1	Tuesday, 18 February 2025	1	us.
2	(9.30 am)	2	Personal statement of WILLIAM JAMES BAXTER (read)
3	LORD TURNBULL: Good morning.	3 N	IR BAXTER: Yes. Thank you.
4	MR BAXTER: Morning, sir.	4	"I am a Retired Police Superintendent of the
5	LORD TURNBULL: Mr Greaney.	5	Police Service of Northern Ireland incorporating the
6	MR GREANEY: Sir, good morning. We are starting later than	6	Royal Ulster Constabulary GC.
7	I said we would start, for which I apologise to you,	7	"I joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) as
8	sir, and to everyone else.	8	a Cadet at the age of 16 on 6th May 1973. I was
9	Today we're going to hear from a number of police	9	subsequently appointed as a Trainee Constable in the RUC
10	officers who were involved on the day of the bombing and	10	Training Centre on 9th June 1974 and on completion of
11	in the aftermath. And the first of the officers or	11	training was appointed as a Probationary Constable in
12	former officers from whom we will hear is	12	Strabane, County Tyrone. During my career I was
13	William James Baxter, known as James Baxter, and I will	13	promoted thorough the ranks to Sergeant on
14	be referring to the witness, sir, as James with his	14	16th May 1979, Inspector on 13th August 1984, Chief
15	permission.	15	Inspector on 22nd April 1991, and Superintendent on
16	James is a retired police superintendent of the	16	6th January 1997 and served in various roles in County
17	Police Service of Northern Ireland, and on	17	Tyrone, County Londonderry and County Fermanagh. On
18	15 August 1998 he held the role of subdivisional	18	6th October 1997 I was appointed as the Sub-Divisional
19	commander in Omagh subdivision, and in a moment James	19	Commander in Omagh Sub-Division, a position I held on
20	will read his personal statement to us.	20	15th August 1998 and I remained in post in Omagh until
21	But, James, first of all, please, I would invite you	21	my retirement on 5th January 2003.
22	to give us your full name?	22	"On 15th August 1998 I was off duty and visiting the
23	MR BAXTER: William James Baxter, sir.	23	Bangor area in County Down accompanied by my wife wher
24	MR GREANEY: And, James, in your own time and when you're	24	at approximately 3.02pm I received a telephone call from
25	ready, would you please read your personal statement to	25	Inspector Johnston who relayed that a 15-minute bomb
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1	warning had been received shortly after 2.30pm in	1	fatalities and location of the deceased who had been
2	relation to Omagh Courthouse and that the area was being	2	removed to an alleyway and adjacent shop. At
3	cleared. I advised Inspector Johnston to ensure that	3	approximately 6.16pm the Chief Constable arrived at the
4	a full evacuation was completed before terminating the	4	scene and was briefed by Superintendent Murphy and I on
5	call. A short time later I heard from a radio news	5	the circumstances of the bomb explosion. We then
6	bulletin that a bomb had exploded in Omagh, and those	6	accompanied him to several reporters/news teams waiting
7	preliminary reports indicated several casualties.	7	at a cordon position convenient to Campsie Bridge at
8	I attempted to contact the Control Room in Omagh RUC	8	Lower Market Street where Mr Flanagan gave a press
9	Station for more information however was unable to do	9	interview. Mr McFall, the Northern Ireland Office Duty
10	SO.	10	Officer also attended the scene and was briefed on the
11	"I immediately commenced my journey to return to	11	circumstances of the explosion. At 8.27pm I left the
12	Omagh and enroute I heard various news flashes on the	12	scene to attend to other duties.
13	radio that stated there were several fatalities caused	13	"I was briefed on the action being taken to identify
14	by a massive bomb explosion. I travelled at speed to	14	casualties and then went to Omagh Leisure Centre which
15	Omagh RUC Station and on arrival commenced duty. I was	15	was being used as a waiting area and an information
16	immediately briefed and took command of the follow up	16	centre for relatives of the injured and missing, to
17	operation satisfying myself that all appropriate	17	ensure that there were sufficient resources and that all
18	agencies and support was available. I immediately	18	action necessary was being implemented in accordance
19	implemented the Major Incident Plan through RUC	19	with the major incident plan. Upon arrival at the
20	Headquarters, and I met with the Chief Executive of	20	Leisure Centre, Lwitnessed the raw emotion of scores of

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Omagh District Council to ensure co-ordination of the

by Sergeant Marshall in relation to the number of

"I attended the scene of the explosion at 6.07pm

accompanied by Superintendent Murphy where I was briefed

local Major Incident Plan.

people attempting to obtain information about relatives

state as they had no knowledge of the whereabouts of

several people known to me who were in a very distressed

who were reported as missing. I was approached by

inundated by requests for information about their family members. Lists of names of those injured and in hospital were being prepared and displayed however all present were obviously in severe shock and distress. I spoke to Police Officers at the Leisure Centre to offer support and to confirm that all possible was being done to pass information to relatives as soon as practicably possible.

"I was that aware that the Bubble Gym at Lisanelly Military Barracks was being used as a temporary mortuary as part of the Major Incident Plan and I then made my way to that location. On arrival I observed that several of the deceased had been moved to this location and were laid out on rows and covered with sheets. The sight of the bodies laid out in this temporary mortuary was very distressing and brought home vividly the impact of the atrocity that had been inflicted on the people of Omagh. I also inspected the area set aside as a family room and a room where families would be taken to conduct the formal identification of their loved one. I had earlier spoken to the Commanding Officer of The Queens Lancashire Regiment at Lisanelly Barracks and agreed that flowers in use for a dinner in the Officers Mess should be moved to the Family Room, in an attempt to give it a warmer and more pleasant atmosphere for those

"Late on the evening of the 15th I became aware that my son's girlfriend had also died in the explosion. Unable to return home I contacted my wife by telephone

and asked her to break the news to [my] son.

"With very little sleep or rest I resumed duty the following morning. In addition to the many operational issues I faced, the clamour for information by the media was at times overwhelming. The scale of the atrocity resulted in multiple requests for visits to the town by individuals deemed to be VIPs from both political and public backgrounds. The requests seemed never ending and severely stretched my available resources. Many visits in the following days were facilitated which added immensely to the pressures and stress of dealing with this atrocity.

"During the 16th of August I attempted to visit as many of the bereaved homes as possible to pay my personal respects and to offer whatever assistance I could. After visiting several homes, I found this to be the most difficult and emotional duty of my career as I met with family members devastated by their loss in such a horrific manner. On a personal family capacity, I accompanied ... my son, visited the family home of my son's deceased girlfriend where we sympathised with the deceased's mother, and I then left my son home and

who would soon be required to perform the terrible task of identifying the bodies. These flowers were in place, and I recall a box of tissues also set in place which would be used continuously throughout the long night of identification. When I entered the identification room, I observed that one of the deceased was resting in the room awaiting formal identification by a family member. I was made aware of the identity of the deceased, and I realised that the family were personal friends and ... known to me which caused me considerable distress.

"Over the following hours I was devastated to learn of the numbers of injured being treated in hospital and of the number of fatalities and as I learned the names of those who had died, I also realised that many were known to me personally. However, despite the emotional impact that I was experiencing I knew I had to continue to function in a professional manner to ensure that the police response and follow up investigation was facilitated in every way possible. I had also to display leadership to my officers who were also severely emotionally impacted by the events which had occurred and the harrowing activities they were undertaking both at the scene recovering bodies, assisting the injured and supporting relatives of the bereaved and injured.

immediately resumed duty. Whilst attempting to act in a professional manner I found that I too was grieving because of my son's girlfriend's death. My wife and I felt the loss very severely and as a family had to work through the many issues which emerged because of the bomb.

"Throughout the day I continued to visit as many of the bereaved families as possible consistent with my other duties and responsibilities. At that time the most urgent was in facilitating the removal of the deceased from the temporary mortuary to be returned as soon as possible to their families and to have arrangements made with the families to facilitate the funerals. The scene of the bomb explosion which was now a major crime scene still had to be controlled, and personnel provided to secure the site and to carry out a minute fingertip search for items of an evidential nature.

"In the following days I attended many of the funerals while continuing to perform my other duties, not least of which was to provide welfare support to my officers who had been traumatised by the bomb explosion. Whilst attempting to offer the necessary support to my officers I spoke to many who had been involved in evacuating people away from the area of the courthouse

where the bomb call related to. Many of those people evacuated made their way down Market Street to the very site of the bomb blast and some were either fatally or ... seriously injured. In my attempts to support my officers, it was apparent that many were very seriously traumatised and felt guilty and responsible for moving people into the area of the bomb. I referred many officers to the Police Occupational Health Unit for professional counselling.

"I continued to visit those affected by the atrocity in the days following the funerals ... I was managing the police of a police district seeking to maintain normal policing in a context where some of my personnel had family members murdered and many officers were severely traumatised by the events of 15th August and the tasks they had to complete in assisting the injured at dealing with those who had died ...

"On the morning of Sunday 23rd August 1998, I was at my place of worship when I received a message on my pager advising 'Bomb warning Omagh Courthouse -- area being evacuated'. I immediately left my church and proceeded to Omagh arriving approximately 10 minutes later and I found that the area had been evacuated including the churches in the immediate area. I spoke to a young probationer Woman Constable in

occasion. I directed intensive investigations led by a Detective Sergeant to identify and apprehend the person responsible to bring these hoax warnings to an end.

"Over the course of this hoax bomb campaign, I held numerous meetings with leading representatives from The Chamber of Commerce; The Traders Association; The Town Centre Manager; The Chief Executive and Councillors of Omagh District Council; and local Church Leaders to discuss the ongoing campaign and the action being taken by Police to investigate these offences and efforts being made to bring the campaign to a halt.

"On more than one occasion during these meetings I was put under intensive pressure to ignore the calls, to stop evacuating the Town Centre and to immediately declare each bomb warning a hoax when the call was received due to the detrimental effect the calls were having on local commerce. Whilst I was sympathetic to those making such a request on the grounds that businesses were suffering dreadfully, I refused to agree to such [a] suggestion on the grounds of public safety. This brought me into direct conflict with some who were very forcefully insisting I should stop the evacuations.

"Intensive Police enquiries continued engaging with BT both at a local and national level and latterly with

George's Street who was assisting in the evacuation. I was aware that she had also been on duty prior to and after the bomb explosion on 15th August. I quickly realised that she was very distressed and on speaking to her she said, 'Sir, I don't think I can do this anymore'. She was in tears and in my view severely traumatised and I arranged to have her relieved from duty and then referred her for urgent professional counselling to the Police Occupational Health Unit.

"Whilst this alert was subsequently declared a hoax it transpired that the verbal warning given was identical using the same code word as had been given in the original bomb warning of 15th August. Over the following months similar bomb warnings were received, all necessitating the evacuation of the Town Centre, and all were subsequently declared hoaxes. This included a similar warning during the inquest into the Omagh Bomb[ing] on 13th September 2000 which was the 68th bomb alert since the occurrence of the Omagh Bomb.

"It was clear to me from the commencement of this ongoing campaign of hoax bomb warnings that the calls were causing untold stress and anxiety and further traumatising the Omagh Bomb victims, ordinary weekly shoppers and businesspeople within the town and to Police Officers directed to evacuate the area on each

An Garda Siochana in Donegal. As a result of those enquiries, and a surveillance operation the investigation led to the arrest of an individual in Letterkenny, County Donegal. This individual was responsible for over 70 hoax bomb alerts and this arrest ended the campaign of hoax bomb alerts and also ended a period which had caused me severe stress and anxiety for the duration of the calls.

"The impact of the bomb and subsequent events on my well-being was such that I cut my police career short and left in 2003."

That concludes my personal statement, sir.

13 LORD TURNBULL: Thank you.

MR GREANEY: Thank you very much, James.

LORD TURNBULL: Mr Baxter, I'd like to thank you for being prepared to assist the Inquiry through the comprehensive statement which you have prepared. In that statement you've provided the Inquiry with the detailed further layer of understanding of the events of that day, and in particular of the enduring effect of those events on so many who were either caught up in the explosion or who provided assistance to the victims.

Your account of the many hoax calls received in the months and years after 15 August informs us of an utterly shocking and callous campaign which must have

1	been conducted by an entirely heartless individual.	1	the Communications Officer in Omagh Station, by way of
2	I'm most grateful to you for the assistance you've	2	a radio transmission, and we were tasked to go
3	provided.	3	immediately to Omagh town centre to deal with a bomb
4	MR BAXTER: Thank you, sir.	4	warning which had been received by telephone with
5	MR GREANEY: Sir, could we now break, please, for	5	a recognised code word, 'Martha Pope'. The bomb warning
6	ten minutes.	6	stated that a bomb had been placed at the Court House.
7	(10.06 am)	7	My colleagues and I made our way to the yellow security
8	(A short break)	8	barrier at the junction of Market Street [and]
9	(10.19 am)	9	Campsie Road. I got out of the police vehicle and
10	LORD TURNBULL: Mr Rafferty.	10	started to stop the traffic from entering Omagh town
11	Personal statement of ALLAN PALMER read by MR RAFFERTY	11	centre. I then asked a Traffic Warden to take over from
12	MR RAFFERTY: Good morning, sir. Sir, I'm going to now read	12	me whilst I proceeded to notify shop owners of the bomb
13	the statements of two individuals who were police	13	warning. I ran up to the High Street [and]
14	officers in Omagh on 15 August 1998. I'll begin first	14	Bridge Street junction, towards the Court House where
15	of all with the personal statement of Allan Palmer.	15	I met two more colleagues. We made our way towards
16	Mr Palmer says:	16	Campsie Junction, clearing premises on our way. We then
17	"In order to refresh my memory when I was writing	17	rolled out police tape across the width of Market Street
18	the following personal statement for the purposes of the	18	and moved all pedestrians down towards the yellow
19	Omagh Bomb[ing] Inquiry, I read a copy of my original	19	security barrier at the bottom of Market street,
20	statement dated 20th August 1998, which was used during	20	stopping to allow some pedestrians to go down
21	the Inquest into those who died in the Omagh Bombing.	21	Scarffe's Entry and putting Police tape across this
22	"On 15th August 1998, I was a Police Constable	22	Entry. As we continued to move down Market Street, the
23	attached to Omagh Station and on duty accompanied by two	23	bomb exploded.
24	colleagues in a mobile patrol of the town. Whilst on	24	"All I can recall is a flash of light, a great
25	duty, my two colleagues and I received information from 13	25	suction and a sharp piercing pain in my back. At the 14
1	moment the bomb exploded I was a short distance away and	1	anyone in the area, but no-one was found.
2	shards of glass from the shop windows fell into my back.	2	"I saw a woman lying on the ground with the engine
3	I stumbled forwards, but remained on my feet.	3	of a car on top of her Some men were trying to get
4	I remember seeing all the people who were in front of me	4	the engine off of her.
5	lying dead and, those who remained alive, had sustained	5	"I saw a male person lying near a gutter with his
6	serious injuries	6	head on fire. The man was crying to get up while other
7	"I came across a young girl who had been injured	7	police officers were giving first aid.
8	therefore, I applied a field dressing, keeping pressure	8	"I was moving through this terrible scene trying to
9	on the wound until a lady took over for me.	9	assist where I could. I saw another young male, lying
10	"I then saw a lady, [who I believed to be] in	10	on the ground with serious injuries to his face. There
11	her 30s, sitting on the edge of the pavement with	11	was nothing I could do to save his life.
12	a serious hand injury and she was in a highly distressed	12	"I searched SD Kells and climbed over the rubble at
13	state. I told her to hold on until I got a first aid	13	the entrance where I found a woman lying on top of the
14	box and then applied first aid to her hand.	14	rubble
15	"I found another lady who had no pulse and,	15	"At that point, I was told that I needed medical
16	following closer visual inspection, I discovered	16	attention as my back was bleeding. I did not however,

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avail.

a severe head injury with blood coming from her mouth.

I thought she was dead or dying and there was nothing

a nearby police car and she was brought to the hospital.

"I then watched a man jump into the bomb crater

"There was a buggy lying close to the bomb site, but

I could do to assist her. A colleague lifted her into

there was no child. I looked for the child, but to no

which was now filled with water, to see if there was

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"At that point, I was told that I needed medical attention as my back was bleeding. I did not however, see any transportation to bring me to the hospital so I continued to look through the rubble.

"I eventually found a police land rover to go to the Omagh Hospital. I got into the front passenger seat with another police officer who drove. In the rear of the land rover were more casualties so, we made our way to the hospital. We transported a woman with a severe leg wound and, on arrival at the hospital, brought her towards the entrance just to be told that there was no

more room. On getting out of the police land rover at the hospital, a man approached my colleague and I before handing us the leg of a person wrapped in a blanket. We brought the leg into the Accident and Emergency Department and handed it to a member of the medical team. I had a further conversation with the hospital staff about the injured in the back of the land rover. I was told to bring the injured to the Accident and Emergency at the then Erne Hospital in Enniskillen. We carefully placed the lady on a mattress on the floor in the land rover and, along with two other male casualties, we drove to Enniskillen's Erne Hospital.

"On route to Enniskillen, the police land rover ran out of fuel and I had to requisition fuel from very helpful staff at a fuel station. In addition, the land rover had poor tyre pressure which was causing difficulties for my colleague who was driving.

I continued to reassure as best I could the injured in the rear of the land rover of our progress to the hospital.

"On arrival at the Erne Hospital, [in] Enniskillen, the medical staff took over and my colleague and I assisted in getting the injured out of the land rover and into the care of hospital health professionals.

"I further assisted with taking casualties off

Mr Julian Elliot.

Mr Elliot says:

"I was a Sergeant in [the] Custody Office in Omagh at the time of the bombing. On the day of the bomb I was playing football for Maguiresbridge and I had sorted out the early Sergeant to hold on for me until I made it in. On route I heard on the radio in the car the report of the bombing, little did I know the magnitude of it.

"When I got to Omagh the duty inspector sent me to Omagh Leisure Centre to set up an incident centre for the bombing. I had done the Inspectors board and like a number of guys they were giving people experience and giving them extra responsibilities and I think that's why I was sent. There was another Senior Sergeant [who] arrived later, he was local to the area and knew a lot of people so he let me work away and do my thing. We went down there and rapidly a massive amount of people started to arrive literally hundreds. I had about 4 constables set up desks and they got paper out and started to write down the names of those people missing. You can imagine the stampede that there was, a massive amount of people could not get hold of their relatives. They just wanted to know had they been reported or to report them missing. All those missing person's forms

a helicopter who had arrived at the hospital helipad. Whilst assisting, I was taken aside by a doctor who noticed a lot of blood on my back as I was bleeding through my shirt. The doctor told me that I was in need of medical attention and he looked at the injury on my back telling me that I immediately needed the injury seen to

"As a police officer who was on duty at the Omagh bomb and also a victim of the atrocity, I want to give this personal statement in order that my experiences are recorded. My hope is that the information provided will be helpful to the families and survivors. I will never forget the horror of what I witnessed at the scene of the Omagh Bomb. The memories and emotions [that] I carry with me every day are too many to include in this statement, the horrors, the guilt, the helplessness, the anger, the hurt, and many more, have [all] had a serious impact on both my physical and psychological health. To the families and survivors, I would like to reassure you that, as a police officer working on that day, my only concern was to help, serve and protect your loved ones. I would like to extend my deepest sympathy to you all."

Personal statement of JULIAN ELLIOT read by MR RAFFERTY

Sir, I'll next read the statement of

had to be faxed, that was the only thing ... We faxed them from the leisure centre to [the] headquarters. A major frustration of mine was [that] headquarters would not accept a blank piece of paper with the name of a missing person they had to be on the official missing person's forms. The police printed out forms so I had to get someone to go to the station and re-write a load of forms.

"As the evening drew on and more and more people came the crowd then eventually started to reduce, in that relatives were found in hospital or they made it home. Communications were badly affected because of the bomb phone lines were affected. Through the evening things started to settle down to a smaller number of people, I was receiving no information from the temporary mortuary at the bubble gym at the army camp therefore I went down in the car to assess who was there and get some names of who was there and start to put things into place. In the leisure centre we had set up rooms for the families and in doing so I was offered the services of 2 social services members and 2 members of the care unit within the police to be with each family and to liaise with them.

"I went up to the army camp, it was a horrendous sight to see the bays lined out in the gym right the way

round it with a body in each bay on a number. Whatever state they were in they were laid out like that. There were some horrendous injuries. ... For the people at the scene and the people managing that, the trauma involved was enormous. I ended up doing what I had to do to find out who was there, I had to be in the middle of it all as well. I started to gather 2 or 3 names at a time, 2 people I recognised, 2 of the victims were known to me unfortunately.

"I went back down and started to say to [the] people at the leisure centre [to] keep that family, keep that family. ...

"I continued to drive back and forth from the leisure centre to the army gym. They put up a big notice board and once they had identified a body they put the name of the person on it. I kept checking the board and to try and get some information as I was running the incident centre.

"During the night we had a large number of families identified who we had to retain. During the night the social workers and care workers came out of rooms that I was walking past. I was on my feet all night back and forwards they said [to me], '[Sergeant] could you speak to our family they are asking questions and they want to know anything definite. They want to know what we know

was the spirits of the people that passed or angels but words came to me that I never and don't remember saying if I'm honest. Everyone was told a different way and I tried to manage my words the best [that] I could with who I was speaking to at the time should it be a wee old woman, [or] should it be a big strong man. I tried to tell them I'm sorry I believe [that your relative or those close to you] had been killed in the bomb and that they are ... in the temporary mortuary. All I can do is offer my sincere condolences, through the night we will be making preparations for you to identify them formally. However you do it, can you prepare your family for this scenario. Some hugged me, some beat my chest ... [some] hyperventilated and collapsed on the floor. It was ... a mixture of responses as you can imagine from humanity.

"This went on all night relaying death messages and trying to be as kind with my words and gentle as I could. I have asked a thousand times why me, a lot of people have said over the years that your empathy and kindness has shone through from your personality. Maybe that is right I don't know. It affected me greatly afterwards. I saw these people in my sleep, I tried to tell them a kinder way so it wouldn't hurt them as much. As time went on and I got good help from very very good

and we know nothing, can you help?' The way the police work you can't just run round telling someone [that] your family member is dead until they are identified and you are sure so I did not have the authority at that time to do that.

"I decided to take my uniform head off and put my humane head on. I thought [that] if I was one of these poor people I would want to know.

"To each family I said get me the strongest member or the spokesperson of the family. I would give them the information and they could relay it to their [families]. One-by-one I took someone out of the rooms, I said walk with me, my name is Julian [and] I run the incident centre here. I can't officially [say] with a police officer's hat on [and] tell you but as a human being I can tell you. I'm doing this as a humane thing, do you want to know what I know and of course they all said yes. Some said that I know that my son [or] daughter [or] mother is dead, I know that they are gone please tell me. We need to be put out of our misery, we will prepare for the worst I feel [that] they have been taken. Some said this [and] some said nothing.

"I was never trained for this, I was never given any preparation for the like of this, this was a huge momentous [and] horrendous occasion. I don't know if it 22

people [and] I have understood that there [are] no better words it's not going to bring the lost person back. I am in a place now where I can actually speak about it. There was a time when I couldn't speak about it

"I tried to provide a nicer, kinder part of humanity. Where somebody had been so inhumane to destroy the lives of so many people, take the lives of so many people and destroy families not to mention those that were injured. I truly feel for them, my experience and my trauma is one thing, but they are at a whole different level. Me telling my story seems insignificant to the poor people that [were] lost and had their lives destroyed.

"Right through the night we arranged a mini bus to take a family at a time over to the army camp. Their loved one was brought into a room [and] they were allowed one-by-one to identify them. This went on all night so I didn't get off until 9.30 [the following] morning. I had been on duty from 4pm on 15th August to 9.30am on 16th August and it was non-stop.

"One of the bereaved parents said to me at the funeral, you seemed to be in a different world, you were in a trance. You moved about as if you were on wheels, you could see the weight of the world on your shoulders.

1	I didn't realise that at the time but obviously the
2	sense of duty, trying to help shone through and that is
3	what I was there for. That day was inhumane [if] I had
4	help, if we helped the bereaved that's all I want.
5	Someone helped put those words in my mouth, someone
6	helped me function for so long in the face of the dire
7	situation."

Sir, that concludes Mr Elliot's statement.

9 LORD TURNBULL: Thank you, Mr Rafferty.

Mr Rafferty, could I ask you to ensure that my sincere thanks are passed on to each of Mr Palmer and Mr Elliot.

MR RAFFERTY: I'll ensure that, sir. Thank you.

Sir, can I ask you, for the reasons that Mr Greaney explained yesterday afternoon, to rise and we will recommence at 1.00 pm.

17 (10.39 am)

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18 (The luncheon adjournment)

19 (1.02 pm)

20 LORD TURNBULL: Mr Greaney.

21 RICHARD SCOTT questioned by MR GREANEY

22 MR GREANEY: Sir, thank you. Good afternoon.

First this afternoon we're going to hear from Richard Scott, who I will refer to as Richard with his agreement in the course of his evidence. And on

1 it that what you had heard was an explosion?

- A. It was quite obvious. I grew up in Castlederg in the
 border with Donegal and I heard many explosions in my
 time growing up, so I was well aware that it was
 an actual explosion.
- Q. And you had, I think, an immediate and serious concernabout what the consequence of that may have been?
- 8 A. I did. I was worried at that stage because my then
 9 girlfriend, who is now, my wife, Nicola was in town that
 10 day after a court case or having had arrested somebody
 11 that night, so I knew that there was something amiss.
- 12 Q. And so you were worried that your wife, Nicola -- Nikki,
 13 as she's known -- might have been caught up in the
 14 explosion?
- 15 A. That's right.
- 16 Q. I should have confirmed at the beginning of your
 17 evidence, but the person seated to your right is your
 18 wife Nicola, Nikki?
- 19 **A.** Yes.
- Q. And was the next thing that happened that a colleague a police colleague, who was also a neighbour of yours
 came to the door?
- A. It was the first within -- within seconds my neighbour,
 who lived one house up from me, he was also a police
 officer and work with me in the crime team, came to the

1 15 August 1998 Richard was a police constable working in 2 the crime team at the police station here in Omagh, and 3 he is going to tell us about his experiences of that day 4 and subsequently.

So I'm going to ask you to begin, please, by telling us your full name.

7 MR SCOTT: Richard Scott, sir.

8 Q. Did you join the RUC as an 18-year-old?

A. I joined the RUC at the age of 18 in 1983. I served in
 Fermanagh, a short time in Omagh, and transferred to the

11 London Metropolitan Police and served there for

two years before I came back to the RUC to Coagh, and

then eventually got back to Omagh around mid-1991.

14 Q. And did you remain during your service in Omagh until15 you retired in 2011?

16 A. That's correct, yes.

17 Q. I'm going next to ask you about 15 August. And on the18 afternoon of that day, where were you?

A. That afternoon I was off duty and I was at home. I was
 actually ironing a shirt to go into work at the crime
 team, and I was sat at the back window of my home which

22 was -- as the crow flies would be no more than half

23 a mile from the town centre when I heard an obvious thud 24 of an explosion.

25 **Q.** And was it obvious to you even at the moment you heard

door and he said, "Did you hear that?" And we actually thought -- because it was so loud we thought the police

thought -- because it was so loud we thought the police
 station had been attacked and the police station was

only a short distance away from where we lived. We

5 had -- we went down a back alleyway and that brought us

6 to a police station. So we ran down to the station and

7 we got there, and as soon as we got to the sanger, the

8 officer within the sanger said that the explosion had

9 been up the town outside Wellworths, and what he said to

us was that he believed that there were many, manyinjuries.

12 Q. And from the police station where did you go?

13 A. We actually ran into the police station as soon as we

found out there were so many injuries, and we ran in, we

gathered up as many first aid boxes as we could,

rummaged around until we got them all.

17 **Q.** And about what time do you think it was that you arrived18 at the police station?

19 $\,$ **A.** I think that was around 3.10, somewhere around there.

20 Q. And about what time did you leave the police station?

21 $\,$ A. We -- within minutes. We ran in, we got gathered up all

the -- the first aid boxes that we could and we

commandeered a car, and then we drove down towards the

24 town. But it struck me whenever we were driving down

25 towards the town was the amount of people that were

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actually walking out, and those people were in various degrees of distress and some were -- were cut and dishevelled, and we noticed that on the way down.

We -- we knew the immediacy, we knew where Wellworths was, so what we did, we drove up Bridge Street the wrong way until we came to the junction with the High Street, then we turned left and we stopped at the -- at the tops of -- of the Scarffe's Entry, which is quite close to where Wellworths was at that stage.

- Q. And did your colleague get out of the police car with 11 12 some of the first aid kits?
- 13 A. He got out and he took some of the first aid kits and he 14 ran down the street and came running back up again, and 15 he was as white as a ghost, and he said -- his words 16 were, "This is bad. This is really bad." I got out of 17 the police car and somebody had shouted to put tape up 18 across the road to cordon off the top of the street.
- 19 Q. Which street are you talking about? Market Street?
- 20 A. That's right. So at the top of the street, the junction 21 of Market Street and Scarffe's Entry. So we taped off 22 that and then I -- I ran down the street, handed out the 23 first aid boxes, I don't know who to, but we handed out 24 the first aid boxes, but at that stage I didn't --25 I didn't tend to anybody at that stage.

a lady who was very, very seriously injured and obviously needed emergency treatment, and there were people shouting for ambulances, and as I went further down the street, then I could see the actual enormity of the devastation and the damage to buildings.

I can't remember what I did down there but I was down there because, while I was down at the bottom of the street, I looked over and I saw Nikki walking up the other side of the street and we just looked at each other with just vacant stares and carried on.

- 11 Q. I'm going to ask you to pause for a moment, because you 12 told us a lot there. You know from what you've said 13 that you moved towards the scene of greatest 14 devastation.
- 15 A. Yes.

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- Q. And is what you're saying to us that you know that you 16 17 did things whilst you were there but you just can't 18 remember what you did?
- 19 Just -- it's a blank and it was only whenever I read my 20 notebook from the day that some things actually came 21 back to me. But it's basically a blank at the bottom of 22 the town.
- 23 Q. But what you do recall is that, extraordinarily, whilst 24 you were there you saw Nikki, now your wife, walking up 25 the street --

Q. And at that early stages, as you ran to the site of the 1 2 explosion, had you taken in quite how terrible --

- 3 A. No.
- 4 Q. -- what had happened was?
- A. No. We knew -- we knew from the people who were walking 5
- 6 out of town that -- and, as my colleague said, it was
- 7 bad. But as I went down the street, you know, the
- 8 devastation wasn't particularly bad, but as I got
- q further down the street, well, then I was able to see
- 10 that there were people who were injured but it was sort
- 11 of gut-wrenching, you couldn't figure out who to stop
- 12 with the -- as I got down the street there were just
- 13 more and more people.
- 14 Q. And by -- by saying you couldn't work out who to stop 15 with, do you mean that it was difficult to decide as you 16 got nearer and nearer to the site of the explosion who
- 17 you should stop to help?
- 18 Exactly. Α.
- 19 Q. Because there were so many people in need of help?
- 20 Α.
- 21 Q. And did you then, as you progressed down the street, 22 come across some of your colleagues tending to a really 23 very seriously injured lady?
- 24 A. Yeah, that was outside -- I think it was nearly directly
- 25 outside Wellworths and my colleagues were tending to
- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. -- and looking dazed?
- 3 It was -- it was a strange sort of thing, because I sort 4 of was oblivious to everybody else on the street but
- 5 Nikki stood out and, as I looked over, she just looked
- 6 at me and, you know, it was just: what is going on here?
- 7 And we passed those glances and -- and went on our way.
- 8
- I don't know where she went to after that, but I came
- 9 back up the town area.
- 10 Q. And so the two of you saw each other, exchanged a glance 11 and then just carried on?
- 12 A. That was it.
- 13 Q. And, as I've drawn attention to, Nikki is seated beside
- 14 you today, and I know from a discussion that we had
- 15 earlier that there is something that you would like to
- 16 say about the support that she's given you over
- 17 the years.
- A. Through this difficult time and through the days and 18 19 the weeks and the months and the years, this lady has
- 20 given me the support to carry on. If she wasn't here,
- 21 I don't know where I'd be now. I don't even know if
- 22 I'd be here.
- 23 Q. Now, you went, I think, back up the street to -- excuse 24 me -- to where a police Land Rover had arrived.
- 25 **A**. I went back up the street again and very close to where

- 1 the lady was lying, there was a Land Rover and we --
- 2 there were police officers there with a door and had
- 3 an injured person on the door. I don't even know
- 4 whether it was a male or female, but I distinctly
- 5 remember we tried to put the door into the back of the
- 6 Land Rover and it wouldn't fit. But I really can't
- 7 remember what happened then. I think we jettisoned the
- 8 door and put the person into the back of the Land Rover.
- 9 Q. And you mentioned to us a lady earlier, and I know that
- 10 you came at that stage to help a lady, and was that the
- 11 lady that you had seen who had been --
- 12 A. It was the lady who I saw on my way down, so I stopped
- 13 with the officers again because we were -- we were
- 14 looking for ambulances, we were looking for anything to
- take the lady away and then one of my colleagues was
- 16 first aid trained and he took a decision that we would
- 17 be able to put her into the back of a police car by the
- 18 way that we -- we got her to hold herself and by sitting
- 19 up in the back of the police car.
- 20 Q. And I'm going to ask you about where you took her in
- 21 a moment, but you recall, I think, that while you were
- 22 tending to that lady there was an eerie silence, as you
- 23 describe it in your statement.
- 24 A. It was the most surreal thing. We were -- we were
- kneeling with the lady and there was an eerie silence,
 - 33
- 1 A. I haven't got a clue.
- 2 Q. And did it seem to me this was just an ordinary member
- 3 of the public in an act of kindness getting into the car
- 4 to help?
- 5 A. Yes, exactly, this was a member of the public who was
- 6 there and said, "I'll go with you."
- 7 Q. And did you eventually reach the back entrance to the
- 8 Tyrone County Hospital?
- 9 A. That's correct, yes.
- 10 Q. In your statement you say that you were met with what
- 11 you can only describe as a scene from MASH, so the US
- 12 television series.
- 13 **A.** Yes.
- 14 Q. Can you describe to us what you mean by using that
- 15 phrase?
- 16 A. As you drove up, all I could see was people walking
- 17 about, dazed and confused. It was just like a scene
- 18 from something from Vietnam and, as I drove up, I could
- 19 clearly see there was an Ulsterbus at the top of the
- 20 drive and from it I seem to remember blood coming down
- 21 the steps of that bus, and there was people coming off
- it. There were just so many people, it was just
- 23 unbelievable.
- 24 Q. And whilst you were still in the car, did a man come up
- 25 to you and tell you there was no point in taking the

- 1 and I looked up and I could plainly see a glass window
- 2 pane falling from the top of -- of one of the adjacent
- 3 buildings and I could see that window pane just falling
- 4 down so slowly, and just broke into a million pieces
- 5 and, as soon as that happened, then the screams went
- 6 back up again and people thought there was a second
- 7 bomb, but it wasn't, it was just the window falling out.
- 8 Q. Now, you put the lady into the car and did you get into9 the car yourself?
- 10 **A.** We put the lady into the back of the car and somebody
- 11 else got in the back as well. To this day I don't know
- 12 who that was.
- 13 Q. Police officer or a member of the public?
- 14 A. No, it was a member of the public. It was a male. And
- we -- we drove the lady to the Tyrone County Hospital
- but because of the congestion we had to go back out the
- 17 Gortin Road towards the police station, you turn right,
- the Old Mountfield Road, turn right again and that
- 19 brought us in at the back of the Tyrone County Hospital,
- and then on the way there we kept reassuring this lady,
- you know, "You're going to be okay, we'll get you
- 22 there.'
- 23 Q. And the person -- the member of the public who had got
- into the back to this day you say you don't know who
- 25 this person was?

- 1 injured lady into the hospital because it was absolutely
- 2 full?
- 3 A. Yeah, he -- he came in -- he came to me and he said,
- 4 "Look, there's absolutely no point. That place is full.
- 5 You need to take this lady to Enniskillen." So what he
- 6 suggested, he said, "Put her in my vehicle and I will
- 7 take her to Enniskillen hospital." I don't know who
- 8 that person was either.
- 9 Q. And was that a member of the Ambulance Service or --
- 10 A. No, it was -- it was another member of the public and
- just with the enormity and his civic duty and his just
- said, "Let me take her. I'll take her to the hospital."
- So that's what I did and we put her into the back of his
- car and they drove off and that was the last I saw of
- 15 them
- 16 Q. And obviously we're not going to identify the lady
- 17 concerned but you are aware that she survived?
- 18 **A.** She did.
- 19 **Q.** And I'm just going to pause for a moment to reflect on
- 20 one feature that emerges out of your account already,
- 21 which was that by the time you left Tyrone
- 22 County Hospital out of circumstances which reflected
- terrible evil on the part of some people, you had
- 24 encountered two acts of great kindness by members of the
- public towards a stranger?

- 1 A. It was unbelievable and, you know, I hadn't a clue who
- 2 they were. Because I was in civilian clothes, they
- 3 hadn't a clue who I was but they volunteered themselves
- 4 to -- to take on that task and take the lady to
- 5 hospital, which was an amazing feat by them.
- 6 Q. Did you then return to the scene of the explosion?
- 7 **A.** I did.
- 8 Q. And at what time do you estimate you arrived back?
- 9 A. I suppose it was probably about 3.30, so I drove from
- 10 the hospital straight down the Campsie Road and parked
- 11 my police car somewhere about the bottom of the town,
- 12 I don't know -- to be quite honest, I don't know where
- 13 I parked it and I don't know where the car went to
- 14 afterwards. I never saw it again.
- 15 Q. And when you arrived back at the scene, was that when
- 16 you were able to understand the sheer devastation on
- 17 Market Street?
- 18 A. The devastation that I saw at Market Street there was
- 19 markedly different from what I saw at the top of the
- 20 town. So when I drove down into Campsie, I could see --
- 21 I could see the total devastation in that part of the
- 22 town. It was quite evident that there had -- that
- that's where the explosion had been.
- ${\bf 24}~{\bf Q}.~{\bf And}$ on arriving back, was it your task to search various
- 25 buildings for survivors?

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- Q. And did you meet up again with your colleague at about
 that stage?
- A. I stood with my colleague, yes, in the middle of the
 street, not far from where the -- the remains of the
 bomb car were.
- 6 Q. And did he say to you that there were bodies everywhere?
- 7 A. He said to me, something, "This is terrible, there are
 - bodies everywhere." And I said, "Look, I'm sorry, but
- 9 I can't see any bodies." And he said, "Look down at
- 10 your feet." And I looked down at my feet and there was
- a body at my feet. And then, as I glanced around,
- 12 I could see bodies to my left, I could see bodies to my
- 13 right.

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But what I found strange was there appeared little white beads everywhere that I think came out of the insulation of the buildings, the walls, and that seemed to mask everything for me. So once I saw past them, then I was able to see all the bodies -- that there were just bedies everywhere.

- 19 just bodies everywhere.
- 20 **Q.** And you have a recollection of at about this stage
- 21 together with your colleague tending to an injured
- 22 person?
- 23 A. We did. We tended to a young person but it was obvious

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- there was nothing we could do. But we did -- you know,
- 25 I felt absolutely useless that there was nothing -- but

- 1 A. That's right. I met up with my colleague again and we
- 2 searched the buildings on the right-hand side as we went
- 3 up the street, the Drumragh Avenue side. We entered the
 - buildings from the corner back up but there was -- there
- 5 was -- there was no people there. They were -- they
- 6 were -- everybody had been evacuated by that time.
- 7 Q. Some of the witnesses describe water in the street, and
- 8 indeed Sergeant -- retired Sergeant Marshall, who will
- 9 give evidence later on today, has such a recollection.
- And do you remember water running down the side of the
- 11 street?
- 12 A. Yeah, on the left-hand side of the street as I walked
- up, I noticed the -- the engine block of the car and on
- 14 that same side there was water gushing down the -- the
- 15 left-hand side and it was tainted with blood, even at
- that stage, you know. It was quite a stream of water.
- 17 It wasn't a trickle, it was quite a stream of water that
- 18 was coming down that side of the street.
- 19 Q. Where was it coming from? Could you tell?
- 20 A. It was coming from somewhere above where the bomb car
- 21 had been, so maybe about 20 yards, maybe 10 yards above
- 22 where the explosion had -- and then was going right down
- 23 to the bottom of the street.
- 24 Q. And tinged, as you say, red with blood?
- 25 A. It was tainted red with blood, yeah.

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- 1 we had to -- we had to move on. And, yes, it does -- it
- 2 makes me sick to just thinking about that now.
- 3 Q. And do you remember going around bodies with other
- 4 police colleagues, it being obvious that those people
- 5 were dead?
- 6 A. Yeah, the -- the bodies were lying everywhere and, at
- 7 that stage, it became apparent that some members of the
- 8 press were gathering at the Campsie end, and a decision
- 9 was taken to move the bodies to give them some degree
- 10 of -- I don't even know what the word is -- some degree
- of -- that we had to give them back their dignity.
- 12 **Q.** Yes.
- 13 A. So Sergeant Marshall instructed us that we should take
- the bodies and move them to a central location.
- 15 Q. And I believe that before they were moved, an army
- doctor examined each person and pronounced life extinct.
- 17 A. Yeah, I -- I was with the army doctor when he went round
- some of the bodies as he examined them and confirmed
- that life was extinct, and then we had to decide what we
- would do with the bodies, so it was like a posse went to
- 21 Nicholson's shoe shop. I went down and grabbed as many
- 22 blankets and curtains and anything that we could that we
 - 23 could put the bodies into.
 - 24 Q. And I'm going to read to you what you say in your
 - 25 statement, because I suspect this captures very clearly

what you experienced. You say:

"I suppose this ..."

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And you're talking about those moments you've just described:

"I suppose this was the worst time of the day for me as we lifted young and old with varying degrees of injuries. The sights I saw still live with me. There are visions I still hold but I do not want to go into detail on this day. Needless to say, it was horrific and still disturbs me."

(Pause).

I will just pause for a moment and check that someone from WAVE is available, and they are.

Obviously the last thing any of us wish to do is to retraumatise or cause distress, but we hope everyone will understand why it is so important in these personal statement hearings that we hear about how terrible that day was.

- 19 Α. Yeah.
- 20 Q. You consider, I believe, that it's important that you 21 should emphasise that each body of a dead person was 22 treated with the utmost respect by you and your 23 colleagues that day.
- 24 A. It's -- it's one of the most important points that I've 25 tried to emphasise over the years, how we treated the
- 1 the atrocity that you saw the aftermath of?
- 2 A. That Entry is the focal point for me. That Entry is the 3 point that I think about all the time. That Entry for 4 me is the reminder for the carnage that was brought to 5 our town.
- 6 Q. Now, I'm still dealing with the events of that day and 7 at some stage were you tasked with another colleague to 8 go to the County Hospital?
- 9 A. Yeah, we were -- we were asked to go and try and find witnesses at the hospital, so we went to the outpatients 10 department and it was just full of -- full of people, 11 12 and we spoke to one or two people in outpatients, but it 13 was -- it was so apparent that there was no point in us 14 talking to anybody. You know, we really weren't -- all 15 we were doing was compounding the stress of the people 16 who were there, so we took a decision to go back into 17 the town again.
- Q. And back in the town, what did you do? 18

those people who were injured.

- 19 So we -- we returned to the scene and then some time 20 later, I can't remember even what we did at the scene, 21 but some time later I was tasked to go to the Tyrone 22 County Hospital again and to help collect details of
- 24 Q. And that, again, you found an extremely distressing part 25 of the day?

1 bodies, and how we treated everyone with respect and 2 moved them to the -- the Entry and gently laid them 3 down. And we -- we started at the far end of the -- the 4 Entry and the body was laid down, and there were 5 several -- several teams of us doing that, lifting the 6 stretchers and taking the people up and we laid them

- 8 Q. And the sheer number of bodies was just overwhelming for 9 you, as you were there.
- 10 A. Yeah, it was when it hit me how many people had been 11 killed, when we started off at the far side of the Entry and then the Entry was half full, and within a short 12 13 space of time the Entry was full, and then we had to go 14 to a business above the Entry, and that's where we put 15 the rest of the -- the bodies and body parts.
- 16 Q. And you say in the statement:

gently down.

17 "The only thing that I can say to loved ones is to stress again that we treated each body with the utmost 18 19 respect and so gently. They needed to be given that 20 after what they had been through."

