

1 THE INQUIRY RESUMED ON WEDNESDAY, 14TH OCTOBER 2026 AS
2 FOLLOWS:

3
4 CHAIRMAN: Good morning, Mr. Greaney.

5 MR. GREANEY: Good morning, Sir. In the witness box
6 this morning we have Baroness Nuala O'Loan and I'm
7 going to ask that she be sworn please.

10:02

8
9 BARONESS NUALA O'LOAN, HAVING BEEN SWORN, WAS
10 QUESTIONED BY MR. GREANEY AS FOLLOWS:

10:02

11
12 MR. GREANEY: Could I ask that the microphone be moved
13 a little nearer to the witness, please. Thank you very
14 much?

15 CHAIRMAN: Good morning, Baroness O'Loan.

10:03

16 THE WITNESS: Morning.

17 CHAIRMAN: Can I thank you for your assistance in
18 attending here this morning.

19 1 Q. MR. GREANEY: would you begin by telling us your full
20 name please?

10:03

21 A. I'm Baroness Nuala Patricia O'Loan.

22 2 Q. And I'm going to just begin by telling you, albeit you
23 will know in any event, and reminding everyone else of
24 where you fit into the picture and the role that your
25 evidence has today.

10:03

26
27 So, we are currently in Part 7 of Chapter 3 of the
28 Inquiry's work. Part 7 is concerned with the police
29 investigation into the Omagh bombing and subsequent

1 processes. As we've explained previously, by
2 subsequent processes we are referring to investigations
3 outside of the main track of the police investigation
4 which we're concerned with or in some way connected to
5 the Omagh bombing.

10:03

6
7 And, Lady O'Loan, your report of 12th December 2001,
8 which we'll be looking at in detail, was one such
9 investigation falling within Part 7. What we are
10 interested in today, speaking as the Inquiry Legal
11 Team, is your process, so the process by which your
12 report of December 2001 was generated and the key
13 findings that you reached within that report.

10:04

14
15 And while it will be necessary for us to address the
16 fact of the dispute that developed between the Police
17 Ombudsman on the one hand and PSNI and the Northern
18 Ireland Office on the other hand, what we are not going
19 to seek to do is to delve into the detail of that
20 dispute, still less to adjudicate on it. So, can I
21 just begin by checking that that makes sense as an
22 approach. And I can see that it does for which I'm
23 grateful.

10:04

24
25 As a starting point, we'll begin with your background
26 and experience before we turn to your appointment. So
27 I'm at paragraph 7, page 3 of your report.

10:04

28
29 Are you a qualified solicitor of the Supreme Court of

1 England and Wales?

2 A. Yes.

3 3 Q. And did you practise as a solicitor?

4 A. No.

5 4 Q. And instead were you what might be described as a legal 10:05
6 academic?

7 A. Yes.

8 5 Q. Did you teach law at the University of Ulster between
9 1976 and 1980?

10 A. Yes. 10:05

11 6 Q. And then again between 1985 and 1999?

12 A. Yes.

13 7 Q. Between 1992 and 1999 did you hold a particular Chair
14 at the University?

15 A. Yes. 10:05

16 8 Q. What was that Chair?

17 A. It was John Monnet Chair in European Law.

18 9 Q. Were you the course director of a number of
19 undergraduate and postgraduate courses?

20 A. Yes. 10:06

21 10 Q. Including a masters degree in administrative and legal
22 studies?

23 A. Yes.

24 11 Q. Did you ever have police officers as your students?

25 A. I had a lot of police officers as my students on the 10:06
26 course, the MA in administration and legal studies, I
27 was the course director of the course and I was
28 responsible for the welfare of the students on the
29 course. Chief officers among them. One then Deputy

1 Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary,
2 Ronnie Flanagan, was my student.

3 12 Q. I hadn't appreciated that Sir Ronnie was one of your
4 students. Did you, in the course of your work,
5 supervise a number of MA dissertations with a policing 10:06
6 theme?

7 A. I did.

8 13 Q. In addition to your legal work prior to your
9 appointment as the Ombudsman, did you hold a
10 significant number of public appointments? 10:06

11 A. I did.

12 14 Q. Including acting as a custody visitor to police
13 stations in Northern Ireland?

14 A. Yes.

15 15 Q. A member of the General Consumer Council for Northern 10:07
16 Ireland?

17 A. Yes.

18 16 Q. The convenor of the transport and energy group of that
19 council?

20 A. Yes. 10:07

21 17 Q. Legal expert member of the European Commission's
22 Consumers' Consultative Council?

23 A. Yes.

24 18 Q. A member of the Northern Health and Social Services
25 Board? 10:07

26 A. Yes.

27 19 Q. A convenor of the NHS complaints system for Northern
28 Health and Social Services Board, and Chair of the
29 Northern Ireland Electricity Consumers' Council?

1 A. Yes.

2 20 Q. Did you also, during the 1990s hold a role with the
3 Police Authority for Northern Ireland?

4 A. I was a member of the Police Authority from 1997 to
5 1999 when I became Police Ombudsman designate, I was 10:07
6 Vice-Chair of the Community Relations Committee of the
7 Police Authority.

8 21 Q. And, finally, before we turn to your appointment, have
9 you also held a number of voluntary roles within the
10 community? 10:08

11 A. Yes.

12 22 Q. Including acting as a trained counsellor?

13 A. Yes.

14 23 Q. And that role as a trained counsellor, was it something
15 that was of relevance to the work that you were in due 10:08
16 course to do as Police Ombudsman?

17 A. Yes, because the nature of the work which I did
18 required me to listen to a lot of very, very difficult
19 accounts, to remain dispassionate, to remain focused
20 and to ensure that nothing I did by my manner or my 10:08
21 speech impeded the ability of the people coming to me
22 to make such statements as they wished to make. So, it
23 was useful, yes.

24 24 Q. Now, turning to your appointment as the first Police
25 Ombudsman. The Office of Police Ombudsman for Northern 10:09
26 Ireland came into existence on 6th November 2000, but
27 were you the Police Ombudsman delegate from 22nd
28 October 1999?

29 A. I was the Police Ombudsman designate.

1 25 Q. Yes. In that role as Police Ombudsman designate were
2 you, essentially, gearing up for the role once it
3 actually came into effect?

4 A. Yes, because we had to get premises, get staff, we had
5 some regulations, some existing regulations but further 10:09
6 regulations were being drafted. We had to create
7 policies, processes, we had to get simple things like
8 notebooks for the staff to use, police notebooks, you
9 know, so there was an enormous amount of work to be
10 done, the biggest part of it was the recruitment of 10:10
11 staff.

12 26 Q. We heard from one of the members of staff that you
13 recruited, former Chief Superintendent Martin Bridger,
14 that he was there from the early days on the ground and
15 that he can remember the need to perform tasks such as 10:10
16 ordering desks and chairs?

17 A. Something like that, yes.

18 27 Q. So, you were building up from the very ground?

19 A. Yeah, very much so.

20 28 Q. Had you been appointed to that role following a process 10:10
21 of recruitment?

22 A. Yes, I applied.

23 29 Q. And the description for the role that prompted you to
24 apply, did it indicate that the post of Police
25 Ombudsman would require legal skills, leadership and 10:10
26 strategic planning skills, skills in developing and
27 maintaining networks, media skills and judgment and
28 decision-making skills?

29 A. Yes.

1 30 Q. And should we understand that necessarily, bearing in
2 mind that you applied for and then were appointed to
3 the role, you considered that you had those skills and
4 abilities?
5 A. I hoped I had, and those who appointed me obviously 10:11
6 considered that I had.
7 31 Q. In the result, did you spend seven years in the role of
8 Police Ombudsman?
9 A. I did.
10 32 Q. In that period were you responsible for 21,000 10:11
11 investigations?
12 A. Yes.
13 33 Q. Which covered a total of 35,000 allegations?
14 A. Yes.
15 34 Q. Now, I'm turning next to paragraph 11 of your witness 10:11
16 statement. And in paragraph 11 you draw attention to
17 the fact that Section 51(4) of the Policing Northern
18 Ireland Act of 1998 which created the role of Police
19 Ombudsman, required that:
20
21 "The Ombudsman shall exercise his powers under this
22 Part in such manner and to such extent as appears to
23 him to be best calculated to secure—
24
25 (a) the efficiency, effectiveness and independence of
26 the police complaints system; and
27
28 (b) the confidence of the public and of members of the
29 police force in that system."

1 was that requirement, in particular, to exercise your
2 powers in a way that engendered confidence of the
3 public and members of the police force in the system
4 for police complaints, something that you regarded as
5 important?

10:12

6 A. It was fundamental. It was a fundamental duty that I
7 had as the first Police -- as the Police Ombudsman and
8 those two subsections, efficiency, effectiveness and
9 independence and confidence of the public, always
10 underpinned my thinking as I went through the years.

10:13

11 35 Q. In the early days of your appointment did you work to
12 build confidence within the public?

13 A. Yes.

14 36 Q. And across the communities in Northern Ireland?

15 A. Yes.

10:13

16 37 Q. And did that involve, for example, taking every
17 opportunity you could to give talks and to speak to
18 people about the work of the Police Ombudsman?

19 A. Yes, we had a policy that if anyone asked to meet me I
20 would meet them. It might take a little time but I
21 would meet them, I would go to community halls and
22 things like that and meet people. I also spent a lot
23 of time with police officers.

10:13

24 38 Q. And that was the next thing I was going to ask you
25 about. The confidence of the public is obviously vital
26 if the role is going to be successful one, but did you
27 consider that Section 51(4) provided, generating the
28 confidence of police officers in your system was also
29 important?

10:13

1 A. It was fundamental and vital, absolutely vital.

2 39 Q. Did you find generating such confidence within the
3 police itself to be a straightforward or challenging
4 task?

5 A. The there were two levels, on the surface everyone was 10:14
6 very welcoming and assured me of every existence and
7 every help, but underneath that there was a current of
8 suspicion, which I understood, a current of more than
9 suspicion, and the Police Association, the Police
10 Federation; I mean, for example, would never meet me, 10:14
11 their Central Council would never meet me although they
12 met my successor before he became Police Ombudsman
13 he was a police officer.

14 40 Q. But never ever during those seven years met you?

15 A. No. I met their branches but never met the Central 10:14
16 Council for a meeting.

17 41 Q. How did you, bearing in mind that staff association
18 centrally wouldn't meet you, how did you go about
19 trying to ensure that there was confidence within the
20 police force in your post? 10:15

21 A. I asked to meet as many branches of the Police
22 Federation as I could and I accepted every invitation.
23 I spoke at a Police Federation conference. I attended,
24 I think, every training session for young police
25 officers coming in at Garnerville which is the police 10:15
26 training college and I talked to them about the office.
27 I wanted them to understand that the office was there,
28 that it would be fair, that it would be independent and
29 that it would be impartial and that they had nothing to

1 fear if they just kept to what they had been taught to
2 do and that we would not make judgments on them which
3 did not reflect their training, et cetera, et cetera.
4 So, it was really important that they actually knew who
5 the Police Ombudsman was and what the focus of the 10:15
6 office would be.

7 42 Q. And this, I believe, is what you tell us in
8 paragraph 17 of your report, that you attended every
9 possible training course --

10 A. Yeah. 10:16

11 43 Q. -- at the training college so that you would have the
12 opportunity to meet every student officer?

13 A. Yeah.

14 44 Q. In order that you could communicate to them that they
15 would be treated fairly? 10:16

16 A. Yeah.

17 45 Q. And so that you were not just a faceless organisation
18 but someone that they had met?

19 A. Yeah, and I did other things, you know. I remember
20 there was an incident involving a TSG, a tactical 10:16
21 support group, where we had to serve notices,
22 discipline notices on them all and there was huge
23 opposition to that. And so I told them I wanted to
24 come down and meet them and I actually did go down to
25 Tennent Street late one Friday night to go out with 10:16
26 them in the Land Rover so that they could meet me too
27 and that they could understand what we were doing and
28 what the Police Ombudsman was required by law to do.
29 So, I did a lot of sort of things like that.

1 46 Q. what we learn from paragraph 16 from your statement,
2 and I'm sorry there's some jumping backwards and
3 forwards at this stage, but later on in your evidence
4 we'll move much more smoothly through your statement,
5 but we learn from paragraph 16 that some statistical 10:17
6 data was available to you demonstrating that by March
7 of 2002, so 14 months after the establishment of your
8 office and three months after the publication of your
9 public statement and summary relating to the
10 investigation concerning the Omagh bombing, the 10:17
11 percentage of those who were aware of the new system
12 for making complaints had risen from 57% to 86%, and
13 that 86% of those surveyed believed that your office
14 was independent?
15 A. Yes. 10:17
16 47 Q. And that the data also indicated the split across the
17 community, namely, that 83% of Catholics and 75% of
18 Protestants believed that they would be treated fairly
19 if they made a complaint to you as the Police
20 Ombudsman? 10:18
21 A. Yes.
22 48 Q. I'm going to turn, before we deal with the
23 circumstances in which the 2001 investigation was
24 instigated, just to deal with some matters of
25 background and overview. So, I'm now at paragraph 12. 10:18
26 You've told us that one of the challenges when you
27 started was the recruitment of staff?
28 A. Yes.
29 49 Q. By the time that you commenced the 2001 investigation

1 did you have a team of experienced professionals
2 beneath you?

3 A. Yes.

4 50 Q. And were you able to draw upon them for the purposes of
5 that investigation? 10:19

6 A. Yes.

7 51 Q. Did they include the then Chief Executive a man named
8 Sam Pollock?

9 A. Yes.

10 52 Q. The Director of Investigations, David Wood? 10:19

11 A. Yes.

12 53 Q. And Martin Bridger, who was the Deputy Director of
13 Investigations and the investigating officer for the
14 Omagh investigation?

15 A. Yes. 10:19

16 54 Q. And we know from Martin Bridger that both he and
17 David Wood were on secondment to you the Metropolitan
18 Police Service?

19 A. Yes.

20 55 Q. As you commenced your investigation, did you recognise 10:19
21 that you were dealing with issues which have caused
22 enormous damage, loss and trauma and which were capable
23 of retraumatising people?

24 A. Absolutely, absolutely.

25 56 Q. And as a team did you have any particular aim in that 10:20
26 regard?

27 A. We wanted to ensure that what we did would not cause
28 more trauma to them, that we were careful in every way
29 possible, that the investigation would be

1 victim-focused so that we would take their needs into
2 account as best we could. And we -- I appointed
3 Martin -- it's unusual for a senior investigating
4 officer to be a sort of family liaison but I did ask
5 Mr. Bridger to do the family liaison because I wanted 10:20
6 them to have access at the highest level when they
7 wanted it. And Martin did that family liaison and we
8 did a lot of work with various organisations to try and
9 ensure that what we did didn't cause greater distress.
10 It caused distress, of course it did because we were 10:20
11 unpicking, as indeed the Inquiry is. And I have read
12 all the impact statements that came into the Inquiry
13 and they're terrible, and we were conscious of that at
14 that time.

15 57 Q. And, indeed, I believe you attended the commemorative 10:21
16 hearing?

17 A. I did, yeah.

18 58 Q. Now, the investigation was triggered by a report in The
19 Sunday People on 29th July 2001; self-evidently by that
20 date, more than three days or about three years had 10:21
21 passed since the Omagh bombing, and did the fact that
22 you were that distance from the bombing itself make you
23 think that the investigation needed to be proceeded
24 with as a matter of urgency, not as matter of urgency
25 or was speed just not a factor? 10:21

26 A. It needed to be done as a matter of urgency but it
27 needed to be done properly.

28 59 Q. why, in your judgment, did it need to be dealt with as
29 a matter of urgency?

1 A. Because when you're doing -- we were not investigating
2 the Omagh bomb, the work which we were doing was
3 related to the investigation of the Omagh bomb. And
4 when you're investigating a criminal offence, the
5 further you get from the date upon which the offence 10:22
6 was committed the more likely you are to lose
7 witnesses, to lose investigative opportunities, to lose
8 forensic opportunities and that sort of thing. And
9 also because, I think, we very rapidly became aware
10 that the investigation had virtually been on hold for a 10:22
11 very long period and it needed to be revitalised, it
12 needed to move. I mean our aim in doing this
13 investigation was (a) to provide reassurance if
14 reassurance was possible to the families; and (b) to
15 ensure that anything which could be done to facilitate 10:22
16 the Omagh investigation, in the hope that it would lead
17 to convictions of those who were responsible for it.
18 So, that was the urgency.

19 60 Q. You've said along the way of that helpful answer, that
20 it was not your purpose to investigate the Omagh 10:23
21 bombing?

22 A. That's correct.

23 61 Q. So, you were not seeking to replicate the work of a
24 police investigation which would be designed to
25 identify suspects and ultimately prosecute those 10:23
26 individuals?

27 A. Correct.

28 62 Q. Generally speaking, the role of the Ombudsman would be
29 to investigate conduct issues relating to police

1 officers, to paraphrase it.

2 A. Mm-hmm.

3 63 Q. Is that what you considered you were doing or did you
4 consider you were doing something different and broader
5 than that? 10:23

6 A. No, the allegation made in The Sunday People was that
7 the police had been told, well the headline said the
8 police had been told about Omagh and the question then
9 was if the police had been told about Omagh what did
10 they do with that information, if information was 10:23
11 provided and that information was not properly handled,
12 then there was a possibility of misconduct and indeed
13 serious misconduct. And that applied to all the issues
14 which we dealt with. So, we were always looking at
15 what should the officer have done? What did the 10:24
16 officer do? Can you tell us what you did and why you
17 did it? And then move to, do we need to think about
18 discipline notices, and things like that.

19 64 Q. But that was the purpose of the investigation?

20 A. Yes, yes. 10:24

21 65 Q. So, I said that we were going to deal with things at a
22 fairly high level at the start and I'm the one that's
23 starting to delve into detail, so I will try to hold
24 myself back.

25 10:24

26 Again, just dealing with things at a high level, and
27 identifying just a small number of the challenges that
28 the investigation faced before getting into them in
29 more detail. I'm now at paragraph 14. During the

1 period of the investigation into matters concerned with
2 the Omagh bombing, were you also having to manage the
3 other work of your office?

4 A. Yes, absolutely.

5 66 Q. And to give us an idea of the scale of that; during the 10:25
6 first 14 months did your office receive 3,556
7 complaints against police officers?

8 A. Yes.

9 67 Q. Involving over 5,000 separate allegations?

10 A. Yes. 10:25

11 68 Q. Together with having inherited about 2,000 complaints
12 from your predecessor organisation?

13 A. Yes. Part of the reason for the very high level of
14 complaints during that first year was that people were
15 waiting for the office to be created rather than going 10:25
16 to the predecessor organisation, but it was a very
17 heavy workload.

18 69 Q. I'm just going to pause for one moment to ask whether a
19 member of the team could just go to my room and get
20 from my table the bundle of materials that relates to 10:25
21 the evidence that Greg Harkin gave yesterday and, in
22 particular, The Sunday People Article. I meant to
23 bring that into court so that I could quote from it
24 accurately. Thank you very much, Mr. Rafferty.

25 10:26

26 So, you were having to deal with the investigation
27 whilst dealing with that other work.

28 A. Mm-hmm.

29 70 Q. And what we also know is that the investigation began

1 as final arrangements were being made for the
2 implementation of the Act of Parliament that was to
3 create the Police Service of Northern Ireland, PSNI?
4 A. Yes.
5 71 Q. And so, would it be fair to say that within policing in 10:26
6 Northern Ireland this was a period of significant
7 change?
8 A. It was.
9 72 Q. Furthermore, was there very significant political
10 interest in the investigation that you conducted? 10:26
11 A. Yes, there was.
12 73 Q. And at what level was there such political interest?
13 A. At the very highest level and at lower levels. So,
14 there was interest right across the political sphere in
15 what we were doing and opposition to even the 10:27
16 suggestion that I would do it.
17 74 Q. Well, I'm going to get to this in more detail but
18 across the piece of this work, investigation and then
19 report did you feel supported by the Northern Ireland
20 Office? 10:27
21 A. Not particularly, no.
22 75 Q. And, ultimately, did you feel supported by politicians
23 when it came to the point in time in December when you
24 were wishing to publish your report?
25 A. There was a split in the community, I think, at that 10:27
26 point. I think that the Nationalists politicians
27 accepted that we had done what we had to do and there
28 was a significant amount of outrage amongst certain
29 members of the Unionist parties.

1 76 Q. what you tell us in paragraph 19, is that the 2001
2 Police Ombudsman Omagh investigation was challenging
3 from the very beginning?
4 A. Yes.
5 77 Q. And you say: 10:28
6
7 "This was because of hostility in some quarters to the
8 mere fact that I had decided to exercise my powers to
9 examine matters relating to the Omagh bomb."
10 10:28
11 A. Yes.
12 78 Q. well, let's turn so as to enable us to understand that
13 in more detail. To the events that led to the
14 establishment of the investigation. And self-evidently
15 the investigation that you established in August 2001 10:28
16 had, at its background, the Omagh bombing of 15th
17 August 1998 and you explain that in your statement and
18 as you'll appreciate, everyone in this room has a deep
19 understanding, many better than I do, of the
20 circumstances of that event? 10:29
21 A. Yes.
22 79 Q. And there had been an investigation by the RUC (as it
23 then was) into the bombing and while by July of 2001 no
24 one had been convicted, was it the position that you
25 had received no complaints about any matter relating to 10:29
26 the bombing?
27 A. That's correct.
28 80 Q. And had the Omagh bombing or the investigation into it,
29 therefore, been any sort of focus for you and your

1 office prior to 29th July?

2 A. No.

3 81 Q. And then on 29th July, as I've said already, The Sunday
4 People published an article - we don't need it on the
5 screen unless would you like it on the screen - it's 10:30
6 INQ 038430, and the headline on the front page:
7
8 "'I told cops about Omagh, and that was three days
9 before the bombing,' claims top secret agent."
10 10:30
11 And did that come to your attention either on that
12 Sunday or very shortly afterwards?

13 A. It came to my attention on that Sunday. I would read
14 all the local papers.

15 82 Q. And read, literally, the headline, you may have hinted 10:30
16 at this yourself earlier, might have tended to suggest
17 that the source, Kevin Fulton, or the person known as
18 "Kevin Fulton," had given information to the police
19 that Omagh was to be bombed?

20 A. Yeah. 10:30

21 83 Q. And, in fact, the thrust of the piece was that the
22 sourced had told the police that a bomb was coming
23 north and the author had worked out, through his
24 sources, that that bomb was likely to have been the
25 bomb that was detonated in Omagh, that was the effect 10:31
26 of the evidence of Greg Harkin yesterday. That was how
27 he explained to us, whether it's a good explanation or
28 not will be for others to decide but that is how he
29 explained to us that that headline had come to be

1 created by the editor, notwithstanding that the
2 information had not been that Kevin Fulton had said
3 that a bomb was coming to Omagh?

4 A. Yes.

5 84 Q. It is probably all very clumsily expressed but I hope 10:31
6 you've understood me.

7 A. Yes.

8 85 Q. Did you read the article on that Sunday?

9 A. I did.

10 86 Q. What, in particular, did you take from it? 10:31

11 A. Well, my immediate thought was what on earth are the
12 Omagh families going to be thinking about this. You
13 know, this is going to cause such distress. And in
14 causing that distress -- to me it was just unthinkable
15 and it seemed to me that I had a power to investigate 10:32
16 without a complaint and it seemed to me that given the
17 gravity of the situation, given the terrible
18 circumstances and the terrible consequences of the
19 Omagh bomb that I needed to think about investigating.

20 87 Q. So, this is just what we need to understand. I don't 10:32
21 want to get too technical about it partly because I
22 don't have the Act in front of me, but there are a
23 number of ways in which the Police Ombudsman can and
24 could then investigate a matter relating to police
25 conduct. One would be, perhaps the obvious way would 10:32
26 be if a complaint were to be made by a member of the
27 public. But, was there also a power under
28 Section 55(6) of the Act to investigate without a
29 public complaint if there was a concern of a serious

1 nature relating to matters of a potentially criminal or
2 disciplinary nature relating to police conduct?

3 A. Yes.

4 88 Q. So, in other words, in particular circumstances, the
5 Police Ombudsman had power to self-generate an 10:33
6 investigation?

7 A. Correct.

8 89 Q. And did it immediately appear to you that it might be
9 necessary for you to establish an investigation
10 pursuant to that power? 10:33

11 A. I certainly came into the office on Monday morning and
12 talked to my colleagues about it, yes.

13 90 Q. This is what we need to understand, and this takes us
14 to page 11, paragraph 30 of your witness statement.

15 A. Yes. 10:33

16 91 Q. And when you arrived at your office on that Monday
17 morning did you discover that senior colleagues were
18 also aware of the newspaper article and concerned about
19 it?

20 A. I'm not sure that they were all aware of it immediately 10:33
21 but they certainly became aware of it. And having
22 become aware of it, they were certainly very concerned
23 about it.

24 92 Q. And did you discuss with your senior colleagues what
25 concerns the article gave rise to? 10:34

26 A. Yes.

27 93 Q. And I'm just going to go through the concerns that you
28 identify there. First of all, the allegations, if
29 proven, would amount to serious police misconduct?

1 A. Yes.

2 94 Q. Because they would amount to the police having failed
3 to act upon relevant information --

4 A. Yes.

5 95 Q. -- relating to planned attack which had in the result 10:34
6 eventuated with many, many, many deaths?

7 A. Yes.

8 96 Q. If true, might it be said that the allegations could
9 hardly be more serious in terms of police conduct
10 issues? 10:34

11 A. Yes.

12 97 Q. And as you say, if true, they had massive potential to
13 damage the integrity of the RUC in relation to the
14 handling of the events surrounding the Omagh bombing?

15 A. Yes. 10:35

16 98 Q. Was that the first factor that you and your team --

17 A. The families and the damage to policing, yes, yeah.
18 Misconduct, the families, the damage to policing.

19 99 Q. Obviously, you would have been taking into account that
20 the article related to what you describe as arguably 10:35
21 the most grave and exceptional crime in the history of
22 Northern Ireland?

23 A. Yes.

24 100 Q. A most dreadful atrocity?

