

INQUIRY LEGAL TEAM CHAPTER 3 FACTUAL EVIDENCE SUMMARY

PART 5: 15 AUGUST 1998 (14:29 to 15:03)

1. This factual evidence summary comprises a selection of first-hand witness accounts for the period **14:29 to 15:03**.¹ The aim is to provide the Chairman, Core Participants and the public with a digest of the key parts of accounts that are in the Inquiry's possession relating to the period between the first warning call and the moment immediately prior to detonation.
2. This summary contains details that some may find distressing. Only the evidence that is necessary to understand the period immediately before the detonation of the bomb is set out in this summary. The summary will refer to locations in Omagh and people who were in the town in the period shortly before the detonation of the bomb; some may find these details distressing to read.
3. This evidential summary will be separated into the following sections:
 - 1) The warning calls
 - 2) The notification of the RUC and the subsequent chain of communication
 - 3) The evacuation efforts
 - 4) The notification of the British Army and the subsequent chain of communication
 - 5) Photograph of the bomb car parked on Market Street
4. Unless otherwise indicated, the ranks of RUC and British Army officers are recorded as they were on 15 August 1998, to avoid confusion about the chain of command or the relative authority of the individuals at the time.

Section 1: Warning calls

¹ The 24-hour clock is used for the timings to which reference is made.

Margaret Hall

5. In her statement to the RUC dated 19 August 1998, Margaret Hall stated that on Saturday 15 August 1998 she was employed by UTV as a programme assistant. Her job entailed answering the phones and doing administrative duties in the newsroom. She had started work at 12 midday and she said at 14:32 hours she received a phone call in the newsroom via the switchboard. She said: *"Hello newsroom"*. She described hearing *"a male voice with a Northern country accent"*, which she *"found difficult to make out"*. She said: *"at first, I thought this man was some sort of nutcase"*. She described saying *"What"* to him several times, in an effort to make him speak more clearly.
6. She described hearing him say: *"Bomb" courthouse Omagh Main Street, 500lb explosion, 30 minutes"*. She said that she typed those words into the computer. She described how she *"could not make out any complete sentences he was saying"*. She stated that she got the impression that the caller was very nervous. She asked him for a code word, which the caller gave to her. She said that at first she thought he said *"Malta Pope"*, which she questioned. He then said, spelling it out, *"Martha Pope"* and then he said *"I.R.A Oglanhan"*. She said that she thought he spelt that out as well.
7. She described how at that point the phone *"went dead"*, and *"right away"* she dialled 999 and informed the police of the call. The Inquiry has a transcript of the 999 call which is provided in full at paragraph 31 below.
8. Detective Chief Inspector Billingsley said at paragraph 103 of his statement that subsequent enquiries revealed that the warning call was at 14:29.
9. Ms Hall stated that after she put the phone down from speaking to police, there was another call on the line. She said that she answered that call and she spoke to the same male voice. She stated that she *"would say"* that this call came in at 14:35. She said that the male said: *"Martha Pope 15 minutes bomb Omagh town"*. She stated that she *"immediately cut him off"* and phoned the police by dialling 999 informing them of the second call. The Inquiry also has a transcript of that 999 call which is provided in full at paragraph 39 below.

10. This warning call was in fact made at 14:31.
11. Ms Hall said that she received no further phone calls from this individual. She said that *“from his voice, I would put this male in the 50 to 55 year old bracket”* and she said *“the phone line as far as I can recall was crackly.”*
12. In her statement dated 18 May 1999, Ms Hall said she can be accurate with the time of the first warning call being at 14:32 as she said that is what would have been displayed on the computer VDU² in front of her. She also said: *“I am unable to recall his initial words as I found him so difficult to understand because of his accent.”*
13. Ms Hall described typing into her computer “Martha Pope” and “IRA Oglanhan”. She said that she spelled out “IRA Oglanhan” as it sounded. She said that she was unable to recall if the caller spelt this for her as well but that she was *“certain that the spelling in the computer is my spelling, as this wouldn’t have been important to me at this time”*.
14. She described her 999 call to the police. She said that she informed them of the call, mainly reading off the computer screen and adding in details which she had not typed in *“like the timescale of 30 minutes warning”*. She also stated that the second call was no more than 3 minutes after the first, putting it, she said, at about 14:35 hours.
15. She also said that during the second call, she partially typed the warning onto the computer. She also stated that she was *“unable to pin point the origin of the man’s accent only to say it was definitely not Belfast.”*
16. In her evidence to the Coroners’ Court on 6 September 2000, Ms Hall said that the accent she heard *“was not a southern accent, it was a very thick accent, I had difficulty in making him out. I actually thought afterwards that he had something covering the phone”*. She agreed that his voice sounded muffled. She said that she thought her first conversation with that caller took *“maybe one minute”*. She said that between the first and second warning call she received there was a period of *“two, three”* minutes. She also said that this was the first time she received a warning call with that code used.

² This is understood to mean “visual display unit”.

She also agreed that she believed that the first caller was the same person as the second caller.

17. The Inquiry is in receipt of a statement by Simon Clemison, Head of News & Programmes at UTV dated 18th December 2025. In his statement, he said that he understood that an *“unwritten and widely understood procedure applied throughout UTV between 1 July 1997 and 15 August 1998 whereby all staff understood that any person who received a bomb warning should immediately dial 999, request the police, and provide all details of the call to an officer. At that time, there was no internal requirement to report warning calls upward to management prior to contacting the police. All staff members were verbally briefed as to this procedure”*.

‘Hilary’

18. Hilary’s statement to the RUC dated 15 August 1998 recorded that she was known as Hilary and was a volunteer worker within the Samaritans at Coleraine. She described that on the day of the bombing at 14:34 she received a telephone call in the Coleraine office from a male caller. This call was in fact made at 14:31.
19. Hilary said that the male caller gave her the following message: *“Am I through to Omagh”*. Hilary replied *“No”* and informed the caller that he was through to Coleraine. Hilary said that the caller then continued, saying: *“This is a bomb warning”*. She said that the caller stated that it was going to go off in the centre of Omagh in 30 minutes’ time. She asked if there was a code. She said that the *“caller gave a code which I couldn’t make out”*. She said she *“actually asked him to repeat it 3 times but I still couldn’t make it out”*. She asked the caller to spell it. She said that he did so, and she spelt it back to him and he agreed that it was correct. She asked him to clarify whereabouts in Omagh as she didn’t know the town and he said: *“Main Street, about 200 yards up from the Courthouse”*. She said that the caller hung up. Hilary stated that she immediately phoned the police using the 999 system. The Inquiry has a transcript of Hilary’s 999 call which is provided in full at paragraph 44 below.
20. Hilary stated: *“I did not pick up any distinct accent from the caller, but I can say that he sounded sober and I would say that the caller was neither old nor very young and he*

spoke with quite a gentle voice.” She said that the telephone system did not operate a caller display nor did it have the 1471 facility. She said: “The only reasons his call could have come to Coleraine are if he dialled the direct line... or if he dialled our 24 hour number... which is a central number which automatically diverts calls to any office or finally his call to our Omagh office was diverted to Coleraine as we cover calls to Omagh every Saturday until 2pm and for some reason today the diversion was not lifted at 2pm.”