- A. That's correct. 21
- Q. And you, I think, still live in Omagh; is that right? 22
- 23 A. I do.
- 24 Q. And when you're in the town centre, is there 25 a particular place that still to this day reminds you of 42
- 1 That was a hard bit, because details were beginning to 2 filter through who -- who had been killed, but we 3 obviously couldn't tell relatives -- we obviously
- 4 couldn't tell relatives -- and that was a hard bit
- 5 because there were people that I knew and I knew that
- 6 their loved one was probably dead, and I felt a lot of
- 7 guilt that I couldn't even tell them that.
- 8 Q. Did you eventually get back home that day or night?
- 9 A. I don't know what time I got home but it was late on.
- 10 And whenever I did get home I stood at my back door and stood beside the wheelie bin and I took off every piece 11
- 12 of clothing that I was wearing, put every piece of
- clothing into the bin. I just felt dirty and my clothes 13
- 14 had blood on them and a vile, vile smell, and I thought
- 15 by taking off my clothes that would disassociate myself
- 16 with the scene.
- Q. Before you had time to think at all, are you then 17 18 required back at the police station?
- I don't even know how long I was at home. I was 19 20 still -- I was still going through a real adrenaline
- 21 rush, but I did, I went back to the police station.
- 22 I remember sitting on a kerb outside the back door of
- 23 the police station and just thinking -- my actual
- 24 thoughts were, "Jesus, this is a nightmare," and
- I worked on. It was the early hours before I got home. 25

- Q. And had you been drafted into the bomb inquiry team set 1 2 up to begin the criminal investigation.
- 3 A. I was drafted in straightaway to the bomb inquiry team 4 and I worked as part of a team going out and talking to 5 witnesses about what they saw and did.
- 6 Q. And you would inevitably be talking to deeply, deeply 7 traumatised people?
- 8 A. We were talking to deeply, deeply traumatised people 9 and, likewise, we were deeply traumatised ourselves. We
- 10 were -- and as a -- it's a sort of strange but that's
- how we -- in the days afterwards, that's how we actually 11
- 12 filtered through our own emotions by talking to these --
- 13 to the witnesses.
- 14 Q. And during the period that you were doing that, as no 15 doubt they were experiencing flashbacks and nightmares,
- 16 you too were experiencing such things?
- 17 A. Yeah, the days, the weeks were horrendous and we had the
- 18 flashbacks. I say that sleep was a luxury for days
- 19 and weeks after that, and I do say that -- that much of
- 20 the off-duty time was masked with alcohol, but we had
- 21 a job to do and we had to do that job to the best of our
- 22 ability, and that's what we did.
- 23 Q. And the Chairman has heard from many witnesses who speak
- 24 of an absence of any form of counselling, whether for
- 25 survivors, bereaved, responders in the period that
- 1 uniform position.
- 2 **Q.** And that, you say, was the worst three months of your 3
- 4 A. That was the worst three months that I have ever put in
- 5 and I was doing things that I didn't know what I was
- 6 doing. I can only describe myself as out of control.
- 7 And at one stage my supervisor brought me in and before
- 8 he even said anything I said, "I know, I really don't
- 9 know what I'm doing. I can't -- I can't control what
- 10 I'm doing."
- Q. And you were, you say in the statement, a total mess but 11 12 you got through with the help of close colleagues.
- 13 Α. Yeah, those -- those colleagues rallied round and I got 14 through with the help of them.
- 15 Now, in due course, you were called upon to prepare the Q.
- 16 inquest file and to consult with the coroner; is that 17 the position?
- 18 A. That's correct, sir, yes.
- Q. And you know much better than I do that different people 19
- have different opinions about the inquest which was to 20
- 21 ensue, and neither you nor I will want to step into
- 22 that, but there are some key aspects that I know you
- 23 wish to say and that we judge you are entitled to say,
- 24 that you prepared that file to the best of your ability.
- 25 A. Yes.

- 1 followed. And was there any form of counselling or
- 2 psychological support made available for you as you went
- 3 about this work?
- 4 A. No. I -- I was brought in with a few members of the
- crime team shortly after the incident where we spoke to 5
- 6 somebody from occupational health and we were basically
- 7 told, "Look, if you need us, we're here." But
- 8 I'm sorry, but we haven't any time to talk to anybody.
- 9 We just had to go full on with what we were doing.
- 10 Q. And you, I know, as others who have given evidence, feel
- 11 strongly that a lesson that needs to be learned from the
 - experience of you and all the others we've heard from is
- 13 the need for proper trauma counselling for those
- 14 involved in incidents like this in any of the ways that
- 15 I've described earlier.

- 16 A. At some stage but this was -- this was an incident that
- 17 surpassed anything that I had ever seen and there was no
- 18 way that we were ever going to get the counselling and
- 19 the services at that time. When things calmed down
- 20 then, yes, we had to go and seek -- seek help, and that
- 21 help to a modicum was there.
- 22 Now, in due course, in Christmas of 1999 did you return
- 23 to your regular position within the crime team in Omagh?
- 24 Yes, I had to go back for a period of about three months A.
- 25 from the -- from the inquiry team back to my regular

 - Q. That you felt a duty to do what you could to establish
- 2 where each person had been at the time of the explosion
- 3 or as near as possible.
- 4 A. Now, I actually felt a sense of pride being asked to
- 5 complete the inquest file, and I suppose that was
- 6 because of my knowledge of the scene and of Omagh, but,
- 7 yes, one of the things that struck me from -- from
- 8 a very early stage was that because we moved the bodies,
- 9 there was no definitive map of where each person lay, so
- 10 I took it upon myself to read every statement and where
- 11 I saw mention of a piece of clothing being worn by
- 12 a certain person, say it was a yellow coat, then my task
- 13 was then to look at the photographs of the victims and
- 14 try and match them up so that at the end of it I was
- 15 able to roughly say where each person was whenever the
- 16 bomb went off.
- 17 Q. And we're going to walk through the next part of your
- 18 evidence very carefully, but you attended the inquest
- 19 itself; is that correct?
- 20 A. I attended the -- I was involved in setting up the
- 21 inquest, and the court was a makeshift court at the
- 22 leisure centre. So I was there for quite a time getting
- 23 that set up, acting on behalf of the coroner, and then
- 24 I attended every day of the inquest.
- 25 Q. And it is not appropriate to get into what was explored

- 1 at the inquest but I know that it is important to you to
- 2 say that you had pride in the way in which your police
- 3 colleagues gave evidence.
- 4 A. Each of those police colleagues that I saw gave their
- 5 evidence in an exemplary manner. They made me proud to
- 6 be a police officer at that inquest, the way they
- conducted themselves. So the inquest lasted three weeks 7
- 8 and it was on the very last day that I just sat down and
- 9 broke, and I couldn't do any more.
- 10 Q. Did you, nonetheless, struggle on for nine further
- 11 vears?
- 12 A. I had to take periods off on sick leave but, yes, I did
- 13 with the help of my superintendent --
- But you weren't the officer you had been before? 14 Q.
- A. Sorry? 15
- 16 Q. But you were not the officer you had been before?
- 17 A. No. No. I was quite a confident police officer in
- 18 those years, but I lost all my confidence and the only
- 19 thing I could do was function at a desk job. And I was
- 20 diagnosed with PTSD in 2002 and I've had for the next
- 21
- nigh on ten years had to regularly see a police
- 22 psychiatrist.

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- 23 Q. But it was not until just two years ago when you were
- 24 able to have EMDR, a psychological treatment, eye
- 25 movement desensitisation and reprocessing?
- 1 have to remember the many hundreds who were -- were
- 2 injured. We also have to remember the multitude of
- 3 other services, including doctors, nurses, as well as
- 4 even as far down as ministers, clergy and priests, what
- 5 they went through on that day as well, and that's what
- 6 prompted me to -- to set up an organisation -- with the
- 7 help of other colleagues to set up an organisation to
 - look after specifically military and police colleagues
- 9 because of the security aspects of it.
- Q. And what is -- what is that organisation called? 10
- A. It's called MAPS, Military and Police Support of 11
- 12 West Tyrone, and we set that up 13 years ago, and
- 13 I still serve there as the chairman and a full-time
- 14 volunteer. We're a totally voluntary organisation.
- 15 Q. And you explain in your statement that you couldn't ever
- 16 hold down a regular job, as you put it, again and what
- 17 you do now through MAPS is your treatment.
- A. MAPS is my coping mechanism. I know that I won't be 18
- 19 able to -- to function again, and some of the colleagues
- 20 I work with are the same, and I'm proud to say that Phil
- 21 Marshall, who is making a statement later, is actually
- 22 now a full-time volunteer with us as well. Yeah.
- 23 Q. And the fact that you carry out that work at MAPS you
- 24 would want to emphasise doesn't mean you've recovered or
- 25 forgotten about the atrocity?

- That's correct, sir, yes. 1 A.
- 2 And is it the position that since the day of the bombing
- you have suffered from various health issues that 3
 - doctors have put down to your PTSD?
- A. Yes, I think -- or before that I had to -- I knew I was 5
- 6 suffering, but during the inquest one of my tasks was to
- 7 liaise with the local Omagh trauma team and they were
- 8 very, very supportive in the inquest, and whenever I did
- q break, I could not and would not go and see anybody from
- 10 that -- that team because I didn't want them to see me
- 11 being so weak. But, yes, since that I've had various
- 12 health issues which when investigated it all went back
- 13 to stress and PTSD.
- 14 Q. And in your statement you tell us that your life had
- 15 been changed forever.
- 16 A. From 15 August my life had changed forever. I couldn't
- 17 work any more. I worked as long as I could and
- 18 I sought -- and eventually I was medically retired.
- 19 Q. And obviously you recognise and have recognised in your
- 20 discussions with me the terrible loss that the bereaved
- 21 families suffered and those who had terrible injuries,
- 22 but, at the risk of repetition, your life too, although
- 23 not in the same ways, has been changed?
- 24 A. No, my -- that -- at all times we have to keep those who
- 25 lost loved ones at the front of our minds, but we also
- 1 A. No.
- 2 Because every day you think about it and --
- 3 A. Every day. My office is only a matter of metres away
- 4 from the bomb scene.
- 5 Q. Indeed.
- 6 So those reminders are there every day. I suppose
- 7 people say you move on, you forget about these things,
- 8 but you don't. This is a -- you don't function, you
- 9 survive, and every day is a day of survival. So those
- 10 reminders are always there whenever you hear a siren
- 11 going off, and then you have all the triggers like the
- 12 water and polystyrene beads and things like that,
- 13 they're the triggers that put you back into walking the
- 14 street again on 15 August.
- 15 Q. And in the years after Omagh, after the bomb, and
- 16 particularly since the establishment of this Inquiry,
- 17 have you found that more and more colleagues have spoken
- 18 to you about their mental health?
- 19 A. Yes.
- 20 Q. And, as you explain, many of those feel they don't
- 21 deserve help because they didn't have someone killed or
- 22 seriously injured.
- 23 A. That's correct. Many --
- 24 Forgive me, I interrupted you.
- 25 Sorry, many -- many of my colleagues -- many police and A.

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1	military colleagues think because they wore a uniform
2	and they were police officers they couldn't be seen to
3	be weak, and then for others it was a false pretence in
4	front of their own families, and for many of those
5	people their pain was masked with alcohol and they kep
6	that within their own households. Unfortunately, that
7	can now be seen with many through being passed on to
8	their own families.

- 9 Q. Now, in a moment I know that you want to read to us 10 paragraphs 34 and 35 of your witness statement, but before you do so, I know that you would want to ensure 11 12 that we understand that you feel strongly that your 13 colleagues worked tirelessly to help in the aftermath of 14 the bombing
- A. I do have to say that I -- the admiration I have for my 15 16 colleagues who were there on the day of the bomb and did 17 their best to -- to clear that scene and who tended to 18 the dying and the injured was exemplary. I'm proud of 19 what I did but that's absolutely nothing to what they 20 went through, and I am proud of them.
- 21 Q. Richard, would you now read to us paragraphs 34 and 35 22 of your statement, please.
- 23 A. "However, there are people who could tell us exactly 24 what happened on that day and why they did what they 25 did, but they do not have the guts to own up. They are

your work with the Military and Police Support of West Tyrone. That organisation plainly provides support and help which is both necessary and valuable.

Through the evidence which you and others have given to the Inquiry, and given generously, the extent to which the bombing impacted on the whole community of Omagh is becoming clear and I'm, therefore, grateful to you for adding to our understanding.

9 MR SCOTT: Thank you, sir.

LORD TURNBULL: Thank you. 10

MR GREANEY: Sir, may we break for 15 minutes, please. 11

12 (1.53 pm)

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(A short break)

14 (2.07 pm)

LORD TURNBULL: Mr Greaney. 15

MR GREANEY: Sir, thank you. 16

> We're next this afternoon going to hear the personal statement of Norman Haslett. Norman is a serving police officer in the Police Service of Northern Ireland who, as he will explain to us, holds the rank of superintendent, but on 15 August 1998 he was a constable in the RUC stationed in Omagh.

And so I'm going to begin, please, by asking you to identify yourself.

MR HASLETT: Norman Haslett.

responsibility for their cowardly act and the death and

lives ...

destruction that they left behind them on the 15th August 1998. It is they who should be paying for the pain and [the] distress they have caused to those who have suffered since ... and will do so in the future. It is they who should be here today to explain the impact of their deeds. They, and those who have remained silent ever since ..."

the coward who came into our town and [they] devastated

"The terrorists need to come forward and take

MR GREANEY: Thank you very much indeed for answering my 12 13 questions.

14 LORD TURNBULL: Mr Scott, I'm grateful to you for the 15 strength which you've shown in being prepared to give 16 a statement to the Inquiry. What you've said has added 17 significantly to our understanding of the events of that 18 day. The Inquiry is also coming to an understanding of 19 the impact on those who attended at the scene of the 20 bombing and on those who attempted to provide 21 assistance. It's obvious from what you've told us that 22 the impact for you and for others has been both profound 23 and enduring.

> But in addition to hearing about your involvement at the scene of the bombing, it was informative to hear of

MR GREANEY: And, Norman, I know that you wish to read 2 statement personal to us and I'll therefore ask you to 3 do so as soon as you are ready.

Personal statement of NORMAN HASLETT (read)

5 MR HASLETT: Thank you, sir:

> "My name is Norman Haslett. I am a serving police officer in the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I hold the rank of Superintendent and I am [presently] the Commander of the policing District of Newry, Mourne & Down. On 15th August 1998 I was a Constable in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, stationed in Omagh, County Tyrone. I was a first responder to the Omagh bomb, having assisted in the evacuation of the town centre just before the bomb exploded and being part of the immediate police response to the aftermath of the explosion.

"I have thought long and hard about submitting this statement to the Inquiry. At first I decided that this wasn't something that I wanted to do; for me it's taken 26 long years to finally be able to compartmentalise the terror and the horror of that day, which will indelibly be etched into my soul, to a place where I can process it, contain it, and in some way deal with it without going completely mad. I have placed the memories, the pain and the suffering, the sounds, the smells and the

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images from that day into a box in my mind marked 'Omagh' and over time I have learned to discipline myself not to open this box save for one single day every year; the anniversary of the bombing. There are triggers which frequently make me think of the bombing but the only time when I can go back and relive the experience is on the 15th August each year. For me this is cathartic in that it allows me to deal with the event on my own terms where I can control, as best I can, my emotions and my feelings. But it's not easy. So to submit this statement, and in doing so to go back and relive the experience again is [I suppose] a risk to my own wellbeing and peace of mind.

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"However, there are two reasons why I now choose to do so; firstly because I have reached the conclusion that if there was something, anything at all, that I could disclose at this time which would give even a modicum of comfort or even relief to the poor families of the innocents who were lost, or those who were seriously injured on the day, then this is the last that I could do. Secondly, I wanted to take the opportunity to accurately articulate the immediate police response to what happened and the efforts that myself and my colleagues took to save and preserve life, as best we could, in the midst of carnage and desolation ... my

vehicle and headed off to the Constables' workroom to get on with my work.

"The day was fairly uneventful up until the early afternoon, some time after 2pm, when my attention was drawn to the sound of sirens from police vehicles outside the station. I remember going to the front gate and asking [Reserve Constable Neary] who was on duty there, what was going on. He informed me that a bomb call had been received for Omagh Courthouse in the town centre. On hearing this, I thought I'd better find Sergeant Marshall as I had the keys of the supervision vehicle and I knew he would want to get to the Courthouse to oversee the police response to the bomb call. I went to the Communications Room where I was informed by a colleague that a number of bomb warnings had been received stating that there was a bomb at the Courthouse in Omagh and that the code word that had been given was the same as had been used in a recent bombing in Banbridge on 1st August 1998. That got my attention. I realised then that this was most probably the real thing and not a hoax.

"[And] receipt of this information was sobering and served to very much focus my mind on the task at hand. Sergeant Marshall then arrived at the Communications Room and he asked me if I had the keys to the police sincere hope is that my contribution to the Inquiry will be helpful.

"On 15th August 1998 I had two and a half years' police service, having joined the RUC in February of 1996. I was a member of 'A' Section response policing team, with the role of providing a 24/7 policing response to the community in Omagh and the surrounding area. On that day my Section were due to commence duty at 4pm however, I was detailed to work an overtime shift, commencing duty instead at 7.45am and working with my colleagues in 'B' Section we referred to this shift as a 'double'. I remember attending the briefing that day when [Sergeant] Phil Marshal wo was the 'B' Section Sergeant allocated me initially as an extra officer in one of the mobile patrol vehicles. I had recently inherited a fairly complex investigation involving multiple assaults so at the end of the briefing I asked Sergeant Marshall if I could work on the investigation instead of the duty he had allocated me. [Sergeant Marshall] was content with this on the caveat that I would be available to drive him later in the afternoon when he was due to oversee a parade of 'floats' in Omagh town centre as part of an ongoing festival. I was relieved to get some free time to complete my paperwork so I acquired the keys of a police

vehicle. I had them with me and Phil said he would drive us into the town centre so he could oversee the police evacuation operation. We both went to the back yard of the station and got into the car with Phil driving and myself in the passenger seat.

"When we left the station, we were immediately caught in traffic at the junction of the Old Mountfield Road/Mountjoy Road. I activated the police siren and flashing blue lights and we proceeded at speed towards the town centre down the Mountjoy Road ... left on to Drumragh Avenue and then turned right at the junction of Drumragh Avenue and Market Street, [into] Market Street and heading for the Courthouse. As we turned right into Market Street, I could see a lot of people, some of whom were on the footpaths on either side of the street and some of whom were in the roadway. It was clear that my colleagues had commenced an evacuation of the area of the Courthouse at the top of the street and this buildup of people in lower ... Market Street was the outworking of that evacuation. As we drove along Market Street, I remember people moving off the road when they saw and heard our police vehicle. I recall cars parked on the left side of Market Street as we proceeded along it. I remember this distinctly because I saw a small boy run between two parked cars to get off the road and onto the

footpath to avoid our vehicle as it approached. There was nothing unusual about these vehicles whatsoever in the fleeting moment that I went past them. Little did I know that a bomb was contained within one of the vehicles that was parked there.

"We proceeded up Market Street which then becomes High Street. I remember seeing some of my colleagues at the junction of High Street and Bridge Street. There were no civilians in High Street which is the street directly in front of the Courthouse. George's Street to the right of the Courthouse was being evacuated but it was clear that John Street, to the left of the Courthouse, had not yet been cleared and there were none of my colleagues there. [Sergeant Marshall] drove the vehicle up High Street and into John Street where he parked up on the right-hand side of the street near a Bookmaker's premises.

"We both got out of the vehicle and Phil handed me the keys. On Phil's instruction, I started to clear the premises on John Street which were occupied while Phil headed in the direction of High Street to oversee the evacuation operation. John Street is quite [a] narrow [street] and the buildings that line it were mainly commercial, public houses and offices. I recall that most if not all of the offices were not occupied as it

for and checks on that vehicle were being conducted by [Sergeant Marshall] on the police radio. At that stage, I was satisfied that I had taken all prudent steps to evacuate John Street and get people away from the Courthouse so I returned to the cordon point at Sally O'Brien's pub.

"At some stage I was joined by other colleagues ... I remember talking with them and they remarked they were en route for parade duty elsewhere in Northern Ireland but were recalled to Omagh because of the bomb scare. I was standing just outside a dry cleaning premises when I heard an explosion to my right. I knew immediately that this was a bomb explosion. I grew up in Derry/Londonderry in the 1970's and '80s so I knew all too well the sound of a bomb going off.

"When I looked in the air I saw a large pall of black and brown smoke ascending into the air from the direction of the lower end of the town centre. My immediate thought was 'that's definitely not at the Courthouse!'. I then remember the radio transmissions on the police radio network; I'll never forget them. I heard my colleagues screaming that a bomb had exploded; that there were multiple casualties and that assistance was required urgently. I'd never heard screaming like that on the police net before or since.

was the weekend.

"Clearance of the premises involved me moving in turn to each one, knocking loudly on doors and informing occupants in very clear and unambiguous terms that a bomb call had been received and that they needed to evacuate the building immediately. I moved quickly from one building to the next with a fair degree of urgency as I needed to get people away from the Courthouse as quickly as possible. I remember a strong reluctance from some customers in both pub and a betting shop to leave the respective premises. I repeated my requests a bit more forcefully and they complied and left. I told people to move away from the Courthouse, down John Street to the security barrier situated at Sally O'Brien's pub at the junction of John Street and Kelvin Avenue. I asked people that if they had a vehicle parked in the street to account for it and to move it immediately. I remember very clearly people just not taking the bomb warning seriously. Some people behind the security barrier were shouting 'Bang' and [then] laughing.

"When I was satisfied that all the buildings in John Street between the Courthouse and Kelvin Avenue had been evacuated, I walked down John Street towards the Courthouse, where all but one vehicle had been accounted

"The people at my cordon point went very quiet.
I remember calling out to them to see if there were any doctors or nurses amongst them that could assist but there was no response. I was a bit concerned that there may still be a secondary device at or about the Courthouse and that this explosion might have been some sort of a 'come on' to lure police into a trap, but when I heard the chaos on the radio, I knew that I had to go. I got into the police vehicle, turned it and headed at speed down High Street and into Market Street.
I remember seeing some police colleagues at the Super Value store in Market Street trying to hold a crowd of people back. I parked up just behind the crowd, got out and ran through them into the scene.

"It was clear from the scene that greeted me that a large car bomb had exploded in Lower Market Street. If there is a hell, and I think [that] there [probably] is, then I'm fairly certain what I saw and heard and smelled just at that moment must resembled it. It was pure carnage and chaos; the street was completely wrecked with shops having been severely damaged by the blast and glass and debris was strewn all over the roadway. A car engine block which [I think] was on fire was lying in the middle of the street. Alarms from various commercial premises were ringing loudly and

there was a lot of confusion and panic. People were streaming; high pitched guttural screams of pain and distress. People who had been injured by the explosion were being tended to by members of the public and by police officers. Some were crying out in pain and some were very quiet and still. I remember seeing people who were obviously beyond help, some horribly mutilated with arms and legs missing.

"The further I walked down Market Street, the more bodies and injured people I encountered, women, men and young children. Some were in the wreckage of the destroyed buildings but most of them were lying in the street. A water mains at the bottom of Market Street had been ruptured and a river of water was cascading down Market Street towards the junction at Drumragh Avenue.

"I tried to assess as best as I could which of the injured were in the most need of medical attention.
I observed one young female lying in the middle of Market Street with a serious head injury. She was one of the injured who was still and quiet. She was being attended to by [a number of] members of the public who were enquiring about an ambulance. I informed them that I had access to a police vehicle and that I would bring it to them momentarily. I ran back to where I'd parked

"I since learned this young lady subsequently died of her injuries.

"I went from the hospital back to the scene of the explosion at some speed and parked my vehicle close to the traffic lights at Campsie Road/Dublin Road junction. I then went into the scene of the explosion on foot with the intention of evacuating more casualties to the hospital. I started to search the commercial premises along the right [side] of Market Street, travelling towards the Courthouse. These premises were very badly structurally damaged and were extremely insecure. There were no more injured to be recovered and so, it became very clear, very soon that the operation had moved from the rescue of the injured to the recovery of the dead.

"Around about this time I became very conscious that this was a huge event and that news of the bombing would be being broadcast probably nationally and even internationally. My thoughts [at that time] went to my parents who would most probably have heard the news and I knew they would have been deeply worried as I'd told them I was working a double that day in Omagh. I wanted to get word to them that I was ok but in 1998 mobile phones were in their infancy and anyone who had one had no signal due to the effects of the bomb. Likewise, in nearly every commercial premises which I searched, the

the police vehicle and activated the blue flashing lights and siren as I drove through the crowd of people who had gathered and stopped as close as I could to where the girl was lying on the [road].

"Assisted by some members of the public, I put her in a makeshift stretcher consisting of a board and put her into the rear seat of the police vehicle. Her head was behind the driver's seat of the car. One of the members of the public whose name was Paddy, got into the front passenger seat of the vehicle. I believe he was either a part-time or an off-duty nurse. I reversed the police vehicle and then drove into Bridge Street with the sirens on and blue lights flashing. At this point, Paddy climbed from the front passenger seat into the back seat to comfort and reassure the girl but she never spoke throughout the journey. I went as far as I could to Tyrone County Hospital Accident & Emergency Department via Drumragh Avenue, Campsie Road and the Killyclogher Road. I got as close as I could to the entrance of A&E before getting blocked by traffic. Myself and Paddy got out of the vehicle and with the assistance of another member of the public, we removed the injured girl from the rear of the vehicle and handed her over to medical staff from the hospital who took her into the A&E Department.

telephone lines were down.

"My colleagues had similar thoughts and someone said that the Electricity ... shop on Market Street had a telephone line that was [actually] working. There was a short queue of police on the phone and when it came to my turn I called my parents' house in Derry but there was no answer. I then telephoned my aunt's house, also in Derry. Thankfully, she answered and I think this was the other one and only time she ever heard me swear. ... I was able to tell her what had happened and that I was ok and I asked her to head to my parents' house and let them know. The conversation only lasted a few seconds because I needed to get back to the devastation that was outside.

"As was their habit, my mum and dad had been parked up on the promenade at Portstewart that Saturday afternoon and were listening to the football commentary on BBC Radio 5 when the broadcast was interrupted to announce the news of the bombing. Understandably they went up the wall with worry and all they could do was to find a call box and telephone the RUC station at Coleraine to ask for news. A female police officer was able to tell them that there had been casualties but that she didn't know if any were police. [She] actually told my Mum that all she could at that stage was to

pray.

"We all have families and in the midst of the carnage and the devastation, I was thinking about mine and how anxious they would be for news about me. I was glad that I was able to get through to my aunt but I was also very conscious of the fact that there were a lot of other families that evening who were going to get very different news to that which my parents subsequently received

"Sergeant Marshall assembled myself and my colleagues in the middle of Market Street and asked us to commence with the recovery of those who had been killed. I remember that we were all aware that the world's Press were gathering in the Campsie Road and we were also conscious that the dead were lying where they fell, many in the middle of the street and not in great condition. We all felt a collective obligation to respect the dignity of those who had been lost. I was thinking of the poor families of those who had been slain and that no-one would ever want to see an image of their loved one, left broken and desecrated on the street, broadcast live on television around the world.

"With that in mind, we set about recovering the dead. The most convenient site to retrieve the deceased to, and out of immediate sight of the gathering media,

outside Nicholl & Shiels shop. The first, who was closest to the Dublin Road, appeared to be a young man ... a few feet up was another young male lying face down in the water. I turned him over and found that he had extensive head injuries. Both of the deceased were checked by the paramedic shortly after and I later saw

both of them in the temporary mortuary.

"As the dead accumulated in Market Street Arcade we started numbering then using torn up strips of paper and a biro pen. Looking back, this sounds awful and terribly impersonal but it was the only way we could keep an accurate count of the number who had died and who we had recovered. There were so many dead that I can't [remember exactly or accurately] where each was found, the nature of their injuries or how they were clothed. It came to the point that Market Street Arcade became full of the deceased. I counted a total of fourteen of the deceased arranged in Market Street Arcade at this point. They were arranged long ways at right angles to Market Street and each was covered up with a blanket or some other covering to protect their dignity. Blood stains seeped through the coverings.

"When Market Street Arcade could facilitate no further of the dead, we took the remainder to Moira's shop, a few doors up Market Street on the left towards was Market Street Arcade, a small alleyway just off
Market Street and a pedestrian access to a car park
behind. We started to recover the dead at the bottom of
Market Street, convenient to Nicholl & Shiels shop, and
worked our way up Market Street in the direction of the
Courthouse. I saw a lot of bodies lying in the street
and in the rubble of destroyed buildings. The injuries
to the bodies varied. A number of the dead were
children. I could say much more about the injuries that
I witnessed, but I will keep [those] memories and images
to myself. I remember at the time almost being in
disbelief that a human being could possibly inflict such
damage to another human being for any reason, never mind
for the sake of a political cause.

"Sergeant Marshall and a military doctor proceeded from one dead body to the next. I remember the doctor had a stethoscope and he placed it on each of the bodies, looking for signs of life. Once life was pronounced extinct, Sergeant Marshall directed that each of the deceased be removed to Market Street Arcade. Police, Fire Service and Ambulance personnel all conducted this task. I assisted in the removal of the first four of the deceased.

"I assisted in the removal of two of the dead in a flow of water from the disrupted water mains just 70

the Courthouse. The doors and the windows of this establishment had been blown in as a result of the bomb. Any officers who arrived with further deceased were directed to lay them in Moira's shop until six of the dead were lying there. When we were satisfied that there were no further bodies to recover from the wreckage and from the street, a total of 20 bodies and a body part lay in Market Street Arcade and in Moira's shop. They had been numbered consecutively from 1 to

"Sergeant Marshall then gathered all the police officers on the scene together in Market Street. He explained that the dead needed to be moved to Lisanelly Army Barracks where a temporary mortuary was being set up. Market Street was essentially a crime scene so it was important that we were able to maintain continuity of the scene; for this reason each police officer present was allocated a number of bodies to accompany to the mortuary and in doing so we could each account for the movement of each of the victims from the scene to the mortuary for any future Coroner's Inquest.

"I was allocated the victims that were numbered 12 and 13. I assisted in placing these victims into the back of an ambulance that had reversed up to Market Street Arcade from the car park to its rear.

I got into the back of the ambulance and accompanied these people on their journey to Lisanelly Barracks. There, at the temporary mortuary which was inside a 'bubble-gym' structure, I assisted in carrying the victims to locations on the floor of gym which had been marked with the numbers '12' and '13' on pieces of cardboard. They were lying together, side by side.

"All the victims from the scene were laid out in similar fashion on the floor of the gym. Seeing them all laid out as they were was quite a profound and distressing sight and I think this was the first time that the enormity of what had just happened actually struck me. At this point, I and my uniformed colleagues were instructed by a Detective inspector from Omagh CID to search the victims for any identification, identification marks and property. I found this to be a particularly harrowing task due to the state that some of the deceased were in, and the fact that some of those killed were young children. I started with the two people who I had responsibility for and recorded the details as I proceeded. The first victim [who was numbered] (12) was a female of an age that I could not determine. She had a fine gold necklace round her neck and a gold band wedding ring on her left hand ring finger and a gold buckle ring on her right hand ring

Fernando was part of an annual visit of 30 Spanish children to Buncrana in County Donegal where they stayed with host families to learn English over the summer.

They, together with some children from Buncrana and their leaders, were on the day trip to Omagh when they were caught up in the bomb. Fernando was a beautiful wee boy and while some of the other victims had horrible wounds, there wasn't a mark on him. I couldn't understand how he [had died] until I found out after the Coroner's Inquest that a small piece of shrapnel had entered just behind his left ear and killed him probably instantly. I was relieved to hear that he hadn't suffered any pain. He just looked to me as if he was lying there asleep.

"Fernando's death, more than anything else that I witnessed that day, has had the most profound and lasting affect on me. I honestly think it was the pen-knife that did it; he was just a wee innocent boy on his holidays with his pen-knife in his pocket and he was murdered for a political cause by people of insignificance whose humanity was indifferent to the consequence[s] of their actions. Maybe it's because when I was a wee boy, I too supported a football team and had a Swiss Army knife but for years after the bomb, I couldn't even look at a Swiss Army knife without the

finger. I now know this lady to have been Philomena Skelton.

"The second victim [who was numbered] (13) was a male child who looked about 11 or 12 years old. He had short brown hair, brown eyes and he had a Mediterranean complexion. He was wearing a green military type T-shirt, a green 'Fruit of the Loom' sweatshirt, a pair of blue jeans, 'Notton Truck' brown boots and a pair of white socks with a 'Y' on them. The only possession that this beautiful wee boy had on him was a small red Swiss Army knife which I found in one of his pockets.

"This was Fernando Blasco Baselga. Let me tell you [sir] about Fernando Blasco Baselga because for me as the first responder who had responsibility for looking after him for him after his death, Fernando and a Swiss Army knife are the embodiment and the personification of the innocence that was lost as a result of the Omagh bombing in August 1998. Fernando was born on 12th November 1985, so he was just short of 13 years of age when he was killed. He was Spanish and lived in Madrid where I believe he supported his local football club, Real Madrid. Ironically, Fernando's father had been injured in an ETA bomb in Spain in 1992 but had thankfully survived. [The Inquiry will know] that

tragedy of what happened to Fernando overwhelming me. After a lot of counselling and soul searching I can now deal with it, but it hasn't been an easy process for me.

"I felt so bad for Fernando's family that I asked a family friend to translate a letter in Spanish which I sent to them in Madrid. In it, I expressed my sincere and heartfelt condolences for what happened to their son when he was in our Country. I also let them know that despite what had happened, Fernando was never left on his own ... that someone was with him caring for him and looking after him even though he had passed on. The family responded with a very gracious and dignified letter which left me both humbled and broken. I was very glad to hear from them and I will always treasure this letter. I often think of Fernando and his family and I'd like for them to know this and that [he will] never [ever] be forgotten. I think of what might have been had the Omagh bomb not happened. He had his whole life in front of him. He'd be 39 now, maybe with his own family. But it wasn't to be. Instead he was robbed of his young life by an act that was supposed to help to bring us all together. Utter madness.

"Neither Fernando nor Philomena had any positive identification on them so I completed my notes and handed over to the Detective Inspector. I then assisted

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with the searching of another seven or eight of the victims in the temporary mortuary. I seem to remember that more bodies being brought into the mortuary as the evening wore on. The scenes were harrowing and distressing as we did our very best for these poor people. At one point I remember the Army Chaplain in the camp gathering everyone there in a circle in the midst of the dead and we all recited a very quiet and emotional rendition of the Lord's Prayer. I remember nearly choking on the line in the prayer that says 'deliver us from evil'. The Army produced a bottle of whiskey if anybody needed a drink to settle themselves, given the scene before us and the unbelievably difficult job we'd been asked to do. I could have [probably have] done with one but I chose not to partake.

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"At around 11.30pm Sergeant Marshall stood us down and I returned to Omagh RUC station from where I went home. I remember listening to coverage on the way home and I recall that the number of dead reported in the news bulletin was far short of the number of bodies [I had just left] in the mortuary. When I got home, my girlfriend at the time drove all the way from Carrickfergus to my home in Fermanagh to be with me which [was] very much appreciated.

"[Sir], there are a number of reflections I have on 77

killed or injured were police officers and no one else. The murderers who planted the bomb parked their vehicle and walked away. Myself and my colleagues responded by moving as quickly as we could into the danger area. I can honestly say in good conscience that we did everything we could to try and save and preserve the life of the innocent people of Omagh on that day.

"Finally, [and] for the sake of the families of the deceased, I want to assure them all that on that day their loved ones were treated with all the dignity and respect that myself and my colleagues could muster. They were lifted from where they fell, [they] were laid down gently and with the utmost care and respect ... They were [never] alone and we did everything we could for them. We treated the dead as if they were our own. I hope this will give the families at least some comfort as they continue to deal with their unimaginable grief and loss all these years later.

"In conclusion, I don't think anyone could go through [the] experience like that without being changed by it. Witnessing inhumanity like that at first hand certainly affected me in a very profound way. It's with me every day, but I was only [there as] a witness. I can't even begin to think what it must be like for the injured and the families of those who perished. Omagh

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the events in Omagh in August 1998."

First of all, whilst I fully acknowledge that as a result of this atrocity 29 innocent civilians and two unborn children were brutally murdered, I personally believe that the intended purpose of the positioning of the bomb in Market Street was to kill and injure police officers who the Real IRA knew would have to set up cordon points and evacuate the relevant area. RUC officers were the target. This is my personal opinion and belief as someone who was there. The terrorists were no doubt indifferent as to the tragic outcome that ensued. The warnings they gave were vague and perhaps deliberately so. Either way, the terrorists who planned the operation and who planted the bomb and who walked away were callously reckless as to the consequences of their actions, and this brings me to my second point:

"The blame for this atrocity can only lie with the people who deliberately left a car bomb in the centre of a busy market town in County Hospital on a Saturday afternoon just before the start of new school term.

"On the day we as first responders were acting on the information available to us at the time and that is all that we could do. We evacuated the area of the Courthouse. Had the bomb exploded where it was reported to have been left, the only people who would have been

was only one tragedy in a litany of tragedies that has scarred us all. All I can do now in the line of work that I'm in, is to resolve and dedicate myself to do everything I can to make sure that this never ever happens again."

Sir, that concludes my evidence. I'd like to thank the Inquiry for giving me this opportunity to present it to you today. Thank you.

MR GREANEY: Thank you.

LORD TURNBULL: Thank you, Mr Haslett. Over the last few weeks, as you know, we've heard from many witnesses who have provided the Inquiry with accounts of the events of 15 August 1998. It has become clear from the combined evidence which we've heard that the reality of the scene in Market Street after the explosion must really be something that was quite impossible to imagine or to comprehend, and it has also become abundantly clear that the psychological effects of the atrocity, which, as you say, was committed by the terrorists who planted the bomb, those psychological effects have spread throughout many different parts of the community of Omagh. It has been very valuable to have a number of different accounts from those who attended the scene as first responders. Your evidence has given the Inquiry an overview of the police response and that has been 80

1	both	informative	and	helpful.

- l'm, therefore, most grateful to you for your
 contribution in providing such a detailed and helpful
 statement to the Inquiry. Thank you.
- 5 MR HASLETT: Thank you, sir.
- 6 MR GREANEY: Sir, thank you. We're going to aim to return
- 7 to hear the final person's statement of the day in
- 8 20 minutes but could I warn you, sir, and everyone that
- 9 we may need a little longer than 20 minutes.
- 10 (2.43 pm)
- 11 (A short break)
- 12 (3.28 pm)
- 13 LORD TURNBULL: Mr Greaney.
- 14 PHILIP MARSHALL questioned by MR GREANEY
- 15 **MR GREANEY:** Sir, thank you. Finally today we're going to
- hear from Philip Marshall, who on 15 August 1998 was the
- 17 duty sergeant at Omagh police station, and at his
- 18 request I'm going to refer to him as Phil during the
- 19 course of his evidence.
- 20 And the way in which we'll introduce his evidence is
- 21 through questions and answers.
- 22 And, Phil, the first question is, would you please
- 23 tell us your full name?
- 24 MR MARSHALL: Philip Marshall.
- 25 Q. And are you a retired police officer?
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- Q. And during the early stage of that shift, was there
 anything out of the ordinary?
- 3 A. No, it was a normal day. I briefed the section first
- 4 thing, allocated the officers to their task for the day
- 5 and we were anticipating a normal day to deal with
- 6 normal everyday things helping the community.
- 7 Q. And I think that is one of things that sticks in your
- 8 mind, that until the terrible moment of the explosion,
- 9 it's the normalcy of the day that you remember?
- 10 A. Yeah, it was -- it was a beautiful day and we were
- 11 looking forward to a flotilla of floats coming in with a
- 12 lot young people that afternoon to the town.
- 13 Q. Sir, I'm going to come on in just one moment to ask you
- 14 about that. So you had paraded and briefed your section
- on their duties and tasks for the day, and I think that
- as the morning moved on and as Omagh town came to life,
- 17 the volume of calls to respond to kept growing?
- 18 A. That's correct.
- 19 $\,$ Q. But, as you put it in the witness statement, it was just
- 20 normal stuff, road traffic accidents, thefts and helping
- 21 the community.
- 22 A. Correct.
- ${\bf 23}~{\bf Q}.~{\bf And}$ was it at some stage during the middle of the
- 24 morning that you were told that the carnival was to take
- 25 place or the parade, or did you know about that already? 83

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Having retired in October 2009 in the rank of chief
- 3 inspector?
- 4 A Correct
- 5 Q. Was that 30 years or just under 30 years after you had
- 6 first joined the police?
- 7 **A.** Yes.
- 8 Q. And where was it during those 30 years that you served?
- 9 A. I served mainly in Tyrone but I had spells in Fermanagh
- 10 and in Strabane, sir.
- 11 Q. Have I correctly identified that on Saturday
- 12 15 August 1998 you were the duty sergeant at Omagh
- 13 police station?
- 14 A. That's correct.
- 15 Q. And what did being duty sergeant mean?
- 16 A. You're in charge of the security of the station,
- 17 communications room and all the patrol cars, you would
- 18 respond to all the calls during the day.
- 19 Q. And so was this, therefore, a uniformed job?
- 20 A. Correc
- 21 Q. And during the early part of that day, were you working?
- 22 **A.** Yes.
- 23 Q. What time had you rostered on to duty, if you can
- 24 recall?

25 A. Quarter to 8.

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- 1 A. No, I was -- I got a phone call that -- it was
- 2 mid-morning, I don't know the exact time, just to make
- 3 us aware that there was a flotilla coming in and I made
- 4 a plan out and told the officers what we were going to
 - do for -- which points to cover, et cetera, to
- 6 facilitate the parade to come into the town, and I was
- 7 going to utilise the traffic wardens as well.
- 8 Q. And so when you got that call, did you understand that
- 9 there was going to be a parade of floats containing lots
- of young people that would be making its way into the
- 11 town centre?
- 12 A. That's correct.
- 13 **Q.** And was the information given to you that that was
- 14 expected to happen around 3 o'clock that afternoon?
- 15 A. Correct again.
- 16 Q. And you've told us that you came up with the plan, and
- 17 that that plan involved the deployment of traffic
- 18 wardens into the town.
- 19 **A.** Yes.
- 20 Q. And that, I think, is something that you look back on
- 21 with a tinge of regret?
- 22 A. Yes, it was to prove costly for a couple of our traffic
- 23 wardens, as I asked them to remain around the bottom of
- 24 the town because I wanted to utilise them at certain
- 25 junctions.

- Q. And, as you probably appreciate, we have heard from one 1
- 2 of the traffic wardens that was there?
- 3 A. Yeah.
- 4 Q. So did there come a time at about 2.30 that day when 5 a normal day changed?
- 6 Α. Yes, about half past 2 I was contacted by telephone by 7
- the communications staff within Omagh police station and 8 informed that they had received a warning to the effect
- 9 that a bomb had been placed in Omagh near the
- 10 courthouse.
- Q. And did you also understand from what you were told that 11 12 a recognised code word had been given with that warning?
- 13 Α. That's correct.
- 14 Q. On hearing that, did you instruct radio operators to
- 15 task two patrol cars to the town centre to begin
- 16 clearing?
- 17 A. That's correct, immediately.
- 18 Q. And because the first warning, so-called warning, had
- 19 referred to the courthouse, was that the area that you
- 20 understood needed to be cleared?
- 21 **A.** That would have been the focus of our attention, yes.
- 22 You had been given information by staff at the police
- 23 station about the terms of the warning. Did you at that
- 24 time also check the precise terms of the message
- 25 yourself?

- 1 that you and your police colleagues would need to clear
- 2 in response to the warning?
- 3 A. Yes, it had to be mostly commercial premises, some
- 4 domestic dwellings and then you had places such as
- 5 public houses, bookmakers.
- 6 Q. And as you observe in your statement, it wasn't
- 7 straightforward to clear places like public houses and
- 8 bookmakers because of an attitude that this was just
- 9 another bomb scare.
- A. That's correct. The vast majority of people when you 10
- 11 tell them there's a bomb scare, they evacuate the town
- 12 in a mannerly fashion as quick as they can.
- 13 Unfortunately there's a couple of percentage of people
- 14 who when you go into the likes of a bookmakers that they
- 15 want to watch the race before they leave, or when you go
- 16 into a public house, one of the normal reactions you get
- from a drunk man is "I'm now going to finish my pint." 17
- 18 But I'm afraid I wasn't going to take that and they were
- 19 told under no uncertain terms that they were getting
- 20
- 21 And were you yourself involved in the work you just told
- 22 us about?
- 23 A. Yeah.
- 24 And were you fortunately able to draw on other police
- 25 resources that were assembling back at Omagh Station? 87

- Before I left, I read the message. 1 A.
- 2 Q. And you knew that a code word had been used. Were you
- 3 aware of the significance of that code word?
- 4 A. I was. It was used in previous incidents.
- 5 Q. And did you then travel into Omagh town yourself in
- 6 a marked car with your sirens and lights operating?
- 7 A. That's correct. I went into the town accompanied by 8 Constable Haslett.
- 9 Q. And as you understand, certainly as well as anyone else
- 10 in this hearing, the issue of bomb warnings and the
- 11 response is a controversial one to some extent --
- 12 A.
- 13 Q. -- and the Inquiry is not going to step into the dispute
- 14 but I do know that there are some things that you wish
- 15 to point out and that we judge you are entitled to point
- 16 out as a matter of fact and one of the things I know,
- 17 Phil, that you consider it important to point out is
- 18 that none of the warnings gave any details of the make,
- 19 model or colour of the car that contained the bomb.
- 20 That's correct, make, model, colour, registration
- 21 number, which shop it was parked beside. If we had got
- 22 any of that, we wouldn't be sitting here today. 23 Q. You've said yourself, and we've heard from many
- 24 witnesses, that this was a really very sunny Saturday
- 25 afternoon, and did you know that there were many places
- 1 A. Yes, that was a godsend to me. We had a large number of
- 2 police officers who were due to go to I think it was
- 3 Kilkeel to do duty at a band parade and I managed to get
- 4 that stopped and get them rerouted to me.
- Q. Now, during the period that you were in the town, did 5
- 6 you become aware that two further warnings had been
- 7 received?
- A. Yes. 8
- Q. And as we know, and as is established facts, people 9
- 10 continued to be moved away from the courthouse and down
- Market Street. 11
- 12 A. That's correct.
- 13 In the moments before the bomb exploded, where did you
- 14 find yourself standing?
- 15 **A**. Well, I found myself in front of the courthouse.
- 16 I'd actually walked down towards Bridge Street. Now,
- 17 I knew then that the triangle of roads around the
- 18 courthouse, which is George's Street, Church Street and
- 19 John Street, had all been cleared, high Street had been
- 20 cleared, foundry Lane had been cleared, bridge Street 21 had been cleared and Scarffe's Entry had been cleared.
- 22 So all that was left was a group of cars, if memory
- 23 serves me, roughly five on each side of the road
- 24 directly below the courthouse, and that's where
- 25 I believed the bomb then to be and that's where I was

1 standing.

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It was my intention then to start to radio in and warn them -- communications that I was about to radio in the registration numbers of the cars, so we could start to check them out.

- 6 **Q.** And the cars you're talking about are the cars near the courthouse?
- 8 **A.** Yes.
- 9 Q. So you're near the courthouse in the area where youthink in your head the bomb is.
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. And people have been evacuated to -- from that area down
- 13 Market Street, as we know, to an area where in fact the
- 14 car containing the bomb was.
- 15 A. Yes, but it was our understanding that that the bomb was
- 16 at the courthouse. So if you're standing at the
- 17 courthouse and you look down the town, the town dips
- down quite severely towards Bridge Street and then
- 19 levels off a little bit, rises up again and then
- 20 disappears, and the further we were putting the people
- 21 down the town, the safer we thought they were away from
- 22 any potential shock waves from the blast.
- 23 Q. Although, as were you to discover just moments later,
- that turned out to be wrong.
- 25 A. Yes.

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- 1 over the street, and the situation just got worse and
- 2 worse and worse the further you went down into
- 3 Market Street.
- 4 Q. And in your witness statement you talk of being struck
- 5 by the noise, and I don't know how much detail of this
- 6 we need to go into, but you also describe being struck
- 7 by the smells.
- 8 A. It was the smell of death.
- 9 Q. And everywhere that you looked were there people begging
- 10 for help and just walking around unable to come to terms
- 11 with what had just happened?
- 12 A. Yes, it's a strange phenomenon that people look a very
- 13 ashen and grey coloured because the bomb lifts all the
- 14 dirt and small stones, et cetera, and literally explodes
- 15 it into the body, plus you have the dust from the
- 16 collapsing buildings. So they take on a very unusual
- 17 colouring.
- 18 Q. And so from that beautiful day, a day that many people
- 19 have told us was full of fun and excitement, the
- 20 contrast could not have been starker with what was now

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- 21 happening?
- 22 A. Absolutely.
- 23 $\,$ Q. And you, I think, were yourself in a state of shock at
- 24 what you were experiencing.
- 25 A. It's very hard to take in initially. For the first,

- 1 Q. And I said just moments later because whilst you were in
- 2 that position, not far from the courthouse, did the
- 3 explosion occur?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. And what impact did that have upon you physically, first6 of all? Did you remain standing?
- 7 A. I was -- I was crouched down, like that, and I just --
- 8 I couldn't -- I looked behind me and I seen the plume of
- 9 smoke and I heard the noise and the glass, and I just
- 10 couldn't believe that it had exploded down there.
- 11 Q. And was it immediately obvious to you that the bomb had
- 12 exploded in the area to which the public had been
- 13 directed?
- 14 A. Absolutely.
- 15 Q. What did you do, Phil?
- 16 A. I had another officer close to me and I told him to
- 17 radio in the fact that a bomb had exploded and I ran
- 18 immediately to the scene.
- 19 Q. And as you reached the seat of the explosion, did the
- sheer scale of the number of dead and injured become
- 21 apparent to you?
- 22 A. Not totally immediately. The first thing that hit was
- the noise. You had all the shop alarm -- burglar alarms
- were going, you had horrendous amount of screaming,
- 25 there was also a prevailing smell that was coming up
- 1 I don't know, 30 seconds, one minute, you're just
- 2 standing there in disbelief. But then you have to
- 3 switch off as a person and you have to remember that
- 4 you're -- you're in charge and you've got to deal with
- 5 it
- 6 Q. And so was it apparent to you from the outset that you
- 7 were the police officer that was in charge of that
- 8 situation at that point in time?
- 9 **A.** Yes.
- 10 Q. And you said that you decided that you had to shut down
- 11 emotionally to try to manage the situation that you were
- 12 presented in.
- 13 A. Yeah, you'd no other option.
- 14 Q. Even though there was a part of you that just wanted to
- be anywhere other than there?
- 16 A. I just didn't want to be there, absolutely, I wanted to
- 17 run, but I had to do my job.
- 18 Q. And one of your first actions was to go to where the
- engine block of the car that had contained the bomb had
- 20 landed; is that right?
- 21 A. Yeah, it was blatantly obvious that there was people
- trapped under the engine block and they were literally
- 23 burning to death.
- ${\bf 24}~{\bf Q}.~$ And the screams of those there are something that stick
- 25 with you?

- A. Yeah, oh, yeah, it's one of my nightmares, but I don't know who it was, I think it was a member of the public, appeared with one of the very large fire extinguishers that were used in shops and we used it to try and put the fire out, and then a couple of police officers with I think it was a couple of civilians as well helped lift the engine block so as we could slide some of the people out -- or the people out. Thankfully most of them survived, although I think one person perished.
- 10 Q. And just as we heard from Richard Scott earlier, is it
 11 a feature of your memory that not just that your police
 12 colleagues worked to help people who were injured, but
 13 also that just ordinary members of the public helped at
 14 the scene?
- A. Absolutely, at the very beginning it was just a joint
 community effort. The police and the public, there were
 some members of the public were absolute heroes that
 day, and I don't know who they are, but they were taken
 instruction from us and doing a sterling job.
- 20 Q. And did you at that point look around in order to assess21 the situation?
- 22 A. Yeah.

- Q. And maybe just in a few sentences, can you explain whatyou observed? I'm at your paragraph 18, if that helps.
- **A.** Well, there was vast numbers of seriously injured and 93
- Q. And so I will just invite you to do that at this stage
 in your own time.
 A. "I noticed one of my young officers was cradling
 - A. "I noticed one of my young officers was cradling an injured female. I could see that the officer herself was very traumatised and was in a state of shock. So, I told her to take the injured woman to hospital in the police car, thus removing her from the horror but still carrying out an essential task.

"When I think back I realise now how young those [young] officers were that day. I only had two constables, Dougie and Doc, who were around my age with my experience. I knew I could rely on them but the rest [they] were just kids. Nearly all probationers or very inexperienced. One of them had only 6 months service and he was barely 19 years old. For all of them it was their first time at any major incident. They were just ordinary young men with Mums and Dads, and brothers and sisters who I was demanding they carried out extraordinary tasks.

"Seeing to the injured. Applying anything to soak up blood. Helping those who could walk [get down to the junction]. Carrying those who couldn't walk. Getting them onboard transport to Hospital and then running back up to help the next casualty. Later on helping me wrap and carry the dead to the alleyway. Remaining with

people who were obviously dead, and it just kept getting worse. I moved up and down the street, asking members of the public and obviously the police and tried to allocate them to severely injured or people who were dving.

That was incredibly stressful for us all, because I had to shout at some members of the public, but in particular some of my own police colleagues, because people were screaming for help and they were reacting to the scream, and I was trying to tell them, "No, whilst that's horrendously difficult to do, you go to the person who's not screaming because there's a fair chance they are far more seriously injured and deal with that first."

- Q. And this sounds similar to evidence that we heard
 earlier today that one of the difficult things for those
 at the scene was just to identify who to help first.
- 18 A. Yeah. There were just people begging continuously for19 help.
- Q. Now, I know from discussions that I've had with you that
 you want to emphasise one aspect of the officers that
 you were commanding that day in that situation, and that
 the way that you would like to deal with that is by
 reading your paragraphs 19 through to 22.
- 25 A. Yes, please.

their allocated bodies. Never complaining about what they were being asked to do by me.

"I got them to search extremely unsafe buildings for any possible survivors. Hours later they went with their deceased to the temporary mortuary. New horror. More horrendous sights and smells for them to deal with. Total and utter shock at what was laid out in front of them. I had then and to this day have an immense provide in them all. Many still suffering [today] with PTSD and badly needing help."

11 Q. Now, along with your police colleagues and some members12 of the public, did you use whatever was to hand?

A. Yes, we had a severe lack of equipment to deal with what
 was in front of us. I kept asking them on the police
 radio for medically trained people. I was screaming
 looking for doctors and nurses all the time.

What I didn't realise at the time was there was obviously a protocol for the NHS that they all went to the hospitals, but at the time I couldn't understand why nobody was coming to me. But I just ordered people --my own constables and members of the public to go to wherever they could get primarily (unclear) the chemist and take all the bandages, towels, sanitary towels, anything they could get their hands on that would soak up blood and stop further bleeding. We also took a lot

- 1 of curtains and drapery ware and blown-off shop doors to
- 2 help wrap and transport people, because it was all we
- 3 could get.
- 4 Q. And initially as well, was there a shortage of vehicles
- 5 to transport casualties to hospital?
- 6 Α. Yeah, we just took them down to the junction and done
- 7 our best but we just stopped whatever cars we could get
- 8 and just demanded to take people to hospital. The
- 9 godsend was there was an Ulsterbus arrived and we just
- 10 filled it to the brim with as many injured as we could.
- Q. And did that bus just arrive, insofar as you have any 11
- 12 idea, because it was on its ordinary journey and came
- 13 across the scene or had it been sent there?
- A. No, as far as I'm aware, the manager of Ulsterbus, as it 14
- 15 was in those days, had visited the scene and seen the
- 16 necessity for transport and he went and arranged it.
- 17 Q. And, what, with just one of his usual drivers --
- Yeah. 18 Α.
- 19 Q. -- transporting all of those injured people to hospital?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. And we've heard from a series of witnesses about water
- 22 gushing down the street, gushing down Market Street,
- 23 from a split in the water main, and do you have
- 24 a recollection of that too?
- 25 Α. Yes, the -- part of the explosion must have went into
- 1 She has been my total rock. I know she's had to deal
- 2 with a lot for all the things I have been through, and
- 3 there's many's a time my head hasn't been in a great
- 4 place, but she has stuck by me and I'll forever be in
- 5 her debt for that.
- 6 Q. I'm going to ask you about some of the other things that
- 7 you saw and that occurred in the period that followed. 8
 - other police officers of more senior rank arrive on the

And from about 25 past or half past 3, did various

10 scene?

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- A. Yes, they did. But they all seemed to come to the 11
- conclusion it was -- it was okay for me to carry on and 12
- 13 keep going at the scene.
- 14 Q. And then so did they come and go?
- 15 A. Yes.
- Q. And did you remain for a substantial period in command 16
- 17 of that scene?
- A. About five hours. 18
- 19 Q. And after a period, had the people who had lived but 20 with injuries been removed from the scene?
- A. Yes. Once we'd established that, I knew we were going 21
- 22 to have to deal with the deceased and we're going to
- 23 have to seal the scene off, so the only way I could get
- 24 everybody's attention was to stand in the middle of the
- 25 road and scream my head off, and then I told them all to 99

- 1 the ground and had completely burst the town -- the main
- 2 water main for the town. So water was gushing out for
- 3 maybe 10 feet above from where the car would have been
- 4 down through Market Street.
- 5 Q. And you have, Phil, I think a striking memory of bodies
- 6 actually being moved by the force of the flow of the
- 7 water
- 8 Yeah, I -- when we were -- on one of the occasions when
- 9 I was looking around, I was -- happened to look --
- 10 glance into the window of the shop known as the
- 11 Salad Bowl and I saw a young infant lying -- lying in
- 12 the window. I was standing there looking at her and she
- 13 looked so peaceful, but at that time I didn't know where
- 14 my wife and daughter were and my daughter was the same
- 15 age at that time, and whilst I was standing looking at
- 16 her, thinking, "Is it or is it not my daughter?" I could
- 17 feel something nudging my leg and I looked down and it
- 18 was another body had floated into me.
- 19 Q. And what you say is this was a scene from hell.
- 20 Yep, absolutely.
- 21 And you just mentioned your wife, I'm not going to name
- 22 her but is she here within the hearing room today?
- 23 A. She is.
- 24 Q. And I know from our discussion that you would like to
- 25 say something of the support that she has been for you.
- 1 get to the junction of Market Street and Drumragh Avenue
- 2 where I instructed some police to use tape to seal it
- 3 off, and then start -- I asked them to start going into
- 4 these buildings, even though they could have collapsed
- 5 round us, but funnily I remember asking them, you know,
- 6 "If you don't want to do it, don't", but they all
- 7 stayed.
- 8 Q. And so did you divide the line in two to ensure that
- 9 both sides of the street were searched at the same time?
- 10 A.
- 11 Q. And during that search, did a large number of further
- 12 dead bodies become obvious to you --
- 13 Α. Yeah.
- 14 Q. -- and your police team?
- 15 A.
- Q. In the course of what you were doing over that period of 16
- 17 time, had you made a radio transmission requesting the
- 18 attendance of a doctor?
- 19 Yeah, I made more than one. I badly needed a doctor to A.
- 20 the scene.
- 21 Q. And why was that?
- 22 Because only a doctor can tell you officially if
- 23 somebody's dead.
- 24 And did a doctor arrive at the scene after a while?
- 25 Eventually I noticed this person with a fluorescent

- 1 jacket on with the word "Doctor" on the back. I didn't
- 2 know who he was at the time but he turned out to be
- 3 a doctor from the army camp. So I grabbed ahold of him
- 4 and said, "Look, I need you to go round everybody with
- 5 me now and put a stethoscope on them and pronounce life
- 6 extinct to me."
- 7 Q. And some of those, for reasons we needn't go into and
- 8 shouldn't go into, were self-evidently dead, but did you
- 9 nonetheless require the doctor or insist the doctor
- 10 check for signs of life?
- A. He couldn't seem to follow why I wanted to do it with 11
- 12 people who didn't have the necessary limbs to preserve
- 13 life, but, I told him, "I don't care, you still put the
- 14 stethoscope on and we do it for everybody."
- Q. And once he had done that and pronounced life extinct, 15
- 16 did you instruct some police officers and also some
- 17 firefighters to have the bodies wrapped and placed on
- 18 a makeshift stretcher?
- 19 A. Yes, we just used whatever we could. There were some
- 20 body bags there, but majority of people were just
- 21 wrapped in curtains and mostly bed sheets, and they were
- 22 taken -- and we decided to take them up into the Market
- 23 Arcade alleyway so we could get away from the lenses of
- 24 the press.

- 25 Q. So we'll just take this in stages, but I think it would
- 1 your reaction to what you saw?
- 2 A. Well, initially I was busy with the doctor. It was only
- 3 when the constable that I had allocated the paperwork to
- 4 came to me and said, "Look, we've a problem up here."
- 5 I says, "What's wrong now?" And he says, "The alleyway
- 6 is full." And it didn't really register with me at the
- 7 beginning, and I just looked -- and I was only a short
 - distance away so I went up to look for myself, and we
- 9 walked into the alley and it was just jammed with the
- 10 dead and there was blood everywhere. So basically we
- 11 just couldn't fit any more in, so I came out and there
- 12 was an adjacent premises known as Moira's clothes shop.
- 13 The entire front of it had been smashed in, so
- 14 I instructed them to the next tranche of deceased I sent
- 15 up they were to be placed in Moira's clothes shop.
- Q. And one of the things that you explain in your witness 16
- 17 statement is that of the alleyway to this day you still
- 18 are unable to enter it.
- 19 No. No, no, no. I tried once and I just -- I was --Α.
- 20 found myself walking between the dead and I just --
- 21 I ran. I've never -- I've never been back.
- 22 Q. And throughout this period, as you were confirming
- 23 death, were you seeking to keep the police control room
- 24 updated about what was happening and about the mounting
- 25 death toll?

- 1 be fair to say that that part of your duties of wrapping
 - and respecting the bodies and then moving the bodies was
- 3 an extremely distressing one for you and your
- 4 colleagues.

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- 5 A. Yeah, the -- there was very few of the bodies in
- 6 a natural state.
- 7 Q. And we'll all have understood what you mean and I'm not
- 8 going to -- I'm not going to ask you to go into further
- detail. Thank you for being careful in the way that you 9
- 10 expressed yourself.
 - Did you instruct a police officer to record the
- 12 movements of the dead bodies?
- 13 A. Yes, I knew that for later courts we would have to have
- 14 some continuity, so I instructed a constable to get some
- 15 pen and paper and record every time I allocated a body
- 16 to a constable, who it was and who got which one, and he
- 17 would write out who it was and rip up a bit of paper and
- 18 write the numbers on and attach it to the deceased.
- 19 Q. And did you then create a team to move the bodies --
- 20 A. Yes.
- Q. -- to the nearby marketplace alleyway that you've 21
- 22 referred to?
- 23 A. I selected six constables and myself and I told them
- 24 that they would be my body team.
- 25 Q. And when you went yourself to the alleyway, what was
- 1 A. Yeah, I had a police radio and they dedicated a channel
- 2 to me, so I would continuously update them. I found
- 3 this really difficult. On quite a number of occasions,
- 4 you'd be halfway through your sentence and you were just
- 5 choking up with the emotion of it. But what really
- 6 didn't help was when you were telling them the numbers,
- 7 they were -- continually asked you to repeat because
- 8 I don't think they could fathom the numbers I was
- 9 telling them.
- 10 Q. Now, by this time, had you and your team been at the
- scene for, well, literally hours? 11
- 12 **A**.
- 13 Q. But did there come a point at which ambulances attended
- 14 to help with the removal of the dead from the scene?
- 15 A. At the back of the alleyway there's two flights of steep
- 16 steps down to a car park, so the ambulances eventually
- 17 started to arrive piecemeal at the back and come up, and
- then we were able to start allocating the dead along 18
- 19 with their allocated body constable to go to the
- 20 temporary mortuary.
- 21 Q. And had the temporary mortuary been set up within
- 22 an army camp because the local official mortuary would
- 23 have been unable to cope?
- 24 A. Yes, it was a decision -- at the scene there was --
- another sergeant and I chatted a couple of hours earlier 25

- 1 about this and we realised the local mortuary could not
- 2 deal with this, so I asked that other sergeant to go
- 3 back and instigate a plan to try and get something
- 4 organised with the army camp.
- 5 Now, I think your team were then involved in
- 6 transporting the bodies of those who died to the
- 7 temporary mortuary, and eventually, having supervised
- 8 that, did you yourself leave the scene?
- 9 A. Yeah, we -- we only had one hiccup was when one of the
- 10 ambulance crews came up and they turned and walked away
- 11 and said, "Look, sorry, we just can't handle this." But
- 12 thankfully we got everybody out. I don't know what time
- 13 I left, it was about some time after 7 I came out with
- 14 the last of the dead.
- 15 Q. In your statement you recall that you left the scene at
- 16 about 7.20 pm, at the end of paragraph 34.
- 17 A. That would be correct.
- Q. And so by then you had been at that scene for 18
- 19 many hours.
- 20 **A**. Yes.
- 21 Q. And from the scene, did you go to the mortuary?
- 22 A.
- 23 Q. And had your team arrived there before you because of
- 24 the work that they had been doing?
- 25 Α. That's correct. The movement of the bodies, a very 105
- 1 sort of lend succour and support to whoever was trying 2
 - to search the body or trying to identify anything that
- 3 was on them that would give us a clue as to what their
- 4 identity was. But that -- we found that extremely
- 5 distressing.

- 6 Q. And we heard from Norman Haslett earlier this afternoon
- 7 about his experience of that part, and it sounds like
 - your experience was very similar and that the experience
- 9 of the other officers was also the same.
- A. It was like a double whammy, you know. You come out of 10
- the hell of that scene for -- we'd been there for 11
- 12 five hours and you didn't really think you were going to
- 13 have to do that, but we did it.
- 14 Q. Now I'm going to turn now to the aftermath of the 15th
- 15 and deal with the things that you talk about from
- 16 paragraph 38 of your statement.
- 17 And is it the position that you and the officers
- 18 that you had been with at the scene did attend funerals
- 19 afterwards?
- 20 A. Yes, we attended some of them but not -- you couldn't
- 21 get to them all. But I -- I could see it was having
- 22 a really adverse effect on some of the younger members
- 23 of the crew. At that time there was no real
- 24 professional help for anyone, so they were coming to me

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25 and just pouring their hearts out. But they were

- 1 rough guess, took about an hour and so from the first
- 2 officer to leave to me arriving would have been an hour
- 3 and then gaps of about ten minutes after that.
- 4 Q. And when you saw your constables, did it strike you what
- 5 they had been through in the period after the explosion?
- 6 A. Yeah, because they'd been waiting a while, their
- 7 adrenaline started to dump and the enormity of what
- 8 they'd been through and what they'd seen had started to
- 9 hit them, plus they looked terrible. They were covered
- 10 in dirt and debris and blood and it was -- they were
- 11 a sorry-looking sight.
- 12 And am I right that this forms part of the reasons why Q.
- 13 you would wish to emphasise that so many of them there
- 14 that day were, as you put it, kids?
- 15 A. Yeah. Yeah, very, very young people.
- 16 Q. And did you go into the temporary mortuary?
- 17 A. Yes, we had to take all of the deceased in and lay them
- down to the corresponding numbers that had been set up 18
- 19 for receiving the dead. Unfortunately we were then
- 20 asked to help identify and -- the deceased and see what
- 21 clues for that we could come up with. After we started
- 22 that process, it became fairly apparent that doing it on
- 23 your own was not going to work. It was just emotionally
- 24 we're just -- we're exhausted. So I decided we would do
- 25 it together as a group and we would go to each one and
- 1 finding attendance at the funerals really, really 2 difficult to deal with.
- 3 Q. And as you've just said, in the aftermath there was no 4 real professional help for the officers, and you add:
 - "To be honest, the normal response was to 'man up' and take a stiff drink to forget."
- 7 A. Yes.

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- 8 Q. And in the initial years after the bombing, I think that
- you and your colleagues spoke to some nurses and 9
- 10 counsellors, but the right level of professional help
- was not readily available. 11
- 12 **A.** No, those nurses were wonderful people and great nurses,
- but they were just -- they weren't even psychiatric 13
- 14 nurses, they were just ordinary nurses, and we needed
- 15 help far beyond their abilities.
- 16 Q. And one of the things that we heard about earlier today,
- 17 and in fact from other witnesses, relates to the series
- 18 of many, many hoax bomb calls that were made in respect
- 19 of Omagh in the period that followed by, as the Chairman
- put it, a heartless individual, and for you personally 20
- 21 and as it seemed for your colleagues, was the
- 22 psychological impact of the bombing made worse by the
- 23 behaviour of that person?
- 24 It was horrendous. For many, many months afterwards it
- 25 almost seemed to us like he knew our shift system

- 1 because it seemed to be that most of the bomb scares
- 2 occurred when my section was on duty and they were just
- 3 being retraumatised continuously. It was an awful
- 4 period of time for the entire community, who -- who
- 5 looked upon -- who looked upon me as the Omagh bomb man
- 6 because every time they saw me coming in they ran.
- 7 The on a number of occasions -- and Officer Baxter
- 8 talked about it as well -- that I found some of my
- 9 junior colleagues just at -- completely at the end of
- 10 their tether. They couldn't take it any more.
- 11 Q. And you explained that in the aftermath of the bombing
- 12 you also found things like the media attention and the
- visits by dignitaries and VIPs stressful and unhelpful.
- 14 A. Yes, in -- in hindsight, I can probably understand why
- 15 I was wheeled out all the time, but it also was a really
- 16 negative impact on me to be continuously under that
- 17 pressure
- 18 Q. You talk of the fact that you, among many of your
- 19 colleagues, have been diagnosed with post-traumatic
- 20 stress disorder.
- 21 A. Yeah.

- 22 Q. And that there are many sights, smells, locations and
- other things, such as media coverage, which trigger
- 24 intrusive memories for you.
- 25 **A.** Yes, as -- the triggers are numerous and they're 109
- 1 I just couldn't cope like that and I have been -- I am
 - not ashamed to say I've been to numerous counsellors,
- 3 and the point I made about that was the fact that it was
- 4 that level of expertise that helped me.
- 5 Q. And I -- I'm just going to make the point that you make,
- 6 that your hope is that others who have suffered symptoms
- 7 such as yours, you hope that rather than bottling it up
- 8 and manning up, that they too will seek that level of
- 9 professional assistance.
- 10 A. They desperately need it, but more importantly they
- 11 deserve it.
- 12 Q. And, finally, Phil, I want to draw your attention to
- 13 something that you emphasise at the end of your
- 14 statement, that the terrible loss of those whose loved
- ones were killed, those who were injured, those who were
- 16 responders and the loss to this whole community was
- 17 caused by people that you describe as "cruel, twisted
- 18 and evil".
- 19 A. Yes. When I left that scene, they had all the clues in
- 20 the world to tell us exactly where it was and they chose
- 21 not to. So they didn't give a damn about the
- 22 consequences.
- 23 MR GREANEY: Thank you very much indeed for answering my

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- 24 questions, which have now concluded.
- 25 MR MARSHALL: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

- 1 constant, and they just jump up at you just like that.
- 2 It results in you have really poor sleep, and I speak
- 3 for a number of colleagues who've confided in me who
- 4 were with me that day that all those feelings of anxiety
- 5 and fear and guilt, heart palpitations, really poor
- 6 health, alcohol abuse is fairly commonplace.
- 7 Q. And you make the point that it's not just those who were
- 8 there that day, but their families and close friends who
- 9 also experience the kind of symptoms and signs that
- 10 you've just described.
- 11 A. Yes, it's not just the officers themselves and the rest
- 12 of the first responders. This has a major impact on
- their wives and their husbands and their children, and
- 14 all their loved ones and their close friends who just
- are watching this, who experience this with you, they
- have to live it with you, so it affects an awful lot of
- 17 people
- 18 Q. And in terms of your own experiences, what you tell us
- 19 is that as recently as a year and a half ago you had to
- 20 seek professional help and a prolonged series of
- 21 sessions ensued with a consultant clinical
- 22 neuropsychologist.
- 23 A. Yeah, it's a -- it was almost part of the psyche of the
- 24 job that you would never admit to weakness. You would
- 25 always just get on with it. But I slowly realised
 - 110
 - LORD TURNBULL: Mr Marshall, in your evidence you've
- 2 described a most harrowing series of events for you and
- 3 your fellow officers to attempt to cope with, some of
- 4 whom, as you've said yourself, were little more than
- 5 teenagers.

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- 6 MR MARSHALL: Yes.
- 7 LORD TURNBULL: As some other first responders have, you've
- 8 explained to us how the events of that day have left
- 9 an enduring mark on your professional career and on your
- private life, and you've done so with a commendable
- 11 measure of sensitivity. It was important for the
- 12 Inquiry to learn that you and other officers have been
- 13 diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder following
- on from the events of 15 August, and it was informative
- to hear of the effects of that disorder.
- The information which you gave to us about the
- 17 limited availability of psychological support at the
- time has contrasted with your recent experience of the
 real level of support that's needed in the form of
- real level of support that's needed in the form of a consultant clinical neuropsychologist was most
- 21 insightful. The Inquiry is grateful to you for the
- 22 strength which you've shown in being prepared to give
- evidence today and for the detailed information which
- you've provided to us about the first responders'
 - involvement that day and about the consequences for

1	them.	1	INDEX	
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3	MR MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.	3	Personal statement of	2
4	MR GREANEY: Sir, thank you. That concludes the evidence	4	WILLIAM JAMES BAXTER (read)	
5	for today. Could we thank everyone, including the	5		
6	witnesses today, for fitting in around the different	6	Personal statement of	13
7	sitting arrangements and, sir, we will next sit tomorrow	7	ALLAN PALMER read by MR RAFFERTY	
8	at 10.00 am for what will be the final day of the	8		
9	commemorative and personal statement hearings.	9	Personal statement of	19
10	LORD TURNBULL: Thank you.	10	JULIAN ELLIOT read by MR RAFFERTY	
11	(4.27 pm)	11		
12	(The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am	12	RICHARD SCOTT questioned	25
13	on Wednesday, 19 February 2025)	13	by MR GREANEY	
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