

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE 3rd PUBLIC MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND
POLICING BOARD MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2002 AT 12 NOON IN
WATERSIDE TOWER, CLARENDON DOCK, BELFAST**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Mr Denis Bradley (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Alex Attwood
Viscount Brookeborough
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr Fred Cobain
Mr Brian Dougherty
Mr Sam Foster
Mr Barry Gilligan
Mr William Hay
Mr Tom Kelly
Mr Alan McFarland
Mr Eddie McGrady
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Ian Paisley, Jnr
Mr Sammy Wilson

**POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN
IRELAND:**

Mr Colin Cramphorn (Acting Chief
Constable)
Chief Superintendent, Command
Secretariat

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Ivan Wilson (Interim Chief
Executive)
Six Board Officials

IN ATTENDANCE:

Representative from the Police Staff
Associations

Apologies:

Lord Kilclooney, Mrs McCabe and Mr Sharma.

Chairman:

Welcome everybody to this public session. We apologise for starting late, but that tells you that the private session went on much longer, and it was a productive session.

First I want to welcome, as our acting Chief Constable, Colin Cramphorn. You are very welcome to the session and you are welcome to this job in this interim period. I would invite you to make your opening statement.

Acting Chief Constable Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Thank you Chairman for those warm words of welcome.

Chairman, I have just got four things I was going to report by way of an opening statement before we move into the questions.

Members are, of course, well aware that tomorrow is the graduation ceremony for the first cohort of trainees to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Members have all been invited, as I know you are aware, I just wanted to say a few words about the proceedings on the day.

I'd like to stress that notwithstanding many of the press comments and the use of what I will call traditional language, talking about passing-out parades and such like, tomorrow is in fact a graduation ceremony and is primarily therefore modelled on an academic model, and that is reflected in the choice of presiding officer and indeed the titles and the language that has been used in respect of the day. Of course tomorrow is also a very important day in the sense that the new uniform, the new crest and the new service flag and banner come into use at midnight tonight. And therefore the proceedings tomorrow reflect that. We are delighted that you have accepted our invitation to present us with our new flag, Chairman, and that it will then be raised with

due ceremony. The more formal part of the proceedings will be the first part. That will take place outdoors on the parade ground and there will be some echoes of former passing out parades in the sense that there will be officers drawn up on parade for the purpose of receiving that new flag from the Board. But we will then adjourn and having been gowned appropriately for the actual graduation ceremony proper. This will be in a large executive marquee, which is being erected adjacent to the parade ground. Again I am very grateful to you for accepting our invitation to, not only to present the Police Board bursary but also, to make some comments to the graduates at that point. Once all the graduates have received their certificates from the presiding officer, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, then I will draw proceedings to a close myself with a few comments. So in very brief thumbnail sketch that is the order of events for tomorrow. But I do just want to stress that it is a graduation day, a graduation ceremony, and not a passing out parade as many of the press reports persist in describing it.

Two items Chairman, if I could in respect of real estate, or the property which the Board owns. You asked Sir Ronnie at our last meeting about progress on the consultation regarding station closures. That consultation exercise was concluded at the weekend just past. I should stress that's consultation in respect of the list of 25 stations that had previously been notified.

It will not surprise many members of the Board that there is a good deal of public disquiet about this issue and a majority of those stations are not supported for closure as a result of the consultation exercise. I would intend to have a full report for the Board, at the May meeting, of the outcome of that process and to allow members to have time to examine that before the meeting, but I suspect it will be very few of the stations that are on that list that will ultimately proceed to closure now.

However, there are other stations that we now need to review and look at and will need to go through a similar process because as we have bedded in the new DCUs and indeed the new policing arrangements generally, then clearly

it is appropriate to be doing that. As indeed is the fact that there is the specific recommendation in Patton, recommendation 54, saying that district commanders should have the discretion to decide in consultation with their local communities how best to balance resources between static posts and mobile patrols. So we have to be careful, all of us, that we do not actually cross a line regarding that particular recommendation. So a full report next month, but the first indications from the consultations are that it will be far from 25 stations that are brought forward with recommendation for closure. The second aspect of the estate, Chairman, that I was just going to touch on is the new police college, which I know is a subject close to not only your own heart but many Members hearts. This has been a long running saga as again I know you are all well aware of. I was really just anxious to update you that we have now, following the meeting in February of the tripartite body, that you attended, re-engaged with Partnerships UK who are moving ahead now with the work to prepare the outline business case. Because of the long gap in our previous engagement with them that is going to take somewhere between four and six months to produce, but we intend to press ahead with that at full speed and indeed in the coming months. I have a project board scheduled which the Board will be represented, I believe by your Chief Executive. So that is back in train and we are moving forward on that one and I just wanted to offer that by way of reassurance to Members.

