of the major lessons of Operation BANNER and is discussed in Chapter 8.[13]

[13] Chapter 8, paras 822-827.

CHAPTER 6 – OPERATIONS IN THE MARITIME, AIR AND ELECTROMAGNETIC ENVIRONMENTS

MARITIME OPERATIONS

601. Coastal minesweepers (and later Mine Counter-measures Vessels (MCMV)) were employed from October 1969 in a Maritime Security Operations role to counter seaborne smuggling of arms or personnel. At first the maritime patrols were periodic, but their obvious utility and success led initially to units being held for tasking at 48 hours notice. Following the imposition of Direct Rule in 1972, a permanent coastal patrol[1] was established, supported by naval Sea King helicopters based at Prestwick in Scotland. Operations were conducted within the three-mile territorial limit, although the provisions of 'hot pursuit' permitted boarding confirmed or suspected offenders in international waters. This effectively extended the Area of Operations, thus reducing opportunities to evade arrest. Once a permanent footprint had been established, the maritime security task grew in stature and led to the formation of the Northern Ireland Squadron in the mid-1980s. Initially operating three Bird-class vessels, the Squadron was supplemented in 1986 and eventually replaced by Hunt-class MCMVs to provide a full time presence. Operational effectiveness was enhanced by vessels operated by the Royal Naval Reserve and the addition of Royal Marine (RM) small boat teams operating from parent vessels. RN Sea King helicopters flying out of Prestwick were augmented by a Wessex V detachment in 1977, and subsequently Lynx Flights, for direct tasking by naval authorities. These were employed to provide information on activity beyond the limits of territorial waters and to gather low grade shipping intelligence, in the form of routes and concentrations, in support of maritime security patrols. Similarly, from 1975, submarine support was employed occasionally for covert surveillance operations largely based on intelligence cueing.

602. In 1972, the Landing Platform Docks (LPD) HMS FEARLESS and HMS INTREPID were allocated to support Operations MOTORMAN and GLASSCUTTER.[2] Whilst exercising off Scotland with elements of 3 Commando Brigade RM and 848 Naval Air Squadron embarked, HMS FEARLESS lifted 4,000 troops and 200 armoured vehicles including Royal Engineer AVREs to Northern Ireland. The planning for and execution of this complex task was achieved within 56 hours. HMS INTREPID was rapidly brought up to operational readiness and moved personnel and equipment from Portland to Belfast. In addition to landing troops and armoured vehicles through the Port of Belfast, the LPDs and their landing craft conducted riverine operations in poor weather to land and recover AVREs at an inland security force base. With marked ingenuity, a minor war vessel was employed as a communications relay platform in support of the maritime offload when satellite communications were not available. Although the Royal Navy's amphibious capability was instrumental to the success of Operation MOTORMAN, the most notable aspect was the Navy's ability to deliver a sizeable land force.

603. The Royal Navy provided a variety of other support throughout the Northern Ireland campaign. This included countering a water borne surface-to-air missile threat on

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[1] Operation GRENADA. In addition to the GRENADA task, Operation INTERKNIT was mounted specifically to cover Carlingford Lough on the border between Northern Ireland and Eire.
[2] Chapter 2, paras 226-227.

Lough Neagh;[3] training and education of Army personnel in the conduct of riverine, water borne and small boat operations; underwater explosive ordnance disposal; fire fighting; and water borne military aid to the civil power for the RUC.

Figure 6-1: Boat Operations on Loch Foyle, 2001

AIR OPERATIONS

604. In terms of hours flown the contribution of air and aviation assets to Operation BANNER was, firstly, Army Air Corps (AAC) helicopters; secondly RAF support helicopters (SH); thirdly AAC Beavers and Islanders conducting airborne reconnaissance; and lastly RN support helicopters. However, this simple numerical assessment conceals the reality of what became a truly integrated air/land campaign in which all elements played a critical part.

605. AAC helicopters, originally Scout and Sioux, later Gazelle and Lynx, were primarily used for airborne reconnaissance, surveillance and limited troop lift. They were fitted with a variety of observation and surveillance devices at various times. This included real-time TV from quite early in the campaign, and eventually real-time colour video. Manned airborne surveillance made a considerable contribution to the overall intelligence effort, with aircraft taskings originating from a wide variety of units and the product going to a similarly wide list of users.

[3] Operation LAWFUL.

Figure 6-2: VCP Operation over Fermanagh, 2003

606. The deployment of the Lynx in 1979 enabled much easier movement of small tactical units. The deployment and movement of VCP parties by helicopter had been conducted from the early stages of the campaign. However, the early generation of AAC helicopters were too small and RAF support helicopters were rarely available sufficiently often to make this a significant tactic. By the early 1990s Lynxes were armed with door-mounted GPMGs. A pair could fly a patrol large enough and for long enough to conduct snap VCPs over a wide area. These flights, known as 'Eagle Patrols', developed into a significant part of framework operations, particularly in South Armagh. Helicopters transiting through Bessbrook Mill[4] or forward-based there were included in the intelligence picture. Together with SH, and given that overt road movement was forbidden in South Armagh for many years, Army Aviation contributed to a genuinely airmobile concept of operations in South Armagh and several other places.

607. However, RN and particularly RAF SH were needed to meet the sheer scale of troop lift required. RAF Wessexs, then Pumas and a small but important number of Chinooks, gave the security forces a considerable advantage through operational mobility. RAF helicopters belonged primarily to No 72 Squadron (Wessex) and No 230 Squadron (Puma). No 230 Squadron arrived in Northern Ireland in 1992, whilst No 72 Squadron served there in part or whole between 1969 and its disbandment in 2001. In the early 1980s No 72 Squadron was the largest in the

[4] The HQ of the Armagh Roulement Battalion.

RAF, with 24 aircraft. In addition to routine insertion and extraction of patrols, SH conducted a considerable amount of logistic movement into and out of remote sites. Roulement units deployed to forward locations from RAF Aldergrove or, occasionally, direct from the Mainland by Chinook. After the Ballygawley bomb of 20 August 1988, which was targeted at a bus full of Servicemen going on leave, the routine movement of some families was conducted by SH. Support helicopters also flew many hours of manned airborne surveillance missions. For several years Northern Ireland was allocated more than half the total of all UK SH flying hours. RN Wessexs and later Sea Kings also flew support missions, but generally with fewer aircraft (perhaps four compared with 12 to 16 RAF aircraft). At one time Sea Kings were the only aircraft equipped and trained for night operations out of un-reconnoitred sites. They could be used to deploy and recover patrols at night much more flexibly than other aircraft types, and therefore often came on task late in the afternoon or early evening.

Figure 6-3: RAF Wessex Mk 3 – Workhorse of the Campaign

608. Airmobility also enabled a significant tactical development - that of ‘operations boxes’. These were relatively large areas of ground (perhaps 20m by 10km) which were saturated with foot patrols, typically delivered by helicopter. Such operations often involved several rifle companies simultaneously. Patrols would conduct an extensive pattern of snap VCPs, rummage searches and framework patrolling. The direct effect of such operations was often quite limited. However, they frequently prompted terrorist activity either in or around the fringes of the box, which would be detected by other agencies. They could be used to disrupt a terrorist operation, cover the deployment of COP patrols, or several other options. Overall, the effect of air, foot and vehicle patrols creates a tactical synergy which is hard to counter.

609. Beaver and Islander aircraft were used primarily for airborne reconnaissance. They were closely integrated with the Reconnaissance and Intelligence Centre (RIC[5]) at RAF Aldergrove. It became entirely routine for a planned search operation to be supported by up-to-date aerial imagery.

610. Although a number of helicopters were forced down by gunfire or occasionally mortar fire,[6] it appears that no aircraft was ever shot down with the loss of all or most of those on board. Thus the security forces retained control of the air throughout the campaign. That was due in large part to a continued process of upgrading aircraft and reviewing flying tactics in response to changes in the threat. After a shooting incident in 1983 helicopters changed to flying either below 50 feet or above 500 feet, notwithstanding the possible threat of SA-7. IR jammers were introduced to Lynx and Puma from 1985. An SA-7 was used on 19 July 1991, but missed its target. Flying in pairs also contributed to defeating the threat. Any loss of control of the air would have seriously impeded the conduct of security force operations on the ground. The effort expended in defending it was well spent.

Figure 6-4: Gazelle over Harland and Wolff Shipyard, Belfast

611. Deployment patterns changed throughout the campaign. AAC squadrons initially undertook Roulement tours, but this was slowly changed to an all-resident force.

[5] 'G' for 'geographic' was added late in the campaign (hence 'RIGC') to describe the integration of cartographic and survey elements.
[6] For example, landing or taking off from a security force base.

Although this reduced disruption to the Army elsewhere, it concentrated operational experience almost exclusively in resident squadrons and required an increase in the number of aircrew deployed. RAF and RN aircrew deployed individually for short deployments, typically of six weeks for the RAF. This allowed them to maintain currency and training standards whilst on the Mainland and to concentrate on operational flying whilst deployed. However, it limited their local knowledge and their integration with supported Army units.

612. Such differences were perhaps inevitable given different Service practices and backgrounds. They were not helped by occasional rivalry and 'turf wars'. The formation of the Joint Helicopter Command and the Joint Helicopter Force, Northern Ireland contributed to overcoming such differences, and required those involved to focus on the delivery of airborne capability.

