

10/02/2009

**Contention (i) – ‘In paragraph 2.3 of his report, Mr Murray concedes the unique position of the RUC. He mentions policing against the background of sectarian divide. In this concession Mr Murray is seriously mistaken. The RUC was attempting to police in the face of a terrorist campaign. Mr Murray has no experience of policing in a terrorist environment.’**

1. During the period of the ‘troubles’, between 1969 and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement on 10th April 1998, a total of 312 police officers in the RUC were killed. Over this period police officers were subjected to all forms of terrorist attack, particularly from Republican paramilitaries who waged war against the security forces. Violent incidents against police occurred on a near daily basis, resulting in several thousand officers being injured, some severely.

2. Many police officers, even when off duty and in their own home, lived under constant fear of attack. This was fuelled by the many incidents that occurred and constant information received at work regarding potential security threats against them. Threats, violence and death became part of the lives of a police officer, particularly in areas where they were not welcome or indeed despised.

3. I found the setting up of interfaces or so called peace walls or fences, which segregated the communities, made engaging with the local community all the more difficult and challenging. The vast majority of segregated public housing often compounded feelings in these areas and made normal policing difficult and allowed paramilitary influences to grow. I often experienced instances where law abiding people, who could assist police with crimes committed in their community, declined to do so fearing for their own personal safety. In situations like this it was difficult, no matter how hard police tried, to help them overcome the fear or influence of the paramilitaries. To even receive such persons’ knowledge, to use as intelligence to act upon, was seen as success for police.

4. Intelligence handling during the 1980’s became a big part of policing where Special Branch had primacy over CID in terms of joint handling of paramilitary informants, until 1995 when CID officers ceased to handle paramilitary informants. In 1997 the RUC introduced new rules for informant handling and management which included all information about terrorism and ordinary crime from a member of the public (MOP) being notified to a Regional Intelligence Unit and gave clear guidelines on the registration of informants.

5. In some hard line Loyalist areas the RUC was deemed unacceptable, a fact backed up by the number of police resources required to respond and carry out operations, for example in some areas of North Belfast. Although continually seeking to provide a public service the police would often find themselves as being portrayed as wrong, biased or ‘caught in the middle’ especially when tensions erupted between