Lastly Chairman, given that we have just come through the Easter weekend it is appropriate that I should perhaps just update you on the Easter parades. It was a good weekend. In general, most of the parades took place without any serious difficulties, or serious incidents. There were however one or two exceptions. There was an illegal parade at Camlough in Newry, 120 persons and one band, and a file is being prepared and submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions in respect of that.

At Downpatrick, there was a legal parade, but one of three bands involved in the parade went past the notified dispersal point. They in effect overran their authorised parade by some 300 yards and then stopped at the local police

station to serenade us with 15 minutes of assorted tunes. Well I do not think that is one we are likely to report to the DPP but it was technically in breach. In Armagh there was a legal parade again. A visiting band from Glasgow, forming part of the main parade, stopped on two occasions on the route, which again was in breach of the terms and shouted sectarian slogans, largely at police officers it would appear. In fact we had had no notification of that particular band participating in the parade, but subject to those three exceptions it was a successful weekend from the point of view of policing parades. Of course public order more generally, as we are all sadly too well aware from North Belfast, we have continued to have serious issues and problems.

Chairman:

In respect of the very last point that you made, Fred Cobain and Ian Paisley Junior would like to ask questions in respect of North Belfast.

Mr Fred Cobain:

Hopefully, Acting Chief Constable, if you could give us some further details about the difficulties we are having in North Belfast, and your view of that. Secondly, I have spoken to the Minister on a number of occasions about the CCTV business plan. I think she told me a number of weeks ago it was almost at a conclusion. If you could give us your, or the policing view of CCTV in that area, and how its going to help combat some of the difficulties we are having in there, and maybe you could give us another briefing on how important it is, even with CCTV in that area, to gain the engagement of the two communities. This is probably more essential than CCTV.

Chairman:

Thank you, the Ian Paisley Junior question since it is on the same theme I believe. Ian.

Mr Ian Paisley:

Thank you Mr Chairman, and welcome Colin to your new post.

As you know, as a Police Board we are charged to maintain an efficient and effective police service and it is clear that police resources are being stretched. You know that the Member of Parliament for North Belfast today has called for an inclusion of more emergency CCTV provision in the area. I'm wondering if you could confirm for us that the inclusion of these CCTV's in areas like the Limestone interface and the White City area, if that would help first of all to detect some crime, to deter some other crime. Would it lead to arrests, which I note have not taken place because of the pressure that your men have been under, and if these things would help. Obviously as a Policing Board it would help us to fulfil our purpose of maintaining an effective and efficient police service. Where is the blockage here, is the blockage with the police, do the police not want these, or is the blockage with the Northern Ireland Office who would not give us the cash to provide these cameras?

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Essentially three aspects to that, if I can take them in order. To update events of the last 24 hours in particular. Certainly last night was the worst rioting we have seen in that area in the current series of disturbances. Matters started round about six thirty yesterday evening and reached a crescendo between about ten to eight, and about half past ten in the evening. The bald statistics are as follows: 13 police officers were injured, none of them seriously I am pleased to say, one military colleague was injured, in the hand and there was one member of the public injured, believed to have been struck on the inner left leg by a baton round that had been fired at him. There were 23 pipe or blast bombs thrown at the police, five of which actually struck police vehicles, some 40 odd petrol bombs, and that is a minimum figure, thrown at police vehicles. There were five incidents of live fire being directed towards police and two police vehicles were struck by live rounds. Police fired 18 baton rounds, and military colleagues fired one baton round. Three of the devices thrown at the police did not explode and were subsequently dealt with by army technical officers. We have recovered five spent cases

from the shots that were directed at police, five civilian vehicles were damaged and four were burnt out, and nine police vehicles were damaged.