613. A further change in deployment patterns was that from forward basing (which optimised the speed of reaction of aircraft deployed) to centralisation at RAF Aldergrove. At any stage neither case was entirely correct; there were always some aircraft at Aldergrove and some forward, particularly at Bessbrook Mill (which in the late 1980s was reputed to be one of the busiest heliports in the World). Centralisation allowed for better use of assets, but was probably only possible once longer-range, longer-duration aircraft and a number of forward refuelling sites became available. Forward refuelling, with rotors running, was introduced by the RAF in 1972. By 1990 aircraft were rarely more than 15 minutes away from fuel, and only five minutes in South Armagh. This made a major difference to availability on task. Overall, centralised *control* rather than centralised basing was the key to greater effectiveness.

614. Control of the air granted freedom of movement and with it the ability to conduct logistic movement and resupply. However, such operations consumed scarce flying hours. It became an example of being 'fixed' operationally and tactically through terrorist activity. A degree of G3 rigour and discipline was required to impose a workable degree of logistic inconvenience so as to free up helicopter hours for operations.

THE ELECTROMAGNETIC DIMENSION

615. One of the first problems faced by units deploying to Northern Ireland was that their Combat Net Radios (CNR) did not work in urban areas, where almost all operations took place initially. This was a major problem (but not a new one for the Army). CNR - initially of the Larkspur and then Clansman series – is not optimised for urban areas, and the laws of physics impose strict limits on the capabilities of communications equipment. A number of special-to-theatre measures were taken. Pye, Westminster and Storno radios and pocket phones working through 'talk-throughs', were introduced. These commercial, off-the-shelf systems were the everyday means of communications and none of them were truly satisfactory. Other than their technical limitations there were recurrent problems with scalings, maintenance, spares and training, as well as interoperability with other users such as the RUC.

616. It was rapidly realised that some form of fixed communications infrastructure was required. The provision of that infrastructure, its maintenance and evolution, was a major operation over many years. In involved some interesting and novel challenges. Issues included the vetting of civilian aerial riggers, where used; the security of riggers working on exposed sites in dangerous areas; and the balance between operational considerations and practical health and safety measures. The infrastructure became highly complex and sophisticated, frequently employing what was at the time state of the art technology. By 2000 or so Northern Ireland could be said to be Britain's first fully networked theatre of operations. At a more basic level, it was the deployment of Cougarnet across Northern Ireland from the mid-1980s that first gave most units a robust, reliable, deployable and secure means of tactical communications.

617. However, the fight to communicate was but one aspect of the electromagnetic struggle. Terrorist organisations were also involved in what was genuinely electronic warfare from early in the campaign. For example, loyalists were found to be jamming the BBC from a UDA club in Belfast in the early 1970s. A Royal Signals electronic warfare team located the jammers using electronic support measures (ESM) equipment. The club was raided, the individuals arrested and the equipment seized.

618. RCIEDs presented another challenge. Early PIRA IEDs used commercially available model aircraft components. Simple counters could be devised, but manufacturing, fielding and using the equipment by all the troops at risk was a major operational challenge. The situation rapidly evolved into a continuous struggle between development and counter. The security forces developed policies to manage this process. Initially the response was largely technical based on the four strands of detection, inhibition, initiation and surveillance. This was developed into a more sophisticated process which linked tactical and technical measures tailored to the threat and is discussed further in Chapter 8.[7] It is also linked to the wider subject of scientific support to operations, discussed in Chapter 7.[8]

619. Patrol-level electronic counter measures (ECM) equipment was introduced almost as soon as the RCIED threat was understood. Since then it has been rapidly and continuously developed to keep pace with the threat. General principles were also been developed to guide that process. When a new threat was identified the first response was generally the deployment of detectors. As technical counters were found, equipment switched towards the use of inhibitors. Another issue was that wherever possible equipments should be integrated into a single item. This was important both for manpack and vehicle configurations. *It was generally found that equipment should be designed for the manpack role and then adapted for vehicle use, not the reverse.*

620. On one occasion a soldier lost a piece of patrol equipment which fell into the hands of PIRA, which analysed it and developed a counter which then killed at least one soldier. That is one reason why the loss of equipment was, and remains, in this type of campaign, a serious issue. However, the problem was hugely compounded

[7] Chapter 8, paras 822-827.
[8] Chapter 7, paras 707-711.

because the unit involved did not report the loss of equipment until the end of its tour. That gave PIRA a head start, which was more than long enough.

621. Search and EOD ECM equipment went through parallel processes of development, and two management issues were observed. The first is that an artificial division between ECM for EOD and that for other purposes is not helpful in the long run. The second is to highlight the inescapable need for organisations and processes to coordinate the use of the electromagnetic spectrum. This is required not just across the security forces but also with the wide variety of civilian users, from fire brigades to air traffic controllers, doctors on call, hospitals and medical users, all of whom have a legitimate call on portions of the spectrum.

CHAPTER 7 - WIDER ASPECTS OF THE CAMPAIGN

ORGANISATION AND DEPLOYMENT

701. The organisation and deployment of Regular Army units can be considered under three broad headings: strength, Arms Plot and Roulement; tour length and interval; and choice of units. In August 1969 there were three resident infantry battalions in Northern Ireland and one armoured reconnaissance regiment. Reinforcement was initially by large numbers of units on short tours of four months or less. Neither the resident nor the first reinforcement battalions had received any internal security training. Troop strengths are summarised in Figure 1:

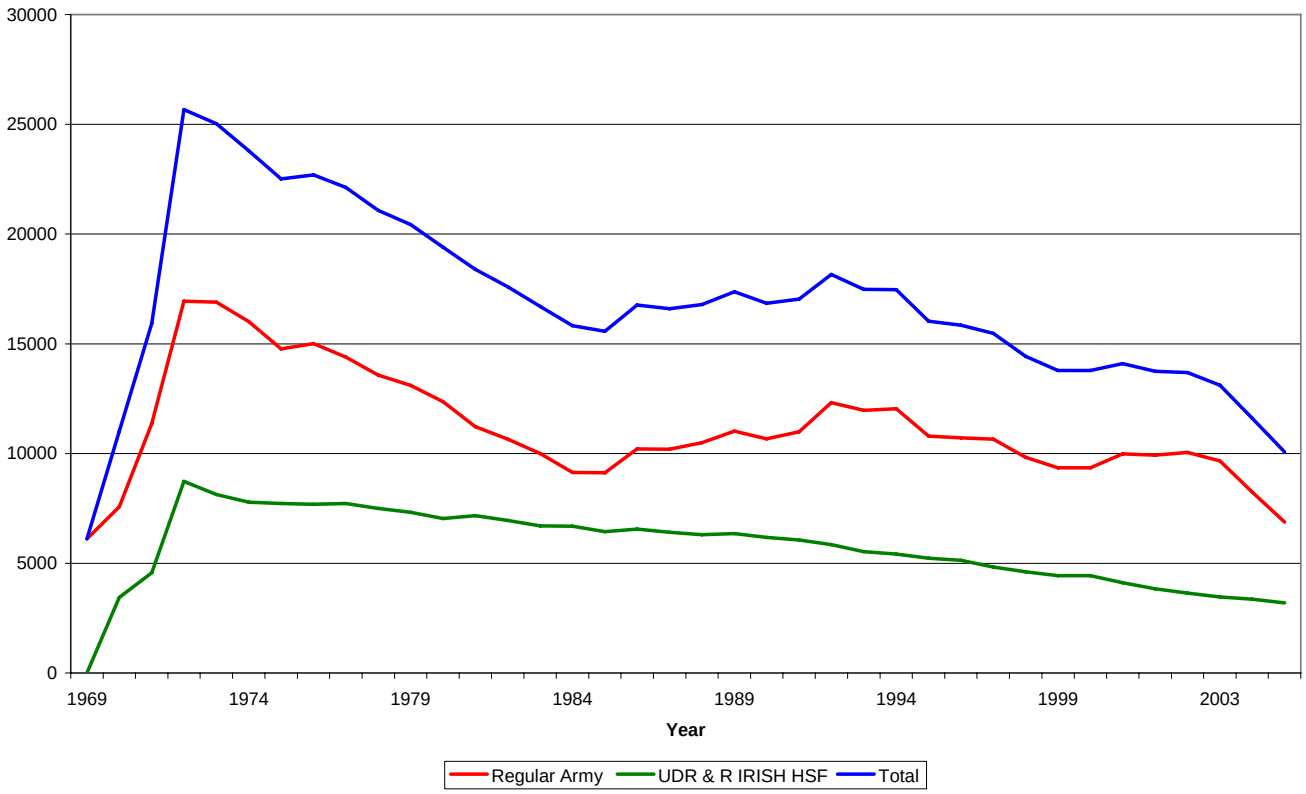

Figure 7-1: Graph of Total Troop Strength of the Regular Army in Northern Ireland

(Note: the total does not show short-term deployments, such as the commitment of the SPEARHEAD battalion. For Operations GLASSCUTTER and MOTORMAN the short-term total for 1972 exceeded 28,000).

