

Response to Observations for the Omagh Bombing Inquiry

Author: Dr. John F. Morrison

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I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The following report is in addition to the author's December 2024 report submitted as evidence to the Omagh Bombing Inquiry.

1.2 Within the first report the author provided his independent expert analysis on the origins and development of violent dissident republican activity in the lead-up to, and aftermath of, the Omagh bombing of August 1998. The report provided an overview of key literature and terminology, as well as the origins and the splits which led to the formation of the main violent dissident republican groups.

1.3 The following report provides supplemental information clarifying some aspects of the first report. This supplemental information is in response to observations contained within the second letter of instruction to the author dated July 31st, 2025.

1.4 The second letter of instruction contained eight general observations and three observations about specific aspects of the original report. Each of these observations are responded to individually within this report.

1.5 The first eight responses contained within the report relate to the general observations.

1.6 The final three responses relate to the observations of the specific aspects of the report.

1.7 Within the report the original observations are first presented in **bold**. These are then followed by the author's responses to the observation.

2. Response to Observation 1

2.1 The first general observation asked **“Please explain why you have not used the words ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist’ when referring to the IRA (this acronym is intended to cover PIRA, CIRA and RIRA)?”**

2.2 One explanation for not using the words ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist’ across the report is that these groups are more often collectively referred to as paramilitary groups within the Northern Ireland context. This is exemplified recently in the 2015 A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan from which the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) emerged. Similarly, the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) Reports specifically referred to ‘paramilitary groups.’

2.3 The documentation and policies linked to A Fresh Start and EPPOC both refer to ‘paramilitary activity’ and ‘paramilitary groups’ rather than ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist.’

2.4 Within para. 2.1 of the First Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission it states that “We deal not only with terrorism and sectarian violence but with all other forms of criminality that these groups commit.” My report uses a similar process and therefore the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ were not deemed to be suitable for the purpose of the report, as they only describe some of the activities engaged in by the groups.

2.5 Resultantly following the lead of the above and other official policies and documents the report used the ‘paramilitary’ and ‘paramilitarism’ terminology to describe the groups and their activities.

2.6 As noted in para. 2.6 of the original report, and in section 6 of this report, the groups in question were not just involved in what would be defined as ‘terrorism.’ They were also involved in a variety of other illegal and legal activities which would not fit the definition of terrorism. Therefore, the terms ‘paramilitarism’ and ‘paramilitaries’ can be viewed as umbrella terms to describe the group and their activities. This is used to describe their combined ‘terrorist’ and ‘non-terrorist’ activities and personnel.

2.7 The above rationale therefore emphasises that while the ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ terminology was not used within the report that this does not equate to the groups not having engaged in acts of ‘terrorism.’

2.8 It is the author's belief that this more commonly used terminology of 'paramilitary' and 'paramilitarism' is a more all-encompassing description of the groups' activities than 'terrorism' and 'terrorist.'

3. Response to Observation 2

3.1 The second general observation asked **“Do you consider the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ are appropriately balanced and neutral explanations for the activities of dissident republican terrorists? If no, please explain why and what alternative terms you consider appropriate to use in their place.”**

3.2 In order to respond to this observation it is first necessary to define the key terms of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist.’ Below are presented definitions from both UK and Irish legislation. These two jurisdictions are chosen as examples as they are the most relevant to the Inquiry, as the groups violent activities took place in Northern Ireland. However, the planning and preparation for the attacks are believed to have at times taken place across the border in the Republic of Ireland.

3.3 According to the United Kingdom’s Terrorism Act 2000

- (1) In this Act “terrorism” means the use or threat of action where –
 - (a) the action falls in subsection (2),
 - (b) the use or threat is designed to influence the government [or an international governmental organisation] or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and
 - (c) the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious [,racial] or ideological cause.
- (2) Action falls within this subsection if it –
 - (a) involves serious violence against a person,
 - (b) involves serious damage to property,
 - (c) endangers a person’s life, other than that of the person committing the action,
 - (d) creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or
 - (e) is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.
- (3) The use or threat of action falling within subsection (2) which involves the use of firearms or explosives is terrorism whether or not subsection (1)(b) is satisfied.
- (4) In this section –
 - (a) “action” includes action outside the United Kingdom,

- (b) a reference to any person or to property is a reference to any person, or to property, wherever situated,
 - (c) a reference to the public includes a reference to the public of a country other than the United Kingdom, and
 - (d) “the government” means the government of the United Kingdom, of a Part of the United Kingdom or of a country other than the United Kingdom.
- (5) In this Act a reference to action taken for the purpose of terrorism includes a reference to action taken for the benefit of a proscribed organisation.

3.4 The Irish State’s primary legislation, the Offences Against the State Act 1939, for countering terrorism does not define the term ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist’ and instead refers to ‘unlawful organisations,’ ‘criminal offences,’ etc. Within this Act an organisation may be declared unlawful under section 19(1). Only two such orders have been made with organisations styling itself as the Irish Republican Army (also the IRA and Óglaigh na hÉireann) and organisations styling itself as the Irish National Liberation Army being declared as unlawful organisations. Within the Courts it has held that labels such as ‘official’, ‘real’, ‘provisional,’ ‘continuity’ etc. are immaterial to whether a groups comes within the remit of the relevant order (McEntee, 2023).

3.5 Within the Irish Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005 the framework decision on Combating Terrorism approved by the Council of Europe was adopted with particular application to international terrorism (McEntee, 2023).

3.6 Within the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005 and the framework for Combating Terrorism:

““Terrorist activity” is defined by reference to offences under our law which are committed in or outside the State with the intent of seriously intimidating a population, unduly compelling a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, economic or social structures of a state or an international organisation. The specified offences for the purpose of the definition of terrorist activity are set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 and comprise those offences under Irish law which correspond to the specified categories of intentional acts set out in Article 1 of the Framework Decision.”

3.7 Within the same Act and framework:

“‘Terrorist group’ is defined by reference to the Framework Decision, i.e. a structured group of more than two persons, established over a period of time and acting in concert to commit terrorist offences.”

3.8 Utilising the above definitions, the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ do provide an accurate description for some of the activities of the dissident republican organisations. This includes the August 1998 Omagh Bombing.

3.9 The Omagh bombing, and others, were designed to influence a government and to intimidate the public or a section of the public. Alongside this the violence was carried out for the purpose of advancing a political cause. This therefore meets the criteria of the UK’s Terrorism Act 2000. Similarly the attack was designed to seriously intimidate a population and unduly compel a government to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, economic or social structures of the state. It therefore meets the criteria set out in the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005. The attack was carried out by a structured group of more than two persons, acting in concert to commit terrorist offences. This therefore meets the criteria for the group being defined as a ‘terrorist group’ within the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2005. The organisations involved are also proscribed terrorist organisations within the UK.

3.10 Attacks such as the Omagh Bombing also fit with academic definitions of terrorism as presented in response to Observation 3 below.

3.11 While the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ do describe attacks such as the Omagh bombing they do not accurately describe all of the activities of the violent dissident republican groups. For example their localised violent activities targeting members of their own communities which were previously referred to as punishment attacks, and contemporarily called paramilitary style attacks, would be more accurately described as acts of vigilantism (Morrison, 2024). Some of their other activities would be most accurately described as organised criminality, according to the Organised Crime Task Force (Irish Times, 2013) and in evidence given to the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2024).

3.12 While the above outlines the legislative definitions and application of the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ the observation asks if the terminology is ‘balanced’ and ‘neutral.’ In order to assess this it is imperative to acknowledge that the ‘terrorism’ label is recognised as pejorative rather than balanced, neutral or impartial. Colloquially this terminology is invariably used to refer to the violent actions of those who are defined as ones ‘enemies.’ The organisations themselves, and their supporters, reject the use of this terminology and instead view their actions as part of military activities in a war. They similarly reject the ‘paramilitary’ label (Bont, 2022, p.13).

3.13 Paragraph 3.12 above acknowledges that the groups in question reject both the paramilitary and terrorist labels. Alongside their rejection of these labels many of those opposed to their continued existence disagree with the continued use of the paramilitary label. It is noted that some representatives of victims and survivors of the Troubles believe that the paramilitary terminology risks romanticising the groups’ continued existence and that the continuation of the ‘paramilitary’ rather than ‘terrorist’ terminology can perpetuate an acceptance of their continued existence (Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, 2024, para. 10. p.7). This is a point which will be returned to in section 4 of this report.

3.14 In her submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2024, para. 12, p. 8) the Minister for Justice Naomi Long acknowledged the complexity of moving away from the paramilitary terminology, due to the range of activities the groups are involved in. She stated:

“The difficulty of referring to them [paramilitary groups] simply as organised crime gangs is that you simplify what is a complex picture. Although that is their main business, at various stages they take on the mantle of political spokespeople and a whole range of other things in a way that organised crime gangs do not”

3.15 The current Independent reviewer of justice and national security arrangements Dr. Jonny Byrne, alongside his colleagues, stated in their submission to the Committee (2024, para. 12, p.8) that within their communities some of these groups have an element of political legitimacy. They stated:

“These groups carry some political legitimacy and are visible in events,

such as parades, in many parts in Northern Ireland, and they display their existence on murals and flags that are rarely removed. These groups are sewn into the weft and weave of everyday life.”

3.16 When one considers the utilisation of this terminology, and its alternatives, the importance of context is key. This includes the context of both time and place. This was acknowledged in quotes presented below from John McBurney (2024, para. 12, pp. 8-9), one of the Commissioners at the Independent Reporting Commission and secondly by Koulla Yiasouma (2024, para. 11, p.8), the former Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.

“If they are not engaged in fierce warfare one against the other, why do they still exist and what are they engaged in now? Undoubtedly, there are organised crime groups embedded within the wider groupings, but then there are dormant members who have been members for many years, there are active members who see themselves as community activists, and there are more dangerous elements who are involved in pure criminality.” (McBurney)

“These are armed groups. These are gangs. There is nothing about the ones that young people are involved with that suggests to me that they are doing anything other than criminal activity, so we need to use language that describes it properly. That is not to say that you can compare an armed criminal gang in Northern Ireland in the same way that you can anywhere else. It has to be seen within the context of our situation, and that they have emerged from our conflict.” (Yiasouma)

3.17 When one considers the context of these terms being used in the author’s reports for the Inquiry the use of language must be seen within the context of Northern Ireland, and the timing which it is referring to, largely the late 1990s. Each of the viewpoints and arguments presented here were taken into consideration when choosing the language utilised in the present report.

3.18 Considering the above in relation to balance and neutrality, as the observation directs, the contemporary pejorative utilisation of ‘terrorism’ terminology would lead to the

conclusion that the ‘terrorism’ phraseology is neither ‘balanced’ nor ‘neutral.’ However, as indicated above when considering those opposed to the continued use of the ‘paramilitary’ terminology, neither is the ‘paramilitary’ phrasing used in the report.

3.19 When referring to these groups and their violent and non-violent activities it is unachievable to use truly balanced and neutral terminology. One could use the Offences Against the State Act, 1939 approach and refer to ‘unlawful organisations’, or refer to the groups’ activities as ‘non-state political violence’ (Bont, 2022, p.13), or alternatively as Prof. Duncan Morrow recommends calling them ‘armed groups’ who utilise ‘coercive control’ (Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, 2024, para. 11. p.8). However, even these options of alternative terminology could not be considered ‘balanced’ and ‘neutral’ as it would not be deemed acceptable by all.

3.20 The most balanced and neutral way to describe these groups and their activities is to accurately describe and detail their make-up and activities to the best of one’s knowledge, expertise, and experience, as well as being transparent about how one came to the decisions that they did in relation to terminology and the wider content of analysis. This is the approach which the author has endeavoured to take in the previously submitted report, as well as the present submission.

4. Response to Observation 3

4.1 The third general observation asked **“Please set out definitions for the following terms and explain why and in what context you consider it appropriate to use them: terrorist, paramilitary, violent dissident republican?”**

Terrorist

4.2 The previous response (section 3) outlined the definitions of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ by referring to UK and Irish legislation. When covering the definition of ‘terrorist’ the present response will expand on the previous by also considering academic attempts to define the term.

4.3 Before one can define ‘terrorist’ it is important to define ‘terrorism,’ which has proven extremely difficult to conceptualise across the history of academic research. Resultantly there has never been a truly consensus definition for either (Malkki, 2025; Richards, 2015). However as Malkki (2025) outlines this lack of consensus and resultant existence of multiple conceptualisations is not uncommon in academic research, especially for terms like ‘terrorism’ which are used in multiple contexts for different purposes.

4.4 Acknowledging that there is no universal definition for ‘terrorism’ the present author defines ‘terrorism’ as ‘the employment of violence or the threat of repeated violence by the individual or group intent on bring about a political, religious, or racial effect. The aim of this action is to bring about a state of fear in a wider audience than the direct physical victims of the initial act or threat of violence. A terrorist incident should be defined by the use of violence or the threat of violence to bring about the intended effect, not by the specific motive of the perpetrators. Therefore terrorism is a tactic which can be employed by any individual or group, whether they be state or non-state actors.’ (adapted from Morrison, 2010, p. 1).

4.5 Resultantly a terrorist is defined as an individual and/or group who utilises the tactic of terrorism, as defined in 4.4, as a dominant tactic in their aims to achieve their intended effect. It is therefore most appropriate to use the terminology in the context of when they have engaged in terrorism as a dominant tactic to achieve their goals. Within this there needs to also be consideration of whether they denounce the future use of terrorism. Therefore, those who previously were involved in terrorism may no longer be labelled as ‘terrorist’ if

and when they truly move away from, and denounce any future use of, terrorism as a tactic to achieve their goals.