21. She said that she had made Detective Constable Devine aware of the code word used. Detective Constable Devine’s statement stated that Hilary gave him the code word “MARTA POPE”.³
22. In her evidence to the Coroners’ Court on 6 September 2000, Hilary said in relation to street names, that the caller said: “200 yards from the courthouse High Street, the main street.” She said: “I do not know Omagh so I assume that High Street is the main street”. She said that she told the police High Street, and stated that “as far as I remember he said it was 200 yards from the courthouse in the high street.” She also said that she thought that was her first warning call.⁴

Source and recording of the warning calls

23. Detective Chief Inspector Billingsley’s Sequence of Events statement records that the first warning call to Margaret Hall at UTV at 14:29 and the warning call made to Hilary at Samaritans at 14:31 were made from a Public Call Box situated at McGeough’s Crossroads, Forkhill, County Armagh (01693888357). The statement also records that the second warning call to Margaret Hall at UTV at 14:31 was made from a Public Call Box situated at Loyes Cross Road, Dundalk Road, Newtownhamilton, County Armagh (01693861252). Detective Chief Inspector Billingsley stated that the two Public Call Boxes were approximately half a mile apart.

³ Further see the transcript below at paragraph 44 which details that Hilary gave this code word to Constable Murphy during the 999 call she made.

⁴ The Inquiry sent a R9 request to Samaritans regarding, amongst other things, any protocols relating to bomb warnings at the time of the bombing.

24. The warning calls themselves were not recorded but the subsequent calls made by Margaret Hall and Hilary to 999 were.

Section 2: The notification of the RUC and the subsequent chain of communication

Constable George Mullan

25. Constable George Mullan's RUC statement dated 18 May 1999 recorded that on the day of the bombing he was a Constable Controller in Belfast Regional Control, Castlereagh RUC station in Belfast. He was in the Control Room and at 14:30 he answered an emergency call from a woman who identified herself as Maggie from the newsroom at Ulster Television. He said he could be certain of the time as all 999 calls are recorded which includes the time received. He said that Maggie told him: *"I'm only after receiving a phone call from a man with a Country accent saying that there was a bomb in Omagh Main Street near the Courthouse a 500lb bomb and it is going to go off in 30 minutes"*. Constable Mullan said that he repeated this back to her and she went on to say: *"I asked him for a code word and he said it was 'Malta Pope' and he did repeat it."*
26. Constable Mullan said: *"there was a little more to the call but I am unable to make it out on the tape recording of the call."* He said that the call terminated at 14:31 hours. He said that because of the contents of the call, he immediately telephoned police at Omagh and informed them of what he had been told.
27. He said that on completion of the call he made a note on the Command and Control system. The Command and Control "incident print" records that this was at 14:33. He said that as soon as he committed this to the system, it automatically went to the specified destination, which in this case was Omagh Communications Room. It would then appear on their computer screen for action.
28. He said that he further contacted Maggie at UTV to ascertain from her if they could activate their 1471 system in relation to the origin of the bomb call, but she informed him that they were unable to use that facility. Constable Mullan said that at 14:37 hours he made an entry on the computer incident log to that effect. He further

described using the desktop recording system and writing down the transcript of his call with Maggie.

29. Constable Mullan's RUC statements dated 28 June 1998 and 9 December 1998 are in similar terms to the above statement. In his statement dated 9 December 1998, Constable Mullan stated that the Atlas Command and Control serial number was 738.
30. During the course of his evidence to the coroner, Constable Mullan said on 6 September 2000 that *"the code word did certainly strike a chord with me as being similar to one which had been used in a previous attack some couple of weeks prior to the Omagh bomb"*. The Inquiry understands this to be a reference to the attack in Banbridge on 1 August 1998. He agreed that it was treated as a genuine bomb scare. He said that he connected the word with the Real IRA. He also said during his evidence that: *"I advised whoever I spoke to at that time that this code word had been used some two weeks previously during a bombing in Banbridge"*.

Transcript of the first 999 call by Margaret Hall

31. The transcript of the call reads as follows:

<i>"[Constable George Mullan]:</i>	<i>Police emergency.</i>
<i>[Margaret Hall]:</i>	<i>Belfast message 01232 262</i>
<i>[Constable George Mullan]:</i>	<i>Thank you. Hello police can I help you.</i>
<i>[Margaret Hall]:</i>	<i>Newsroom.</i>
<i>[Constable George Mullan]:</i>	<i>Pardon.</i>
<i>[Margaret Hall]:</i>	<i>This is the newsroom.</i>
<i>[Constable George Mullan]:</i>	<i>What newsroom.</i>
<i>[Margaret Hall]:</i>	<i>Ah UTV.</i>
<i>[Constable George Mullan]:</i>	<i>Yes.</i>

[Margaret Hall]: *I'm only after receiving ahm a phone call ah from ah a man with a country accent saying that there was a ah a bomb in ah Omagh Main Street ah near the courthouse, a 500lb bomb and it's going to go off in 30 minutes.*

[Constable George Mullan]: *Omagh main street and 30 minutes, 500lbs.*

[Margaret Hall]: *Yes he said I asked him now, I asked him for a codeword and he said it was Malta Pope.*

[Constable George Mullan]: *What is it.*

[Margaret Hall]: *Malta.*

[Constable George Mullan]: *Malta Pope.*

[Margaret Hall]: *Pope*

[Constable George Mullan]: *Right.*

[Margaret Hall]: *And if you just (inaudible) I would know (inaudible) ah he did repeat it ahm as I couldn't (inaudible)*

[Constable George Mullan]: *Right and what's your name.*

[Margaret Hall]: *My name's Maggie.*

[Constable George Mullan]: *Maggie. Okay much obliged.*

[Margaret Hall]: *Thanks.*

[Constable George Mullan]: *Thanks, bye bye."*

Constable William Hall

32. Constable William Hall's statement recorded that on the day of the bombing he was on duty in Omagh station and was detailed as the station duty officer, which meant

dealing with the members of the public calling at the station or telephoning the station, and other police stations making enquiries.

33. He said that sometime around 14:30 hours he recalled taking a phone call from Belfast Regional Control telling him of a bomb warning that they had received relating to Omagh town. He said that he could not recall verbatim what the man (who the Inquiry understands to be Constable Mullan) told him but as the message was relayed, he made notes of the salient points in a notebook. Constable Hall said the notes he made were “*A Div, UTV, Main St Court 500 Martha Pope*”. Constable Hall stated that he recalled the operator explaining to him that the codeword was one used in Banbridge earlier in the month when a bomb did explode.
34. Constable Hall said that on finishing the telephone call he immediately telephoned the communications room in Omagh and informed the operator of the contents of the call he had received. He said that he then was able to call up the Atlas Command and Control computer entry generated by Belfast Regional Control and he made an entry in the Station C6, the Occurrence Book. He recorded that the Duty Inspector and Duty Sergeant had been informed as he was aware that they had been.
35. He described how, a short time later, a further entry appeared on the Command and Control system detailing a similar telephone warning having been received by the Samaritans in Coleraine. He said that he transcribed that message into the station Occurrence Book taking no action as he was aware that action was already underway.