It was, by any assessment, a serious nights rioting in that part of the city and, unfortunately, as I think my colleague Alan McQuillan said on Radio Ulster this morning, there is no obvious sign of the kind of community engagement that Mr Cobain was alluding to. We are very much stuck in the middle of the community tensions in this particular situation. We are being criticised with vociferousness, from both parts of the community, for our actions. At the end of the day all the police can try to do is to provide the space for the communities to find a way to move forward together. But at the moment there does not appear to be any cause for optimism that the communities are actually able to move ahead together. I share Mr Cobain's concern about that because this is not a problem that can be solved by policing, it is a problem that can perhaps be contained and even mitigated to some degree by policing, but it can not be solved by policing.

Turning now to the specifics of the CCTV system which both Mr Paisley and Mr Cobain have raised. We have been working for some time with colleagues from the Northern Ireland Office in respect of CCTV in North Belfast in general. I think most Members will be aware that at the Ardoyne Road, Alliance Avenue junction, there has in fact been a new installation commissioned and that is now working very effectively. Further discussions then followed with the Northern Ireland Office and we were asked to look at the possibility of a wider deployment across North Belfast. That led to the establishment of a working board or project board to try and work up feasibility for a system that might cover all of North Belfast. We have got to a draft design stage and there is some associated business case materials that have been prepared which the project board is due to consider in the next fortnight.

The costs for such a wider area system across North Belfast at this stage are estimated to be of the order of £1million but of course the costs depend on

the exact specification that may finally be arrived at. But that is a ballpark figure, and then of course there is an annual running cost that goes along behind that, if such a system is commissioned, which at the moment could be anything up to £0.9million per annum.

Mr Paisley asked “are the police the blockage here”? We welcome the development of CCTV systems generally. There is an obvious potential benefit in an area like North Belfast where evidential material from such systems can be critical in securing convictions. And to that degree it is certainly not a police blockage. There has been recent correspondence between the Minister and the Chief Constable’s office and, indeed, I think your own office, in respect of how such a system might be funded. We have made clear in all our dealings on this matter to date that we do not regard ourselves as having adequate funding in either capital or revenue to install such a scheme, or indeed to run such a scheme in subsequent years. That is a matter that we have agreed to look at again at the request of the Minister, but I see nothing to suggest that our position on that will change at this point in time.

Chairman:

Mr Eddie McGrady wishes to ask a question in respect of Castlereagh.
Mr McGrady.

Mr Eddie McGrady:

I endorse the welcomes already made to you by other Members to your first Board meeting.

As you will be aware there is very considerable public and community concern about the events of Castlereagh. We do know that the PSNI obviously must be and are engaged in a criminal investigation, which of its very nature has an element of subjudice about it. I personally am of the opinion that the enquiry by the Secretary of State, under

Sir John Chilcott, is virtually an internal enquiry of government/inter-government agencies. So how do you intend to address the public concern that still is there and is growing in fact, as to the blame game that is taking place at the moment? What capacity and what manner do you think that you will be able, at given intervals, to give some progress report to the public in terms of what is happening there without prejudicing your own criminal investigation? Secondly, are the two enquiries running totally independent or is there an intermix, an appropriate intermix between them, or is there an inappropriate intermix between them? Thank you.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Thank you for your kind remarks Mr McGrady.

As you say there is a very intensive criminal investigation underway and that investigation must run its course as it would for any other crime. And as I know Sir Ronnie stressed to you at his last appearance before you, we are talking of very serious criminal matters here, aggravated burglary and so forth. In terms of what material can be shared in public as to attribution for this particular offence, clearly we have to be very careful that anything that is said in public does not prejudice the progress that the enquiry may be able to make. Therefore, I am clearly not going to be in a position to say things in public that may help to allay peoples fears but could equally prejudice the progress of the investigation.

As the investigation progresses and certain lines of enquiry are taken to their conclusion and so forth, well then clearly it will be possible to make some further information available, and to make some further public statements available as to where those lines of enquiry have led us and what if anything may result from them. Clearly, in an ideal world, the best possible outcome is to arrive at a position where there are substantive criminal charges placed in respect of the break-in and the matters then dealt with before the courts, and the full case heard before the courts, but clearly that could be some considerable time away, if it is achievable at all.