702. The Army had an establishment of about 155,000 for most of the period until the end of the Cold War. Operation BANNER was a major strain on its resources. There was continuous pressure to reduce troop strength, with the result that numbers in theatre were as low as was considered feasible and most units were worked very hard. Tours for resident units were initially 18 months and for Roulement units four months. Greater continuity was necessary, so tours were extended to 24 months for resident units and four and a half months for Roulement units. The latter allowed for a handover of a week at each end of the tour whilst only using three units per AOR per year. The pressure and pace of operational duty was such that Roulement tours were only extended to six months in the early 1990s. Resident infantry battalions

could only deploy two or at most three companies for operations (not least because of the need to guard their own barracks and married quarters) whereas Roulement units deployed four. However, resident battalions developed a depth of skill and local area knowledge that Roulement units could not match, and provided much-needed continuity. There was, therefore, a gradual move towards more resident infantry battalions, peaking at six in the mid-1980s. In addition, one resident battalion on the Arms Plot for two years took the place of six Roulement units. The effect of that on the interval between operational tours ('the tour interval') was considerable.

Figure 7-2: A Coy 1 GLOSTERS Deploys into Londonderry, 1970

703. The tour interval is the result of the operational need for units, the tour length and the number of units available. More units needed and very short tours from a given number of units resulted in very short tour intervals. One unit complained of being bored on its fifth short tour – in 1972! The general effect was to make it very difficult to train for general war roles, since most of Operation BANNER took place during the Cold War. A Royal Armoured Corps, Royal Artillery or Royal Engineer unit deploying in the infantry role for four months from BAOR was considered unavailable for its primary role for roughly a year once pre-tour training, deployment, recovery, leave and re-training were considered. The net result of multiple short tours at short intervals was that units were only able to regain their expertise due to the residual knowledge of the SNCOs. For example, if an artillery battery commander did two deployments to Northern Ireland during his tour of command he might never get to fire his guns, let alone exercise his battery in a major Formation Training Exercise.

Almost all large-scale collective training ceased in BAOR for a time during the early 1970s.

704. At one stage the average tour interval for UK-based infantry battalions was 13 months. However, the average is always misleading. As late as 1989-92 one infantry battalion did four short tours in three years; whereas during the early 1980s one BAOR-based mechanised battalion did not deploy for 41 months. From early on the Army tried to achieve an average tour interval of 24 months. This figure was based on empirical observations in the 1970s but then achieved mythical status. There was no research that demonstrated its effect on, for example, soldier retention. It does seem to have been a reasonable target but was seldom achieved. As Operation BANNER ran down in the 1990s, other commitments such as Bosnia increased.

705. The other way of increasing the tour interval was to increase the number of units. Non-infantry units were used from very early on. They made a major contribution to the campaign but suffered accordingly. Both the first and the most recent soldiers to be killed on active duty on Operation BANNER were Gunners. The depth of skill of non-infantry units in the infantry role was never as deep as that of Regular infantry units, and senior commanders were well aware of a degree of risk in using them. Gurkha units were never deployed to Northern Ireland. Royal Marine Commandos were deployed for numerous short tours, and at one stage an RAF Regiment Wing deployed to run a battalion AOR. Irish-recruited regiments[1] were not deployed for many years. The eventual decision to deploy them was taken on a case-by-case basis. One regiment stated that it did not wish to serve in Northern Ireland at the same time that another was volunteering. Officers from the Gurkhas and Irish-recruited regiments served with other units throughout the campaign.

706. Although Roulement generally worked well, it did result in a lack of continuity at unit level which was never entirely resolved. A few officers and non-commissioned officers did serve for longer tours in continuity roles, often in intelligence sections (individuals became known as CONCOs). With hindsight greater use could have been made of in-theatre elements to provide continuity. For example, resident or UDR battalions might have provided small numbers of Operations, Intelligence and Logistic personnel to support the handover of units.

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT

707. A scientific adviser (SCIAD) was attached to HQ Northern Ireland in 1969. There has been a dedicated SCIAD and staff in theatre continuously since then. As civil servants they have served on long tours (sometimes for several years) and provided a useful contribution to continuity in their ability to understand developments to the threat and how to respond. They have developed a significant body of corporate knowledge, not least of initiatives that have been tried and failed in the past, coupled with the objectivity to know why they failed and why they might or might not succeed in the future.

[1] Before 1992 the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars, the Irish Guards and the Royal Irish Rangers.

708. SCIAD was initially largely concerned with Operational Analysis (OA) and provided some very useful insights, considering issues such as: the development of tactics; the best way to schedule tactical reserves; and the optimum balance between PVCPs and 'snap' VCPs. SCIAD's advice in 1977 was that the optimum balance was no PVCPs at all, largely on the grounds that as far as was known no PVCP had ever detained known terrorist suspects or captured any terrorist arms or equipment. Terrorists simply avoided them. Conversely snap VCPs had a deterrent value as well as contributing to attrition. In addition permanent VCPs became targets themselves. The suggestion that there should be no PVCPs was initially rejected by military staff on several grounds: some that can be seen to have flawed logic; the reasonable point that PVCPs provide reassurance to elements of the population (although there are other ways of providing reassurance); and apparently wilful misinterpretation of SCIAD's advice. It is also interesting to note that the officer responsible for taking that decision returned to Northern Ireland later and the consequences of the decision were visited on him when a PVCP in his AOR was attacked. PVCPs had still not resulted in any arrests or finds. The result of SCIAD's studies was often counter-intuitive to the military. It requires perception and imagination on the part of military staff to see that the counter-intuitive option may well be the best.

709. The development of the IED as a major threat drew SCIAD's attention almost entirely away from OA and into electronics. Investigation of developments in the threat, designing counters, building prototypes, supporting the production of field equipment and advising on its deployment became major activities. These activities were closely linked to those of other staff branches such as intelligence and communications. In some areas SCIAD and his staff could predict probable future developments by PIRA technicians, which enabled the initiative to be taken in the technical struggle.[2]

710. Research and development was required in many different scientific disciplines. For example, after the bomb attack on the PVCP at Buncranna Road in October 1990 human factors experts made considerable improvements to the ergonomics of OPs and PVCPs. They advised on issues such as the number, size and location of video screens, location of alarm buttons, and so on. Improved workspace layout and therefore better overall effectiveness was a significant contribution to force protection.

711. SCIAD had no production capability, and limited resources of his own. However, he was closely linked to Mainland research and development organisations, and to Operational Requirement (subsequently Equipment Capability) staffs. The scale of support available on the Mainland was considerable and was co-opted when needed. At one stage the campaign against the RCIED was coordinated at two-star level and the number of establishments and scientists directly involved both grew more than seven-fold. Significant funding was directed to many aspects of equipment for Northern Ireland, and reaction times were generally far faster than that for General Service equipment. During the 1990s HQ Northern Ireland became a Top-Level Budget holder, which required it to undertake OA in support of investment appraisals for new equipment. SCIAD moved back into OA to some extent.

[2] Chapter 8, paras 822-827.

Towards the end of the operation SCIAD had evolved a broad-based scientific and analytic capability. It is highly significant that SCIAD worked in HQ Northern Ireland and reported directly to the GOC.

FORCE PROTECTION

712. Some of the earliest images from Operation BANNER show soldiers wearing 'flak jackets' and deploying from Humber 'pigs'. Force protection grew from there into a concerted programme across many individual disciplines. Flak jackets were replaced by the effective but unpopular Improved Northern Ireland Body Armour (INIBA) with ceramic chest and back plates. Developments elsewhere led to the general service Combat Body Armour being adapted to carry the INIBA plates. This was more comfortable, hence more likely to be worn and more effective. Women found it far more comfortable.

713. The arming of Servicewomen was an issue that took time to resolve. At first Servicewomen were not to be armed under any circumstances. It was not until the policy to arm all women in the Services was taken in the early 1990s that equivalent measures were taken in Northern Ireland.

714. Developments in ECM and armoured vehicles have been described elsewhere. Force Protection Engineering developed considerably from the early days of sandbagged sangars, through bullet-proof prefabricated sangars, to mortar-proof accommodation. The design and construction of more mundane items such as 'sight' screens was also developed and optimised.[3] Evolutionary design and fabrication led to highly advanced structures such as those built for what was effectively an annual series of sieges at Drumcree in the 1990s.

Figure 7-3: Construction of the Roadblock at Drumcree for the 2003 Marching Season

[3] Sight screens are high walls designed primarily to give cover from view. In some locations they have to be very high to prevent the inside of a security base being overlooked.