Constable Wesley Francis

36. Constable Wesley Francis’ statement recorded that on the day of the bombing he was at Castlereagh working as a Controller in Belfast Regional Control. At around 14:30 he was aware that another Controller, George Mullan, had received a 999 call giving details of a bomb warning for Omagh town. He said that “*a matter of minutes after he received this call, no more than 5 minutes, I received a 999 call from I assume the same caller, as George had talked to, as she stated “this is the newsroom again”*”. He said that the lady went on to tell him that “*she had received another call giving a bomb warning for Omagh town giving a 15 minute warning this time*”. He said that he was unable to recall the specifics of the call but said that all 999 calls are recorded.

37. He said that on ending the conversation, he immediately telephoned Omagh Communications to give those further details. Constable Francis said he did not know who he spoke to but related to the man in Omagh communications what he had been told: that the same caller had phoned the UTV newsroom and given the code word Malta or Martha Pope, and that the bomb in Omagh town was now going to go off in 15 minutes. Constable Francis said that “*the Communications man*” informed him that they had a car already responding to the initial call. He described adding an entry to the Command and Control log created by Constable Mullan detailing the further warning he had received. The Command and Control “incident print” records this entry at 14:36.
38. In his evidence to the Coroner on 11 September 2000, Constable Francis said that the warning was “*non-specific*” in that the area referred to was “*simply Omagh town*”.

Transcript of the second 999 call by Margaret Hall

39. The Inquiry also has a transcript of the 999 call received by Constable Francis and made by Margaret Hall. The transcript records the following:

“[Constable Francis]: Hello police.

[Margaret Hall]: Belfast (inaudible) 01232 262000.

[Constable Francis]: Thank you. Hello caller.

[Margaret Hall]: Hello, this is the newsroom again.

[Constable Francis]: Yes.

[Margaret Hall]: That same fella’s just after ringing back saying the code word and there was a bomb in ah Omagh town, it’s going to go off in 15 minutes now.

[Constable Francis]: 15 minutes.

[Margaret Hall]: Yes.

- [Constable Francis]: *And it was the same caller.*
- [Margaret Hall]: *The same caller.*
- [Constable Francis]: *And same code word.*
- [Margaret Hall]: *Sae code word.*
- [Constable Francis]: *Okay*
- [Margaret Hall]: *I think it might be Malta Pope or Martha Pope, can't make him out
cause of his country accent.*
- [Constable Francis]: *Either Malta or Martha.*
- [Margaret Hall]: *Yes and he said he was the IRA with ahm some Irish IRA I've never
heard, I couldn't make him out again.*
- [Constable Francis]: *Right okay.*
- [Margaret Hall]: *Okay thanks.*
- [Constable Francis]: *All right newsroom, thanks very much bye."*

Constable Gary Murphy

40. Constable Gary Murphy's first statement dated 10 September 1998 recorded that he was on duty in the Communications Room at Coleraine station when at 14:38 he received an emergency 999 call from Samaritans, Coleraine. He said that the caller gave her name as Hilary and the text of her message was as follows: "*I have received a bomb call for Omagh town centre approximately 200 yards from the courthouse and the code word 'Marta Pope' was given*". Constable Murphy said that he immediately telephoned Omagh Communications and informed them. He prepared a log on Command and Control and sent it to Omagh Communications. The Command and Control "incident print" records this entry with the time 14:38.
41. In his second statement dated 20 May 1999 Constable Murphy stated that "*sometime in around 14:30 hours*" he received the emergency 999 call from Samaritans. He

described making notes of the call and immediately telephoning Omagh Communications. He said that initially he was ringing a wrong number but then he did get through to the Communications Room. He said that he didn't know who he was talking to, but he gave him the message as he had received it. He said that the person informed him that they had already been informed of similar calls. He described putting the information into the Command and Control log and, once committed to the system by him, he said that it automatically went to the station of responsibility, in this case Omagh.

42. In his third statement dated 18 October 2006, Constable Murphy provided some further detail about the timing of the call from Samaritans which he said was at 14:32 hours and 40 seconds following a check of the cassette tape. He provided further information about the use of the Command and Control system, including what was recorded on it and how.
43. During his evidence to the inquest on 7 September 2000, Constable Murphy said that he at that time had no knowledge of the meaning of "Marta Pope".

Transcript of Hilary's 999 call

44. The Inquiry has the transcript of Hilary's 999 call made to Constable Gary Murphy:

"[Constable Murphy]: Police Emergency, can I help you.

[Hilary]: Hello ah this is a Samaritan volunteer in the Coleraine Branch.

[Constable Murphy]: Hm hm

[Hilary]: I've just had a bomb warning

[Constable Murphy]: Ok and what was, what was the

[Hilary]: It said it was to go off in the centre of Omagh about 200 yards from the courthouse ah in 30 minutes time and the codeword Marta Pope

[Constable Murphy]: Marta Pope

[Hilary]: Pope

[Constable Murphy]: POPE (spelt)

[Hilary]: Yes

[Constable Murphy]: Your name is please

[Hilary]: I'm not sure, not allowed to give out names

[Constable Murphy]: I would need your name love for a bomb call. This is Coleraine Police Station

[Hilary]: Ah Hilary

[Constable Murphy]: And your telephone number there Hilary

[Hilary]: Em is it

[Constable Murphy]: I'll need to get back to you love

[Hilary]: Em let me think em 320000

[Constable Murphy]: 320000

[Hilary]: Uh Uh

[Constable Murphy]: Thank you

[Hilary]: Ok thank you bye

[Constable Murphy]: Inspector."

Constable Martin Millar

45. Constable Martin Millar's first statement of 9 September 1998 recorded that on the day of the bombing he was detailed by Sergeant Marshall to Communications. At 14:32 he received a call from FIC Belfast,⁵ via the Command and Control Terminal, reporting

⁵ Detective Chief Inspector Billingsley's addendum statement states that FIC is Force Information Control.

that a bomb warning had been received at UTV, stating that there was a bomb in Main Street, Omagh around the courthouse and that it would go off in 30 minutes. He said that he informed Sergeant Marshall of these facts. Sergeant Marshall instructed him to task the mobiles⁶ to clear the area.