Mr McGrady:

.....the point about the parallel enquiries, are they parallel or intermixing?

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Clearly I have no control over Sir John Chilcott's enquiry, but equally when asked to brief his enquiry, or for our senior investigating officer to brief his enquiry, then that is a reasonable request to be made and we would, and have, responded to that in brief in his enquiry. So they are not intermixed other than that one way traffic, if I can describe it that way, not the other way, no.

Chairman:

Could I ask Brian Dougherty next, and then following him Mr Sammy Wilson, Mr Tom Kelly and then Mr Sam Foster.

Mr Brian Dougherty:

Welcome Acting Chief Constable. I would like to broaden the debate slightly away from the east of the province. Believe it or not there is life outside North Belfast. My concern is around the city centre in Londonderry, especially at night. As a young person who often tries to go there socialising, I find it quite often a scene of general lawlessness. I find it an intimidating place, an unruly place and more often than not there is a huge lack of police presence. At the moment there is also a concern in terms of certain vigilantes in the area who are working loosely under the banner of restorative justice, which has raised concerns within the community. My basic question really then is. How are the police going to reclaim control of Derry city centre?

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Chairman there is a lot of work that is already gone on in Derry city centre and indeed the commissioning of the CCTV system for Derry city centre is part of that bigger programme under the city centre regeneration scheme. But clearly you are well aware of the tensions and the difficulties of dealing

with large crowds of people who have consumed alcohol or whatever by way of recreation. It's not always possible to intervene as robustly as one might wish, as we have seen on many occasions in the past, because that actually ends up provoking a worse situation than perhaps one that's trying to be mitigated. So there really is a something of a catch 22 in policing those sorts of situations.

A lot of work has gone on with the local traders including the licensing trade and will continue to go on and we will all have to work at this together, because once again it is not something that the police can solve on their own. It involves colleagues in the other emergency services who have been quite disgracefully treated on occasions; ambulances attacked and so forth. I know you are all aware. So we will continue to work with all of the interested parties, and that includes of course the young people themselves who are the principal users of the city at night time for recreational purposes. That is the only way we can actually resolve the problem. Swamping the area with police officers, if it were a practical option, would actually not solve the problem. It would simply displace the problem.

Chairman:

Mr Sammy Wilson, crime statistics.

Mr Sammy Wilson:

Reading your report Mr Cramphorn, I must say that for a Board which is seeking to have more effective policing it makes very sorry reading. Crime detection rates down from 27.5 percent to 18.8 percent; attacks on young people up by 12 ½ percent; thefts from cars up by over a 1,000; and the detection rate down from 9.2 to 5.6 percent. I could go on, but it really does make sorry reading. There has been allusion made to the loss of control, even of the Londonderry city centre and other places, where the police seem to be unable to contain crime at weekends. What actions are being taken; what practical actions are being taken, first of all to get crime statistics down and detection rates up for those crimes which are committed.

Mr William Hay:

I will give you an example of resources on effective policing. In my own area, a gang was seen entering a house, robbing the house, a number of neighbours phoned the police and said, "look, the gang is operating at the moment in this particular house". Police came an hour later and the gang was away. That same gang moved up the road, about 10 miles, spent 25 minutes in a house, the neighbours also saw them entering the house, spending quite a while in the house, 25 minutes later the police came, and they were away. It took the police, at least, I would say, half an hour to travel 15 miles. I can give you another example. Windows broken in a house on Tuesday night in the Fountain. A serious number of windows broken in a house, top windows. The lady rang me last night to say the police had not even arrived out at the house yet. This happened on the Tuesday and this was the Wednesday night. I'm just saying there is a major problem there, and there are major issues of accountability there, and those are only examples I'm giving you in my area.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Chairman, regrettably I cannot comment on the specific examples because I am not aware of the details. If details are provided to me I will happily arrange for further enquiries to be made and to have a full response provided, but obviously I'm not aware of every incident happening everywhere across the province. You talk in terms about what steps are being taken to diminish crime, you actually said crime statistics, but I think you meant crime proper. There is a huge raft of work ongoing I have not reported to you, all the cases of good police work that is going on. I can take to doing that each month if that would be of use to Members, and helpful to Members. We are severely stretched in resource terms; we are under considerable pressure for the reasons you know, in terms of public order etc. We have no choice but to

respond to that. When we have to mobilise large numbers of public order officers then they are not available to be responding to whatever nature of incidents and cover on the ground can get pretty thin. Actually that is no different from any other part of the country, and therefore, I am not defending it, but I am just putting it in a context.