715. Two bombs exploded at Warrenpoint on 27 August 1979. Sixty deaths, or 37% of all Army deaths due to terrorist action in Northern Ireland from that date onwards, were the result of just nine bombs.[4] Twenty-one Servicemen were killed in England by a further three bombs.[5] Thus almost half of all Servicemen killed by republican terrorists since 1979 were killed by 12 bombs. Although significant in themselves these statistics suggest the considerable importance of force protection issues.[6] They, and the nine members of the security forces killed by the 'South Armagh Sniper'[7] reinforce the need for a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to counter terrorist operations.[8] This comprehensive approach produced a virtuous cycle of effectiveness in Northern Ireland as advances in any one discipline created benefits elsewhere.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS

716. For several reasons Information Operations were probably the most disappointing aspect of the campaign. In the early stages soldiers and junior officers, given appropriate training, did a very good job of appearing on camera in the immediate aftermath of an incident. The Army certainly learned hard lessons regarding media handling in the early 1970s. However, with that exception, Information Operations were generally poorly conducted; they were ill-coordinated with other government bodies; they were reactive; and often missed significant opportunities. The absence of a government information line was often exploited by the terrorist, sometimes with operational or strategic consequences. Constant criticism in the republican media, notably the *An Phoblacht* newspaper, was not seriously challenged by Government, NIO or Army Information Operations. Part of the reason for the ineffectiveness lay in the lack of a single unitary authority for the campaign, and the lack of a joint forum to agree Information Operations priorities, messages and means of dissemination. Differing viewpoints on the need for positive Information Operations in Stormont (and the NIO) the Police and HQ Northern Ireland militated against effective Information Operations.[9]

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

717. When the Army arrived in 1969 civil-military operations were rapidly seen as a way of maintaining the confidence of all sections of the community, but particularly the catholics. Units appointed Community Relations (CR) officers who established links with local opinion-formers. In catholic areas these were often priests. However, due to the very high turnover of Roulement units (with up to eight in Belfast alone, none of which stayed for more than four months initially) a lack of continuity and consistency was inevitable. A number of valuable CR projects were put in place,

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[4] 18 killed at Warrenpoint; four killed at Glenadush on 16 December 1979; 11 soldiers and six civilians at the Droppin Well Inn near Ballykelly on 7 December 1982; six killed at Lisburn on 15 June 1988; eight killed at Ballygawley on 20 August 1988; five killed at Camlough on 19 May 1981; three killed at Mayobridge on 18 November 1989 and five killed at the Buncranna Road PVCP on 24 October 1990.

[5] The Hyde Park and Regent's Park bombs of 20 July 1982 and the bombing of the RM barracks at Deal on 22 September 1989.

[6] It cannot be entirely coincidental that all but two of those ten events took place in the second half of the year. The others took place in May and June (the 5th and 6th months).

[7] Chapter 5, paras 529-530 and box.

[8] Chapter 8, paras 822-827.

[9] Chapter 8, para 815.

such as sponsoring youth clubs or running summer youth camps. In the early years, the Stormont authorities appeared broadly indifferent to the plight of the catholics and thus calls for long-term assistance with facilities such as community centres tended to go unheeded.

718. The imposition of Direct Rule and the formation of the NIO changed that. The NIO established a network of local government representatives, known as Civilian Representatives (CIVREP). Usually Northern Irish citizens themselves, they were generally highly capable and earned the trust of the local community. They made a significant practical contribution to CR and were a useful source of local information for Army units. They were anxious not to be seen as 'government spies' and needed to exercise discretion, not least to retain the trust of the community. One reason why they were popular was that they were a conduit for civilian compensation claims.

PERSONNEL AND LOGISTIC ISSUES

719. Personnel and Logistic issues can be reviewed under fairly broad headings. Many personnel issues should be seen in the context of an Army gradually modernising itself under the social pressures of the late 20th Century. In 1969 pay and allowances had only just been modernised under the 'comparability' process. Issues such as operational service pay, extra leave warrants, welfare and recreation facilities were all relatively new innovations in the 1970s. Northern Ireland was the first theatre for which operational service pay was authorised. Domestic legislation is different in Northern Ireland in some cases from that on the mainland, and therefore the administration of families of resident units had to be conducted on a slightly different basis.

720. The treatment of injured soldiers developed significantly. The injured could be flown directly to the military wing of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast which rapidly developed a world-wide reputation for the treatment of bomb and bullet injuries. 'Battlefield' first aid also developed rapidly with the creation of 'team medics' on the scale of one per fire team. Trained only to give immediate, life-saving first aid, they kept the injured alive until the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO) arrived. The RMO stabilised the casualty for evacuation to hospital, typically by helicopter. The 'golden hour' was met in the great majority of cases and the survival rate of the seriously injured was very high. This gave units considerable confidence. In very broad terms, roughly one soldier was discharged from the Army due to injury for each soldier killed by terrorist action.

721. The key issue of logistics was that of developing a permanent operational infrastructure in a country where English is the spoken language but where most activity outside security bases had to be covert. This had several consequences; the general lesson for the future is the need to think through the implications of the environment rigorously and act on the deductions. Examples include the need for covert recovery of broken-down vehicles; and the need to procure, license, service and rotate fleets of covert vehicles. Such vehicles were needed for many different purposes: vans to deploy patrols; trucks to deliver food; rubbish trucks; school coaches; and so on. Movement control into, out of and within theatre all had to be done covertly. That required special arrangements with ferry operators, airlines and so on. The British Forces Post Office was used throughout the Operation for private

mail, in order to conceal domestic addresses. On at least one occasion a Royal Engineers unit adopted civilian equipment, clothing, working practices and even site signs in order to build something without drawing attention to its activities.

722. However, there were also occasions when infrastructure and logistics had to be conducted as overt military operations. The construction and later refurbishment of the hardened accommodation at Crossmaglen were both brigade-level operations involving up to nine battalions (Operation TONNAGE). Major route clearances had to be undertaken; the route picketed, engineer plant and materials moved in by road; the construction site protected; and everything removed again on completion.

723. All this required adaptation to local conditions. Special-to-theatre Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) were required, particularly to cater for Roulement. It was found that equipment support was best done by permanent station workshops. Local manufacture was often required, requiring both engineer and equipment support skills rarely practised elsewhere. Overall, much of the combat service support to Operation BANNER was not a matter of the normal considerations of demand, distance and duration as much as adaptation to the local conditions of the theatre.

TRAINING

724. The first units arrived in Northern Ireland with no special-to-theatre training: as described, 3rd Battalion the Light Infantry arrived in just over 24 hours. It had no maps, and none were available. At the time it was not obvious that the campaign would go on for years and it was not until 1972 that pre-tour training was formalised, largely under NITAT at Hythe and Lydd. This quickly became NITAT UKLF when a second team was established at Sennelager in Germany. These teams trained units deploying to Northern Ireland for residential or Roulement tours. A Northern Ireland Reinforcement Training Team (NIRTT) was established in theatre to train individuals on trickle postings, or those joining units mid-tour. Attendance at NITAT or NIRTT was mandatory for all individuals posted to Northern Ireland.

725. There seem to have been four main reasons for NITAT's success. First of all, the operational need was obvious, and that acted as a huge incentive for HQs, instructors and units undergoing training to take it seriously. Secondly, it was closely tied to one theatre and therefore had a single focus. Although it delivered standardised training it was able to optimise that training for specific unit AORs. Thirdly, the staff was of high quality and had first-hand knowledge and real credibility. The great majority of instructors (colour sergeants to captains) had just completed an operational tour in theatre themselves. The training team leaders – captains – had the personality, knowledge and credibility to be able to debrief OCs and COs, and to comment on the suitability of subordinate commanders to COs. That must be rare in almost any army. Perhaps most importantly, OC NITAT (in the rank of Major for much of Operation BANNER) and his instructors visited Northern Ireland frequently and ensured that they were fully up to date with developments in theatre.

726. NITAT and NIRTT ensured that all troops deploying to theatre were properly trained and briefed as to what to expect in Northern Ireland. The professional standards set,

and achieved in a few weeks of training, were high. Pre-tour training saved lives and was a ‘war winner’.

727. Whatever the formal command and budgetary relationships, the NITATs were in practice owned by HQ Northern Ireland. Critically, that HQ controlled NITAT’s syllabus; particularly the Tactics, Techniques and Procedures and other aspects of doctrine. NITAT and its successor, the Operational Training Advisory Group (OPTAG) was a major success. It produced well-trained, confident and highly motivated units fit for deployment. One former senior officer pointed out that in his experience the character of units in theatre varied considerably, but he rarely found a bad one. NITAT helped develop and standardise tactics across Northern Ireland. It was a major contributor to the speed at which tactical and equipment developments were brought into practice.

CHAPTER 8 - MAJOR FINDINGS, OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

801. This Chapter presents the major findings of the study, an overview of Operation BANNER and the main conclusions.

THE EARLY STAGES

802. There was no insurgency in August 1969. The IRA was not a credible force and took no significant part in the events of that month. For several reasons the IRA was allowed to develop into an effective insurgent organisation over the next two years. This suggests that the early stages of an apparent breakdown in social order – however it is described - are absolutely critical to the subsequent nature of a campaign. All subsequent decisions and actions, by all parties, are conditioned by these early events. Furthermore violence in the early stages creates bitterness, hatred and extreme views which can last for generations. Looking at the events of the Troubles in retrospect, it is apparent that many of them could have been avoided or reduced in impact if effective measures had been taken early on; and that similar patterns can be seen in many situations elsewhere.

Figure 8-1: Public Order Operations in the Falls Road, 1970

803. Thus there is an important requirement to identify situations which are likely to lead to social unrest, insurgency or civil war. In Northern Ireland, this should not have been difficult. Junior officers present in Northern Ireland in 1969 were well aware of

the discrimination and deprivation, and asked themselves at the time why the Government did not do anything about it.

804. However, the critical issue is the necessity of engaging all relevant agencies in early, substantive, visible action for reform in order to prevent insurgency or civil war breaking out or potential insurgents exploiting the situation. This is likely to be difficult. Lack of knowledge of the situation, lack of perception, vested interests and political impasse will all militate against the chance of such preventive action being taken. For example, in 1969 the British Cabinet saw much of the problem of Northern Ireland as being Stormont's responsibility. However, given its composition, Stormont was most unlikely to take substantive action. Indeed it would probably have seen that as being contrary to its own interests. Stormont was part of the problem and could have been so recognised at the time.