46. His second statement of 3 December 1998 outlined these same facts, in particular that the message received by him via Command and Control reported *“that Maggie in UTV had received a bomb warning from a male person “bomb to go off in 30 minutes near the courthouse, Main Street, 500lbs, code word Marta Pope”*”. He said that no organisation was mentioned.
47. In his statement of 9 September 1998 Constable Millar then went on to say that at 14:33 he received *“another bomb warning via the Command and Control Terminal from Coleraine RUC station stating that Samaritans in Coleraine had received a phone call stating that there was a bomb in Omagh town centre, near the courthouse (200 yards). The codeword ‘Marta Pope’ was given.”* Constable Millar said that he was made aware that the same codeword was given when Banbridge town centre had been damaged by a bomb earlier that year. He said that he relayed that information to the callsigns clearing the area.
48. The Inquiry has the transcript of this radio communication to RUC callsigns.
49. In his second statement of 3 December 1998, he also said that he became aware of the same coded warning being used in Banbridge via a phone call from FIC. He also said that he told callsigns to pay attention to Land Rover type vehicles or cars which appeared to be heavily laden. He said that he also informed the callsigns that it may be appropriate to park the police vehicles at the bus depot and clear the town on foot from Bridge Street.
50. He described how, over the next half hour, he received various radio transmissions for car checks.
51. In his third statement dated 26 May 1999, he also described how there was another Communications Officer working with him, Reserve Constable McNally, which he said

⁶ It is understood that this is a reference to patrolling uniformed officers.

was the norm. He said that on the day of the bomb, Reserve Constable McNally had gone for his lunch around 13:45 leaving him as the sole operator. He said that at 14:34 he had received a message via the Atlas Command and Control Computer system about the bomb warning saying: *"Bomb to go off in 30 minutes near the Courthouse, Main Street, 500 lbs, code word Malta Pope"*. He provided more detail on the workings of the Command and Control system, saying that in this case a bomb warning was received in Belfast Regional Control, an operator records it on the computer and when he commits it to the system, it is transmitted to the visual display unit in front of him in the Communications Room for action. He said that he was unable to recall receiving the initial warning by telephone by BRC (Belfast Regional Control) but, he said, it was possible the telephone call was received by someone else who would happen to be in the Communications Room and would have answered the phone as he has been engaged in some other task.

52. He said that at the beginning of the incident he could not recall who if anyone was in the Communications Room with him. He received the telephone call at 14:32 hours which he described as having been recorded by the computer as well as all entries he made to the log.
53. He went on to describe informing Sergeant Marshall by telephone, which he said was the first thing he did on receiving the 14:32 call, and then receiving the call from Coleraine Communications regarding the Samaritans warning call. He said that he informed the Coleraine operator that he had already received a similar warning from Belfast Regional Control. The operator informed him that he would send the details down via Command and Control anyway.
54. He also described that in and around the same time he received a further telephone call from Belfast Regional Control, with the operator informing him that UTV had received a further warning now giving 15 minutes for the bomb to go off and the same code word had been used when the bomb exploded in Banbridge. Constable Millar said that he relayed this information via radio to the callsigns on the ground.
55. He said that after another 5 to 10 minutes, Reserve Constable McNally returned to the Communications Room and took over the responsibility of the radio transmissions,

leaving him free to update the Command and Control system as the incident progressed.

56. Constable Millar also gave evidence to the inquest. In his evidence he said that the sequence of events was that he had received all three warnings before he tasked the mobiles to clear the area around the courthouse, and that he assessed that there was a bomb in the general area of the courthouse. He also explained why he had stated in his communications to callsigns that the warning was given for about 150 yards from the Courthouse. He said: *“One of the messages said at the courthouse, one said 200 yards. I did not want to send them exactly 200 yards from the courthouse, so I have picked an area in between.”* During his evidence he also explained that he was not working to a contingency plan. He also stated that as far as he was aware there was no training ever given on trying to deal with a lack of clarity or precision in bomb warnings, and that he was not aware of any other situation where three warnings had been given for one bomb. He agreed that the army would have been available if he had wished to call for them.

Reserve Constable David McNally

57. Reserve Constable David McNally’s statement recorded that he was on his lunch break from approximately 13:45, leaving the Communications Room and the station complex altogether, returning at 14:40 to resume his normal duties assisting Constable Miller. He said that on going into the Communications Room, Constable Miller informed him of a bomb scare ongoing in the vicinity of the courthouse. He said that he took over the radio transmissions leaving Constable Millar to make the necessary entries on the computer system command and control.
58. Reserve Constable McNally also gave evidence to the inquest. In his evidence he explained the existence of a contingency plan which he was aware of at the time. He said that the contingency plan was an aid which could be brought to bear if required, but that the first three things on it were: *“inform the senior officer on duty, which is the duty inspector and the duty sergeant and the resources are tasked to the scene. There is then a list saying consider, consider, consider, but most of them, of the agencies that you will be tasking, will be when the actual bomb was found and a control point had*

been set up to send those to speak to the inspector then on the ground and decide whether ATO or whatever was going to go into – it is not a necessity to use it, it is there as an aid. It is sometimes a lot quicker to do it manually, if you like”. He went on to say that: “you inform the duty inspector, the duty sergeant goes to the scene, and assign resources. That is the first part of that plan, you consider the rest after that. The rest is basically once you have located the bomb, if you like, and set up a cordon point, to send other agencies to it”.

Sergeant Philip Marshall

59. In his statement dated 18 August 1998, Sergeant Philip Marshall said that on the day of the bomb at approximately 14:30 hours he was in Omagh RUC Station when he was informed by the Communications Officers, Constable Millar and Reserve Constable McNally, that they had received a report of a bomb scare. Sergeant Marshall said: *“it was alleged that a bomb had been planted in the Main Street at the Courthouse and that a code word had been given”*. He described instructing the Communications Officers to task the two mobile crews to go immediately to the scene and commence clearing the area.
60. He described then driving a police vehicle from Omagh Police Station towards Market Street with Constable Norman Haslett to assist with efforts.
61. During the course of his evidence to the Coroner, Sergeant Marshall gave further evidence about the evacuation efforts. He also indicated that he was working to the initial call that he received, being the first warning, and that his perception when he left the station was that the device was in the vicinity of the courthouse. He also said that the second warning through the Coleraine Samaritans was not conveyed to him over the radio. He said that a minute or two prior to the explosion, his perception of *“the danger zone would have been the two sets of vehicles at the upper end of High Street.”* He indicated that he was trying to get people 200 metres clear from the perceived danger zone and out of the line of sight, back to Market Street and then over the brow of the hill.
62. Sergeant Marshall also provided a witness statement to the Inquiry for its personal and commemorative hearings. His statement is dated 13 February 2025. He also gave oral

evidence to the Inquiry on 18 February 2025. He told the Inquiry that the code word was a recognised one and he was aware it was used in previous incidents.⁷ He said that upon tasking his two local station patrol cars to the town, he went to the control room and read the message himself which said: *“Hello newsroom, Bomb courthouse, Omagh main street, 500lbs explosion, 30 minutes.”* In his Inquiry statement, and in his oral evidence, he described the difficulties of getting people to evacuate on a bright, fairly sunny afternoon in August. He said: *“tactfulness quickly submerged into some very plain speaking to motivate people to move away from the area where I perceived the bomb to be.”* He said that he was able to draw on police resources that he knew to be assembling back at Omagh station, which he asked to be re-routed to Omagh town. He said during the evacuation efforts, moving people away from the courthouse, he had been updated via radio that two further warnings had been received, which gave 15 minutes’ and 30 minutes’ warning.

