

266T/T9TLT

Department of Health and Social Services

(Nothing should be written on this cover except as indicated by the headings and any amendments will be carried out by REGISTRY on written request)

TITLE
AFTERMATH OF FORENSIC
SCIENCE LABORATORY -
EXPLOSION - NEWTOWNBRED A
AND OTHER BOMB
EXPLOSIONS.

Continuation File No.

FORMER FILE No.

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Box 4 - 1993

REFERRED TO	DATE	REFERRED TO	DATE	REFERRED TO	DATE
Emergency Planning	1 OCT 1992 ✓				
Emergency Planning	2 NOV 1992 ✓				
PA	18/4/97				
Gen Registry PA	21/4/97				

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FIRST REVIEW	YEAR	INTLS
SECOND REVIEW		

17161/1992

From: P W Lynch
Capital

Date: 25 October 1993

To: Mr J McGrath
Director Provider Development

cc Secretary
Mr Hunter
Mr McCusker (Cent Sec)
Mr Clements (NIO)
Miss Montgomery
(EHSSB Nominated Officer)

TERRORIST BOMB EXPLOSION -SHANKILL ROAD, BELFAST SITUATION REPORT

A terrorist bomb exploded around 1.00 PM on Saturday 23 October 1993 in a shop on the Shankill Road, Belfast. In total there were 10 fatalities, (2 children, 4 men, 4 women) and over 50 people injured.

Responses

Ambulance Service

The Eastern Ambulance Service received 999 call at 1.10 PM and tasked 6 vehicles, 3 rapid response cars, 4 team leaders and a total of 25 staff the first responding vehicles arriving at 1.13 PM. One of the Officers later assumed the role of Liaison Officer at the Mater Hospital.

The Ambulance Service's Emergency Plan was put into operation and 7 casualties were transported to the Mater Infirmorum Hospital and 5 to The Royal Group of Hospitals. Two Public Health Doctors and one Public Relations staff were at Ambulance Control, Purdysburn. RUC Casualty Bureau information was documented at Ambulance Control and RUC had a Liaison Officer at the Royal and Mater. The RUC confirmed that the casualty documentation plan was effective.

Two Ambulance personnel suffered a hand injury and a leg injury whilst working around rubble and were treated at the Belfast City Hospital. Off-duty Ambulance personnel volunteered for duty to enable others to stand down. Mr McKee, Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer said that the incident was one of the most stressful incidents that the Service has experienced in recent times in that two-thirds of the Service's resources were tied up by the incident. It was also made evident in the incident that the helmets currently being used by their personnel gave insufficient protection as one officer wearing a helmet was slightly injured by a falling brick. The specification for replacements are currently being examined by the Ambulance Service and DHSS will have to give urgent consideration to fund the provision of personal issue of improved helmets at an approximate cost of

£37,000.

An emergency channel on the Ambulance Service radio system would have made communications better and it is hoped that the new radio system shortly to be installed should facilitate this.

The British Red Cross and St John Ambulance provided back-up cover to the Service.

Hospitals

The Mater Infirmorum Hospital received 50 casualties. Their Emergency Plan had been put into operation before the first casualties arrived, most of them arriving as walking wounded. The Mater social services team responded immediately. Six casualties were retained overnight, two in Intensive Care described as stable and the remaining four as comfortable. The Mater Hospital referred two casualties to the Royal for neurosurgery and two casualties to the Ulster Hospital for plastic surgery.

The Belfast City Hospital was on standby and sent a medical crash team to the site. This was however not required.

Social Services

North & West Belfast Community Social Services responded immediately with an Emergency Trauma Team in accordance with their emergency plan. Other social services staff were deployed at the Mater Hospital, Royal Victoria Hospital and the morgue at Forster Green Hospital to offer what assistance they could to relatives and victims. From the documentation of those dealt with, a follow-up approach will be made for any necessary long term support. Social workers from the Trauma Team are currently in Shankill Health Centre and the telephone number (247181) is to be publicised in the media etc for anyone in the community requiring support. This facility will be reviewed at the end of the week.

I will keep you informed of any developments.



P W Lynch

PT

FROM: D J WATKINS
US CENT SEC
DATE: SEPTEMBER 1992

CC: PS/Mr Mates (DFP,B&L) - B
PS/Mr Atkins (DOE,DE&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Elliott
Mr Murray
Mr Semple
Mr Blackwell - B
Mr Lyon - B
Mr Hunter, DHSS
Chief Executive, SSA
Mr Robinson
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr McConnell - B

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

KNOCKEREDA EXPLOSION

Introduction

1. Thank you for your minute of yesterday. In response a group representing DOE, Housing Executive, Compensation Agency, DHSS, Social Security Agency, DFP, PAB and Central Secretariat met to check progress on the ground and identify scope for possible further action. This note reports the outcome and recommendations of the group.