805. When engaged in such situations, British commanders have been fully aware of the need for substantive, multi-agency action. Unfortunately military commanders are often the only people in authority with the understanding of the broad situation and the technical knowledge to appreciate the risks and wider implications. But they are not the people who must take the key actions required to recover what might be a bad and deteriorating situation. The armed forces' initial mandate is likely to be to prevent a greater breakdown of order. They will typically have very limited resources to deal with the wider issues of social, political and economic unrest. *However, the circumstances will often suggest that those senior commanders deployed on the ground have the duty and the obligation to attract, at the earliest opportunity, the attention of government ministers (or political administrators) to the range of problems, and to recommend and enable non-military as well as military action in order to address the underlying causes of the unrest*. No one else in authority in a situation of public disorder can be guaranteed to have a better view. The political context will dictate what the military can achieve and what limitations are imposed. But the requirement for strategic and operational commanders to guide and inform political decision-making is clear.

806. There will be, in tandem, a requirement to monitor developments across a number of areas: political, social, economic, cultural and possibly religious. The ability to detect and analyse potential and emerging insurgent groupings will be particularly important.

807. The initial period after the arrival of a military force in a peace support or peace enforcement operation has been described as the 'honeymoon period'. That suggests that there is a period (variously given as 100 days or three months) in which to put things right. The term 'honeymoon period' is a misnomer. *It is not a honeymoon. It is the most important phase of the campaign.*

ADDRESSING THE CAUSES OF INSURGENCY

808. The underlying causes of an insurgency will tend to be social or political, economic, religious or a mixture of these. Insurgent bodies feed off disaffection (and *vice versa*) from whatever cause. In the case of Northern Ireland the IRA fed initially off discrimination and deprivation, and then exploited the perception that the Army and

RUC were partisan and anti-catholic. The truth was not necessarily important: *dissatisfaction is a sentiment, and feeds off perceptions.*

809. Security forces do not 'win' insurgency campaigns militarily; at best they can contain or suppress the level of violence and achieve a successful end-state. They can thus reduce a situation to an 'acceptable level of violence' – a level at which normal social, political and economic activities can take place without intimidation. 'Acceptable level of violence' as a term should be used carefully since violence should have no place in a developed society. What is required is a level which the population can live with, and with which local police forces can cope. Security forces should bring the level of violence down to the point at which dissidents believe they will not win through a primarily violent strategy and at which a political process can proceed without significant intimidation. If possible, the situation should not be allowed to come to that stage.

810. However, unless the causes of unrest are addressed, insurgency or serious unrest will continue. In Northern Ireland this did happen, over a period of years. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive did clear the great majority of the Victorian slums. Money was invested into the economy to create jobs. It took time, and it could not have been done without a substantial reduction in the levels of violence of the early 1970s. But, simplistically, the long-term solution was not to deploy three battalions into the Divis Flats; but rather to bulldoze them and build decent, respectable homes with proper amenities.[1]

811. Addressing the causes of the insurgency will not generally be within the remit of the armed forces. They can achieve a limited but critical security task, but that will not be the solution to the overall problem. In addition, they should avoid making the situation worse. It could be argued that the Army did make the situation worse by, in practice, alienating the catholic community in 1970 and 1971. In this regard, it should be acknowledged that while material improvements can be delivered, in some cases it may be much more difficult to change emotions, perceptions or deep-seated grievances and beliefs.

A SINGLE CAMPAIGN AUTHORITY

812. By 1980 almost all the military structures which eventually defeated PIRA were in place. It is revealing to examine why it then took another quarter of a century to end the campaign.[2] In retrospect some signs are visible. There was no single authority in overall charge of the direction of the campaign, but rather three agencies, often poorly-coordinated: Stormont followed by the NIO; the MOD; and the RUC. From a military perspective, for most of the campaign there was little coherence and synergy. There was little evidence of a strategic vision and no long-term plan. Below the level of Westminster White Papers there was no clearly-articulated strategy, or view of the future and how to achieve it which involved all the relevant agencies. As a result the 'wheel was often reinvented' and progress was unnecessarily slow. Action against terrorists was not linked closely to addressing the causes of the problem.

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[1] Chapter 5, Figure 5-1.

[2] The insurgent form of PIRA was defeated. However, it adapted and evolved into a terrorist organisation. See Chapter 2, paras 227 and 231-232.

813. Ministers and civil servants were sometimes reluctant to engage in the comprehensive, fully coordinated cross-government activity which the Army would recognise as a campaign plan. That is a good reason for the need to take very firm action to ensure that they are engaged in, and convinced of the need to abide by, the process. This will not be easy.

814. The events of the Troubles provide no evidence for the utility of the current set of campaign planning tools, because they were not used. However, they indicate very strongly that they, or something like them, are required and should be applied across all lines of government activity. The resulting plan will probably be loosely developed at first. However, there should, as a minimum, be some mechanism of agreed end-states, lines of operation, intermediate objectives, and a responsibility to coordinate.[3]

815. Particular efforts are likely to be needed to overcome the inherent lack of synergy between Government Departments and agencies. In Northern Ireland this was never more the case than in the area of Information Operations. Many contributions to this analysis have described the information campaign in terms such as 'woeful', 'pitiable' and 'grossly inadequate'. In simple terms, rarely would anybody in authority other than in the Army take a positive, proactive stance. The result was a regular series of information failures in which PIRA (and occasionally loyalist paramilitaries) held and exploited their advantage. As early as the mid-1970s over 80% of the violence was perpetrated by PIRA, but even that simple and categorical fact was never exploited. Since insurgency feeds off dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction is a sentiment which feeds off perceptions, shaping the perception of the population is critically important. *The absence of a unified, proactive information strategy for most of the campaign was a major failing*.

816. It has been said that PIRA was engaged regularly, and generally successfully, by the Army at the tactical level in Northern Ireland; but it was almost never engaged at the operational and strategic levels. A campaign plan should integrate strategic, operational and tactical activities through the superior commander's intent and its translation into coherent missions for subordinates at each level. With hindsight one can detect throughout the campaign incidents where tactical activity lacked apparent purpose, or where activities were not coordinated and did not achieve synergy. That is probably the clearest military justification for a single campaign authority and plan. A process by which the strategic intent is translated quickly and effectively into tactical activity is clearly required.

817. Many senior officers called for the appointment of some form of 'supremo' for Northern Ireland right up until the mid-1980s. No such appointment was made and the Troubles drifted on for another 20 years. There are arguments for and against such an appointment, which are discussed later.[4] It was not important that the 'supremo' should be military; but rather there be a single figure of authority.

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[3] This issue is being addressed (June 2006) through the Generic Strategic Campaign Plan work being led by MOD in Whitehall. Some positive progress has been made.

[4] Chapter 8, paras 852-853.

INTELLIGENCE

818. One distinguished commentator has suggested that, in peace support or counter insurgency operations, information is the currency, not firepower. The logic is simple: once an adversary has been identified to allow his removal (by arrest or attack) the security forces normally have more than sufficient physical resources with which to strike. The difficult part is the information required, particularly where the terrorist or insurgent hides himself in the midst of the population (and in a blizzard of irrelevant information). The intelligence aspects of Operation BANNER were discussed in Chapter 5.[5] Their importance is hard to understate. The insurgency could not have been broken, and the terrorist structure could not have been engaged and finally driven into politics without the intelligence organisations and processes that were developed.

THE LOGIC OF LOCAL CONDITIONS

819. Counter insurgency and peace support campaigns tend to be subject to local factors which do not necessarily accord with overt logic. For example, during the Troubles there were almost no attacks on the TA in Northern Ireland, nor on the families of policemen or soldiers. Lawyers were seldom attacked by terrorists on either side. The few bombs placed in Service married quarters areas appear to have been placed to tie down troops, rather than to kill or maim. This seems paradoxical, as they were clearly relatively easy targets.[6] The reasons probably lie in the self-image of the IRA as an army with its own sense of morality, honour and justice. There were local ground rules in the Troubles, and they did not necessarily have obvious logic. The same would apply in any other complex social situation. The security forces need to learn what the local conditions are; analyse why the local conditions are as they are; and finally try to understand the implications.

Figure 8-2: Local Conditions - Belfast, 1969

820. It was often said that the British did not understand Ireland. In part this may have reflected ignorance and an unwillingness to try to understand. For the many commanders who did attempt to understand the roots of the Troubles any number of

[5] Chapter 5, paras 502-505 and 537.
[6] As another example see Chapter 4, Footnote 3 concerning shotgun licences.

perceptive books were available. With hindsight what those books could not easily convey, nor the British easily understand, were the deep-seated beliefs, myths and feelings held by the local population. In some cases the perceived (and perhaps actual) grievances were centuries old. Selectively taught history or partisan use of events provided rallying cries and strong motivators. Such cultural issues tend to be unspoken and even subconscious. They are inherently difficult to comprehend. In the absence of such deep understanding the British tended to underestimate the differences between the Irish and themselves. One commentator observed that Englishmen, especially, tend to view the Irishman as a variant of a Briton rather than as a foreigner.