4.6 Within the application of these definitions it must be acknowledged that not all members of organisations labelled as ‘terrorist’ will be directly involved in violence or the threat of violence, and that not every act engaged in by these individuals and groups can or should be defined as terrorism.

Paramilitary

4.7 Similar to the challenges in defining ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ defining ‘paramilitarism’ and ‘paramilitary’ has not resulted in a universal definition, especially when one considers the application of the term to the context of Northern Ireland.

4.8 Brendan O’Leary (2019, p.xxxiii) proposed that within the Northern Irish context that “[p]aramilitaries are unofficial armed bodies, “militias.”” Within his justification for the usage of the term ‘paramilitary’ as opposed to ‘terrorist’ O’Leary (2019, p.xxxiii) states that “[t]he use of the term “paramilitaries” instead of “terrorists” does not indicate, and should not be construed to mean any tacit support for any paramilitary organization in the Isles past or present; it is simply, a more accurate and helpful description than the available alternatives.” The present author takes the same position.

4.9 Within the presentation of his definition O’Leary (2019, p.xxxiii) cautions on the need to appreciate the context in which the term is being used. He cites that, for example, the Northern Ireland specific definition would be misunderstood by Latin American specialists who would consider ‘paramilitaries’ as right wing and pro-regime, as opposed to the ‘unauthorised and unlawful’ combatants as seen within the Northern Ireland context.

4.10 O’Leary’s cautioning in relation to the importance of context is relevant when one considers Uğur Ümit Üngör’s (2020) depiction of paramilitaries as “irregular armed organizations that carry out acts of violence against civilians on behalf of the state.” While this may be true in the application of the term outside of Northern Ireland, it is not reflective of the usage of the term in relation to Northern Ireland’s unlawful armed groups.

4.11 This discrepancy between how the term ‘paramilitary’ is used in the Northern Ireland context, as opposed to elsewhere, is emphasised by Ferguson, Bergess and Hollywood (2008, p.132) when they state that “paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland are not irregular militias who assist the regular military, as in the common definition of the term. The Northern Irish paramilitary groups...are armed insurgent groups whose members are viewed by supporters as “resistance fighters” or “counter-terrorists” and by opponents as “terrorists”.”

4.12 Similar to the conclusion of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2024, p.9) the present author acknowledges the terms ‘paramilitary’ and ‘paramilitarism’ are complex and contested within the context of Northern Ireland. However, alternative terminology do not capture the ‘complex historical and political context which leads to these groups remaining embedded in communities.’

4.13 The term ‘paramilitary’ is appropriate to be used when it is contextualised within the historical and political context of Northern Ireland, and is not used loosely in a way that could be misconstrued as sharing a definition with more international applications of the term.

4.14 It is not appropriate to use the term ‘paramilitary’ in any context whereby it can be used to either directly or indirectly glorify or romanticise the groups and their activities.

Violent Dissident Republican

4.15 As noted in the initial report (6.2) the term ‘dissident’ in the context of Irish republican organisations refers to Irish republican individuals or groups who distance themselves from the political strategy of Sinn Féin and the PIRA, and who reject the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent political agreements (see Horgan and Morrison, 2011). However, as with all of the terms referred to in this report there is no consensus in relation to the appropriateness or conceptualisation of this term.

4.16 Included within the dissident community are those individuals and groups (e.g. CIRA, RIRA, and the New IRA) who espouse the continued utilisation of violence to achieve their political aims of a united Ireland. These are the actors who are referred to as the violent dissident republican (VDR) actors. The reason for adding the term ‘violent’ before ‘dissident’ is to differentiate them from those Irish republicans who also distance themselves from the

political strategy of Sinn Féin and the PIRA, yet do not condone or call for the continued use of violence to achieve a united Ireland.

4.17 It is in the context of collectively describing those dissident republican organisations and individuals who condone, promote and continue to utilise violent activity (including terrorism and paramilitary vigilantism) with the ostensible aims of achieving a united Ireland that the term ‘violent dissident republican’ is appropriate to use.

5. Response to Observation 4

5.1 The fourth general observation asked **“Do you consider the terms “terrorist” and “paramilitary” are interchangeable and, if so, why?”**

5.2 As is implied in the previous sections I do not consider the terms ‘terrorist’ and ‘paramilitary’ to be interchangeable.

5.3 Terrorism is considered to be one of the tactics which the violent dissident republican paramilitary groups in question have utilised. However, as has been presented in the previous responses these groups are also engaged in non-terrorism related activities. Therefore, the terminology should not be considered as interchangeable.

5.4 For individual members of the paramilitary groups their involvement may not necessarily involve engagement in activity which would be defined as ‘terrorist’ in nature. Some of their involvement may be more accurately described as vigilantism or organised criminality. As is emphasised by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in their 2024 report it is important to make clear the variety of activities these groups are involved in. Therefore, if the term paramilitary and terrorist are seen as interchangeable it would not capture, for example, the groups’ involvement in organised criminality.

5.5 Therefore, ‘paramilitary’ is seen as a context specific term for these groups who use, ‘terrorism’, amongst other illegal and legal tactics in the attempt to achieve their short and long term goals.

6. Response to Observation 5

6.1 The fifth general observation asked **“At paragraph 2.6 of your report, you refer to “high profile nationalised acts of what is often referred to as terrorist violence”. Is there a reason for using this phraseology?”**

6.2 The full sentence from para. 2.6 reads “While much of the focus in relation to paramilitary violence relates to high profile nationalised acts of what is often referred to terrorist violence, this section of the report will also raise the issue of localised paramilitary style attacks (PSAs) a form of paramilitary vigilantism which takes place within both republican and loyalist communities of Northern Ireland.”

6.3 This paragraph is contained within section 2 ‘Overview of Report.’ Within that paragraph in particular the aim was to demonstrate that while much of the public and media attention can focus on the acts of terrorism carried out by the paramilitary groups that these groups have also traditionally been involved in extreme forms of violence within their own communities. I believe that this is an important point to highlight as it provides a more complete understanding of the violence committed by the paramilitary groups.

6.4 The use of the phraseology ‘of what is often referred to as terrorist violence’ was chosen to reflect the lack of consensus in relation to the utilisation of the term ‘terrorism’ as discussed in previous sections.

7. Response to Observation 6

7.1 The sixth general observation stated **“Please explain why you use the phrase ‘armed struggle’, ‘armed campaign’, ‘armed activity’ and ‘paramilitary campaign’.**

- a) **Armed struggle - Please refer in particular to paragraphs 9.22, 9.33, 9.34, 9.44, 10.13, 12.12, 12.17.**
- b) **Armed campaign – Please refer in particular to paragraphs 7.15, 9.18, 9.19, 9.26, 9.28, 9.32, 9.36, 9.39, 9.49, and 12.6**
- c) **Paramilitary campaign – Please refer in particular to paragraphs 9.16, 9.41, 9.42, 9.63 and 9.64.**
- d) **Armed activity – Please refer in particular to paragraphs 9.25, 12.12 and 12.14.”**

7.2 Each of the terms referred to within observation 6 relate to the sustained illegal campaigns of violent activities, which included acts of terrorism, by the armed republican groups under review.

7.3 It is imperative to note that the use of the terminology referred to within the sixth general observation should not be construed as support for, legitimisation, or romanticisation of the organisations’ illegal violent activities, terrorist and otherwise.

Armed Struggle

7.4 The term ‘armed struggle’ is a well-known phrase which is commonly used within republican circles to describe their sustained campaigns of violence with the ultimate aim of achieving a united Ireland. The term was previously used by Prof. Richard English as the title of his book on the IRA ‘Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA.’

7.5 Within the present author’s report the phrase ‘armed struggle’ was used to describe the internal decisions and debates within the groups under consideration. A key aspect of the report was “to provide an overview about the origins and development of dissident republican terrorism, with a particular focus on the period prior to the Belfast Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998, the Omagh Bombing on 15 August 1998 and the beyond.”

7.6 In order to successfully meet the instruction presented in 6.5 it was imperative to show the internal debates, viewpoints, activities and manoeuvring within the relevant groups during that time.

7.7 The decision was that in order to most accurately present the internal debates around political and armed republicanism that the most transparent way to do so was to demonstrate, in appropriate sections of the report, the language that would have been used within these debates. This phraseology was therefore particularly used when there was reference to the internal debates and disagreement within the organisations about their continued utilisation of paramilitary violence, terrorist and otherwise. This is illustrated in the following seven quotes which used the said terminology:

- i. “This included the competition for support internally within the pre-existing membership, as well as for the numerous young northern nationalists who were keen to join-up to continue the armed struggle” (9.22).
- ii. “Within this they were challenged to consider not just the armed responses, but to also consider how political approaches could be aligned to assist the continued armed struggle.” (9.33)
- iii. “They were proposing to retain the armed struggle, as well as the abstentionist policies to Stormont and Westminster.” (9.34)
- iv. “The republican representatives involved in the negotiations were telling their membership that the armed struggle was still in operation.” (9.44)
- v. “[Marian Price] accused Gerry Adams of betraying the IRA’s armed struggle.” (10.13)
- vi. “It is reported that during the ceasefire they took the time to regroup, and reconsider the direction of their paramilitary struggle.” (12.12)
- vii. “In Northern Ireland when RSF candidates do run in elections they have to stand as independents, as they refuse to renounce the armed struggle to achieve their end goal of Irish unity.” (12.17)

7.8 Each of the quotes i-vii were designed to give insight into the internal viewpoints within the organisations in question. It is the belief of the author that if alternative phraseology such as ‘terrorist campaign’ was utilised within the above quotes that it would not have accurately given an insight into the strategic debates and disagreements within the organisations, and how they viewed their own campaigns of violence.

7.9 It is acknowledged that it would have been more suitable to place this terminology in inverted commas across the report to indicate that it represented the language of the groups in question.

Armed Campaign

7.10 The phrase ‘armed campaign’ is alternative terminology to refer to the decades of armed violence perpetrated by these group. However, it is largely interchangeable with ‘armed struggle’ as described above. Similar to ‘armed struggle’ this terminology was largely used to illustrate the internal debates and strategic proposals and choices within the organisations in question. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

- i. “While the origins of the 1969/70 [split] had seen the reluctance of the Official leadership to continue to engage in the armed campaign the reality of the Troubles resulted in the leadership seeing the necessity to engage in ‘acceptable’ forms of paramilitary activity.” (9.24)
- ii. “At the 1972 Army Convention he put forward a motion for the support of the continuation of the armed campaign, a motion which was passed.” (9.26)
- iii. “However, according to a quote from another RIRA member there were those within the leadership who were actively proposing the maintenance of the armed campaign during the leadership’s deliberations.” (12.6)

7.11 The utilisation of this phraseology once again was chosen to accurately present the debates and decision-making processes internally within the organisations in question. As with the ‘armed struggle’ terminology the phrasing of ‘armed campaign’ was always preceded with the definitive article ‘the.’ This was used to specify that this referred to the particular campaigns of violence being engaged in by the republican paramilitary groups in question, and how they viewed them.

Paramilitary Campaign

7.12 The use of the phrase ‘paramilitary campaign’ sees the use of the umbrella term ‘paramilitary’ as detailed in previous sections. The use of this term allowed for the implication that these were sustained periods of a variety of forms of violence, including but not exclusively terrorist violence.

8. Response to Observation 7

8.1 The seventh general observation asked **“Q7 of your letter of instruction asks you to “please set out a chronology of the dissident republican terrorist attacks (or attempted attacks) and other significant incidents in that campaign.” Please can you explain why you chose to title your chronology “timeline of violent dissident republican activity”?”**

8.2 The reason for choosing this title of the chronology was because a judgement was made that this relatively succinct title encompassed all aspects relating to Q7 of the letter of instruction.

8.3 It is the authors belief that a chronology of terrorist attacks, attempted attacks and significant incidents in that campaign all fit under the title of ‘timeline of violent dissident republican activity.’

8.4 The above decision relates to previous responses on the choices of terminology.

9. Response to Observation 8

9.1 The eighth general observation stated **“Please provide us with a copy of your dissertation as referenced at paragraphs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.5 of your report.”**

9.2 A copy of the author’s dissertation has been submitted to the Inquiry as an attachment alongside the present submission.

9.3 The dissertation can be accessed and downloaded from the St. Andrews Research Repository at the following url: <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/3158?show=full> [INQ034593]

10. Response to Observation 9

10.1 The ninth observation was the first which related to a specific part of the original report.

10.2 The observation related specifically to Chapter 9 – Splits in the Irish Republican Movement 1969 – 1997. p.45, para. 9.41

10.3 The observation stated “**Please refer to INQ011740, page 10 and INQ000379, paragraph 19.**

1. Is there a reference for the statement at §9.41 of your report that “this was not a major split in terms of number of members leaving the Provisionals”; and

2. Please address the number of individuals associated with each of the established republican paramilitary organisations and dissident republican organisations in 1997 and 1998, including any changes over time up to and including August 1998 (noting for example at §9.63 the references to a significant escalation in VDR activity). Please consider whether this could be addressed at an appropriate point between 9.40-9.66 or otherwise the chronology/timeline at section 11.”

10.4 The statement “this was not a major split in terms of number of members leaving the Provisionals” was ascertained through extensive interviews by the author with some of those who were involved in the split, as well as engaging with the extant literature on the topic. This is depicted in the author’s book *The Origins and Rise of Dissident Irish Republicanism: The Role and Impact of Organizational Splits* in pages 170 to 174.

10.5 Within the aforementioned book Martin McGuinness, the former deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland stated:

“So I think that it took considerable skill, dialogue and debate and management to ensure that what happened then didn’t turn out to be a re-split, which is what the Real IRA people and the 32 County Sovereignty Movement were trying to bring about. So it was fended off then.” (Morrison, 2013, p. 172)

10.6 Within the same book the former Sinn Féin MLA, Mitchell McLaughlin stated:

“Clearly you didn’t bring all people with you. But one of the accomplishments of both Oglagh na hEireann (PIRA) and Sinn Féin is that they brought by far the majority of their

members with them into the process, through the process and out the other side of the process. I don't think it was humanely possible to avoid some of the disaffections."

(Morrison, 2013, p. 174)

10.7 This assertion of the PIRA maintaining the majority was further confirmed by a founding member of the RIRA, depicted by the pseudonym 'Conor.' When discussing in relation to the Army Convention from which the RIRA was ultimately founded he stated:

"Once the Adams faction had the Belfast members on their side we knew that they [the dissidents] couldn't take a majority." (Morrison, 2013, p. 173)

The above quote, however, only relates to the founding leadership and not the overall membership of the RIRA.

10.8 Due to the clandestine nature of the groups in question, and the somewhat autonomous nature of individual units, it is difficult to accurately ascertain membership numbers. However, below are summaries of a number of sources which give a general sense of the overall memberships.

10.9 In 2004 the first report of the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) paragraph 3.2 stated with respect to the Continuity IRA (CIRA) that "CIRA had hoped to attract disaffected members from PIRA, but the membership remained small. By mid-1999 most of its members North of the border had defected to the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA), though the group has recovered some ground since then." This movement of CIRA members to the RIRA was also confirmed by Mooney and O'Toole (2003, p.60)

10.10 This same IMC report continued in paragraph 3.3 by stating that "CIRA's leadership maintains only a tenuous authority over individual units. Those units normally consist of about six people and act in the main autonomously. The group lacks a central strategic focus other than continuing the Republican struggle by physical violence. Even though membership is small CIRA can, by operating through small units, mount effective, though sporadic, attacks."

10.11 When discussing the RIRA the first report of the IMC in paragraph 3.17 stated that the "RIRA lacks an organised structure so that individual units have a considerable degree of

autonomy. There is little central strategy although there is input from leadership figures in terms of authorising or overseeing attacks.” It continued in paragraph 3.19 in stating that “While the membership is not a totally cohesive group we believe RIRA is potentially a very dangerous terrorist group.” It is important to note that this observation relates to the assessment of the group in 2004, and that in the aftermath of the Omagh Bombing that the group went through considerable changes (see Morrison, 2020).

10.12 Within his book *A Secret History of the IRA* the journalist Ed Moloney (2003, p. 445) stated in relation to the 1996 General Army Convention of the Provisional IRA that “the delegates are chosen on a basis of one for every ten IRA members, and, once the turnout at the Convention is known, that makes it possible to figure out fairly accurately the strength of the IRA. Some sixty delegates were present at the 1996 Convention, while another ten or so missed their pickups, and that suggests that the operational strength of the IRA in 1996 was around six hundred or at most seven hundred men and women.”

10.13 Within the 1997 General Army Convention of the Provisional IRA it was proposed by Moloney (2003, p. 477) that there were between twenty and thirty dissident delegates who would ultimately move away from the Provisional IRA. A significant proportion of those dissident delegates went on to form the RIRA.

10.14 In reference to the initial formation of the RIRA Jonathan Tonge (2004, p.682), citing Brendan O’Brien (1999), states that the founding member Michael McKevitt was “joined soon afterwards by nearly 40 serving or former PIRA members. Although few others followed, the RIRA’s expertise in the supply and construction of weapons made it a bigger threat than the CIRA.” *INQ011740*

10.15 A meeting took place between Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, Prime Minister Tony Blair and their delegations on August 16th, 1998 in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing. Within paragraph 8 of the meeting’s minutes the Taoiseach stated that “[t]he conventional approaches had not and would not work in a situation in which the dissidents only needed a few people on either side to achieve their objectives and existing people could easily as necessary be replaced by others.” *INQ000379* This point raised by Ahern emphasises that for the RIRA in particular that their strength was not necessarily in their number of members, but instead in their paramilitary expertise and experience.

10.16 Later within the minutes of the above meeting it is noted that the Taoiseach ‘said that those in the splinter group [RIRA] numbered perhaps 90 in all, including those who stole cars, did look-out etc. Perhaps only a third or less were dangerous activists.’ *INQ000379* This emphasises the need to consider the variety of violent and non-violent roles of the different actors within the organisations.

10.17 In their 2011 open source analysis of the violent dissident republican groups’ membership and activities Horgan and Morrison (2011) found a total of 92 suspected members of the RIRA who had been convicted, alongside 68 suspected members of the CIRA from 1998 to 2010. These figures however, do not indicate the strength of the respective groups at any one point in time.

10.18 In a 2008 interview with the journalist Suzanne Breen a leadership representative of the RIRA stated “We have enough volunteers to carry out the army’s functions. We’re currently recruiting across Ireland. I can’t be more specific for security reasons.”

This interview is not available online. Therefore an image of the article in microfilm has been sent with this report.

10.19 At the emergence of the New IRA in 2012 it was reported that the new group had a ‘membership of between 250 and 300 military activists, backed up by associates’ (Brady, 2012).

10.20 Considering the above, it is clear that the RIRA at the time of the Omagh bomb was a new group with a relatively small membership of up to 90 members. However, while the membership was small they had significant experience, expertise, and access to weaponry within their membership to be able to engage in extreme violence from the outset

10.21 By contrast the CIRA was small grouping who lacked the support structures, and access to weaponry to mount a sustained campaign of violence. It is not clear the number of members within this organisation.

10.22 It is proposed that the above analysis of the membership of the groups could be a standalone section of the original report immediately before ‘10. Key RIRA and 32 County Sovereignty Committee/Movement Personnel.’

11. Response to Observation 10

11.1 The tenth observation was the second which related to a specific part of the original report.

11.2 The observation related specifically to p.54 (para. 9.63) and p.56 (para 9.66)

11.3 The observation relating to para. 9.63 stated **“The expert refers to proposals for the RIRA to co-ordinate with the CIRA and the INLA; in relation to the former that this was ‘starkly highlighted with the Omagh bombing of August 1998.’**

11.4 The observation relating to para 9.66 stated **“Liam Campbell developed an ‘operational coalition’ with the CIRA and the INLA.**

There is no further expansion of the above comments relating to this reported coordination between the RIRA and the CIRA, therefore,

- 1. Can the expert provide further detail of what he understands to be the co-ordination between the RIRA and the CIRA in relation to the Omagh Bomb, with references.**
- 2. Can the expert provide further comment on his understanding of the reported ‘operational coalition’ between the RIRA and the CIRA, with particular regard to:**
 - a. The attribution of responsibility for the incidents listed in Chapter 11 (Point 3 below), and**
 - b. The potential for cross-over or fluidity of membership between the dissident republican groupings.**

These points are raised in the content that the CIRA having formed in 1986 do not appear to have engaged in any sustained campaign of terrorist activity until the emergence of the RIRA (para. 11.3).”

