

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM McCREESH

DATED THIS DAY

OF

2009

I, William McCreesh declare that this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that if it is tendered in evidence at the Inquiry I will be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

1. The Inquiry has disclosed a number of documents to me. Where I make specific reference to a document in my statement I have given the number of the relevant page.
2. I have previously not made a statement in relation to the Robert Hamill case and I do not have any notes to assist my memory other than those supplied by the Hamill Inquiry.
3. I joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1960 and retired from the force in December 1999. On retirement I was the deputy to the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) in South Region and I held the rank of Chief Superintendent.
4. During almost forty years of police service I served in every rank between Constable and Chief Superintendent in Londonderry. In 1985 I was promoted to Superintendent and posted to Portadown as the Sub Division Commander. I was promoted to the rank of Chief Superintendent from Portadown back to Londonderry and I remained there for a year before moving to 'C' Division (Cookstown and Dungannon) as the Division Commander. I then moved to work directly with the military to co-ordinate planning and anti-terrorism in South Region and from there I moved to be the Deputy ACC in South Region.
5. My role as Deputy ACC largely involved planning and coordinating operations, particularly concerning anti-terrorism. I worked closely with the military.

Further, if there were any issues concerning resources on investigations, I would be contacted. As part of this role I was responsible for Mobile Support Units (MSUs). ACC Hall was responsible for overseeing operational matters. My operational role was confined to on call duties: the ACC and I would be on call as senior duty officer on alternate weekends.

6. When I arrived in Portadown in 1985 it was still the case that loyalist parades traversed through nationalist areas and this caused considerable ongoing serious public disorder. There were probably ten parades a year at that stage. I had the responsibility of carrying through the first amendments to the routes of the parades in order to stop parades going through nationalist areas.
7. One of the areas where parades marched was 'The Tunnel', a route down Woodhouse Street into Obin Street. The parades came up and down there and it was an area of public disorder and confrontation. Eventually, through considerable hard work and pressure, only one parade remained and that was Drumcree. The Drumcree Parade continued to march up the Garvaghy Road until 1996 when the Chief Constable made a decision to stop it going along that route. I was Deputy ACC in 1996 and involved in the operational planning of the police response to the Drumcree Parade.
8. I am therefore aware of the problems of policing Portadown and the sectarian incidents which occurred on a regular basis. From my own experience the centre of Portadown would have been regarded by the loyalists as their territory and no place for Catholic/Nationalists to be. To my knowledge there has never been a Catholic/Nationalist march in Portadown.
9. I was aware that the Catholic community used St Patrick's Hall in Thomas Street and would walk across the Market Street/High Street junction into Woodhouse Street and down the tunnel into Obin Street. I am aware that there would be clashes between the two communities in the area of this junction. Normally these incidents would merely involve shouting but on occasions there were minor clashes with violence.

10. In 1997 the centre of Portadown was barred to traffic with barriers placed at key locations to prevent any acts of terrorism with vehicles. The RUC deployed a Land Rover in the main street at weekends as a preventative measure to deter public disorder. The officers may have walked around outside the vehicle when deployed there, if only to stretch their legs.
11. I am aware from the documents I have been disclosed that Inspector McCrum was the night duty inspector at Portadown on the night of 26/27 April 1997. Inspector McCrum recorded in his notebook at page 9960 that he contacted me on the morning of Sunday 27 April 1997 and advised me of a public disturbance that had happened in Portadown that night. I do recall being informed by someone of the incident. I cannot remember whether it was Inspector McCrum, but I accept that it was. To the best of my memory I think was told that there was a clash between two groups that two people had gone to hospital and I'm almost certain it was a clash between rival sectarian factions.
12. My priority would have been to establish from whoever I was talking to what initial police action had been taken. I would have asked Inspector McCrum whether anyone had been arrested and whether officers at the scene made statements to identify people in order that arrests could be made. I would probably have directed that the victim's clothes be recovered from the hospital. I certainly would have ensured that CID were involved and at the scene or at the station. I would also have insisted that no one went off duty until statements and every detail was recorded. I would not have discussed the management of the scene because the RUC had great experience with crime scenes from at least 150 murders and 1,000 bomb incidents in the South Region.
13. As a matter of practice I would have expected all officers going off duty to have been debriefed. Where officers had been involved in a public order incident I would have expected them to have made notebook entries and statements. I was not aware that officers had to be recalled to duty to make statements after having been stood down without a debriefing.

14. I do not believe that I was told in my initial briefing that Robert Hamill had been transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast because of the seriousness of his injury.
15. I did know that DCI P39 was called out to deal with the incident and she therefore would have had responsibility for the investigation. CID within each Division reported through the Detective Chief Superintendent 'South'. In 1997 this officer was Maynard McBurney and as such DCI P39 would have reported to him on the investigation.
16. I may have spoken to DCI P39 later that day regarding an update on the investigation but I have no recall now of doing so. Any press release regarding the incident would have come from the investigating officer and not through me.
17. On Monday 28 April 1997 ACC Hall resumed duty and I had no further part in the incident or the subsequent murder investigation. I became aware through the media of a public complaint against the four officers on public order duty in the Land Rover but I was not at any stage involved in any formal briefing regarding the murder investigation or the complaint.
18. I have been asked if I was aware of an internal investigation into allegations against Reserve Constable Atkinson. I knew RC Atkinson but I was not aware of any internal investigation and I cannot recall being briefed by anyone about allegations against him.
19. I would have expected ACC Hall to have been advised of a serious complaint against an officer. Although he would not have been involved in the complaint investigation he would have liaised with ACC Complaints and Discipline. I had no discussion with ACC Hall regarding RC Atkinson or an internal investigation.
20. As I have stated, I had responsibility for Mobile Support Units (MSU).. I am unaware of MSU staff being deployed on arrests on 10 May 1997 in connection

with the Hamill murder investigation and I therefore assume that the investigation obtained the staffing that was required.

21. My involvement with the public order incident at Portadown on 27 April 1997 was limited to one briefing. On his return to duty on 28 April 1997, ACC Hall would have assumed responsibility for liaison with the Sub Division Commander at Portadown and the Senior Investigating Officer.

SIGNED:
WILLIAM McCREESH

DATED: