

Secretariat

# Royal Ulster Constabulary

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HQ Ref: C20/18/82

Force Order No 12/94

File Box: C

Date: 5 July 1994

Sub-Head: (c)

Part I

## SCENES OF CRIME PRESERVATION AND EXAMINATION

### INTRODUCTION

- (1) Sophisticated scientific and fingerprint examination and comparison techniques are available to investigators to realise maximum evidential value from forensic examinations of scenes of crime. However, the value of any forensic connection of a suspect to the scene of an offence can be lost in the absence of basic scene preservation procedures. Scene preservation is a significant factor in any criminal investigation. All members must recognise their responsibility to acknowledge, adhere to and implement the ethos of scene preservation.
- (2) Terrorists and criminals have learnt how best to avoid being made amenable to the courts. Defence scientific examinations are increasingly prevalent in investigations and arising from these examinations defence counsel explore and challenge all aspects of scene preservation, contamination, notes, continuity of possession of exhibits in the case and general evidential integrity.
- (3) Expert scene examiners and support services staff may have to give evidence of their findings. If good scene preservation is demonstrated then the evidence of findings reinforces the Crown case. If bad scene preservation is disclosed the case can be considerably weakened.
- (4) It is essential therefore that the basic principles of preservation and examination are strictly adhered to. This should be the case at all crime scenes and not solely at serious outrages such as bombings, shootings and murders.

### 2. PRESERVATION OF A SCENE

- (1) The objectives of preserving a crime scene are:
  - (a) to enable interpretation of events within that scene and to allow examination in their original state of all items which can provide evidence;
  - (b) to have the scene photographed in its original state;
  - (c) to have the scene mapped in its original state.
- (2) Failure to adequately preserve a scene can result in:
  - (a) incorrect interpretation of events;
  - (b) loss of material;
  - (c) movement of items from their original position;

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