Superintendent William James Baxter

63. Superintendent William James Baxter’s statement dated 15 September 2000 recorded that he was the Subdivisional Commander of Omagh Sub-Division and he was off duty in Bangor at the time of the bombing. He said that at approximately 15:02 he received a telephone call from Inspector Johnston who ‘related’ that a 15-minute bomb warning had been received shortly after 14:30 in relation to Omagh courthouse and that the area was being cleared. Superintendent Baxter said that he advised Inspector Johnston to ensure that a full evacuation was completed before terminating the call.
64. In his Inquiry statement dated 24 October 2024, Mr Baxter recalled the same details. He read that statement into evidence on Tuesday 18 February 2025 during Chapter 1.
65. Superintendent Baxter’s 2000 statement also set out the RUC’s procedure to be adopted in the event of a bomb warning and at the scene of an explosion, namely paragraphs 22 to 26 of the RUC Code Section 28 regarding Major Incidents. Superintendent Baxter also gave evidence at the inquest about the RUC code and the

⁷ [Day 13 | Commemorative and Personal Statement Hearing | James Baxter, Richard Scott, Norman Haslett, Philip Marshall, read statements of Julian Elliot and Allan Palmer – Omagh Bombing Inquiry](#) page 86.

contingency plan. He also stated that if military personnel were available they could be deployed.

Inspector Joseph Johnston

66. Inspector Joseph Johnston's RUC statements said that he was Duty Inspector on the day of the bombing. He said that at approximately 14:40 hours he became aware that a report had been received of a bomb scare at Omagh courthouse. He said that he immediately went to the Communications Centre and spoke to Constable Millar and Reserve Constable McNally. He said he was informed that the call had been received at 14:34 by UTV that a bomb had been planted in Main Street, Omagh, at the courthouse with a 30-minute warning and a code word had been used. He said that he ascertained that a number of mobiles had been tasked and a clearance operation had commenced around the courthouse. He said that he directed that personnel from all of the outstations report to Omagh RUC Station and that the military be informed.
67. He described keeping in touch with the call signs on the ground. For example, he described tasking Sergeant Salter's L2 Unit to assist Sergeant Marshall with the evacuation. He said that at 14:58 hours he was informed that John Street, Georges Street, High Street, Bridge Street and Market Street had been cleared and sealed off and that all vehicles in John Street had been accounted for.
68. He described being informed by Constable Millar of a second warning being received concerning a bomb being planted at the courthouse. He described telephoning Superintendent Baxter and telling him of the reports of a bomb at the courthouse in Omagh and he stated that the area around the courthouse had been cleared.

Section 3: The evacuation by RUC officers and traffic wardens

69. This is an overview of the evacuation efforts by RUC officers and three traffic wardens. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive recitation of everything that each account contains, nor does it include the statements of every officer on the ground.
70. The statements held by the Inquiry are detailed and, in short, describe the officers' initial receipt of the bomb warning and their being tasked to attend at the town centre to assist with the evacuation efforts. They describe being divided into different crews,

for example “Lima Oscar 71” or “LO71”. The traffic wardens’ statements describe their work to assist in those efforts.

71. For example, Lima Oscar 71 was made up of Constables Eakin, Morrell and Palmer. Constable Eakin’s statement dated 20 August 1998 described receiving a radio transmission at approximately 14:35 which stated there was a bomb alert and that it had been reported that the bomb was outside the courthouse at the top of High Street in Omagh. Constable Morrell was the driver of that call sign. In his statement dated 23 August 1998 he said that they immediately headed in the direction of Omagh town centre, with the two-tone horns and blue lights employed. Constable Palmer’s statement dated 20 August 1998 stated that they were told that the codeword used was the same as that used in Banbridge. Accordingly, he said *“the crew in the car with that took that it was very likely that this was the real thing.”*
72. In his statement to the Inquiry, dated 5 February 2025, which was read into evidence during the Inquiry’s Chapter 1 hearings on 18 February 2025, Constable Palmer described how the code word was recognised, and how it said that the bomb had been placed at the courthouse.
73. The call sign called L2 MSU was made up of a number of officers, including two Sergeants: Sergeants McCracken and Salter. Sergeant Salter’s statement dated 24 August 1998 recorded that he was informed of the bomb warning at Omagh RUC at approximately 14:40 hours and he apprised Sergeant McCracken of the warning, which was that a device had been left at Omagh courthouse. He said that he then immediately contacted Communications and the Duty Inspector, Inspector Johnston, separately by phone to make them aware of L2 MSU’s availability for deployment as required. He said he was told to remain on standby. He said that after waiting for several minutes, he then contacted Communications again by means of a radio transmission to make them aware of their availability. He said that they were subsequently tasked at approximately 14:50 hours to assist Sergeant Marshall at John Street adjacent to Sally’s Bar.⁸ Constable Harkness was also one of a number of officers in L2 MSU. In his statement dated 15 September 1998 he said that his team were alerted to a bomb scare, believed to be in the area of the courthouse. His call sign

⁸ Tasking for this callsign to attend Omagh was given at 14:53.

was requested to go to George's Street by Sergeant Marshall who he described to be co-ordinating police personnel on the ground.

74. The call sign named LO70 had Constables McClatchey, Stewart and Doherty. Constable McClatchey's statement dated 11 September 1998 described receiving a radio transmission at approximately 14:35 which was answered by Constable Doherty. Constable McClatchey said that Reserve Constable McNally had tasked LO70 to attend the town centre regarding a bomb call, and they were told that the same code word was given as was used in Banbridge. He said it had been claimed that the bomb was outside the courthouse in Omagh town centre. They attended and had their police sirens and lights on.
75. LU70 was made up of Constable Benson and Sergeant Irvine. Constable Benson's statement dated 20 August 1998 recorded that, at some time around 14:30, LU70 were directed by radio from Omagh communications to go to the back of the Royal Arms Hotel in Omagh town centre to evacuate all people from it. He said that they were told there had been a coded bomb warning received that there was a bomb at the courthouse. Sergeant Irvine's statement dated 1999 described how, when travelling to Omagh, he overheard Communications say that they now had information that there was a "*recognized password*" used with the bomb warning. He described driving towards Omagh at speed.
76. Constable McBurney's statement dated 14 September 1998 recorded that at around 14:45 hours she heard a radio transmission from Communications stating that there was a 500lb car bomb within a 150-yard radius of Omagh courthouse. She said that the transmission also stated that a code word had been used, the same as Banbridge, and they had 15 minutes to clear the area. She said that she immediately drove a police car into the town centre via Market Street. Constable Walker's statement dated 1 September 1998 similarly described receiving a report from communications at around 14:40 regarding a car bomb being placed in High Street adjacent to the courthouse. He was also informed that this was being treated as a genuine warning as the same coded warning had been given in the Banbridge explosion.
77. In his statement to the RUC dated 18 August 1998, Constable Norman Haslett described how sometime after 14:00, he became aware of sirens outside the station,

and he made enquiries about what was going on. He was told about a bomb scare at the courthouse in the town centre. He described going to Omagh town centre with Sergeant Marshall. He activated the police sirens and blue lights to get there.

