



Policy Legacy FOI Team
Headquarters 38 (Irish) Brigade
British Forces Post Office 825

E-Mail: 38X-PolicyLegacy-FOI-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk



Reference: FOI: 2020/02349

Date: 22 July 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE BOMBING OF THE CENTRAL BAR IN GILFORD ON THE 31 DECEMBER 1975

Further to our letter dated 6 July, I can confirm that your request has been considered under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI (A)), and the process is now complete.

You asked the following:

“Requesting hard copies of documents relating to the Central Bar in Gilford on the 31 December 1975.”

I can confirm that the MOD holds some information relating to the bombing of the Central Bar, Gilford on the 31 December 1975. This information has been located in a range of documents and relevant extracts of these have been provided at Annex A. A copy of an IED Report can be found at Annex B, please note that all information that is redacted using a black box represent information that has been redacted under a Freedom of Information exemption.

Some of the information you have requested could be exempt under Section 23(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, which relates to the bodies dealing with security matters, although it is also possible that the information relates to none of the bodies dealing with security matters. Sections 23(1) and 24(1) are being cited in the alternative as it is not appropriate, in the circumstances of the case, to say which of the two exemptions is actually engaged so as not to undermine national security or reveal the extent of any involvement, or not, of the bodies dealing with security matters. Section 23 is an absolute exemption and, if it were engaged in this material, the MOD would not be required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information.

Any information that is not exempt from disclosure under Section 23(1) could be exempt under Section 24(1) of the FOI(A), which exempts information from disclosure if its exemption is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. We cannot say which of the two exemptions is actually engaged, but to the extent that S24(1) might be engaged. We acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency, but we consider that there is a stronger public interest in protecting national security.

Some of the information you have requested falls within the scope of Section 26 (Defence) of the FOI(A) as its release would or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. Section 26 is a qualified exemption and we have conducted a public interest test to determine whether the information should be released or withheld.

The factors for this public interest have determined that whilst disclosure would demonstrate openness and transparency this is outweighed by the detrimental effect disclosure would have in

revealing the capabilities of military operational planning by compromising the methodologies and practices employed in the gathering and analysis of information. I have therefore concluded that the public interest supports withholding some information under Section 26.

All Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) cases remain open and if new evidence comes forward the PSNI will reinvestigate. Release of these documents must be carefully considered under Section 31 (Law Enforcement) of the FOI(A).

I have completed this consideration through a public interest test including consultation with the PSNI who have advised that release of some of the information could adversely impact on any investigative process and may jeopardise any future prosecutorial process. On this basis I am withholding some of the information under Section 31 of the FOI(A).

In addition, some of the information falls within the scope of Section 38 (Health and Safety) of the FOI(A), as its release could endanger the physical or mental health of any individual or endanger the safety of any individual. Section 38 is a qualified exemption and we have conducted a public interest test to determine whether the information should be released or withheld. The factors for this public interest have determined that whilst disclosure would demonstrate openness and transparency this is outweighed by the detrimental effect disclosure could have on those mentioned in the documents, or their family members and friends. I have concluded that whilst disclosure may be of historical interest, the health and safety of individuals must be taken into account. Some information has therefore been redacted under Section 38 of the FOI(A).

Additionally, some of the information contained within the disclosure constitutes personal information, such as names and addresses. Under FOI(A) this information is exempt under Section 40 (2) by reason of the first condition under Section 40 (3) (a) (i), as disclosure would contravene data protection principles under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). This is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test to be conducted in order for this information to be exempt from disclosure. Therefore, all personal information has been redacted.

I appreciate that this incident took place 45 years ago and the passage of time can be a factor in diminishing the applicability of exemptions to information however in this case the overall balance is in favour of partial release.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the FOI(A). Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

38 (Irish) Brigade FOI Team

Enc:

Annex A Verbatim Extracts from various documents.
Annex B IED Report

**Verbatim Extracts from Various Documents Relating to the Bombing of the Central Bar,
Gilford – 31 December 1975**

Director of Operation Briefs – 31 Dec 1975/1 Jan 1976

4. **Rural Areas.** There was one bomb explosion
 - a. 3 Inf Bde
 - (2) A 5-10 lb device exploded in a Protestant public house in Gilford, killing two civilians and injuring 26 others, two of whom are seriously ill.