Clearly this is not just about what are the police doing. It is about what everybody can do together. Yes we have a huge professional responsibility to discharge and frankly our staff are working under incredible pressure just now in terms of the amount of case load etc. that they are carrying, compared to what they would have been historically. We have difficulties in recording and making sensible comparisons in terms of crime levels.

You quoted a series of increases, well they are based on last year. Last year's system was a manual crime recording system which we know is not as efficient as the computerised crime recording system we have now. I am on record last year pointing this out, because it is the fourth time in my police career that I have lived through this sort of transition from a manual system to an IT system. I told the then Police Authority that they could expect an increase in recorded crime of somewhere between 10 and 25 percent with that particular changeover, because that's the band that I have experienced in the past. So we do have to be very careful with these statistics in that sense, and I regret to say that that's going to carry on to some degree next year, because once again the Government is changing the crime recording standard. We have a new crime recording standard effective from the 1st April. So we do have to look at these statistics with some care.

I am not minimising the concerns because I share them. There is far too much going on, but there are also some heroic efforts being made by our staff, and there is a whole raft of reasons, detection rates etc which flow from a number of areas. As this is a very technical area, I would not want to get into it here and now, but once again when we have such huge amounts of resource diverted into one or two major enquiries, major investigations, with

the major crime load that we are carrying we cannot even resource murder enquiries to national standards, for instance. Quite frankly, volume crime is not getting the investigative effort that we would wish to give it. It is also the fact that our specialist resources that are what you need to counteract the kind of professional robberies and such like at the heavier end of conventional crime, are being diverted into security related activities, and you are well aware of that. So when you add all of these things together you see the kind of consequences, and I stress again, I'm not minimising them, I am just saying this is a very complex picture and it needs to be unpicked very carefully and not just taken on bald statistics one year against the next year. In fact we need to look at five to ten year time lines to actually make sense of what is going on.

Chairman:

Mr Tom Kelly has a human resource question and he is followed by Mr Sam Foster,
Mr Alex Attwood and then finally Viscount Brookeborough.

Mr Tom Kelly:

I would like to say Chief Constable, you are very welcome. I will not hold you completely responsible for the detection rates, but, on the human resource level, we keep getting requests from the Service for people to go on secondment. I have a particular view at this stage that we should put a moratorium on those requests until the new Chief Constable is in place and we can get a better perspective on what those resourcing needs are. Particularly when the Service keeps telling us that we have a resourcing problem, and it seems to be always senior officers who are being sent on secondment. Would you support the view to have a moratorium on further secondments for the next six months?

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Well Chairman it would of course be in direct breach of a Patten recommendation, which would cause me some concern, but it does predate Patten. In any event there has been a long practice of seconding officers, encouraged by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, to ensure that officers from Northern Ireland have the opportunity to experience other policing environments than Northern Ireland and are able to bring back the fruits of their experience and skills to try and make best use of them within Northern Ireland. The sorts of secondments that you are referring to, I think, would be, for example, staff officers into HMIC at Superintendent or Chief Inspector level. They are relatively small in number and in that sense I don't think the organisation has a particular difficulty in being flexible enough to allow that, especially as many of those secondments now are very short term ones like six months, for instance. They are not all the two or three year secondments that used to be the case in the past. The area of secondments is of course much more an issue for debate and I suspect we will return to it. It relates to those officers at Constable/Sergeant level and you know the numbers involved in that and it is a considerable number at this point in time principally to the United Nations.

Chairman:

Sam Foster.

Mr Sam Foster:

Thank you, Mr Chairman. My apologies for being late, I had other meetings to go to. I had been here earlier in the morning. And do forgive me if I may be repeating something that has already been said prior to my arrival. A couple of points from the Fermanagh end, going back west again if I may.