25 A. Yeah. 10:35

26 101 Q. You mentioned the family and as you tell us in the
27 statement you recognised, you and your team, that the
28 allegations could only cause continuing distress and
29 pain to survivors and the bereaved families?

1 A. Yes.

2 102 Q. And, moreover, the allegations made by Mr. Harkin in
3 his article had already attracted very considerable
4 national and international media coverage?

5 A. Yes. 10:36

6 103 Q. So, for a variety of reasons, it would have been
7 inappropriate for your office to have done nothing?

8 A. Yeah.

9 104 Q. Is that the view you came to?

10 A. Yes. 10:36

11 105 Q. Now, did you immediately commence a formal
12 investigation or take some steps preliminary to that?

13 A. I talked to my colleagues about it and on 2nd August I
14 told the Chief Constable that we were making some
15 enquiries about the article and he assured me of full 10:36
16 cooperation. And then we asked for information, we
17 interviewed Kevin Fulton -- sorry, Mr. Bridger
18 interviewed Kevin Fulton and we considered his
19 credibility. And then on 14th August I told the Chief
20 that I would initiate an investigation under 55(6) of 10:36
21 the Act. And it was going to be a very simple, very
22 short investigation, simply had information been made
23 available to the RUC prior to the bomb and if it had
24 been made available had it been responded to
25 appropriately and I did not expect it to take very 10:37
26 long.

27 106 Q. So, you thought that this was going to be fairly
28 narrowly-focused investigation?

29 A. Yes.

1 107 Q. And you could come to a conclusion reasonably quickly?
2 A. Yes.

3 108 Q. And the chronology of this was 2nd August, you tell the
4 Chief Constable you're going to take some preliminary
5 steps. 10:37
6 A. Yes.

7 109 Q. Sir Ronnie assures of his cooperation. On 8th August,
8 Mr. Bridger of your office interviewed Kevin Fulton?
9 A. Yes.

10 110 Q. And I believe you told us that that was because his 10:37
11 credibility was important?
12 A. Yes.

13 111 Q. Do you mean by that that if Mr. Bridger had been able
14 to establish that Kevin Fulton was a fantasist or
15 wholly unreliable for some different basis, that that 10:37
16 would have weighed against a formal investigation?
17 A. Well, that would have had to be taken into account in
18 the context of any information which we could find out
19 about Mr. Fulton as an RUC informant and as an
20 informant, it turned out, to other agencies. But that 10:38
21 would have been part of it. But really we wanted to
22 know exactly what Kevin Fulton had said to The Sunday
23 People because I knew that it may be that The Sunday
24 People was misreporting.

25 112 Q. So, you needed to understand what he had said to The 10:38
26 Sunday People?
27 A. Yes.

28 113 Q. You needed to make an assessment of his credibility and
29 reliability?

1 A. Yeah. You could only call it a preliminary assessment,
2 you couldn't call it an assessment.

3 114 Q. I've understood. So, on a provisional basis?

4 A. Yeah.

5 115 Q. Making that assessment, I'm sorry I'd overstated it. 10:38

6 A. No, no.

7 116 Q. In that period between 2nd August and 14th August, when
8 you commenced an investigation under Section 55(6), did
9 you obtain some information that was relevant to the
10 credibility of Kevin Fulton? 10:39

11 A. Yes, we did.

12 117 Q. And it may be that that's what we find at your
13 paragraph 37?

14 A. Yes.

15 118 Q. Had it been established that at the time of the bombing 10:39
16 the person known as "Kevin Fulton" was considered to be
17 a reliable source and the information he provided was
18 so regarded?

19 A. Yes. There was nothing to indicate that he was
20 unreliable. 10:39

21 119 Q. And that he had provided information about dissident
22 terrorist activity in 1998?

23 A. Yes.

24 120 Q. But that in May 2000, so after the Omagh bombing, he'd
25 been declared "dangerous" and was said to be 10:39
26 unreliable?

27 A. Yes.

28 121 Q. At that very early stage, were you making any
29 distinction between information that he may have

1 provided about general criminality and information that
2 he may have provided about subversive activity?

3 A. well, because this was in the context of the Omagh
4 bombing we were particularly interested in information
5 which he provided about subversive activity, and 10:40
6 although he provided it to CID handler it was material
7 which was handed to Special Branch.

8 122 Q. So, as I've said, a decision was then taken to
9 establish an investigation?

10 A. Yes. 10:40

11 123 Q. And did the investigation begin with two particular
12 terms of reference?

13 A. Yes.

14 124 Q. And are those the Terms of Reference we see at
15 paragraph 38 of your statement? 10:40

16 A. Yes.

17 125 Q. Namely, one, whether any information of relevance to
18 the bombing was available to the RUC prior to the Omagh
19 bomb?

20 A. Yes. 10:40

21 126 Q. And two, if such information did exist, whether it had
22 been responded to appropriately by the RUC?

23 A. Yes.

24 127 Q. And so this is why you tell us initially you felt that
25 it was going to be a narrowly-focused investigation? 10:41

26 A. Yes.

27 128 Q. Did you notify the Secretary of State for Northern
28 Ireland that there was to be such an investigation?

29 A. I did, I had a duty under the Act to keep the Secretary

1 of State informed about matters which might cause
2 public interest and which he might need to respond on.
3 So, I did on 3rd August and again on 14th August.

4 129 Q. And at that stage was the Secretary of State John Reid?
5 A. I think so. I'm sorry, I would have to check. 10:41

6 130 Q. I think he had become the Secretary of State on 25th
7 January 2001 having taken over from Peter Mandelson.
8 So, that chronology would seem to be correct.

9 A. Thank you.

10 131 Q. At an early stage, did you receive a letter from the 10:41
11 head of the RUC Special Branch?

12 A. Yes.

13 132 Q. And was that a response to a letter that your office
14 had sent on 3rd August?

15 A. Yes, it was seeking information. 10:42

16 133 Q. And did the reply respond to the request for
17 information that you had made?

18 A. It did but it didn't respond completely.

19 134 Q. So that a series of questions had been imposed, a
20 series of answers had been given; were you told that 10:42
21 material would be available to your team at RUC
22 Headquarters?

23 A. Yes.

24 135 Q. And was it your understanding that all relevant
25 material was going to be made available? 10:42

26 A. Yes.

27 136 Q. And is what you're saying to us that subsequently you
28 discovered that there was other information in addition
29 to that, that was made available that was relevant?

1 A. Yes.

2 137 Q. So, that what was made available initially was
3 incomplete?

4 A. Yes.

5 138 Q. When you discovered that it was incomplete, was that a 10:43
6 source of disappointment for you?

7 A. Yes.

8 139 Q. In due course did what you hope to be a
9 narrowly-focused investigation become broader?

10 A. Yes. 10:43

11 140 Q. I'm going to come to the circumstances in which that
12 occurred, and this takes us to paragraph 43?

13 A. Yes.

14 141 Q. Was a discovery made by your team in September 2021?

15 A. Yes -- no, we were told, we were told. 10:43

16 142 Q. So, you received information?

17 A. Yeah.

18 143 Q. And did you receive information that the Assistant
19 Chief Commissioner, Raymond or Ray White, had
20 commissioned a review of the police investigation into 10:44
21 the Omagh bombing, as had been conducted up to that
22 point?

23 A. Yes.

24 144 Q. Were you told that the review had been requested by the
25 senior investigating officer for that investigation in 10:44
26 August 1999?

27 A. Yes.

28 145 Q. And that the review had been carried out by Detective
29 Chief Superintendent Brian McVicker?

1 A. Yes.

2 146 Q. The Chairman, for your information, heard evidence from
3 Mr. McVicker both on Thursday of last week and
4 yesterday about his findings.

5 A. Yeah. 10:44

6 147 Q. Did you receive information that ACC White was informed
7 of emerging findings from the review in May of 2000?

8 A. Yes.

9 148 Q. And did you discover that an instruction had been given
10 by the Chief Constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, on 2nd 10:45
11 June?

12 A. Yes.

13 149 Q. What did you discover that instruction to have been?

14 A. Sorry, the instruction was given to the Omagh bomb
15 investigation -- sorry, that nothing was to go to the 10:45
16 police Omagh bomb investigation until the Review Team
17 had completed its work. And I think Mr. McVicker felt
18 that that was appropriate because it made a line in the
19 sand as to what he was reviewing.

20 150 Q. Yes. So, certainly one can see a logic in that? 10:45

21 A. Yes.

22 151 Q. Pause what's going on until the review has completed
23 its work?

24 A. Yeah.

25 152 Q. And was it your understanding that the review of 10:45
26 Mr. McVicker was completed and a report produced in
27 November 2000?

28 A. Yes.

29 153 Q. And that it had been discussed at length by senior

1 police officers at a meeting some months later on 7th
2 June 2001?