821. Without effective cultural understanding the security forces in any theatre cannot conduct a truly effective information campaign and arguably, therefore, an effective counter insurgency campaign. Additionally many military activities may be flawed because the reaction of population cannot be properly predicted: there is a need both to gain intelligence and to understand local perceptions.[7] This links to the idea that insurgency feeds off dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction is a sentiment based on perception. Perception is framed by culture.

PROCESSES RATHER THAN LESSONS

822. There appear to be few concrete and directly exportable lessons from Operation BANNER. Reflection suggests that, where particular organisations or methods have been exported to other theatres, their success lies in the extent to which they are adapted to local conditions. Apparent individual 'lessons' appear to reflect wider issues, and it is those wider issues which this publication attempts to capture. An example is the observation that the presence of armed helicopters deters terrorist attacks. This was identified quite independently by the US armed forces in Iraq in 2003. However, it only applies where the security forces have control of the air; the more general issue in that case is that of a Manoeuvrist Approach to operations.[8]

Figure 8-3: Training Aid: A Principal Training Area, British Mainland, December 2003

[7] HUMINT sources can gauge local reactions, but this is not the same as being confident of the population's likely response to an event.
[8] Chapter 8, para 833.

823. Conflict is complex, adversarial and evolutionary, which suggests that in the longer term the advantage goes to the side whose military and non-military processes adapt and evolve fastest. Two processes developed or employed in Operation BANNER are noteworthy.

824. *The first is the very closely linked loop responsible for the development of counter terrorist response measures, all of whose components were effectively under command of the theatre HQ, HQ Northern Ireland*. This evolved from the very earliest days of the campaign and was a war winner. That loop included all aspects of intelligence (including technical intelligence); forensics; scientific research and development; the development of organisations and minor unit tactics; the conduct of operations; procurement; training; constant review and feedback. It was very much threat-driven, although where possible commanders and staff sought to predict changes to the threat and thereby gain the initiative. Table-top wargaming was an important aspect. This sought to step through all aspects of a terrorist attack, from reconnaissance, rehearsal and eventual forensic clearance, so as to understand its dynamics, identify weaknesses and suggest counters. The counter would then be wargamed, and so on. Participants from a wide range of disciplines should take part in any future wargames in order to develop an understanding of all dimensions of the problem.

825. One example is that of multiple patrolling. Its development as a response to the gunman has been described.[9] It was also optimised to counter the IED. Patrol equipment was deployed to protect individuals against threats to a given distance; to protect fire teams against the threat to greater distances; and the multiple as a whole to yet greater distances. Spacings were optimised to retain tactical control whilst reducing vulnerability to explosions. For most of Operation BANNER multiple patrolling proved to be an effective and relatively safe tactic. *It should be stressed, however, that the precise details of multiple patrolling were optimised for the balance of threats present in Northern Ireland at the time; the situation in other theatres would probably require modifications to those details*.

826. Chance finds of IED components led to other rapid response developments. In the 1980s a PIRA device was found and analysed by scientific experts. Within one week tactics had been adjusted to mitigate the effectiveness of the device. A technical modification to patrol equipment was developed and fielded within a month. The particular device was effectively obsolete within three months: no such device functioned against a patrol again after the counter-measure was fielded.

827. Such speed of reaction had an operational benefit. It continuously undermined the terrorist's apparent initiative, eroding his will to pursue new developments. The long-term erosion of PIRA's will to sustain the campaign was possibly significant in bringing PIRA to negotiate an end to the campaign. It also boosted security force confidence and morale. The close linkages between response measures and the fact that the key agencies were under command of the operational level HQ was mentioned above. It would not have been possible, for example, had NITAT not answered to HQ Northern Ireland on issues of tactical doctrine, or if SCIAD had not been an integral part of the same HQ. This overall lesson would seem to be

[9] Chapter 5, paras 508-509.

applicable to other theatres. The key is not the scale or variety of the threat, nor the breadth of agencies needing coordination. It is the organisation and the coordination processes which make them work together efficiently. In the case of Northern Ireland, success led to a greater willingness to work together, creating a virtuous cycle of further successes.

828. The second process that stands out as being a key operational factor is that of the military Appreciation, subsequently called the Estimate. Detailed review of a great many operations indicates that it was rarely wrong, in so far as very few decisions had consequences that were immediately negative at the operational or strategic levels. In fact several decisions which had negative consequences were taken contrary to military advice (which was drawn from the systematic examination process inherent in the Estimate). The decision to reintroduce Internment was one example and the decision to attempt to break the fuel tanker drivers element of the UWC strike was another. In both of those two examples the decision was made for expressly political reasons.

829. Only two examples of poor military decision-making stand out as having serious operational and even strategic consequences which were unforeseen at the time. The first was the decision to undertake the Balkan Street Search and to impose the subsequent 'Falls Curfew'.[10] With hindsight it seems hasty, and did not sufficiently consider the wider public relations and operational level consequences of the decision. The second example was the manner in which the arrest operation on Bloody Sunday was conducted, using vehicles to approach the crowd. The decision to do so was not hasty but, with hindsight, seems heavy-handed.

830. In raising these criticisms it should be reiterated that those reviewing the events years afterwards cannot truly understand all the factors pertaining at the time. In addition any criticism should consider what alternatives were available, if any. It should also be pointed out that the Army's current awareness of the operational level and the integration of lines of operation were not developed until long after the two events in question.

DEVELOPING THE MANOEUVRIST APPROACH

831. The broad purpose of doctrine and campaign analysis is to improve or sustain military effectiveness. At the conclusion of every campaign or major operation a professional army should review its doctrine in the light of lessons identified. In 2006 the key elements of British Army Doctrine were the Manoeuvrist Approach and Mission Command.

832. That doctrine was extended into non-warfighting operations in the Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10. The Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) series of the 1990s[11] broadly differentiated between 'War' and 'Operations Other Than War' whilst the lower-level Army Field Manual (AFM) in its various Parts, either related to warlike operations[12] or largely updated older doctrine.[13] The Manoeuvrist Approach and

[10] Chapter 2, paras 216-217.
[11] Particularly ADP Vol 1 *Operations* (Army Code 71565) and ADP *Command* Vol 2 (Army Code 71564).
[12] For example AFM Vol 1 Part 1 *Formation Tactics* (Army Code 71587) and AFM Vol 1 Part 2 *Battlegroup Tactics* (Army Code 71648).

Mission Command were not fully extended into non-warfighting operations. Some of the tenets of the Manoeuvrist Approach were being applied in Northern Ireland before they entered doctrine. For example, the trust and decentralisation that was being practised within rifle companies[14] aided the development of Mission Command. Secondly, the terminology and some of the practices of the Manoeuvrist Approach were adopted within Northern Ireland as soon as they were published. The framework of Deep, Close and Rear Operations was applied to the concept of Northern Ireland framework operations in 1995. Thirdly, many Manoeuvrist Approach and Mission Command tenets apply directly to counter insurgency and counter terrorism.

833. For example, the Manoeuvrist Approach is an indirect approach which seeks to pit strength against weakness and win at least cost.[15] Almost all counters to terrorist tactics have a strong indirect element. Examples include: rummage searching to counter CWIEDs; moving to threaten the gunman's withdrawal, on foot or by helicopter, rather than trying to shoot it out; and attacking terrorist finances rather than the terrorist himself.[16]

834. Winning, or achieving a successful tactical outcome at least cost is important in order to reduce one's own casualties and to aid morale. It denies the terrorist the publicity which security force casualties bring and thereby denies him success. It also releases troops to enable force to be concentrated elsewhere.

835. The core functions within the Manoeuvrist Approach are to Find, Fix, Strike, and Exploit.[17] The importance of intelligence in finding the terrorist or insurgent was described above. He was typically fixed through framework operations which denied his freedom of operation or through operational security (OPSEC) measures so that he did not realise he was being targeted. Striking by arrest or attack was relatively easy once he was found and fixed. Exploitation in this context was often not done, but should have been. Successful strikes against terrorists or insurgents could have been followed up through Information Operations. There were a few occasions where local successes were followed up vigorously due to prior planning and intelligence gained from the initial activity.[18]

836. The Initiative is stressed in doctrine,[19] but it is commonly held that the terrorist always holds it. That is to some extent true, in that he normally chooses the time and place of attack. However, he can be denied it by framework operations to limit or remove his freedom of action. The terrorist also lacks the initiative in a particular sense at the operational level, in that he must continue to conduct attacks. If he does not, his credibility, authority and publicity begin to diminish. To deny the terrorist success through limiting his ability to inflict casualties is a significant operational level issue.

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[13] For example Vol 1 Part 10 *Counter Insurgency Operations* (Army Code 71749).
[14] Chapter 4, para 418.
[15] ADP *Land Operations* (Army Code 71819) Chapter 2, paras 0206-0207.
[16] While not an Army organisation, the formation of the Terrorist Finance Unit in the late 1980s was a significant step in the broad approach to counter terrorism, and this small unit gained significant successes in attacking the financial activities on which terrorist groups depended.
[17] ADP *Land Operations* (Army Code 71819) Chapter 3, paras 0309-0323.
[18] For example, see Chapter 5 para 505.
[19] ADP *Land Operations* (Army Code 71819) Chapter 2, para 0228.