In two of the larger towns in Fermanagh, Irvinestown and Lisnaskea, the police stations are not actually closed, but I understand that early closures are taking place there and there is great concern there. Do you really believe that a place such as that can be policed with a station being closed, and I

understand very few squad cars to cover the whole county of Fermanagh during the course of the night. The second point is Acting Chief Constable, in the Western part of the county, at Belleek, there was rather offensive memorial erected, but within a week shots were fired at Belleek police station. Could I ask, and would you like to comment, do you believe there is quite a lot of republican or terrorist activity going on in the Western part of Fermanagh because Belleek police station was pock marked recently with rifle shots? Thank you.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

I think you're referring to opening hours of station counters, yes. Clearly there is very little point in keeping station counters open when there is not a public demand for them to be open, because you are tying up officers to man station counters who could be more productively deployed on patrol duties. And as we all know, the message that we hear unambiguously from the public is that they want to see police officers out on the ground, they do not want to see them sitting in police stations, or standing behind counters. So local command is again reviewing this in fulfilment of a specific Patten recommendation. Patten says local commanders should have the discretion in consultation with the local communities to fix that balance between static resources and mobile resources. Now that's the sort of process that all our commanders are involved with, including Fermanagh, and clearly that's a matter that's dynamic, its ongoing. The debate can continue, but I am aware that the DCU Commander in Fermanagh believes that he can make the best use of his resources by a certain amount of adjusting hours as you have alluded to and having the resources on the ground to deploy centrally. But we can return to those issues and debate those issues further and indeed we must, to make sure that we get the right balance.

So far as Belleek is concerned, yes you are quite right in your comments on the fact that Belleek came under, its perhaps a little bit to dramatic to say, came under attack. But on the 23rd of March, in the mid evening, about 9pm personnel at Belleek heard a burst of automatic gunfire. A local resident also

reported hearing this. It wasn't immediately possible to find any particular damage. Checks were carried out in the morning by our own staff on our side of the border and by the Gardai on the south side of the border. Nothing was uncovered initially, but then, at 9.20, the immediate neighbour to Belleek police station reported finding glass panels of his conservatory roof smashed. And when we investigated that further we found that there were indeed six strike marks to the gable end of this house wall and two strike marks on the police station. There were no injuries I hasten to add. Now, there has been nothing further of that nature in that area and it remains unclear exactly what that was about, other than perhaps, and you've made reference to the unveiling of a memorial in that particular area, whether it may have been some sort of marking of that memorial in some way. We do not know but that appears to be the only possible explanation to explain this particular event at this point in time.

Lastly, in respect of your question. Well of course all the border areas have caused some concern to us over the past six months in terms of the number of dissident activities and a number of incidents have occurred on both sides of the border which you will no doubt be aware of, in which munitions have been recovered and such like. So there is a continuing level of activity in those border areas of course.

Mr Alex Attwood:

You are very welcome Acting Chief Constable. And before I ask this question I think it has to be pointed out that the PSNI last night in North Belfast, and generally, have been subjected to enormous threat and attack and that anything that I may say is not to in any way diminish what they have been experiencing.

At the last meeting of the Board, the former Chief Constable said there was a dedicated strategy in respect of the leadership of the UDA. People have a sense that whatever the strategy is, there continues to be a failure to get on top of the UDA threat and the most dramatic evidence of that in recent times

was last night, where clearly the leadership of the UDA arranged and orchestrated people to go into North Belfast and do what they did on our community and upon our officers. So could you comment further about what further efforts are being made to track down and put behind bars those responsible for the leadership at a local level for what's happening in North Belfast? And then comment further, where it seems that not much is happening in terms of search, arrest and prosecution. This is being compared, unfavourably, by some, with the vigorous efforts being made by the PSNI since the break-in in Castlereagh. In terms of tracking down who may have been responsible for that, where there's been on-going searches, arrests, seizures, where there have been some complaints made to the Police Ombudsman, to Members of the Board and to the police about the vigour used by the police in respect of those searches, arrests and seizures. And, could you finally comment upon the sense that people think that, whilst the police may have a feeling that they can arrest and question people, the reality is that the police are far from, and the DPP is far from, any reasonable evidence that would suggest that there is a paramilitary involvement in respect of the Castlereagh break-in.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

In terms of the involvement of the UDA in last night's events, my colleague Alan McQuillan has again said already today that we do believe there was UDA involvement in last night. What is not entirely clear to us at this point, and we would still be assessing, is whether that was pre-organised and pre-mediated, or whether it was simply taking advantage of a set of circumstances and making sure that they were then used to best effect from that organisation's perspective. Whichever it was, it is clearly unacceptable and reprehensible conduct. I note your comments and thank you for those.