78. When read together, the statements also reflect the officers and traffic wardens working to evacuate people and communicating with officers in Omagh Communications. By way of example, Sergeant Marshall⁹ described clearing all persons from John Street with Constable Haslett. He described requesting assistance from his colleagues to help with scene clearance around the areas of John Street, Church Street and George's Street. He described overhearing a further radio transmission regarding a further bomb warning near the courthouse. He went towards the courthouse and could see from his position that the area of High Street/John Street and George's Street was clear of all pedestrians. He said that he informed Communications by a radio transmission that all the roads around the courthouse and all of the High Street was, to the best of his knowledge, free of all persons except police.
79. Sergeant Marshall also described directing the crew from Carrickmore to assist. He could also see that other police on duty had managed to clear High Street and Market Street up to around the area of Scarffe's Entry.
80. He described then making a radio transmission to Communications in Omagh RUC station telling them to stand by as he was about to inform them by radio transmission of the registration numbers of all the vehicles parked in High Street as he could not locate a suspicious or heavily laden vehicle. It was at that point that the bomb detonated. Constable Stewart described in his statement dated 21 August 1998 being asked by Sergeant Marshall to check registration numbers of cars in the street. He was doing so when he heard the sound of the bomb.
81. The statements also describe other actions taken as part of the efforts to evacuate the area. By way of further example, Constable Palmer¹⁰ described clearing shops on Market Street with Constables Eakin and Doherty and speaking with Constable Stewart

⁹ See paragraphs 59-62 above.

¹⁰ See paragraph 71 above.

who asked him to clear the premises in Scarffe's Entry which he did. He said he went back to Scarffe's Entry with Constable McBurney and sealed it off at the bottom.

Constable Palmer also later described himself, Constable McBurney and Sergeant Thompson holding the cordon tape down Market Street, walking holding the tape and moving people back closer to the Campsie Road junction.

82. Sergeant McCracken's statement dated 23 August 1998 described going to George's Street where he assisted local police in cordoning it off and directing traffic from Castle Street. He said that he sent police officers with him to "*check out a number of cars parked beside the Courthouse*".
83. Constable Walker¹¹ described arriving at the town centre with Reserve Constable Sproule. He said that the first officer they met was Constable Stewart who informed them of what had been evacuated and what still had to be completed. He said, as a result, himself and RC Sproule began to clear Bridge Street and move people over the bridge towards Mountjoy Road. He then had started to clear Old Market Place when he heard the explosion.
84. Senior Traffic Warden Rosemary Ingram described in her RUC statement dated 24 August 1998 how she normally carried out administration and supervision duties only, but because of a busy schedule and a lack of staff she was to take on a point duty on the day of the bomb. At around 14:45 she said she was aware of police sirens, and a policeman at the Market Street junction stopping traffic going into Market Street. She said: "*he [the policeman] was extremely busy and obviously struggling to cope. He told me there was a bomb up at the courthouse and asked me if I would take over his point to keep the traffic from going into Market Street, which I did*". She described difficulty in controlling the junction because of the volume of traffic and people stopping and questioning her instructions. She sought the assistance of Traffic Warden Thomas Kerrigan, who she said arrived within minutes and started to assist her. After that, she asked Rita (Margueritta) Larsen to assist her.
85. In her statement provided to the Inquiry for Chapter 1, which was read out in a hearing on 11 February 2025, Ms Ingram said that she is in the background of the photograph

¹¹ See paragraph 76 above.

taken of the red Cavalier before it exploded. Her back is facing towards the camera and she was in the middle of the junction. She said that she was only dealing with the traffic and not the pedestrians, but she was very aware of the large build-up of people behind her. She also described how she had in fact volunteered to go into Omagh that day to assist with covering the traffic.

86. The officers and traffic wardens in their statements described moving people around and how they did that. By way of example, Constable Eakin¹² described, along with Constable Morrell, evacuating people from the area around the courthouse and other parts of the town centre. He described, among other things, *“shouting into the shops and business premises for people to move away and get out of the buildings”*.
87. Constable Doherty’s statement dated 19 August 1998 described clearing people away from the courthouse and further down the street; shouting that there was a bomb and for everyone to move as quickly as they could. He described moving people further and further down High Street and taping off the street from Shop Electric approximately.
88. Constable Stewart¹³ described running up the courthouse hill and shouting at anyone he saw to get out of the centre of the town as there was a bomb warning. He also described directing traffic away from the Market Street area, and radioing for assistance to help direct the traffic away. He also described using the PA system of a police car to move people back.
89. Sergeant Thompson’s statement dated 30 September 1998 recorded attending Bridge Street accompanied by Constable Hutchinson to assist in clearing civilians from the area. He said that he identified civilians in the walkway between Bridge Street and Market Street and went through the area, advising them to leave the area or take cover due to the bomb threat. He then described going to Market Street and told police to move the crowd back with the intention of clearing Market Street completely. He said that he liaised with police officers present at Market Street and on his assessment of the situation he had decided that he wanted the crowd moved out of Market Street to

¹² See paragraph 71 above.

¹³ See paragraph 80 above.

the junction with the Dublin Road. He described informing the officers of his decision, but before they could undertake that course of action, the bomb exploded.

90. Traffic Warden Margueritta Larsen's statement dated 22 August 1998 recorded speaking to some Spanish students outside Menarys (High Street). She said she explained to them that there was a bomb scare. She said that one of the youth leaders called the children and they walked towards Market Street, where she also went. She said she spoke to people there and explained that there was a bomb scare in town.
91. Constable Haslett's statement to the Inquiry dated 28 November 2024, which was read into evidence on 18 February 2025 during the Inquiry's Chapter 1 hearings, described *"knocking loudly on doors and informing occupants in very clear and unambiguous terms"* about the warning and moving from one building to the next with a fair degree of urgency.
92. Constable Eakin¹⁴ described going to the Royal Arms and moving people out of the ground and first floor. He also described going to a flat above the Abbey National and kicking the door to get it open. That is where Constable Eakin said he was when the bomb detonated.
93. Constable McClatchey¹⁵ described, among other things, shouting into and entering a number of businesses including Kelly's Chemists, Watterson's shop and Carlisle Shop (High Street). He also described redirecting cars and ushering drivers.
94. Constable Palmer¹⁶ described going into Barretts Shoe shop on Market Street, and warning loudly to everyone that there was a bomb at the courthouse and for everybody to make their way down to the Campsie Road junction. He described, together with other officers, evacuating people from the shops as they went down Market Street towards the Campsie junction. He also described later clearing Milan clothing which he said had two women still inside it.
95. Reserve Constable Moore's statement dated 1 October 1998 described how he and his crew checked houses along George Street. In his statement dated 29 September 1998,

¹⁴ See paragraph 71 above.

¹⁵ See paragraph 74 above.

¹⁶ See paragraph 71 above.

Reserve Constable Allerton stated that his crew were tasked to go to George's Street to make sure everybody was out of their flats and premises. He stated that they knocked on doors. Constable McFarland's statement dated 11 September 1998 similarly described clearing people from all of the shops and flats along George's Street from the junction with Castle Street to the courthouse.

96. Reserve Constable Ogle's statement dated 29 September 1998 described arriving outside Sally O'Briens public house and assisting the local callsign to keep locals out of John Street.
97. Constable Benson¹⁷ recorded running up the Royal Arms Mews to the entrance of the Royal Arms Hotel, which he said was empty already, and he said that they moved a few women from the hairdressers in the Mews out to the rear car park. He said that they went back to the back entrance of the Mews to prevent anyone entering "*the Main Street*" from it.
98. Constable McBurney¹⁸ described clearing shops and premises in the second half of High Street, pushing back the crowd of people towards Scarffe's Entry. She also described that an employee of Electricity Showroom in Market Street came out and asked her what they should do. She said: "*Clear everybody out and close the shop just to be on the safe side*".
99. Constable Morrell¹⁹ described entering into different shops and Brodericks bar. He also described how he ensured that the traffic was flowing away from the area. He said that he spoke to Sergeant McCracken about the areas which were cleared.
100. Constable Stewart²⁰ described speaking to members of the public, and a member of staff from Supervalu. Constable Harkness,²¹ in his statement, described calling at flats in George's Street and carrying out checks on cars in George's Street.