3 A. Yes.

4 154 Q. And that it had been agreed that additional resources
5 would be provided to the police investigation into the 10:46
6 bombing on 3rd of September 2001 to enable it to come
7 together after the summer marching season?

8 A. Yes, and that was nine months after the review was
9 completed.

10 155 Q. So, the review had been commissioned, the review had 10:46
11 reported. It had been discussed some months later, and
12 a decision had been made to commit additional resources
13 a number of months after that and after the marching
14 season?

15 A. Well, resources were committed for the HOLMES accounts 10:46
16 which is the police database for investigations and to
17 the forensic science, I think in January or February of
18 2001, so those two issues were given additional
19 resources but nothing else was.

20 156 Q. Now, you've said that you were told about the McVicker 10:47
21 Report?

22 A. Yes.

23 157 Q. Were you told officially of the McVicker Report or did
24 your team discover it in some different way?

25 A. We were told unofficially. The Chief Constable has 10:47
26 said that it was mentioned at his annual report 2001 in
27 June, published in June. I did actually check the
28 annual report and I discovered that there are two
29 sentences on page 19 of his commentary, that's it, just

1 saying that the review had been set up and
2 recommendations were being dealt with. But I don't
3 think that my inquiry should have had to go and search
4 his annual report to find out that the McVicker Review
5 had been established and that the reported had been 10:48
6 received.

7 158 Q. So, we know that on 3rd August the team had made a
8 request for information?

9 A. Yes.

10 159 Q. And as we learn from paragraph 4, that had included, 10:48
11 has there ever been a review conducted into
12 intelligence available relating to the Omagh bombing?

13 A. Yes.

14 160 Q. And the point you are making, I believe, but tell me if
15 I've misunderstood, is that would you have expected to 10:48
16 have been officially informed, proactively, of the
17 McVicker Report as opposed to being expected to learn
18 of it or not learn of it through an internal review?

19 A. Yes.

20 161 Q. Through an annual review? 10:48

21 A. Yes.

22 162 Q. Now, we'll come back to the McVicker Review in a
23 moment. On 21st August had you been informed that
24 there was, in existence, what you came to term the
25 Omagh Intelligence Report? 10:49

26 A. Yes.

27 163 Q. So, this is something different from the McVicker
28 Report?

29 A. It's completely different, yes.

1 164 Q. Because McVicker had a chapter dealing with
2 intelligence but was also dealing with much broader
3 issues in relation to the investigation?
4 A. Yeah.

5 165 Q. Was the existence of the Omagh Intelligence Report 10:49
6 something that you were told about officially?
7 A. We were told on 21st August, I think in the letter from
8 ACC White about it, and we did receive a copy of it.
9 It didn't contain, if I remember correctly, information
10 which I would have expected it to contain. 10:49

11 166 Q. So, I'm just keen to get the chronology clear in my
12 mind.
13 A. Yes.

14 167 Q. 3rd August, request?
15 A. Yes. 10:49

16 168 Q. 21st August, informed of the Omagh Intelligence Report?
17 A. Yeah.

18 169 Q. Was that made available to you?
19 A. Yes.

20 170 Q. And was it examined by your office on 28th of August 10:50
21 2001?
22 A. It was.

23 171 Q. So, that's the intelligence report that I know we'll
24 need to come back to.
25 10:50
26 Was it then on 5th September 2001 that your team were
27 informed, unofficially, of the existence of the
28 McVicker Report or review?
29 A. Yes.

1 172 Q. And, alongside the chronology of what had happened in
2 relation to that review that you've told us about, did
3 you learn that it had been quality assured by her
4 Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary?
5 A. Yes. 10:50
6 173 Q. who had concluded that it was a thorough, good and
7 relevant review?
8 A. Yes.
9 174 Q. Having discovered on 5th September that the review
10 existed, did your team seek a copy? 10:50
11 A. Yes.
12 175 Q. what initially was the response?
13 A. That there was only one copy, that it was in
14 ACC white's safe and it wasn't likely to be made
15 available. 10:51
16 176 Q. Did you regard that as an acceptable state of affairs?
17 A. No.
18 177 Q. On 7th September did Mr Wood meet with the Chief
19 Constable and explain that your team required the
20 McVicker Report? 10:51
21 A. Yes.
22 178 Q. And at that stage what did the Chief Constable say
23 about that request?
24 A. He said he had no difficulty with us getting it.
25 179 Q. Did he, as it was reported to you by Mr. Wood, say 10:51
26 anything about what his plan was in relation to the
27 McVicker Review and its recommendations?
28 A. He hadn't quite decided what he was going to do about
29 it.

1 180 Q. Thank you. Did the Chief Constable give Mr. Wood a
2 copy of the intelligence chapter of the McVicker
3 Report?
4 A. Yes, he did, he gave him that and he gave him the
5 cross-reference documents. 10:52
6 181 Q. And did he explain something in particular to Mr. Wood
7 as it was reported to you?
8 A. He said he had given a commitment to the families that
9 no stone would be left unturned and he said anyhow,
10 nothing would be lost in time. So, we thought come 10:52
11 September, after the marching season, we would deal
12 with it. He also said that if I wanted access to the
13 full report, then Mr. Wood would have to make a case
14 for it.
15 182 Q. Once you and Mr. Wood had read the part of the McVicker 10:53
16 Report that you had been provided with and the
17 accompanying material, did you come to the view that
18 you did indeed need access to the full report?
19 A. Absolutely.
20 183 Q. And on 10th September did Mr. Wood write to the Chief 10:53
21 Constable seeking the full report?
22 A. Yes.
23 184 Q. Expressing concerns over the absence of disclosure?
24 A. Yes.
25 185 Q. And did he raise two particular issues? 10:53
26 A. Whether appropriate action had been taken in respect of
27 various strands of intelligence that had been received,
28 and whether the intelligence had been passed to the
29 Omagh bomb investigation, and, if not, should it have

1 been? The question was, would it have opened new lines
2 of inquiry which would have assisted the Omagh bomb
3 investigation but which hadn't been exploited.

4 186 Q. Did Mr. Wood also write to ACC White at about this
5 time? 10:54

6 A. He did, yes.

7 187 Q. And at paragraph 52 of your statement you tell us that:
8

9 "He, in his letter, expressed astonishment that despite
10 the fact that we had requested and been assured that we 10:54
11 had all intelligence relating to the bombing or other
12 terrorist incidents or plans around that time, we had
13 not been notified of the McVicker Review or that its
14 report existed."

15 10:54

16 A. Yes.

17 188 Q. That word "astonishment" is a strong word, I'm sure
18 you'll agree, to use, but did that reflect how you and
19 your team felt at that point in time?

20 A. I think we are now nearly six weeks into an inquiry, we 10:54
21 had asked for all the intelligence and we hadn't even
22 been told about this very significant document, so
23 "astonishment" was the appropriate word.

24 189 Q. As part of your reaction did you take account of the
25 fact that in the intelligence chapter of the McVicker 10:55
26 Report you had read about anonymous information passed
27 on to a detective in Omagh and on to Special Branch on
28 4th August 1998 indicating that an attack would be made
29 on police in Omagh on 15th August?

1 A. Yes.

2 190 Q. So, on the day of the bombing?

3 A. Yes.

4 191 Q. And was that information about the 4th August 1998 call
5 something that you had otherwise become aware of? 10:55

6 A. No, and we questioned whether we would ever have known
7 but for the McVicker Review.

8 192 Q. Did Mr. Wood pose a series of questions to ACC White
9 and seek assurances from him in relation to the issues
10 that had arisen? 10:56

11 A. Yes, yes, in a letter, I think, of 10th September. We
12 identified 12 preliminary findings and we asked him to
13 agree with those so that they would be common.

14 193 Q. As a result of the concerns that you had, were your
15 desires for access to the full McVicker Review further 10:56
16 invigorated?

17 A. Absolutely.

18 194 Q. If did you decide that if the full report wasn't made
19 available that you might have to take a particular
20 step? 10:56

21 A. Yes.

22 195 Q. What step did you consider would you have to make?

23 A. I would definitely have to inform the Omagh families
24 and I felt that I would have to put key information
25 about the failure to provide that information to my 10:56
26 office into the public domain, and Mr. Wood did explain
27 that to ACC White, bearing in mind that the police were
28 under a duty to provide us with all information we
29 requested.

1 196 Q. So, was Mr. Wood explaining what might have to happen?
2 A. Yes.

3 197 Q. Was that kind a tool or trigger to generate the report
4 or was it a genuine reflection of what you thought you
5 might have to do, or was it a bit of both? 10:57

6 A. I haven't thought about that. It was certainly in
7 part, I had to work out what I would do if he wouldn't
8 give it to me and, also, it was just the significance
9 of this document to our work and to the work of the
10 Omagh bomb investigation. 10:57

11 198 Q. It sounds as if it probably was --

12 A. Yeah.

13 199 Q. You needed this, you needed to work out how to get it
14 but, also, you did have a responsibility to the
15 families? 10:57

16 A. Yeah.

17 200 Q. And did that seem to work because on 11th September the
18 Chief Constable rang you and told you that he wanted to
19 bring the McVicker Review to you himself?