Annex C to D of Ops Brief – Dated 1 January 1976

3 INFANTRY BRIGADE

- c. At 2110 hours a device estimated as 5-10 lbs of Commercial and thought to have been hidden in a gas cylinder, exploded without warning at GR 066485, in the hall of the following public house in GILFORD, 4 miles South East of PORTADOWN:

THE CENTRAL BAR, MILL STREET, GILFORD

There were 28(*sic*) casualties, of whom the following two persons died later in CRAIGAVON HOSPITAL:

William SCOTT (Prot) [Redacted], GILFORD

Richard BEATTIE (Prot) [Redacted], GILFORD

The following are seriously ill in the same hospital:

Sylvia McCULLOUGH (Prot 30) [Redacted], GILFORD

Of the remaining 24, 5 were later released. There was considerable structural damage to the Public Bar and to the exterior of the front of the building. The Back Bar in which 80 people were drinking was relatively unaffected. The Public House, jointly owned by:

[Redacted] (Prot) THE CENTRAL BAR, GILFORD

[Redacted] (Prot) THE CENTRAL BAR, GILFORD

has a predominantly Protestant clientele. A man who had been drinking in the public bar just prior to the explosion had opened the door into the hall and noticed the bomb. He slammed the door shut and shouted that there is was a bomb. It exploded almost immediately. Samples were taken for DIFS and the RUC PORTADOWN are investigation.

G Ops HQNI – Log Sheets - Dated 31 Dec 1975

Serial (a)	DTG (b)	To (c)	From (d)	Event (e)	Action (f)	Sign (g)
16	2133		3 Bde	At 2122 hrs. A Bomb exploded in 39 Regt area at Gilford (0648) 27 cas in Central bar Gilford. 5-10 lb commercial poss cylinder bomb (no sign) placed in hall of pub. Witness saw bomb as he opened door, closed door and shouted bomb which went off almost immediately. Most of drinkers were in Lounge Bar. Blast effected Public Bar and & exterior building. Severe Structural damage to pub. 27 cas. GR 066485 Pub. 4Si. 23 min cuts and bruises. Pub owner: [Redacted] (Prot) and [Redacted] (Prot) Public Bar write off, and outside wall of Public Bar – Structural damage blast (glass damage to 100m.		
18	2340			1 dead. 3 SI. 23 Minor cuts and bruises		
19	0009			Further death. (now 21 cas)		

G Ops HQNI – Log Sheets - Dated 1 Jan 1976

Serial (a)	DTG (b)	To (c)	From (d)	Event (e)	Action (f)	Sign (g)
1	0133		PR	Informed by 3 Bde that Gilford pub has mixed Prot and Cath Clientele by predominantly Prot		
4	0820		3 Bde	Sylvia McCullough died at 0635 hrs this morning in Craigavon Hospital		

8	1635		PR	BBC rang in to say the South Armagh REPUBLICAN ACTION FORCE have claimed responsibility for the GILFORD bomb. Another call claimed the Peoples Republican Army were responsible.	3 Bde	
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1 QLR MAIN – Log Sheets - Dated 31 Dec 75

Serial	DTG	To	From	Event	Action	Sign
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
5	2145	Ops	Bde	Bomb in Gilford no cas as yet reported.	All pts informed to be on look-out	

1 KINGS – Log Sheets - Dated 31 Dec 75

Serial	DTG	To	From	Event	Action	Sign
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
13	2209			Two expls in other areas tonight. (1) [Redacted] (2) Gilford nr Banbridge – no of cas 312359DEC LOG CLOSED	Ops N & S infod Ops N&S to pass info to pls.	

EOD Log Report

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M
11994	312135 DEC	39 Bde	EXPL	[Redacted]	Central Bar Main St Gilford	Sheet 8 066482	Gas cylinder seen in porch of bar, expl occurred while being evacuated approx. 2110 hrs.	[Redacted] clear DIFS collected	Approx 5-10 lbs Commer	NIL	Area was crowded with RUC trying to assist the SF. No reports had been given to the likelihood of a further device

Daily Explosions/Bomb Neutralised

Ser	DTG	Cat	Prot	Type	Area	Details of Incident	Casualties	Date Reported	Date C Onf'd
625	312110 Dec	1		Expl	GILFORD	7 lb device in gas cylinder exploded in CENTRAL BAR	3 Civ (K) 25 Civ (W)	31 Dec 75	31 Dec 75