11.5 In paragraph 24 of the 2013 Judicial Review on the Omagh Bombing it was noted that ‘there were signs of CIRA and RIRA becoming closer and that there was evidence of increased co-operation between the two groups.’ The review specifically stated 1998 bombing attacks on Moira, Portadown, Armagh and Forkhill were ‘the product of CIRA and RIRA co-operation.’ The Review continued in paragraph 28 to state that ‘many of the attacks in 1998 represented the combined efforts of CIRA and RIRA such as the attack on Lisburn on 30 April 1998 and the attack on Belleek on 9 May. Members of INLA had provided occasional assistance such as the vehicle borne improvised explosive device (“VBIED”) which was used to attack Newtownhamilton in South Armagh.

11.6 With specific reference to the Omagh bombing of 1998 the Judicial Review notes that “there is some evidence that the Omagh bombing was a product of RIRA and CIRA co-operation with RIRA building the bomb and CIRA picking the target and placing the bomb.”

11.7 However, it was noted later in the Review in paragraph 184 that ‘the interaction between these terrorist groups [RIRA, CIRA and INLA] and their supporters was such that it is impossible to say with complete confidence that even if each of the dissident republicans could be identified, exactly on behalf of which particular grouping they were acting at any particular time.’ This assertion demonstrates the difficulty one has in attributing the violent described in the timeline and again in section 12 of this report, to any individual group with full confidence.

11.8 In their analysis of the RIRA in months leading up to the Omagh bombing the Irish Times reported that “The group had also attracted support from the two other splinter republican groups opposed to the Belfast Agreement. Members of these groups - the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and Continuity IRA (which was the paramilitary wing of the small political group, Republican Sinn Féin) - vowed support for the ‘Real IRA.’” This emphasised the dominance of the RIRA, while also demonstrating that they were still reliant on the other violent dissident republican groups.

11.9 Mooney and O’Toole (2003, pp.50-51) note that at the birth of the RIRA the pre-existing Republican Sinn Féin leadership met with their 32 County Sovereignty Committee equivalents in unproductive talks about the potential for an amalgamation. However, while the talks were deemed to be ‘unproductive’ this indicated that dialogue was open between the two main dissident movements.

11.10 The most in-depth analysis of the operational co-operation between the RIRA, CIRA and INLA comes from Mooney and O’Toole (2003, pp.126-139) in their book *Black Operations: The Secret War Against the Real IRA*. Within their analyses they propose that in spite of there being no formal coalition that there was a ‘floating membership’ between the CIRA and the RIRA, and that the communications between these two groups was open. Within their analysis they indicate that there was an informal co-operation in relation to arms acquisition. The CIRA had an arms route to the Balkans. However, they required the RIRA’s

expertise to bring the weapons (AK47s, lunch-box bombs, handguns and rocket launchers) back to Ireland.

11.11 Mooney and O'Toole (2003, pp.135-137) indicate that Liam Campbell established an 'active service unit' (ASU) with the aim of destabilising the peace process. This grouping was to bring together membership of the INLA, CIRA and RIRA. The strategy was for the INLA to provide stolen vehicles, the RIRA to transform them into car bombs and for a combination of RIRA and CIRA members to deliver the bombs. One of the key factors which assisted this ASU's ability to operate was its ability to use safe houses on both sides of the border Mooney and O'Toole (2003, p.152).

11.12 Colm Murphy, who was found liable in a civil trial for the Omagh bombing, was believed to be a member of the Continuity IRA. His initial interrogation by police, and the presence of his phones in Omagh and Banbridge on the days of the bombings is presented in significant detail by Mooney and O'Toole (2003, pp.191-204).

11.13 Ten years after the Omagh bombing in the 2008 interview with the journalist Suzanne Breen a leadership representative of the RIRA stated "The IRA will work with the Continuity IRA and INLA on issues where there is common ground. But there are no organisational links and there will be no joint operations. We are not seeking to amalgamate three armies into a 'super republican group.'"

Within the same interview the leadership attempted to distance themselves from involvement in the Omagh bombing. The representative of the leadership stated "The IRA had minimal involvement in Omagh. Our code word was used, nothing more. To have stated this at the time would have been lost in an understandable wave of emotion. That is the only detail we are prepared to give on Omagh at the moment. Omagh was an absolute tragedy. Any loss of civilian life is regrettable. No one in any army, except perhaps the American or Israeli forces, wants to kill civilians. But wars don't end because civilians die in them"

It is important to note that this interview took place with a representative of the leadership in 2008. As noted in the original report the leadership of the movement had gone through significant changes in the years post-Omagh.

11.14 With the above points all considered some form of operational co-operation for the Omagh bombing between the RIRA and CIRA in particular is deemed likely, even with the leadership of the RIRA being the lead instigators of the attack.

12. Response to Observation 11

12.1 The final observation related specifically to Chapter 11 of the original report entitled “Timeline of Violent Dissident Republican Activity.”

12.2 There were two specific observations relating to p.61, para. 11.1 and p.61, para 11.4

12.3 The observation relating to para 11.1 stated **“In relation to the timeline, at para. 11.1, the expert states that the timeline was developed using open sources through a combination of the VDR database (as referenced at p.7, para. 3 of report) and CAIN; included across the timeline, are the groups attributed to be responsible for the incidents, but that the attributions are presented as a possibility rather than a certainty.”**

12.4 The observation relation to para 11.4 stated **“Further, at para. 11.4, it further states that, ‘Where possible organisational attribution is given to the perpetrators of the attacks. However, this is not always possible as not all attacks were claimed, or attributed to an individual group by the police.’**

The timeline includes 35 incidents, of which 14 are identified with the CIRA, 15 with the RIRA, 3 with potentially either group, 1 with the INLA, and 2 incidents with no organisation specified.

It appears that across the 35 incidents there are c.5 incidents which appear to have been definitely claimed by a group, c.5 being attributed to a grouping with the remainder believed to have been carried out by a grouping, save for the 2 that area unspecified. Therefore could the expert provide further detail on the following:

- 1. The basis for believing that a particular grouping carried out an attack, with reference to the available sources for that belief.**
- 2. The source that has attributed an attack to a particular grouping.”**

12.5 As noted in the observations the development of this chronology of violent dissident republican activity was completed by exclusively using open source data. This included databases such as CAIN and the VDR database. The VDR database was developed from exclusively open source data, whereby the research team coded academic and journalistic writings on the topic of violent dissident republican activity. The result of this coding was the

events database utilised in the initial report. For each event to be coded in the database they required reporting in reputable sources. Such reputable sources included, but not exclusively, CAIN, The Irish Times, The Belfast Telegraph and the BBC. The coders sought to corroborate the report by assessing if similar accounts were reported elsewhere on the same attack. This process related to organisational attribution, alongside other key information relating to the attack. For a detailed overview of the coding process see Morrison and Horgan (2016, pp. 581-582).