20 A. He did, and I told him that was not necessary, I just 10:58
21 wanted it.

22 201 Q. And did he accept that?

23 A. No, he insisted he would bring it to me himself and did
24 he. So I left the meeting. We had the training day in
25 the King's Hall in Belfast I think and I went out into 10:58
26 the car park and he handed it to me. I arranged for it
27 to be taken to secured premises in my office.

28 202 Q. By 19th September - I'm now at paragraph 58 - were you
29 continuing to experience certain difficulties?

1 A. Yes.

2 203 Q. And what were those difficulties?

3 A. Well, when we received intelligence in the beginning it

4 was redacted and really you can't conduct an inquiry on

5 the basis of redacted intelligence, and then we 10:58

6 couldn't get access to the police database for handling

7 intelligence, so there were arguments about that. That

8 was eventually granted, maybe I'm going ahead of you.

9 204 Q. No, no, it doesn't matter particularly getting ahead on

10 this topic. 10:59

11 A. That was eventually granted, I think, on 9th October

12 and then we -- one of my investigators, looking at

13 information from the database to which we had been

14 given access to the documents, noticed that there was a

15 different font on one of the documents and he asked 10:59

16 about it and it was at that point we discovered that

17 the police also had another database which they hadn't

18 told us about and --

19 205 Q. Another sensitive database?

20 A. A sensitive database. So, I sought access to that. I 10:59

21 have to say it was, it really was profoundly difficult

22 that we were trying to almost like draw teeth in terms

23 of getting information out of the police.

24 206 Q. I'm just going to pause for a moment in the chronology,

25 we will come back to 19th September, but now might be a 10:59

26 convenient time to deal with an issue that some of the

27 Core Participants have shown an interest in.

28

29 Just taking this in stages. Did it become obvious, or

1 was it obvious to you from the outset of this
2 investigation that you were going to have to seek
3 access to sensitive information?

4 A. Yes.

5 207 Q. And prior to becoming the Police Ombudsman, was 11:00
6 accessing secret or top secret information something
7 that you had had to do?

8 A. Not before I was Police Ombudsman, no.

9 208 Q. But before this investigation started in the very early
10 part of August, had you any experience of dealing with 11:00
11 secret or top secret information?

12 A. Certainly secret information because we were conducting
13 other investigations for nearly a year at that point.
14 So, yes. And my staff too, and we had set up an
15 intelligence suite, et cetera, et cetera. 11:01

16 209 Q. So, this is just really what I want to understand
17 because certainly speaking for myself, I've detected a
18 sense that there was a lack of realism on your part in
19 relation to what needed to be done during this period
20 to be enable you to access sensitive information? 11:01

21 A. No. Before I became Police Ombudsman, I enquired about
22 security clearance for my staff. The Developed Vetting
23 process I was told was profoundly expensive, but I was
24 told that if my staff were security cleared, that would
25 give them access, on an occasional basis, to secret 11:01
26 information and that, in those circumstances, security
27 clearance would be adequate. Some of my staff had
28 developed vetting status before they came to me but
29 your developed vetting status attaches to an office and

1 therefore, I think ceases when you leave that office.
2 But they were all cleared and they all had the right of
3 access to information. To such an extent that when the
4 Chief Constable raised the issue of vetting status and
5 he actually went to, I think, Assistant Commissioner 11:02
6 Veness of the Metropolitan Police Service, Assistant
7 Commissioner Veness was able to say yes, these people
8 would have access to his Special Branch and secret
9 material and that there was no problem. And we did go
10 to significant lengths to set up secure premises, et 11:02
11 cetera, et cetera. And the Police Association, Chief
12 Officers, Superintendents and other ranks, were
13 involved in the setting up of the office which included
14 that.

15 210 Q. Let me just, you've used some terms that not everyone 11:02
16 may be familiar with?

17 A. Sorry.

18 211 Q. You mustn't apologise. I'll just see if I can draw the
19 strands together and then if others wish to ask you
20 questions and have permission to do about this, they 11:02
21 can do.

22
23 You mentioned two types of clearance. Security
24 clearance or SC which permits occasional access to
25 secret material, and then there is a level of clearance 11:03
26 above that referred to as DV, or developed vetting,
27 enabling somebody who holds that clearance to access
28 more sensitive information. And as you went into this
29 investigation in August, did you understand that

1 bearing in mind would you have to access sensitive
2 information that it would need to be persons with an
3 appropriate level of clearance that would do that?

4 A. I understood that people with security clearance would
5 have do it, yes. I mean it was a very, very small 11:03
6 cohort, largely of Metropolitan Police seconded
7 officers. I had an intelligence officer from the
8 Metropolitan Police, Mr. Wood and Mr. Bridger as well.

9 212 Q. I'm going to be careful that we don't get into areas
10 that we ought not to deal with in open. But you'd 11:03
11 understood that --

12 A. Yes.

13 213 Q. -- your team who had SC (security clearance) would be
14 able to access the material?

15 A. Yes. 11:04

16 214 Q. And were you subsequently told that they would need
17 developed vetting clearance?

18 A. No, Mr. Veness from the Metropolitan Police said they
19 would get access to his Special Branch, and that
20 continued. I think we did move on to insist on 11:04
21 developed vetting so that there would be no challenge
22 of that type again.

23 215 Q. But you believe that a potential problem was addressed.
24 Did you also understand and accept, as you got into
25 this process, that to the extent that your staff and 11:04
26 you would need to access sensitive material that you
27 would only be able to do that in controlled conditions?

28 A. Absolutely.

29 216 Q. As I've said, if anyone wants to ask you more about

1 that and has permission to do so they no doubt will.

2 A. Yeah.

3 217 Q. But you had an appreciation of and a respect of the
4 need to handle such material appropriately and only via
5 persons with appropriate levels of clearance? 11:05

6 A. Absolutely.

7 218 Q. Let's go back to the chronology. So, 19th September,
8 you were experiencing difficulties gaining access to
9 the Special Branch material that you needed.

10 A. Mm-hmm. 11:05

11 219 Q. So, did you telephone the Chief Constable? I'm at
12 paragraph 58.

13 A. Yes. Sorry, yes, I did. Yes.

14 220 Q. And did you say that you needed to be able to bring
15 copies of the material back to your office? 11:05

16 A. I did. Under controlled circumstances but yes, we
17 needed to be able to do that.

18 221 Q. And did he say he would respond later and ask you to
19 call into RUC Headquarters at Knock?

20 A. No, he said he'd respond later. I was on my way to RUC 11:05
21 Headquarters -- to RUC Castlereagh and on my way back I
22 received another phone call from him, as I recall,
23 asking him if I would call at RUC Knock, the
24 headquarters, and I did so.

25 222 Q. And, did you call in to speak to him? 11:06

26 A. I did.

27 223 Q. And in what you deal with next I'm going to take care
28 not to name a particular individual who you name in
29 paragraph 59, does that make sense?

1 A. Yes.

2 224 Q. We'll identify him by rank.

3 A. Yes.

4 225 Q. But did the Chief Constable tell you that he was
5 concerned about the vulnerability of the bereaved and 11:06
6 the survivors of the Omagh explosion?

7 A. He did.

8 226 Q. And did you understand that he was suggesting that he
9 was concerned because of the investigation that you
10 were conducting, or that he was just expressing, in a 11:06
11 vacuum, a general concern?

12 A. Well, I think given the context he probably was talking
13 about in the context of what we were investigating but
14 also the vulnerability, I think, attaching to the fact
15 that nobody had been made amenable for the bomb. So, I 11:07
16 think those two things.

17 227 Q. And I believe he also told you that he was concerned
18 about the impact of the investigation on the officers
19 who had been involved on the day of the explosion?

20 A. He did. 11:07

21 228 Q. And you assured him that you were not investigating
22 that issue?

23 A. We had made it absolutely clear that we weren't
24 investigating anything which post-dated the bomb and
25 that all we were doing was looking at information, et 11:07
26 cetera. And I made that clear, consistently,
27 throughout because I was aware of the terrible toll
28 that it took on the officers that day.

29 229 Q. Did the Chief Constable tell you that he had spoken to,

1 or at least received information from the person who
2 had had the role of Sub-Divisional Commander in Omagh
3 on 15th August?
4 A. He did.
5 230 Q. And that he had been made aware of the 4th August 1998 11:08
6 call?
7 A. Yes.
8 231 Q. And that he, the Sub-Divisional Commander, had been
9 adamant that he had not been made aware of that
10 information prior to 15th August? 11:08
11 A. Prior to 15th August 2000.
12 232 Q. Prior to 15th August 2000?
13 A. Yeah.
14 233 Q. So certainly, before 15th August 1998 and, indeed, not
15 until 15th August 2000? 11:08
16 A. Correct.
17 234 Q. So, the first time he had become aware of it, the
18 Sub-Divisional Commander, was during the course of
19 Mr. McVicker's investigation?
20 A. Yes. 11:08
21 235 Q. Or his review at any rate?
22 A. Yes.
23 236 Q. As of 19th September, did it seem to you from the
24 chronology that the Chief Constable knew of the
25 McVicker Review and had received it months earlier? 11:09
26 A. Yes.
27 237 Q. And, as we know, the review had made many, many
28 recommendations and did you know whether or not they
29 had been implemented?