You will have heard the previous Chief Constable say on many occasions that the problem we have in dealing with the UDA in particular is that it does not have the kind of organisational structures which control it in the same way that perhaps other organisations do. We would be aware of occasions when

decisions that have apparently been reached have been ignored within a matter of hours by members of the organisation. In other words it is much less of a cohesive whole and indeed in respect of the whole pipe bombing campaign that has gone on over the last six months. There are many instances that we have been able to deal with, and the figures have been provided in the past, but often from those circumstances we are able to ascertain that these are quite often off the cuff, almost spur of the moment, attacks that are mounted when somebody takes the notion into their head to do it. Now that makes it so difficult to counteract, that's what makes it so difficult to actually achieve results, because the opportunity to obtain information in advance to allow one to mount operations that would interdict and get the sort of evidence necessary to secure the convictions we would wish, is much more limited therefore, and that is one of our problems in dealing with that particular organisation and its activities. We will assess last night's events and obviously where there are opportunities for us to pursue further enquiries and investigations, whether that is at the foot soldier level, if I can put it that way, or at the more senior level then those will be taken.

The second part of your question I think, related to the actual events of Castlereagh and the break in itself. You will know from comments that have already been made that that is very much a live enquiry and is ongoing. You will know that it is an enquiry which concerns matters of national security, as the Secretary of State has said in his comments, and the pace at which that investigation is progressing reflects that. However we're still not in a situation where I can perhaps share with this Board, and indeed, the wider public beyond some of the material that has emerged so far in the course of our enquiries.

I understand that there is widespread speculation, I understand that many people are expressing a certain level of, shall I describe it as cynicism about the turn of events, and I will, as soon as I can, seek to address those both with Members of this Board and the wider public. At the moment I am afraid I

have to leave matters where they stand, for fear of jeopardising the actual operational enquiries.

Chairman:

Viscount Brookeborough.

Viscount Brookeborough:

Mr Cramphorn you are very welcome indeed.

To go back to station closures for a relatively quick answer. You have said that some of the stations on the original list may not close, but of course if you happen to live in a community and your station is one of the ones that is being closed it is a big worry for you. First of all you have said that DCU commanders will do everything they can to make the present numbers of police that they have more effective. Is there a force policy on how you are going to demonstrate this because it is obviously critical to us, especially on the Board, that people out there understand what you are saying will happen, and will happen in a demonstrative way, because at the moment the crime levels are going up not down. Secondly, I have got a very quick question over Belleek.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Chairman, as I have already said I will bring forward to the next Board meeting the full report in respect of the station closures. In terms of how does one assess what effective deployment is - there is a range of criteria, we touched on some of them in this discussion today. The issue of response times for instance is an aspect of that. The issue of recorded crime levels is another aspect. The issue of detection rates is a third. There are a whole range of issues that DCU commanders need to take into account in determining what is the optimum deployment for them in their area of the limited resources they have got, taking into account that communities have different priorities in different parts of the province. So there is not a fixed

policy in the sense of a policy document as we might have for training and respect of some particular activity or other.

Viscount Brookeborough:

It is partly about communication with the people, what is the timetable going to be and please do not say soon after the report is brought out. What is the new move before a given time or when do you expect to have completed it?

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Well in respect of the 25 stations that were on the first list that was put to the former Police Authority back in 1997, but went through the process again last year starting in April, that consultation process has now taken place and it is the outcome of that that I will be reporting. This is clearly an issue that is going to keep coming back. It is almost like a revolving door for us now because we need to constantly keep revisiting it in order that we do get the optimum balancing, you know the availability of resources with community desires and expectations and so forth.