RMP Daily Occurrence Book

Serial No.	Date and Time	Reported By	Details of Occurrence	Action Taken	Signature of Duty NCO or Duty R.P.O	Initials of O.C or Supervisor
1115/12	31 Dec75 2130	[Redacted]	<u>Bomb at Gilford</u> Request for assistance on RUC radio ref bomb at Gilford, explosion occurred in a bar and there are casualties	1) All C/S 13 tasked to Gilford 2) CSM Informed 3) Ops 39 Regt Informed	[Redacted]	√
2/1 /1115/12	1 Jan 76 0230	[Redacted]	<u>Result of Bomb at Gilford</u> [Redacted] passed the following information Place Central Bar Gilford Date 31 Dec 75 Result 2 Dead, 2 very seriously injured 25 seriously injured		[Redacted]	√

Intelligence Reports

Report I300304 Date 31/12/1975

Information	A device exploded in the Central Bar Mill Street, Gilford. There were 28 casualties, 3 of whom died.
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Report T300453 Date 01/01/1976

Information	<p>311275</p> <p>At 2110 hours a device was noticed by a customer in the Central Bar, Gilford. The device was located in the hall, he slammed the doors and shouted a warning almost immediately the device exploded injuring 28 people of whom William Scott and Richard Beattie subsequently died in hospital.</p> <p>The device which was estimated to have contained 5 to 10lbs of commercial explosives was packed into a gas cylinder. The Public bar and the front of the building were structurally damaged.</p> <p>010176</p> <p>Sylvia McCullough also died on injuries from the above incident.</p>
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Various Death Logs

Deaths, Due to the Security Situation in Northern Ireland

Name	Date of Death	Location
SCOTT, W	31.12.75	Gilford
BEATTIE, R	31.12.75	Gilford
McCULLOUGH, S	01.01.76	Gilford

Ser	Name	Address	Killed	Date	Mil	RUC	UDR	CIV	TERR	
									CAT	PROT
1390	William SCOTT	[Redacted], GILFORD	Blown up in CENTRAL BAR, GILFORD	31 Dec 75				1		
1391	Richard BEATTIE	[Redacted], GILFORD	“ “ “ “	31 Dec 75				1		

RESTRICTED
IED INCIDENT REPORT

A18

1. Formation 3 BDE			2. Report No 119944		
3. Contact RUC PORTADOWN			4. Type of Incident EXPLOSION		
5. Time Tasked	6. Out	7. Operator			
8. Completed	9. In	10. Time Laid NK	11. Day 4	12. Date 311275	
13. Map Reference 008 066482		14. Multi-Task NO		15. Miles	
16. Location CENTRAL BAR, MAIN ST. GULFORD.			17. Time of EOD Action/Explosion APPROX 2110		
18. Target BAR & CUSTOMERS			19. Position of Device PORCH BETWEEN STREET AND PUBLIC BAR.		
20. Container POSSIBLE GAS CIL	21. Fastening		22. Appearance		
23. Device Type	24. Delivery HAND		25. Explosive Filling APPROX 5-10 LBS COMMERCIAL		
26. Booster	27. Shrapnel		28. Multi-Charge YES/NO	29. Linked by N/A	
30. Initiation NK			31. Delay to Initiation NK		
32. Arming NK			33. Delay to Arming NK		
34. Power NK	35. Anti Handle Type NK		36. Effect Dead Inj Damage 00 27 4321 15m 03 24		
37. Operators Action - CLEAR DIFS COLLECTED					
38. Operators Comment CUSTOMER SPOTTED GAS CIL IN PORCH AND RAISED WARNING (APPROX OCCURRED) APPROX 2MIN LATER WHILE BAR WAS BEING EVACUATED. BAR WAS OWNED JOINTLY BY [REDACTED] & [REDACTED] (PROT) DEVICE HAD BEEN PLACED IN PORCH BETWEEN STREET & PUBLIC BAR ESTIMATED APPROX 5-10 LBS COMMERCIAL FRONT OF BUILDING AND PUBLIC BAR SEVERELY DAMAGED NO WARNING GIVEN. SEARCH OF SEAT OF EXPLOSION AND SURROUNDING AREA FAILED TO SHOW DEVICE CONTAINER. WITNESS [REDACTED] WAS INJURED AND NOT AVAILABLE FOR QUESTIONS. SOCO TO CARRY OUT FURTHER CHECK AT FIRT LIGHT. WHOLE AREA WAS CROWDED WITH RUC. FIREMEN. CIVILIAN. & SF NO CONSIDERATION HAD BEEN GIVEN TO A FURTHER DEVICE.					
39. Reason Device Failed to Function					
40. Service Explosives Used			41. SATO Comment		
42. Police Station PORTADOWN			[REDACTED]		
43. DRC Number			[REDACTED]		
44. [REDACTED]			Date 9 Jan 76		