12.6 In the course of responding to the observations the author has reviewed and updated the timeline submitted previously. As is noted below there are some minor amendments which have been necessary. These are acknowledged at the relevant individual entries to the timeline.

12.7 As one can see from the descriptors of many of the attacks the true attribution for remains unclear, even when reported by reliable sources. Much of this lack of clarity will be the result of the loose nature of the memberships of the key groups, alongside the organisational co-operation, as acknowledged in the response to observation 10.

12.8 The timeline is recreated below with the source(s) of attribution at the end of each entry on the timeline including a hyperlink to the source, where possible.

16th September 1997 - van bomb exploded at Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) station in Markethill, County Armagh. No injuries or casualties. Short warning given prior to the bomb exploding. At the time claimed by the CIRA. However, writing in September 1998 Jim Cusack notes that while the attack was claimed by the CIRA that this could have been the first bombing of the RIRA. John Hicks of the Belfast Telegraph also proposed that this could have been a RIRA attack. The bomb is reported to have been an estimated 400lbs, and caused extensive damage to buildings. There was a short warning followed by an explosion.

Attributed Group(s): claimed by CIRA but later attributed to RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1997 (gives CIRA attribution); "Militants May Rally to CIRA", The Irish Times.; John Hicks, "Dissidents had a Year of Boon and Terror", Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998. (There is no hyperlink available for this article. Therefore a picture of the article on microfilm has been sent with this report)

16th October 1997 – a bomb hoax in Carryduff Co. Down, leading to a DUP rally being evacuated from a hall. After a search of the premises the meeting was resumed. This was attributed to the CIRA. *Originally noted as October 17th in first submission*

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: Moriarty, Gerry (October 17, 1997). “Unionists opposed to Stormont talks warn on united Ireland.” The Irish Times.;

30th October 1997- CIRA bomb detected and defused in the Department of the Environment in Derry city centre.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1997; Civil Servant Flees Terror Threat, Irish Independent

20th November 1997- two controlled explosions carried out on a small bomb outside the offices of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) at Belfast City Hall. BBC received warning from anonymous caller claiming to be CIRA.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1997;

6th January 1998 – a large car bomb defused in the centre of Banbridge, County Down. The bomb estimated to be 300-500lbs. CIRA believed to be responsible according to CAIN. However, John Hicks from the Belfast Telegraph proposes that this car bomb was a foiled RIRA attack.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA or RIRA.

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; John Hicks, “Dissidents had a Year of Boon and Terror”, Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998. (There is no hyperlink available for this article. Therefore a picture of the article on microfilm has been sent with this report)

8th January 1998 - one and a half tonnes of home-made explosives found by Gardaí in a disused shop at Howth pier in Dublin. Explosives believed to be connected with RIRA, and four men were arrested.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; “Dublin gardai hold four after 1 1/2 tonnes of explosives found in disused fish shop,” The Irish Times

24th January 1998 – car bomb explodes at the ‘River Club’ on Factory Road, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh. Bomb warnings received at 7.30pm and the bomb exploded at around 9.30pm. The building was extensively damaged but there were no injuries. CIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; Continuity IRA Blamed for Bombing, Irish Times

20th February 1998 - car bomb exploded at RUC station in Moira, County Down. Seven police and four civilians receive minor injuries in the attack. RUC station, homes and cars extensively damaged in the attack. Bomb believed to be 500lbs. CIRA at the time believed to be responsible, and was noted as such in the original report. However, the report of the Judicial Review into the Omagh bombing indicated a belief that this attack may have been the result of RIRA and CIRA working in collaboration. John Hicks from the Belfast Telegraph attributed it to the RIRA.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA or RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (gives CIRA attribution); Judicial Review, paragraph 24 (gives CIRA and RIRA joint attribution); John Hicks, “Dissidents had a Year of Bood and Terror”, Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998.

23rd February 1998 - car bomb exploded in centre of Portadown, County Armagh. Reports of the size of the bomb range from 300lb to 1,000lb. The CIRA were believed to be responsible and was noted as such in the original report. However, the report of the Judicial Review into the Omagh bombing indicated a belief that this attack may have been the result of RIRA and CIRA working in collaboration. John Hicks from the Belfast Telegraph attributed it to the RIRA.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA and RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (gives CIRA attribution); Judicial Review, paragraph 24 (gives CIRA and RIRA joint attribution); John Hicks, “Dissidents had a Year of Bood and Terror”, Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998.

24th February, 1998 – a 250lb bomb is found, unarmed in Redhills in Co. Cavan. Attributed to be a CIRA bomb.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: Mooney and O'Toole (2003, p.66); Experts to Blow Up Terrorist Bomb, Irish Independent

3rd March, 1998 – a 400-600lb car bomb is found in a Renault car in a shed in Hackballscross, Co. Louth. The car bomb was filled with homemade explosives. Attributed to CIRA.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; Mooney and O'Toole (2003, p.67)

10th March 1998 - mortar bomb attack on RUC station on Newry Road in Armagh, County Armagh. The mortars were noticed by a British Army patrol who raised the alarm. Conflicting reports of which groups it was responsible for the attack, whether it was the RIRA or CIRA.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA or RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (claim CIRA attribution); Mooney and O'Toole (2003, p.66) (claim RIRA attribution); Republican terrorists blamed for mortar attack on police, Irish Independent (claim CIRA attribution); Judicial Review, paragraph 24 (gives CIRA and RIRA joint attribution)

20th March 1998 – a bomb is defused in Derry city centre by the British Army. The bomb is planted at the Northern Bank in Guildhall Square. Attributed to CIRA.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998;

22nd March 1998 – a bomb estimated to be between 1,200 and 1,300lbs is found in Dundalk Co. Louth. It is reported that the bomb was due to be transported to Northern Ireland. Conflicting reports as to whether it was the CIRA or RIRA who was responsible. However, geography would suggest it was likely to be a RIRA bomb.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA or RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (claim CIRA attribution); 'Real IRA' begins to emerge as the biggest threat to North peace, The Irish Times (claim RIRA attribution)

24th March 1998 – mortar bomb attack on Forkhill Army/RUC base. It is reported that four mortars were fired at the base. No one was injured in the attack. However, one mortar exploded in the grounds. CIRA believed to be responsible (according to Irish Independent) and attributed as such in original report. However, Irish Times attribute to RIRA. The Judicial Review into the Omagh bombing states that this could have been the result of collaboration between the two groups.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA and RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (no attribution given, just refers to 'dissident republicans'); Renegade republicans in mortar raid on barracks, Irish Independent (claim CIRA attribution); The Queen versus Sean Hoey, paragraph 5 (no attribution given); 'Real IRA' strong enough to move into south Armagh, Irish Times (claim RIRA attribution); Judicial Review, paragraph 24 (gives CIRA and RIRA joint attribution)

25th March 1998 – on the day that Senator George Mitchell sets a two week deadline for political parties to reach an agreement two mortars are fired at British Army security post in Glassdrummond Co. Armagh. No organisation specified as being responsible.

