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Reference: FOI: 2020/02355

Date: 20 July 2020

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Dear [REDACTED]

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE MURDER OF RUC SGT GORDON WILLIAM WILSON ON 21 FEBRUARY 1983**

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 stated the following:

**“Information relating to the murder of RUC Sgt Gordon William Wilson at the Albert Bar, Armagh on the 21 February 1983.”**

I can confirm that the MOD holds some information relating to the murder of Sgt Gordon Wilson. This information has been located in a range of documents and relevant extracts of these have been provided at Annex A.

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.

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 37 years ago and the passage of time can be a factor in diminishing the applicability of exemptions to information. However, in this instance the overall balance is in favour of partial exemption.

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](mailto: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

**Verbatim Extracts from Various Documents Relating to the Murder of Sgt Gordon William  
Wilson on 21 February 1983**

**Daily Operations Brief – 21-22 Feb 83**

**8 Inf Bde**

1. At 212024 hrs and RUC DMSU mob ptl stopped to call at a fish and chip shop on LOWER ENGLISH ST, ARMAGH. On returning to the car an explosion occurred and RUC Sgt Wilson was killed. The explosion demolished one derelict building and broke windows of nearby buildings.

ANNEX A to D OPS BRIEF 053/83 – DATED 22 FEB 83

**EXPLOSION, ARMAGH (2UDR)**

Monday  
[Redacted] At 212024 hrs an RUC DMSU mon ptl stopped at junc  
LISNALLY LANE/LOWER ENGLISH ST  
to call at a fish and chip shop and a cover gp was deployed from  
the car. As the cover gp was withdrawing an explosion occurred inside.  
[Redacted] 39 LOWER ENGLISH ST.  
a derelict public house, and Sgt Wilson was blown across the rd.  
He was killed instantly. The derelict was completely destroyed  
and superficial damage was caused to neighbouring houses. There  
were no further cas. The device consisted of a quantity of HME.FUID

NAME, AGE AND ADDRESS (Civilian or SF member)	NAME OF HOSPITAL & WARD NUMBER	DATE, TIME ADMITTED	PARTICULARS OF INJURIES
Sergeant Gordon William Wilson PS 11743 30 yrs K1 DMSU, Armagh (H/A) [Redacted], Armagh	Died at scene	N/A	Fatal injuries sustained as a result of terrorist explosion

**HQNI Op Sums dated 10 Jan 83 – 23 Jan 84**

RUC Sgt Gordon Wilson was killed instantly in Armagh when a radio controlled device estimated at 30 kg of home made explosives initiated in a derelict hurling him across the road (21 Feb)

**8 INF BDE 21 Feb 83**

33. Explosion, Armagh. At 2024 hrs an RUC DMSU ptl car stopped at the junction Lisnally Lane/Lower English St to call at a fish and chip shop. A cover group was deployed. As it was withdrawing an explosion took place at 39 Lower English St, a derelict public house, and Sgt Gordon Wilson was blown across the rd and killed instantly. The derelict was completely destroyed and neighbouring houses were superficially damaged. The device, est at 30 kg of HME, was radio controlled.

12. In Armagh on 21 February a RUC Sergeant was killed when a remotely detonated device of approximately 30 kg exploded in a derelict next to a fish and chip shop.

**G3 Log Sheet – dated 21 Feb 1983**

Incident Ref No	Details	Brief	RUC R	NIREP	DRC
01	39 Lower English St, Armagh	√			EOD

**HISTORICAL RECORDS**

**ANNEX A TO CORPS INSTRUCTION (58)**

**NO 628 DATED FEBRUARY 1971**

3/810/4(P&W)

**Month and Year** February 1983      **Unit** 321 EOD Coy      **Establishment No.** 5/3629/4 (P&W)  
**Commanding Officer** [Redacted]      **Formation or Command** Northern Ireland      **Location** Lisburn

SERIAL	EVENT OF INFORMATION	REMARKS ETC
5	e. On the 21 Feb 83 a RC device functioned at No. 37( <i>sic</i> ) Lower English St, Armagh, as a member of the RUC passed the front door. The device was estimated at 20 Kg HME and killed the RUC SGT outright, 156043	

**EOD Reports 21/22 Feb**

EOD No	DTG Tasked	Bde and Unit	Type of Incident	Operator	Location	Grid Ref	Incident	EOD Location	Explosives	Date	Remarks
156043	212030 Feb	8/2 UDR	Expl	Redacted	37( <i>sic</i> ) Lower English St, Armagh	875456	A vehicle an armoured Cortina [Redacted] of DMSU Armagh, Stopped in English Street at the junction with Albert Place. Albert Place is usually Lisanelly on maps. Crew dismounted and took up covering positions. Sgt Wilson went to the corner of Albert Place, where there is	Redacted	NK	NK	

							a derelict formally a Public House. An expl took place inside No. 37 demolishing the front wall and blowing Sgt Wilson across the Street. He died immediately. Apart from shock other members of the patrol okay.				
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**Intelligence Reports**

Report T318597 Date 08/03/1983

Information	<p>212026 Feb 83 Murder of Sgt Gordon Wilson RUC          Armagh City GR [Redacted]          An RUC patrol stopped in Lower English St close to the junction with Lisanally Lane, Armagh City. The crew dismounted and two members of the patrol took up covering positions whilst the other members went to Marcos chip shop, Lower English St. Sgt Wilson left his position at the corner of Albert St and began to walk to his armoured Cortina, as he passed a derelict, formerly the Albert Bar, an explosion occurred from within the building which blew Wilson across the street. Wilson received fatal injuries and died immediately, the other members of the patrol were uninjured.</p>
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**WIS Rep from Armagh**

- B. Bombing/Murder of RUC (Sus RCIED)
- C Lower English Street, Armagh. Grid H: [Redacted]
- D. 21 Feb 83 at 2026 Hrs

E. On the 21 Feb 83 at about 2024 hrs an RUC mobile patrol stopped in Lower English Street Armagh close to the junction of Albert Place, Lisnally Lane. The crew dismounted and two members of the patrol took up covering positions whilst the other members went to a chip shop. At about 2026 hrs Sgt GW Wilson [Redacted] left his position at the corner of Albert Place and began to walk back towards his armured (*sic*) Cortina, as he passed a derelict building (formerly the Albert Hotel), an explosion occurred from within the building which blew Sgt Wilson across the street where he hit a parked vehicle, Sgt Wilson received fatal injuries and died immediately. The remainder of the patrol were uninjured.

F. No forensic items of interest however a FFUID may reveal (*sic*) items of interest.

**Various Death Logs**

**Deaths, due to the Security Situation in NI - 1983**

Name	Date of Death	Location
WILSON, G	21.02.83	Armagh

**RUC DEATHS - 1969-1990**

Ser	Date of Death	Rank	Initials	Surname	Location
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
	<b>1983</b>				
	21 Feb 83	Sgt	G	WILSON	Armagh

Name	Date of Death	Location	Cause of Death
WILSON, G (RUC)	21.02.83	Armagh	Explosion