Sitrep

2. Housing: 600 houses damaged, 50 seriously; none needs demolition; all weatherproofed and some full repairs complete; 12 mobile homes available by end of week; £650K expected to be spent on all this;

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Social Security: 60 claims lodged for grant/loans; 20 grants and 40 loans paid; little demand for new assistance;

Compensation: 500 enquiries handled; 180 notifications of intent to claim lodged; 10 loss adjusters on site since Thursday; geared up to make interim payments as soon as possible;

Information: all three Agencies (Compensation Agency - CA, Housing Executive - HE and Social Security Agency - SSA) had issued guidance to residents by Thursday evening setting out how claims could be lodged.

3. Remaining Problems

- (1) Political: there is clearly a conflict between John Taylor MP and Peter Robinson MP (representing Castlereagh Borough Council). More does need to be done, but we should be alert to the risk of our actions being unreasonably driven by their rivalry. But there is genuine political concern, not confined to Knockbreda, about Government responses to civil damage from terrorism; some at least is probably based on ignorance of what is being done.

- (2) Social Security: some categories of people fall through SSA and HE net. [Quantification.] HE tenants have full cost of building restoration paid for by HE; but contents are his/her responsibility. So, eg, if tenant is employed (so no entitlement to Social Fund grants), has no private insurance cover on contents and suffers up to £200 damage, in addition to restoration of the house, he is eligible for Social Fund Loan (not compensation because of operation of CA's £200 threshold). Pensioners who are HE tenants, have no insurance cover and suffer up to £200 loss would similarly be entitled only to

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Social Fund Loan. If the tenant is unemployed, has no insurance cover and suffers up to £200 damage, he is eligible for Social Fund grant. If he is employed, has no insurance cover and suffers £1,000 contents damage, he will in principle receive £800 compensation from CA in due course but may be eligible for immediate £200 Social Fund loan. The likelihood is, with a presumption of a relatively low incidence of unemployment and high numbers of pensioners in that area, many may fall into the "ineligibility trap"; there may also be some reluctance to accept social security (but this is mere surmise) which would not necessarily preclude criticism of the Government. Although further action on the information front is planned - see para 4(i) below - the restricted availability of the Social Fund in this case is functioning in exactly the way it was designed to. So while Ministers can say that availability of Social Fund finance is not a constraint, there appears to be no other discretion to be offered.

- (3) Speed of Interim Payments by CA: the Agency is statute-bound to go through certain steps prior to interim payment. We propose action below.
- (4) Payment of Contractors: before work commences. Steps proposed below.
- (5) Availability of Advice/Information: Steps proposed below.

4. Further Action

- (1) Advice/Information: the CA will place an official full time from today until further notice in local Activity Centre to advise on the Agency's facilities

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and procedures and act as a signpost to HE and SSA services where action will be put in hand. The SSA itself will now visit homes in the area with whom they have had no contact to ensure that the occupants know fully of their entitlements (and will seek to identify any other problems to be notified to other agencies). In those who have temporarily left their homes, the availability of an advice point in the Activity Centre will be publicised, through the attached press release.

- (2) CA Interim Payments: once a notification of intent to claim and, within a further 10 days, a full application is lodged (usually completed by the claimant's solicitor), then the next critical step is establishment of title before interim payment some 4 weeks after [? establishment of title or application]. Title is clearly an important check against fraudulent claims, and no general foolproof way of short-circuiting the system has so far been found by the Agency or its legal advisers. If Ministers authorise it, however, there may be a solution in this case. For those [number] homes now privately owned but formerly owned by the HE, the CA could agree to allow the owner to assign his compensation rights to the HE in return for the HE doing the restoration work. Since these houses would be in the estate where the HE would already be doing work on its own houses, there should be (indirectly) cost savings for the CA. The risk is that the CA may have to pursue the owner for payment of the £200 threshold. But by definition the maximum amount of public funds at risk would be [£] and officials believe that any actual losses are likely to be offset by lower restoration costs. Officials believe that this would take most of the heat out of the situation, not least on the

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criticism that nothing was being done to enable these owner occupiers to commission work from contractors without down-payment. For occupiers of houses never in HE ownership, the position is more complex. Again people in this category could be offered (a) advice from the Housing Executive as to reputable builders, contracts, etc, and (b) the facility to assign their rights to compensation to the HE as in the last category. Since some [] houses are involved, the maximum risk to public funds would be [£]. Although the CA might be expected to meet lesser difficulties in pursuing payment of the £200 threshold, the building cost savings would be less. But if Ministers authorised this use of public funds as justified by the circumstances, it could be done, thus by-passing the problems of timing of CA payments. Up-take of this facility is, officials believe, likely to be limited. For those owner occupiers in the latter category who do not wish to assign their compensation to the HE, the CA could proceed to early interim payments (73-4 days after application) if Ministers agreed that the circumstances justified the Agency relying on a solicitor's indemnity against title defect. Such indemnities have not in the past been judged foolproof, [but proof of title is an administrative but not statutory requirement, so Ministers could instruct that it be set aside in this case in favour of an indemnity.] [CA to check.] The maximum sum of public money at risk is impossible to quantify: [£], but this is no more than informed guesswork.