¹⁷ See paragraph 75 above.

¹⁸ See paragraph 76 above.

¹⁹ See paragraph 71 above.

²⁰ See paragraph 80 above.

²¹ See paragraph 73 above.

Section 4: The notification of the British army and the subsequent chain of communication

101. 1st Queen's Lancashire Regiment (1 QLR) were the Omagh Resident Battalion, with the majority of their troops based in Lisanelly Barracks. They were part of the 8th Infantry Brigade which was headquartered at Ebrington Barracks in Derry/Londonderry. Stationed in Lisanelly Barracks on 15 August 1998 were the following troops: 1 QLR Battalion HQs and 4 companies (called A, C, Support and H Company 4 R IRISH).
102. Colonel MacMullen stated that the British Army was first notified of a threat to Omagh at 14:40. The 1QLR Watchkeeper's Log (called the "Form B58") contains an entry at 14:40 as follows: *"Bomb Warning on RUC means"*. The next entry is also timed at 14:40 and states: *"RUC have received a bomb warning in Omagh town."* Both entries are recorded to have been received from "INT", which the Inquiry understands is shorthand for 'Intelligence Cell'.
103. Colonel MacMullen stated that the Intelligence Cell in the 1QLR Operations Room monitored the RUC radio network and picked up the broadcast which the watchkeeper recorded in the log. Colonel MacMullen also referred to the Daily Occurrence Book, held in the Operations Room and managed by the Intelligence Cell, which stated: *"Overheard on RUC net, RUC HQ Belfast have received warnings over bombs in several towns province wide including Omagh. The Omagh bomb is believed to be in the area of the courthouse. It is believed to be in the region of 500lbs. It was a Banbridge type codeword warning."*²²
104. Colonel MacMullen stated that the initial reaction was to inform the Ammunition Technical Officer (Adam Modd), the Quick Reaction Force ("QRF"), members of C Company 1 QLR, the Operations 2 Officer Commanding ("OC", Rupert Janes), and the 8 Infantry Brigade Headquarters. He said that the Commanding Officer ("CO", David James) and Operations Officer were paged, and Omagh was put out of bounds.

²² Note Colonel MacMullen's statement says 550lbs but the Daily Occurrence Book says 500lbs. See also: 1QLR Post Incident Report, which states at 14:40 that *"The RUC received a bomb warning for OMA town and began clearing the town centre starting from the courthouse. Detail overheard by Int Cell 1 QLR monitoring RUC net. ATO, QRF, Ops 2 OC and Bde informed. CO and Ops Offr paged, town put OOB."*

Captain Peebles

105. The Inquiry statement of Michael Peebles dated 24 October 2025 recorded that he was the Company Operations Officer of “A Company” at the time of the bombing. He confirmed that he kept the watchkeeper’s log on the day of the bombing, which he said would have been rewritten at the end of his shift to account for shorthand notes, memo notes or scraps of paper which recorded what was occurring.
106. He said that up until the beginning of the incident, he recalled a routine/quiet Saturday morning with nothing significant to report from the night watch. In his statement, he described what was recorded in the log. He said that at 14:40 hours the Intelligence Cell verbally informed the Operations Room that the RUC had received a bomb warning in Omagh town. He said that the Intelligence Cell was located next to the BG (Battle Group) Operations Room and they were told in person. He said that he believed at this stage that the Intelligence Cell stressed that the RUC was significantly concerned, but he said there was “*very little more than that*” and that the Intelligence Cell “*had nothing else to give*” him. He said his reaction was to ask for as much information as possible.
107. He described how the Guard Quick Reaction Force (“QRF”) were “*stood to*”. He also said that Major Rupert Janes, the Officer Commanding of the Company, was informed. Captain Peebles said in his 2025 statement, interpreting the log, that he would have phoned Major Janes. He also described how the Brigade were informed of what was known, either by himself or by phone, as well as other subordinate locations, being Lisnaskea and Clogher Operations Room, who were told that there was a bomb threat.
108. Captain Peebles also described taking a number of other actions, such as phoning the Commanding Officer’s house and speaking to his wife, who he informed that there had been a bomb warning, and said that he needed to speak to the Commanding Officer as soon as possible. He said that the Commanding Officer was then paged. He stated that the Shadow Guard was “*stood to*”. He described the Shadow Guard as “*effectively the sleeping guard, who either had come off duty or were due to come on*”. He stated that the ATO (Ammunition Technical Officer) was informed by the signaller, and the Officer Commanding of C Company instructed his company to “*stand to*”. He also

described trying to contact the Operations Officer's mobile, but he said that the line was not ringing. He was also paged.

109. Captain Peebles said in his 2025 statement, interpreting the log, that at 14:45 he phoned the RUC Operations room to ask for more information. He said that they told him that the target was the courthouse at the top of the High Street. He said that the RUC had deployed all their mobile call signs to clear people from the courthouse. Captain Peebles stated that he recalled 50 metres from the courthouse being mentioned, or that they were expecting the device to be within 50 metres of the courthouse. He said: *"this was the action that I expected would be taken on receipt of a coded warning, that the RUC believed to be credible"*.
110. Captain Peebles said that the entry at 14:50 hours recorded that the Quick Reaction Force was ready to deploy and Major Janes' company was assembling in the Company lines/offices.
111. Captain Peebles said that the 14:55 hours entry recorded that Major Janes was in the Operations Room, and at the same time another call with the RUC explained that the bomb warning had been given using a code word. He said that the time given before detonation was 15 minutes and that it was a 500lb vehicle bomb. He said that critically, the RUC had briefed that they could not find the device. Captain Peebles said that he relayed this information directly to Major Janes in the Operations Room. He said that what was unclear to them was when the 15 minutes actually began.
112. The Omagh Bomb Post Incident Report by 1QLR recorded next to 14:55, among other information, that the RUC *"do not require any mil [sic] assistance yet"*.
113. In relation to the log entry at 15:00 hours, Captain Peebles said that he recalled specifically a call with the RUC in which they were asked whether they required any assistance at that stage. He said that the Officer Commanding of C Company was reporting that they were ready to deploy if needed. Captain Peebles said that the RUC were confident that progress in clearing people from the courthouse was proceeding to plan and that they were well clear of the intended target. Captain Peebles said that he recalled placing a 50-metre ring around the courthouse using a chinagraph pencil on

the Omagh town map in the Operations Room and possibly marking the points which had already been cleared.

114. Captain Peebles said that it was not recorded in the log that Gazelle 5 (a two-seater helicopter) had been stood to. He said he could not now recall whether it was in the air at that point, providing overwatch or whether it lifted off once the device had detonated. He said that the intention was that Gazelle 5 could report any suspicious vehicle movement from overhead and that could be passed to the RUC.
115. Captain Peebles said that at 15:02 approximately, the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel David James, had walked into the Operations Room. Captain Peebles said that he informed him of everything he knew, what the RUC had said about the device, where they had got to with the clearing and who had been “stood to”. He said that he had just finished briefing him when, seconds later, the device went off.