837. Much of the motivation of the terrorist came through a wish to glamorize a somewhat third-rate way of life, through esteem amongst the republican community or, more simply, in bars or with women. Denying terrorists the opportunity to commit terrorist activities will tend to undermine that aspect of motivation. The insurgent's or terrorist's motivation will, however, tend to be different in other theatres.

838. The Manoeuvrist Approach generally stresses manoeuvre rather than attrition, whilst accepting that some destruction is inevitably required.[20] Operation BANNER supports this approach. The massive and sustained attrition against PIRA in the mid-1970s did not destroy it, but drove it to reorganise and restructure. The attritional aspect of 'reassurance, deterrence and attrition' in the 1980s had relatively little effect on PIRA. Attrition did have other effects which reinforce key tenets of the Manoeuvrist Approach. The first is the shock effect of major strikes against PIRA. The second effect was that of shaping PIRA's perceptions, that it would not win by the continuation of the armed struggle and that it was in fact losing. In particular, it was losing some of its most experienced terrorists.[21] Figure 8-4 indicates the immediate effect of the shock of Loughgall on PIRA.[22] The reduction in PIRA activity is clearly visible. However, shock is transient and should be exploited. In this case it was not exploited and lasted about two months.

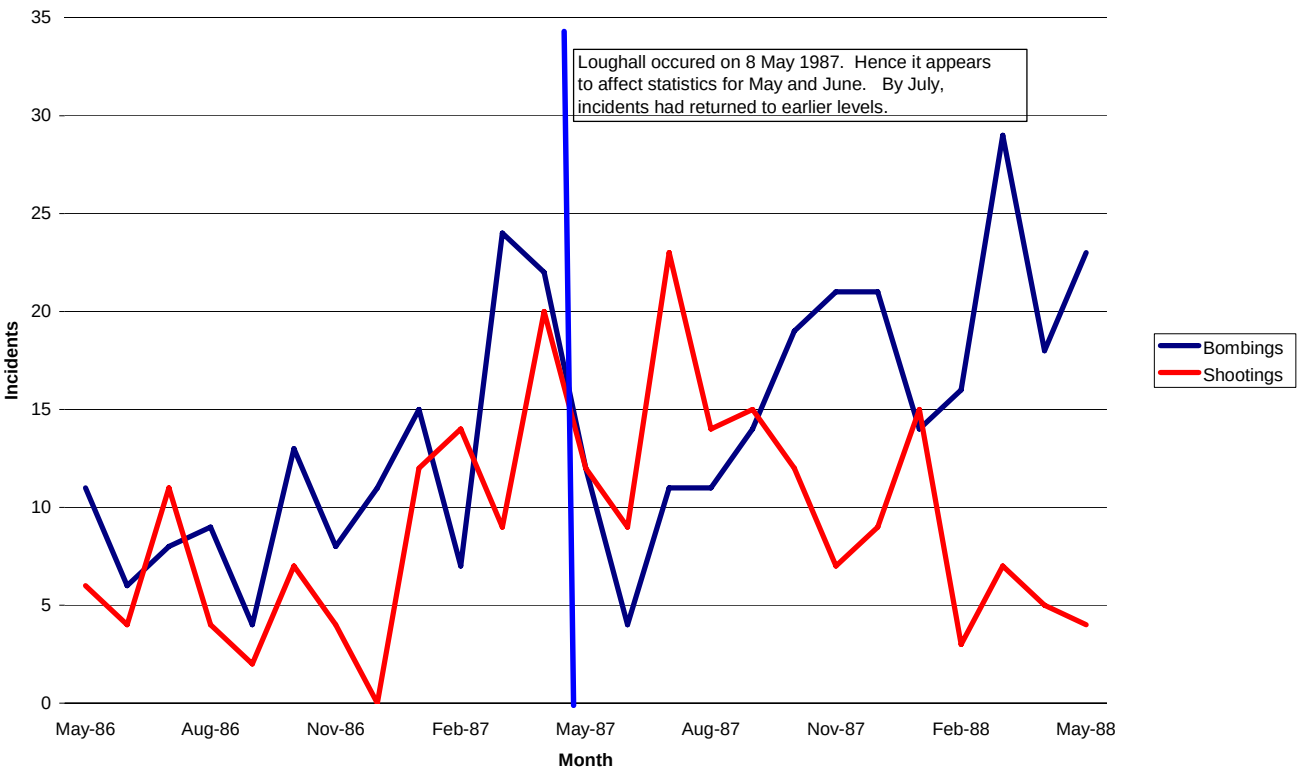

Figure 8-4: PIRA Attacks before and after Loughgall

839. Loughgall did, however, have another effect on PIRA. It did not conduct another operation of similar size for more than two years – the next being the attack on the Derryard PVCP in December 1989. In addition to internal inquiries and mistrust,

[20] Ibid, Chapter 2, paras 0206 and 0222.
[21] Ibid, Chapter 2, paras 0216-0217 and para 0237.
[22] Chapter 2, para 243 and Chapter 5, Figure 5-6.

which corrode morale and mutual trust, it appears that Loughgall made PIRA very cautious about the conduct of what were, to the organisation, large-scale operations.

840. Mission Command is useful in counter insurgency operations since it promotes the trust and decentralisation which are suitable in campaigns of this sort,[23] and since it requires a commander's intent and statement of purpose.[24] A clear statement of intent supports freedom of operation, which might have freed Roulement units from some of the restraints noted in Chapter 4[25] and would have helped focus many of the seemingly pointless aspects of framework operations.[26] The Manoeuvrist Approach should, therefore, be formally and explicitly extended into the full range of doctrine for non-warfighting operations.

THE KEY FACTOR: THE ARMY

841. Although in some ways seriously ill-prepared for the events of 1969, the Army responded quickly and effectively. This indicates that whatever the precise details of organisations and tactics current at the time *it was basically a high-quality, robust and professional force which was able to adapt and evolve rapidly.*

842. Although the British Army has clearly benefited from the lessons it learned in Northern Ireland, not all of these were entirely new; many had been identified before 1969, but were then applied by a new generation of soldiers. For example, the CO of the first unit to come under fire went to great lengths in his post-operational report to stress the need not to return fire until the firing point could be positively identified. As a result his battalion did not return fire until one hour and 40 minutes after the first round had been fired at it. Thus restraint in the use of force, and the discipline required to achieve it, were lessons from earlier conflicts. Operation BANNER ensured that such lessons were learned, institutionalised and if necessary re-learned by the whole Army.

843. The behaviour which the British Army displayed was a key factor. The Israeli historian Martin van Creveld has said that the British Army's self-discipline, and particularly restraint and forbearance in the face of grievous provocation, was a key factor. The Army rarely over-reacted. It did not respond with tanks on the streets. It generally displayed humanity and humour, although during the early 1970s this was difficult to sustain and a desire to 'sort the Micks out' was often apparent.

844. Other military virtues were also important. On at least two occasions junior Non-Commissioned Officers led counterattacks against PIRA gun teams equipped with automatic weapons.[27] Such action must have made a considerable impression on the terrorists involved. Both NCOs were decorated for bravery.

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[23] Chapter 8, para 832 and also SCSI Occasional No 45 *the Big Issue*, Chapter 7.
[24] ADP *Land Operations* (Army Code 71819), Annex A to Chapter 6.
[25] Chapter 4, para 409.
[26] ie '… in order to …' and Chapter 5, para 536.
[27] In West Belfast on 25 March 1982 and at Derryard on 13 December 1989. The 1982 incident involved the use of an M60 machine gun. The NCO involved reached the door of the house from which the fire was coming by the time the gun team withdrew.

845. The intellect and adaptability of commanders and staff were also important factors. The clarity of thought demonstrated in the Estimate or Appreciation process, and the ability to think into the logic of the theatre (to the extent to which that occurred) reveal a level of intellect that not all armies display. The mental adaptability shown in developing organisations and processes rapidly in the face of changes to the threat is noteworthy, and not displayed universally elsewhere. The history of the campaign reveals a large number of bottom-up initiatives. However, as the Operation progressed, HQs were increasingly able to innovate by themselves. Permanent HQs at brigade and theatre level seem to have contributed to this.

Figure 8-5: Unit Signs, Bessbrook Mill, 2003

846. It is notable that a very few, quite junior, individuals were responsible for the basic ideas behind many of the developments seen in the campaign. For example, one captain in the early 1970s was largely responsible for the introduction of the indoor 'pipe' ranges and the Army's first ever operational shooting policy. Lieutenant Richard Winthrop RRF developed a highly successful approach to searching which still carries his name today. Another captain was the first to develop the concept of chains of permanent OPs in South Armagh. The intelligence and initiative shown by young officers such as these is commendable. Equally important, however, is the readiness of the chain of command to consider such ideas, select the winners and implement them, supporting them to the highest levels where appropriate.

847. Such human factors, and others such as the determination and sheer pragmatism shown throughout the campaign, do not just happen. They are products of the culture of the Army and the training and experience which it gives its officers and soldiers. The operational experience of much of the Army was relatively high in 1969, and this process became self-sustaining. Towards the end of Operation BANNER the generally positive experience of Northern Ireland stood the Army well in theatres such as Kuwait, the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq.