Viscount Brookeborough:

... you don't really seem to have a timetable. The one question about Belleek.

Chairman:

Sorry, but there are other people.

Viscount Brookeborough:

The type of weapon. What was the type of weapon used? Which you should know now. Does this give you a worry when most incidents lately around the province been handguns or smaller, that this is more likely to be something larger.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

It certainly was a heavier calibre, it was 762 calibre, exactly what weapon fired those rounds, of course there are a number of possibilities in respect of that.

Chairman:

One final question. Mr Joe Byrne.

Mr Joe Byrne:

Acting Chief Constable, I wonder could you give us an update on the Omagh bomb investigation, and in particular have mechanisms been put in place yet at a formal level for maximum cooperation in relation to intelligence regarding the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Gardai? And lastly what is happening in relation to on-going work with District Commanders in relation to the implementation of District Policing Partnerships? Thank you.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Three questions in one there Chairman, I will do my best to answer them quickly. In terms of the Omagh investigation, I think members will be aware that I was at Templemore with the Gardai Commissioner yesterday at the first of the new annual conferences that the two services will be sharing. This issue came up in our discussions with the members of the press at that press conference yesterday. The mechanisms have been there all along for very close working liaison between the Gardai and ourselves in the conduct of the enquiry and members will know that there have been some arrests in the Republic of Ireland by the Gardai in recent weeks. That has all been done with full knowledge of our own investigation this side of the border. So the co-operation is first class, I have no qualms in expressing my confidence in it, in that respect, and, as I said to the members of the press yesterday, for me its not actually important which side of the border the progress is made in the investigation so long as the investigation is pursued to the fullest extent that it is possible for us jointly to do so.

The second part of your question I think related to District Policing Partnerships. Clearly we had been in discussion with your own officials about the potential regulations that are to be laid to cover the establishment and the operation of District Police Partnerships. That has been a fruitful dialogue, and of course we are looking forward to those regulations being laid now and the DPPs being established.

Mr Joe Byrne:

I wondered in relation to the training of District Commanders and the work that they are getting on with in relation to how the DPP's are going to work at lower levels?

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Well of course the District Commanders have been in a training and development package that began last May and covering all aspects of district command, not just obviously DPP's and liaison, but specifically in respect of DPP's. To some degree one needs to know exactly the framework within which the regulations are going to set them up and to operate, before one can really finalise whether there are any additional training needs to those that have already been touched upon. It is a slightly chicken and egg situation.

Chairman:

Can I just have one final question. Mr Ian Paisley.

Mr Ian Paisley:

Thanks very much Mr Chairman.

Chairman:

As long as its not a multiple one.

Mr Ian Paisley:

No it is not a multiple one. It is important Mr Chairman, it is to do with the general terrorist threat on the province and the Chief Constable will be aware that his predecessor fuelled some speculation that there was going to be another IRA decommissioning stunt, and I am wondering if the new Chief has any information that he can give to us indicating what the current terrorist threat is and indicate to us whether or not there is any view at all that terrorism is actually decreasing. Because from the statistics that we have it looks like there has been 187 shootings in the last year as a result of terrorism. There has been a fall in the amount of munitions found, and there has been a double in the number of police officers injured in the last year, a lot of that as a result of paramilitary activity. So there would be very little hope that this is actually leading to an increase in peace and a decrease in terror. I wonder if you could indicate to us the real terrorist threat over the province at the present time.

Acting Chief Constable, Mr Colin Cramphorn:

Chairman, the security threat of course varies, depending on which part of the province you are in. I have already alluded to the particular concerns in the border regions in an earlier answer. The Board's statistics as you rightly point out do show growth in punishment shootings, punishment beatings, bombings, in the sense of pipe bombings and what have you have all pushed those numbers higher. The threat remains undoubtedly from the dissident organisations on the republican side. On the so called loyalist side again, as an earlier question from Mr Attwood indicated, there is a serious concern in respect of loyalist paramilitary groups so there is still a serious terrorist and security threat which we face.

In terms of decommissioning I have no fresh information, or nothing that would allow me to add or detract anything from Sir Ronnie's earlier comments.

Chairman:

Could I say Chief Constable, very sincerely, thank you for coming today to this public session, and for your contribution.