Major Janes

116. In his RUC statement dated 24 November 1998, Officer Commanding of C Company Major Janes said that at about 14:40 hours on the day of the bombing he was at home, when he received a telephone call from the duty Watch Keeper (Captain Peebles), who said there had been a bomb warning in Omagh. He said that he entered the Battalion Operations Room, located in the Barracks, between 14:45 and 14:50 hours. He said that Captain Peebles gave him and the Commanding Officer a briefing, which outlined that the bomb was suspected of being by the courthouse, and the area was being evacuated by the RUC.
117. In his Inquiry statement dated 24 October 2025, Major Janes further said that he could recall being in and out of the Operations Room when what had happened was being relayed. He described that he had instructed his Company to “stand to” and they were getting ready to deploy if needed.

Lieutenant Colonel David James

118. In his RUC statement dated 29 June 2000, Commanding Officer of 1QLR, Lieutenant Colonel David James, said that he was in the Battalion Operations Room at Lisanelly Barracks and had been informed of a bomb warning in the area of the town

courthouse. He said that he attended the Battalion Operations Room at 14:45 hours and was informed that the area around the courthouse was being cleared with most people being led away from the courthouse in three directions.

119. In his Inquiry statement dated 24 October 2025, Lieutenant Colonel David James said that he could see from the log notes that were put to him that he was paged between 14:40 and 14:45 and that his wife was phoned. He said that presumably she answered the phone, but he did not recall that now. He said that he did recall that as soon as he was paged, he got changed and went to the Operations Room, which he said was about a five-minute walk away from his home.
120. In relation to the receipt of the bomb warning from the RUC at 14:40 hours, Lieutenant Colonel James stated that the RUC had primacy at the time, and *“they would request army support as required following such a report.”*
121. Lieutenant Colonel David James also gave an interview regarding the Omagh bomb in the year 2000. Lieutenant Colonel James said that he was out walking his dog on the local playing fields when an army vehicle arrived and told him that there had been a phone call to the police and he was wanted in the Operations Room. He said he got into the vehicle, went back up to the Operations Room and asked the officer who was on duty, Captain Peebles, what the situation was. Lieutenant Colonel James said that Captain Peebles said at approximately 14:45 that there had been a couple of calls to the police indicating that there was a bomb around the courthouse and the police were clearing pedestrians and shoppers away from the courthouse area. He said that he checked that the police did not want anything, and the helicopter was placed on standby in case a check was wanted as to how the traffic was operating.
122. Lieutenant Colonel David James provided a further statement to the Inquiry dated 28 August 2026. He explained that he had spoken to the North West Sound Archive in 2000 in order to record the detail of what had happened on the day of the bombing as he was conscious that 1QLR had been heavily involved in the response to the bombing atrocity. He explained that he did not make the recording in an official capacity, but he thought that it may be of interest to historians or others researching the Troubles. He also explained that now that he had reviewed the recording, he thought it was most likely that he went with the army vehicle to the Operations Room in his civilian clothes

with the driver. He said that he believed he asked the Duty Officer (Captain Peebles) if the RUC had requested any military assistance when he gave him his briefing. He said that Captain Peebles would have informed him that the RUC had not requested such assistance. He said that the Operations Room had been listening to the RUC radio throughout the period following the receipt of the bomb warning, the detonation and the follow up activities. He also explained that, in relation to his understanding stated in the recording that the Omagh bomb was intended for Dungannon, he was *“merely repeating something that a fellow officer had said to me in casual conversation during a coffee break from a meeting”*. He said that such a statement *“never had any official weight as far as I was aware”* and that he never saw anything corroborating it.

Staff Sergeant Adam Modd

123. Staff Sergeant Adam Modd said in his RUC statement dated 28 September 2000 that on the day of the bombing he was employed as an Ammunition Technical Officer (“ATO”) based at Lisanelly Army Barracks, Omagh. At approximately 14:40 he was informed that a coded bomb warning had been received detailing a possible vehicle borne IED (Improvised Explosive Device) in Omagh town centre next the courthouse. Staff Sergeant Modd said that in reaction to that he stood his team to immediate response. While they were waiting for confirmation, they heard the explosion.
124. In his evidence to the Coroner on 25 September 2000, Staff Sergeant Modd confirmed that he did not receive any information from the RUC directly. He said he received information of the bomb warning via a telephone call from the Military Brigade communications room and confirmed they would have in turn likely received that information from the RUC. He confirmed that he was not informed of a code word prior to the explosion.
125. He further stated that his unit awaited confirmation from the RUC regarding the presence of a suspected improvised explosive device or not. His evidence was that before a suspected improvised explosive device was located or had already detonated, the RUC would deal with the situation.
126. In his statement to the Inquiry dated 11 December 2025 he explained that, in response to reporting of an explosive device, the RUC had civil primacy and decided whether

military assistance was requested. Brigade operations then decided whether the Army would respond and what assets to allocate, such as his company, who were called 321 EOD. The 321 EOD Team Leader (“EOD No 1”) had control over the response once the device’s existence had been confirmed.

127. He said that the confirmation he awaited, as referred to in his statement dated 28 September 2000, was confirmation of his official tasking from HQNI/Brigade and also confirmation from the police who may physically check that a suspected device was present. He stated that he could not recall to what extent that took place for the Omagh bombing vehicle. He said that one of the reasons that a confirmation of that type was not attained was that the vehicle was not in the area it was reported to be, namely outside the courthouse in Omagh.

Captain Park

128. Captain Bruce Park provided a statement to the Inquiry dated 16 June 2026. He said that on 15 August 1998 he was the Battalion Operations Officer for 1QLR. He said that he was off duty and outside Lisanelly Barracks that day, and he was paged by the 1QLR Operations Room after it received details of a bomb warning in Omagh town centre at 14:40. He said that he returned to the barracks immediately, and the explosion occurred during his journey there.

WO2 Briscoe

129. WO2 Briscoe gave a statement to the Inquiry dated 1 September 2026. He said that at the time of the bombing he was serving with 1QLR as the Assistant Intelligence Officer in the Battalion Intelligence Cell. He was the Assistant Intelligence Officer on call on the day of the bombing. He said that he was in the gym at Lisanelly Barracks and he received a pager message asking him to call the Intelligence Cell. He said that that was the only information in the pager message. He could not recall the exact time. He said that he left the gym with his son and began walking home (which was approximately 150m from the gym) so that he could make the call, as he did not have a mobile phone. On his way home, he met his wife. She told him that she had just received a telephone call asking him to go to the Intelligence Cell. She had not been given a reason. He said that he made his way directly to the Intelligence Cell, which

was approximately 400 metres from his home. He said that while he was on his way there, he heard the bomb explode in the town.

Section 5: The photograph of the bomb car parked on Market Street

130. Gonzalo Arguelles said in his statement that the photograph was taken about five minutes before the explosion.

The Inquiry Legal Team, 18 September 2026.