DECISIVE POINTS

848. Could the campaign have been concluded earlier? Decisive Points, which are part of the contemporary Estimate process, can be identified from a campaign analysis, although such an exercise is subject to the caveats surrounding hindsight. The exercise must recognise the art of the possible, both in political and military terms, of those times. There were Decisive Points a few months after the breakdown of public order in 1969, when the situation might have been prevented from developing into an insurgency; in the mid-1970s when the defeat of the insurgency might have led to the long-term neutralisation of the PIRA, before it became a skilled terrorist organisation; and in the early 1980s. A Decisive Points exercise is not purely academic: of the 3600 or so people who have died due to the Troubles, over 1400 died in the quarter century after 1980.

849. In each case mentioned above, the substantive action required to address the underlying political and social causes of the unrest, in addition to what was actually done, would have been considerable. This would have meant major political upheavals, and far–reaching changes to established political views and structures by all the parties concerned. Effective social and economic remedial measures would have been very costly at a time when the national economy was not buoyant. There was no guarantee of early success on the political, social and economic fronts, despite the real efforts at the time: the problems were deep-seated and not amenable to a 'quick fix'. The view of the Dublin government was also a key factor in addressing support for the PIRA, and long-term political solutions.

850. It has been suggested that enhanced legal powers could have been sought in order to remove the upper echelons of the PIRA in the 1980s, when the organisation was able to exist independently of the catholic community (certainly in logistic terms). In theory the PIRA in Northern Ireland could have been separated from its popular support. The political implications of 'enhanced legal powers' in the United Kingdom – including, no doubt, selective, long-term internment – would have been very

considerable. It would have been difficult to enact the legislation (as proponents of the 60-day remand proposal found in Westminster in 2005); release of those interned would have been inevitable at some stage; and the information operations opportunities afforded to sympathisers, and libertarians in a democracy, would have been huge (as the US authorities are finding over the Guantanamo detainees). In addition, without the active support of the authorities in Dublin, and with a porous border, PIRA leaders in the Republic could not have been removed and a clean sweep could not have been achieved.

851. Equally, the political implications of Great Britain relinquishing its custodial role for Northern Ireland would have been immense. The mainland population was not involved in decision-making related to Northern Ireland, not least due to the cross-party consensus that has applied, almost without exception, throughout the Troubles.[28] As late as 1988, an *Economist* survey indicated that 28% of the mainland population wanted the troops withdrawn immediately, and a further 29% within a pre-set period: a total of 57% favouring withdrawal. Only 27% wished Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK. However, these statistics reflect British attitudes, and do not cover republican/nationalist or loyalist views, or, significantly, the opinions of interested external parties in the Republic or in the United States.

CONCLUSIONS

852. The analysis of Decisive Points reinforces some key lessons for those charged with countering mass unrest, and subsequently insurgency and terrorism, albeit in a national rather than a coalition context. The Army, with essential support from the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Government Agencies, was as an instrument of the Governments of the day, each of whom were contending with a range of issues, with differing levels of political and economic resources at their disposal. This 'What If' analysis reinforces the great importance that should be attached by decision-makers to the early stages of a breakdown in public order; and the need to address the causes of unrest rapidly and with visible, substantive measures. The art of the politically possible, both at home and abroad and the influence of key political groups (for example Unionist MPs in Westminster) must be recognised, but it is essential to take a long view as well as to direct the immediate crisis response measures. This long view may need to encompass diplomatic and political efforts in order to gain the support of allies and countries adjoining the theatre of operations.

853. If a deployment is ordered then commanders, following lessons drawn from several campaigns, are likely to press for an effective, unitary campaign authority in order to coordinate the range of political, economic, social, legal, cultural, information operations *and* security measures (security representing military, police and intelligence contributions) laid down in the Comprehensive Approach. The campaign authority – a supremo or viceroy – does not need to be military. This is not an issue that field commanders can resolve; they can, however, make such recommendations to the Service Chiefs of Staff and to Ministers. Coherence across the various departments and agencies of government is essential: some of the results of not achieving this in Northern Ireland are mentioned above, and these not only delayed achievement of a successful end-state, but also had a significant human cost.

[28] *The Lessons of Ulster*, T E Utley, London; J M Dent, 1975, *passim*.

854. A coherent, effective high-level information operations campaign will be a prerequisite for success: information operations are crucial in a world with an insatiable desire for information and news, and where the internet 'blogger' can broadcast as powerful images and messages as the White House or Downing Street. The Army learned hard lessons about good media relations in the 1970s, but this is an area that needs as much attention as the capabilities of potential opponents; and the high-level information operations effort was, during the campaign, as a rule, weak. Information operations should be conducted at several levels: they are not just a tactical military activity.

855. Martin van Creveld has said that the British Army is unique in Northern Ireland in its success against an irregular force. It should be recognised that the Army did not 'win' in any recognisable way; rather it achieved its desired end-state, which allowed a political process to be established without unacceptable levels of intimidation. Security force operations suppressed the level of violence to a level which the population could live with, and with which the RUC and later the PSNI could cope. The violence was reduced to an extent which made it clear to the PIRA that they would not win through violence. This is a major achievement, and one with which the security forces from all three Services, with the Army in the lead, should be entirely satisfied. It took a long time but, as van Crefeld said, that success is unique.

856. The British Army should be proud of its achievement in the conduct of Operation BANNER. Errors were made, however, and some lessons, both from general operations and from a Northern Ireland perspective have been identified above. At the time of writing, the campaign is not yet over, and the definitive history and strategic judgements will have to wait until some time has elapsed. That said, the major military issues apparent at this stage are:

- Recognition of the need for a sensitive approach to the use of military force, and avoiding over-reaction, from the outset of an emergency deployment. The restraint shown by British Servicemen despite significant provocation was notable. Popular perceptions will be formed in the first 100 days of a campaign, and they will be critical to military success.

- The requirement to act vigorously across all lines of government activity to address the causes of major unrest as soon as it is apparent, to prevent disorder turning into an insurgency, terrorism or civil war. This requires not only a pan-government comprehensive approach, but also a single campaign authority so that responses are coordinated effectively. The commander on the ground may have to raise awareness in Whitehall of the requirements for a successful campaign.

- The importance of developing first rate intelligence structures, processes and capabilities, so that military operations may be intelligence-led, and non-military initiatives properly planned and directed. Effectiveness will be judged by what can be gathered, and by how well the product is shared and used.

- The effectiveness of HQ Northern Ireland as a theatre HQ, able to offer long-term continuity during an 'emergency' with no set timescale. The HQ established and maintained (under its command and its budget) the closely linked loop embracing

intelligence, SCIADs, tactical planners, and training staffs which could react quickly to, and rapidly neutralise, terrorist tactical and technical initiatives. The need to conduct an Estimate of command arrangements at the beginning of a campaign or major operation, and to revisit that Estimate subsequently should not be overlooked.

- The need to ensure that doctrine is amended so that the tenets of the Manoeuvrist Approach and Mission Command are fully reflected in the guidance for non-warfighting operations.

- The value of a dedicated operational training team system (NITAT, NIRTT and later OPTAG) with high quality instructors and frequent visits to theatre so that troops deployed with confidence after training in appropriate tactics. It is important, however, that this pre-operational tour training is complemented by further education, related to the theatre and the campaign, for commanding officers, company commanders and key staff officers.

LIST OF ACRONYMS[1]

AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicle.
AOR	Area of Responsibility.
APV	Armoured Patrol Vehicle.
ASU	Active Service Unit.
AT	Ammunition Technician.
ATO	Ammunition Technical Officer.
AVRE	Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers.
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine.
'B' Specials	The Ulster Special Constabulary.
CIRA	Continuity Irish Republican Army.
CIVREP	Civil Representative.
CLF	Commander, Land Forces.
CNR	Combat Net Radio.
CONCO	Continuity Non-Commissioned Officer.
COP	Close Observation Platoon.
CR	Community Relations.
CWIED	Command Wire Improvised Explosive Device.
DAC	District/Divisional Action Committee.
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal.
GOC	General Officer Commanding (all Service personnel in Northern Ireland).
HME	Home Made Explosive.
HSF	(Royal Irish Regiment) Home Service Force.
HUMINT	Human Intelligence.
IAAG	Improvised Anti-Armour Grenade.
IED	Improvised Explosive Device.
INIBA	Improved Northern Ireland Body Armour.
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army.
IRA	Irish Republican Army.
IRSP	Irish Republican Socialist Party.
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.
NIO	Northern Ireland Office.
NIRTT	Northern Ireland Reinforcement Training Team.
NITAT	Northern Ireland Training Advisory Team.
OA	Operational Analysis.
OIRA	Official Irish Republican Army.
OP	Observation Post.
OPTAG	Operational Training Advisory Group.

[1] The Northern Ireland Campaign spawned a host of acronyms. Some acronyms in general use in the Army have not been included in this list.

PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army.
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland.
PVCP	Permanent Vehicle Check Point.
RCIED	Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Device.
REST	Royal Engineer Search Team.
RIC	Reconnaissance and Intelligence Centre.
RIRA	Real Irish Republican Army.
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary.
SB	Special Branch.
SCIAD	Scientific Adviser.
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party.
SLR	Self-Loading Rifle.
SSNI	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
SUIT	Sight, Unit, Infantry, TRILUX (ie, 3 times magnification).
TAOR	Tactical Area of Responsibility.
UDA	Ulster Defence Association.
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment.
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force.
UWC	Ulster Workers Council.
VCP	Vehicle Check Point.
VOIED	Victim Operated Improvised Explosive Device.