1 A. Well, we had some knowledge of what had been
2 implemented and what hadn't, yes.

3 238 Q. Did it seem to you that the recommendations had or had
4 not been implemented?

5 A. It seemed to me that the critical ones hadn't. I mean, 11:09
6 I wouldn't say all of them because recommendations
7 about forensics and HOLMES, a certain amount of work
8 had been done, but there were a huge number of
9 recommendations, you know, possible lines of inquiry
10 which could be followed about people who had been in 11:09
11 Omagh and cars that had been in Omagh, and all sorts of
12 things like that which I think I knew at that stage had
13 not been followed.

14 239 Q. You had become aware of the review in the circumstances
15 that you have described. Mr. Wood had reported to you 11:09
16 that the Chief Constable had said on 7th September that
17 he didn't know what he was going to do with the McVicker
18 Review?

19 A. Yeah.

20 240 Q. And on 19th September 2001 did the Chief Constable say 11:10
21 anything to you about what he intended to do?

22 A. He said it was a very live document. He said they were
23 doing a lot of work arising from it and he said that
24 the only things which remained unaddressed were the
25 linked investigations issue, that was the issue of Real 11:10
26 IRA bombings which had occurred during 1998 and in
27 respect of which there were similar features which led
28 them to be capable of being linked.

29 241 Q. Quite a lot had happened and a good deal had been

1 established by your team by 19th September?

2 A. Yeah.

3 242 Q. And on that day did you reflect on the meeting and
4 discuss where you were with the team?

5 A. Yes. 11:10

6 243 Q. And, as a result, was a decision made?

7 A. Yes, I extended the scope of the investigation.

8 244 Q. So, we know that there had been two Terms of Reference.
9 On that date, 19th September, did you extend the Terms
10 of Reference to include whether intelligence held by 11:11
11 the RUC was correctly revealed to, and exploited by,
12 the Omagh bomb investigation team?

13 A. Yes.

14 245 Q. And was that a reference in particular to the 4th
15 August call? 11:11

16 A. Yes, but a lot of other things.

17 246 Q. And other things?

18 A. Yeah.

19 247 Q. So, that would be Term of Reference 3. And Term of
20 Reference 4, second new one, whether the evidential 11:11
21 opportunities contained within the McVicker Review had
22 been investigated?

23 A. Yes.

24 248 Q. And did you advise both the Chief Constable and
25 Secretary of State of the extension to the Terms of 11:11
26 Reference?

27 A. I did.

28 MR. GREANEY: Now, we're going to turn to a separate
29 but connected topic next. And, Sir, I wonder, bearing

1 in mind we've been going for almost an hour and 15
2 minutes, whether this might be a convenient time for
3 our mid-morning break. If you think it is, I'm going
4 to ask that we restart at 11:30 please.

5 CHAIRMAN: Yes, if that's a convenient point for your
6 examination. 11:12

7 MR. GREANEY: It is, Sir, yes.

8
9 THE INQUIRY ADJOURNED BRIEFLY AND RESUMED AS FOLLOWS:

10
11 CHAIRMAN: Mr. Greaney. 11:33

12 MR. GREANEY: Thank you, Sir.

13
14 BARONESS O' LOAN CONTINUED TO BE QUESTIONED BY

15 MR. GREANEY AS FOLLOWS: 11:33

16
17 249 Q. MR. GREANEY: Lady O'Loan, in the Rule 9 request that
18 you responded to in your witness statement, you were
19 asked at the top of page 20, Question 3:

20
21 "Please provide a high level summary of the information
22 and access you were provided with in order to carry out
23 your investigation." 11:34

24
25 And for my part, we have dealt with already, 11:34
26 sufficiently, the access arrangements as you described
27 them on pages 20 to 22. So far as information is
28 concerned, again, you've largely covered this ground
29 already, but could I take you to paragraph 79. You say

1 at paragraph 79, page 23, having set out your
2 expectation that you would be provided with relevant
3 information, you state:

4
5 "Among the information which was not produced or was 11:34
6 produced only following repeated requests by my staff
7 were the following documents which were vitally
8 important to the investigation."

9
10 And there is then a list. First of all, the McVicker 11:35
11 Review, which I consider we've dealt with adequately
12 already.

13
14 Secondly:

15 11:35
16 "The RUC Omagh Threat Book in which the information
17 received on 4th August 1998 should have been recorded
18 as should have any other relevant threat received."

19
20 Just pausing for a moment. This is a police document 11:35
21 in which would you have expected information relating
22 to the call of 4th August about an attack on the police
23 on 15th August to have been recorded?

24 A. Yes.

25 250 Q. And were you ever provided with the Threat Book that 11:35
26 covered the period of 4th August?

27 A. No, it was never found. But I would say that the Chief
28 Constable in his response on this acknowledged that
29 there had been a Threat Book for the period before, up

1 to '96 and there was a Threat Book for '99 and,
2 therefore, there must have been a Threat Book between
3 '96 and '99, it just wasn't available.

4 251 Q. And what you can say is as one, that it was never made
5 available to you; two, that your understanding was that 11:36
6 that was because it had not been found.

7 A. [Witness nods].

8 252 Q. And you're nodding your head. And, indeed, my
9 understanding is that as of today that Threat Book
10 still has not been found? 11:36

11 A. Yes, yes.

12 253 Q. And would you have wanted to see that Threat Book in
13 order to see the terms in which the call of 4th August
14 had been recorded, assuming it had been recorded?

15 A. Yes, because my expectation was that, according to the 11:36
16 Force Order which required general threats to be
17 communicated to Sub-Divisional Commanders, that it
18 would have been communicated to the Sub-Divisional
19 Commander and that it would have been entered in the
20 Threat Book. The question, it went to the misconduct 11:37
21 inquiry, you know, if the information wasn't
22 communicated, who should it have been communicated by,
23 et cetera, et cetera.

24 254 Q. So, that was the second document or class of document?

25 A. Yeah. 11:37

26 255 Q. Thirdly, you refer to particular documents relating to
27 Kevin Fulton?

28 A. Yes.

29 256 Q. And are you there referring, at least in part, to the

1 two contact sheets that could not be found for meetings
2 between him and his handler?

3 A. Yes, 23rd July and 12th August I think.

4 257 Q. We'll check that those dates, but certainly one was
5 late July and one was 12th August.

11:37

6
7 Just pausing for a moment. The intelligence system,
8 obviously being careful how we deal with this, the
9 intelligence system that you had discovered the
10 existence of during the course of your work, so the 11:38
11 second system as you described it; were you able to
12 establish who - by which I mean which types of police
13 officer - were able to utilise that system? So, was it
14 only Special Branch or could others access it, or don't
15 you know?

11:38

16 A. My understanding was that it was only Special Branch
17 officers. We had an RUC Liaison Officer at
18 Headquarters who was liaising between Headquarters and
19 my investigation and he certainly was unaware of a lot
20 of material and I don't think he would have had access, 11:38
21 I couldn't talk about all the individual officers but
22 it was a Special Branch operation.

23 258 Q. The two contact sheets that you were not provided with,
24 were you able to take any steps to see whether those
25 contact sheets had ever found their way on to the 11:39
26 system that we are just discussing?

27 A. My understanding is that the Kevin Fulton information,
28 I know it wasn't known to Mr. McVicker who did the
29 Omagh bomb review, I'm fairly sure it was not known at

1 all to Chief Superintendent Hamilton who did the
2 investigation.

3 259 Q. Yes.

4 A. I'm not sure whether it was on the -- actually, I'm
5 sorry, I can't assist you there. 11:39

6 260 Q. You don't know one way or the other?

7 A. No.

8 261 Q. So, I won't press that.

9 A. We could probably find out but I don't know.

10 262 Q. I was exploring that because I had been asked on the 11:39
11 part of one Core Participant that seemed to be a
12 relevant issue to me.

13 A. Mm-hmm.

14 263 Q. So, particular documents relating to Kevin Fulton
15 namely the contact sheets. Four, you say: 11:39

16

17 "Significant levels of intelligence documentation were
18 not provided until early December 2001."