- (3) Political: PAB is approaching the Borough Council to see whether they have more accurate information on needs, but also to probe whether a meeting between officials and, say, Mrs Robinson and

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730- 9-92 11:13AM ; 02327600107
Mr Harper plus some other interested local parties might help take further heat out of the situation.

Discussion

5. The previous paragraph, especially (2), suggested some possible solutions, but they are possible only on Ministerial authorisation. The advantages are clear. The downside is (a) risk of limited loss of public funds; (b) consuming the CA's budget at a faster rate than anticipated when this is already a major PE issue; (c) setting a precedent, though large-scale damage to domestic property as in this case is uncommon; and (d) provoking criticism from other victims of explosions, eg, Lurgan (though a distinction can be drawn based on (1) the extent of damage to (2) domestic property). [This experience has also highlighted a number of medium-term policy issues which we should consider in any case: eg, should the CA revert to the pre-1988 facility of having reinstatement work done through the HE? Central Secretariat proposes to maintain an inter-departmental group to examine this for the medium-term.]

Conclusions

6. Is the SofS content to authorise the special action at para 4(2)?
7. Does he wish to issue a press release? Draft at Annex.
8. Does he wish to write to Mrs Robinson and Mr Taylor? Drafts are in preparation.

D J WATKINS

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PRESS RELEASE

The Secretary of State, Rt Hon Sir Patrick Mayhew, MP QC, today emphasised his concern for those who suffered through the Provisional IRA's attack at Newtownbreda last Wednesday.

"The damages wrought to many people's lives and property is enormous. So has been the immediate response by all those involved in the public services as well as by individuals, groups and organisations. All 600 homes damaged have been weatherproofed by the Housing Executive, which has now started full restoration of houses in its ownership at no cost to tenants. Compensation Agency loss-adjusters have been busy on the ground since last Thursday clearing the way for payments to be made. The Social Security Agency and Health Services have been meeting immediate needs and claims. I am personally monitoring our actions and response very carefully.

"But we are now entering the second phase of action. An official will man the local Activity Centre full time to deal promptly with enquiries for advice and action from the Compensation Agency, Housing Executive and Social Security Agency. The Social Security Agency will be visiting the homes of those affected by the explosion who have not yet been in touch with the Agency to ensure that everyone fully understands his or her entitlements. Anyone from the area who may need help but who has temporarily left home should seek advice at the Activity Centre in the first instance..In this way we want to ensure that cases of real hardship are given every available help from the Government.

"I fully understand the need for prompt payment of compensation. I have therefore decided that, in the exceptional circumstances of the large numbers of domestic homes affected by this explosion, special arrangements will be made to enable the Housing Executive to undertake full

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FROM: J G Hunter

DATE: 24 September 1992

cc PS/Lord Arran
Secretary
Mr Simpson
Mr Hamilton (DOE)

1 Mr Lynch later
Mr Downey
MR
30.9.

Mr Leach (SPOD)

**EXPLOSION AT INDUSTRIAL AND FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORY/
BELVOIR PARK ESTATE**

1. Further to our recent conversation, I should be grateful if in your background brief you would refer to the response of Health and Social Services staff to last night's bomb explosion.
2. The attached press release from the Eastern Health and Social Services Board details the nature and extent of the Board's preliminary response. I have subsequently received a verbal update from the Board on the damage to HPSS facilities in the estate and the work of the Board's Crisis Support Team.
3. The Belvoir Park Clinic does not appear to have suffered structural damage but it will be next Monday before immediate repairs can be completed and the building re-opened. In the meantime community health staff will operate from other facilities in the estate.
4. The Crisis Support Team is operating from the Community Centre and is providing advice, guidance and counselling to local residents including, in particular, elderly people. The Team is working closely with officials of the Housing Executive who are arranging any necessary re-housing and for emergency repairs to Housing Executive properties.
4. The nearby Belvoir Park Hospital has been providing soup and sandwiches to some 300 people in the estate, who are being fed in the Community Centre.
5. The Deputy Manager and 2 Social Fund Officers from Knockbreda SSO were deployed to Belvoir Community Centre, Belvoir Drive, to provide information on emergency grants and laws. A special telephone line for benefit enquiries has been installed in the Community Centre. It is hoped that payment giro's will be issued today.
6. I have agreed with Mr Woods that Lord Arran should write to the Chairman of the Eastern Board to commend the efforts of Health and Social Services staff. Mr Woods does not feel that it would be appropriate for Lord Arran to issue a further press release on the Health and Social Services dimensions. Instead, I should be grateful if any public statement could appropriately refer to the work of Health and Social Services staff, alongside the contribution of other agencies.


J G HUNTER