Attributed Group(s): No attribution given

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (no attribution given, just refers to 'dissident republicans');

2nd April 1998 – a 600lb bomb is found in the ferry port of Dun Laoghaire in Co. Dublin, believed to be destined for the UK. Believed to be a RIRA bomb.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (no attribution given, just refers to 'dissident republicans'); Dail Eireann Debate, April 2nd, 1998 (no attribution given); Police Discover Huge Bomb Bound for UK, BBC (no attribution given); 'For The Record' Saoirse, May 1998 p.4 (claim RIRA attribution)

3rd April 1998 – hoax device consisting of a paint bucket filled with car fillers and a Mark 19 time power unit on railway line at Red Bridge, Newry. No attribution given. *In original report was stated that RIRA was believed to be responsible.*

Attributed Group(s): No attribution given

Sources of Attribution: The Queen versus Sean Hoey, paragraphs 7 and 8 (no attribution given);

10th April 1998 – Good Friday Agreement Signed

30th April 1998 – 600lb car bomb placed in Market Square, Lisburn. The bomb was diffused by the security services. RIRA believed to be responsible. The RIRA ‘Martha Pope’ codeword was used. This is the same codeword used in the Omagh bombing.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (no attribution given, just refers to ‘dissident republicans’); The Queen versus Sean Hoey, paragraphs 9 and 10 (no attribution given);

1st May 1998 – RIRA members involved in the robbery of a security van in Cullenmore, Co. Wicklow. One of the raiders was fatally shot by police.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; Garda says Botched Securicor Robbery Was Frightening, The Irish Times

4th May 1998 – two homemade mortars are attempted to be fired at Grosvenor Rd. RUC station in Belfast. One mortar explodes in the tube with the other fails to reach the target. CIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; CIRA Thought to Have Fired Two Mortar Bombs, The Irish Times

9th May 1998 – mortar bomb attack at Belleek RUC station. No injuries are reported. Unclear whether CIRA or RIRA responsible.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA or RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; Mortar Attack on RUC in Belleek, The Irish Times

15th May 1998 – car and trailer bomb abandoned in Kinawley, Co. Fermanagh. CIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): CIRA

Sources of Attribution: Frampton (2011, p. 291) (no attribution given); House of Commons Debates, September 2nd 1998 (CIRA attribution given)

16th May 1998 – 500lb car bomb placed near Armagh RUC station, successfully defused. RIRA believed to be responsible. The RIRA Martha Pope codeword was used.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (no attribution given, says RUC unable to say which dissident Republican paramilitary group was responsible); The Queen versus Sean Hoey, paragraphs 13 and 14 (no attribution given);

23rd May 1998 – 900lb+ and 400lb+ bombs are found in Carrickaneena, Co. Louth. RIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: Mooney and O'Toole (2003, p.108) (RIRA attribution given);

24th May 1998 – bomb partially explodes on railway line at Finaghy in Belfast. Original report stated that CIRA believed to be responsible. However, now attributed to either RIRA or CIRA

Attributed Group(s): CIRA or RIRA

Sources of Attribution: The Queen versus Sean Hoey, paragraphs 15 and 16 (no attribution given); "Bomb Partially Explodes as Army Examines Device" Irish Times (no attribution given); 'Dissidents' Bomb Damages rail link' Belfast Telegraph (attributes to either RIRA or CIRA);

22nd/23rd June 1998 – a landmine is detonated near Drumintee and Forkhill in County Armagh. It was reported in the Sunday People Newspaper (March 14th, 2004) in an article entitled *ETA had Real IRA Phone Bombs* that this had been detonated using a mobile phone.

However, this is not referred to in other descriptions of the detonation. RIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; 'Real IRA' strong enough to move into South Armagh, Irish Times

24th June 1998 – a 200lb car bomb exploded in Newtownhamilton, County Armagh. A 50 minute warning was given prior to the bomb exploding. People were still being evacuated when the detonation took place and six people were injured. The INLA claimed responsibility but it is believed that the RIRA supplied the explosives. This bomb was the day before Assembly elections.

Attributed Group(s): INLA and RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; Car Bomb Explodes in N Ireland, BBC; John Hicks, "Dissidents had a Year of Bood and Terror", Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998.

2nd July 1998 – a bomb explodes on the Belfast-Dublin train line. The explosion takes place near Newry. A telephone warning was given and the attack was attributed to the RIRA.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (says telephone warning claimed to represent the 'south Down IRA'); 'Real IRA' strong enough to move into south Armagh, Irish Times (claim RIRA attribution)

9th July 1998 – 1400lb of explosives found in an abandoned trailer on the Moy to Blackwater Road in Co. Tyrone. RIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: 'Real IRA' strong enough to move into south Armagh, Irish Times; The Queen versus Sean Hoey, paragraphs 17-18

13th July 1998 – a 500lb car bomb is defused outside the courthouse in Newry, Co. Down. RIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: ‘Real’ IRA seems determined to pick up where Provisionals left off, Irish Times

21st July 1998 - mortar bomb attack on Corry Square RUC Station in Newry, County Down. A bomb was planted in the town at the same time and was defused. Responsibility for the attack is claimed by the RIRA.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (Gives the date as July 19th); Mortar Attack on RUC Station, Irish Independent; John Hicks, “Dissidents had a Year of Bood and Terror”, Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998.

28th July 1998 - incendiary bombs placed in stores in Portadown, County Armagh. RIRA believed to be responsible.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: Three shops in Portadown are fire bombed, Irish Times, (no attribution given); John Hicks, “Dissidents had a Year of Bood and Terror”, Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998. (gives RIRA attribution)

1st August 1998 – 33 civilians and 2 police officers are injured when a 500lb car bomb explodes in Newry Street in the centre of Banbridge, County Down. Extensive damage is done to the buildings on the street too. RIRA claimed responsibility. A 20 minute warning was given prior to the bomb detonating.

Attributed Group(s): RIRA

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998; Mooney and O’Toole (2003, pp.139-140); ‘Real IRA’ Admits Bombing Banbridge, The Irish Times; John Hicks, “Dissidents had a Year of Bood and Terror”, Belfast Telegraph, September 8th, 1998.

4th August 1998 – An RUC police patrol is shot at in Lurgan, Co. Armagh. Unspecified who is responsible.

Attributed Group(s): No attribution given

Sources of Attribution: CAIN Chronology of the Conflict, 1998 (refers to ‘dissident republicans’);

15th of August 1998 – The Omagh Bombing

12.9 The above must be read with the firm caveat that these attributions are not always certain. As noted earlier the interchangeable membership, and amalgamation of the dissident groups in the year leading up to Omagh resulted in confusion in relation to attribution.

12.10 Even when a terrorist or paramilitary group has claimed credit for an attack it has been noted that there have been various instances of false claims. Further details of this are contained in Kearns, Conlon and Young's article Lying About Terrorism.