19

20 And does this take us back to something that you were 11:40
21 describing earlier or is it something different?

22 A. We were looking at all the intelligence which may have
23 related to Omagh, so we were doing searches on the
24 second data system. We had an RUC officer actually
25 doing the searches because he was more familiar with 11:40
26 the system and my staff sat beside him while he did
27 them and directed the searches. So, we were looking at
28 any intelligence which may have related to Omagh. And
29 in the course of that we identified -- I do say in my

1 statement but it was something like 360 pieces of
2 information which related to Omagh, only 22% of which
3 had been handled to the senior investigating officer of
4 the Omagh bomb investigation.

5 264 Q. But, you had felt that there were 328 documents that 11:40
6 were of relevance that had not been given to the
7 investigator?

8 A. There were varying levels of relevance. I think I do
9 talk about it in my statement. There were varying
10 levels of relevance, what we would say highly relevant, 11:41
11 medium and low relevance, and we had looked at them and
12 only 22% of all those documents had been given to the
13 senior investigating officer as I recall.

14 265 Q. So, my maths might not be quite right, actually, or 11:41
15 even nearly right, but nonetheless there were a
16 substantial portion of the documents that had not found
17 their way to somewhere that you thought they would
18 have?

19 A. Absolutely.

20 266 Q. Five: 11:41

21
22 "The Chief Constable acknowledged that there was almost
23 1,800 missing documents."

24
25 what type of documents did he make that acknowledgment 11:41
26 in respect of?

27 A. There were documents missing from -- this came from the
28 McVicker Review, there were documents, receiver
29 documents which are documents which indicate

1 information which has been received which is then put
2 onto the HOLMES system and then the receiver enters all
3 the actions which are extracted from that particular
4 information which must be carried out by police
5 officers. So, it's a very clear indication of where an 11:42
6 investigation is going and what's required to be done.
7 And then you can check has that been done or hasn't it.
8 So, there were those documents, there were statements
9 missing, there were all sorts of things missing.

10 267 Q. And then, finally, dealing with the information that 11:42
11 you received or didn't receive, you make the
12 observation that there were occasions upon which you
13 requested documents, were told that they did not exist
14 but nonetheless they were found six, seven weeks later?

15 A. Yeah, yes. And I do understand, I mean I would say 11:42
16 that I do understand that in the vast quantities of
17 documentation and information that can take a while to
18 trace things, but sometimes it seemed a rather long
19 time.

20 268 Q. And I was going really to invite you to acknowledge 11:43
21 what you just have, that there were different ways of
22 looking, you were told things didn't exist but then
23 they did exist?

24 A. Yeah.

25 269 Q. And a way of looking at that is that having thought 11:43
26 that something didn't exist, the police continued to
27 search for it and when they found it, they made it
28 available to you?

29 A. Absolutely.

1 270 Q. Next, I'm going to deal with the process that you
2 adopted which you've dealt with very thoroughly in your
3 report. I'm going to deal with it at a high level.
4 The actual team that was established, was it managed by
5 Mr. Wood who was seconded from the Metropolitan police? 11:43
6 A. It was, yes.
7 271 Q. As we know, it was led by Mr. Bridger, an experienced
8 investigator; did he report to Mr. Wood?
9 A. He did. He also reported to me at intervals, he came
10 up and kept me informed all the way. 11:44
11 272 Q. Did the investigation team also comprise eight other
12 investigators?
13 A. Yes, that's what my records showed, yeah.
14 273 Q. Five of whom worked in the office?
15 A. Yes. 11:44
16 274 Q. So, in other words were permanent staff?
17 A. Yeah.
18 275 Q. And three of whom came on short-term secondment because
19 their particular expertise was required for the
20 investigation? 11:44
21 A. Yes.
22 276 Q. And did the team also comprise two intelligence
23 analysts?
24 A. Yes.
25 277 Q. The ranks of the seconded policing staff ranged from 11:44
26 Commander of Metropolitan Police?
27 A. Yes.
28 278 Q. Was that Mr. Wood?
29 A. Yes.

1 279 Q. Also including the Superintendent, as Mr. Bridger was
2 at that stage?
3 A. Yes.
4 280 Q. And moving down to a Detective Sergeant?
5 A. Yes. 11:45
6 281 Q. And were you satisfied that the team was comprised of
7 people with extensive and wide-ranging experience of a
8 relevant nature?
9 A. Absolutely.
10 282 Q. You have told us what the Terms of Reference for the 11:45
11 investigation included, and can we just deal with what
12 they didn't include?
13 A. Yes.
14 283 Q. First of all, as we know, they did not include the
15 immediate response to the bombing on 15th August. 11:45
16 Secondly, they did not include any actions and liaison
17 with the AGS?
18 A. Yes.
19 284 Q. Thirdly, the Terms of Reference did not include
20 evaluating the evidence against the people suspected of 11:45
21 carrying out the Omagh bombing?
22 A. Yes.
23 285 Q. And, fourthly, what you were not doing, as you've told
24 us, was either investigating or reinvestigating the
25 Omagh bombing? 11:45
26 A. That's correct.
27 286 Q. Indeed, would you have regarded carrying out a
28 reinvestigation of the Omagh bombing as having been
29 outside your powers?

1 A. Yes. We could have investigated had we had grounds to
2 believe that the Omagh investigation had been -- that
3 there had been misconduct in the course of the Omagh
4 investigation, we could have investigated. But we had
5 not, at the beginning when we established our Terms of 11:46
6 Reference, that wasn't what we were doing.

7 287 Q. No.

8 A. Later on it came down more to judgment and leadership.
9 So, that's how it was. We certainly weren't
10 reinvestigating nor did we -- we needed to be very 11:46
11 clear and stay very clearly within our Terms of
12 Reference in order to get this done so as to hand it
13 back, if you like, to the PSNI to get on with it.

14 288 Q. One can understand that there is a line which is
15 capable of becoming blurred, but are you clear that 11:46
16 throughout you were looking at this investigation
17 through the lens of police conduct?

18 A. Yes, absolutely.

19 289 Q. Now, in terms of what the investigation comprised, so
20 paragraph 85, did you establish a separate computer 11:47
21 system for that investigation alone?

22 A. Yes, it was a more secure system.

23 290 Q. Did you carry out an audit of information provided by
24 Kevin Fulton to police?

25 A. Yes. 11:47

26 291 Q. Including analysing what the content of that was,
27 whether and how it was assessed and graded and what was
28 done in response to the information provided by that
29 source?

1 A. Yes, yes.

2 292 Q. Did you carry out - and by you I mean you and your
3 team - an audit of the receipt, content, handling of
4 and response to the anonymous information received on
5 4th August, the 4th August call? 11:48

6 A. Yes.

7 293 Q. Did you analyse the intelligence available within all
8 parts of the RUC which was relevant to the reliability
9 of Kevin Fulton and the information in the 4th August
10 call? 11:48

11 A. Yes.

12 294 Q. Did you also examine matters related to the credibility
13 of Kevin Fulton?

14 A. Yes.

15 295 Q. And undertake an analysis of a wide sample of special 11:48
16 Branch and other RUC intelligence, informant files and
17 decision logs to establish whether it was relevant to
18 the Omagh bomb investigation and, in particular, to
19 identify links between the six individuals who had been
20 named in the 4th August call and whether they had any 11:48
21 association with republican paramilitary organisations?

22 A. Yes.

23 296 Q. And did you also consider it necessary to examine
24 information relating to a series of bombings in
25 Northern Ireland by dissident republicans which had 11:49
26 occurred during 1998 before the Omagh bombing?

27 A. Yes.

28 297 Q. Along with enquiries to establish what intelligence
29 Special Branch handed to the police officers who were

1 investigating the Omagh bombing and when it was handed
2 over?

3 A. Yes.

4 298 Q. This takes us back to the 360 documents and the 22%,
5 and 78%. 11:49

6 A. Mm-hmm.

7 299 Q. As part of that, as I've just indicated, did you
8 consider whether there was other evidence which should
9 have been provided or provided at an earlier time?

10 A. Well, my memory tells me that the Kevin Fulton 11:49
11 information was not provided to the Omagh bomb
12 investigation. It led to an identified line of
13 investigation which involved somebody I called Man A,
14 and that certainly should have been provided to the
15 Omagh bomb investigation. 11:50

16 300 Q. Yes.

17 A. Yes.

18 301 Q. So, the identity of Man A is something that we refer to
19 openly in these proceedings, we know Man A to be
20 Patrick 'Mooch' Blair? 11:50

21 A. Okay.

22 302 Q. Now, the next part of the process that you describe at
23 sub-paragraph (h) is interviews with RUC officers and
24 others?

25 A. Yes. 11:50

26 303 Q. And were interviews conducted with RUC officers?

27 A. Yes.

28 304 Q. I'm just pausing for a moment to deal with one issue
29 which I'm going to deal with in summary, give you the

1 opportunity to deal with. After publication of your
2 report, an officer of the RUC who was involved, in
3 part, concerning the 4th August phone call, made a
4 complaint to the Police Ombudsman about adverse
5 comments made about him in circumstances in which he 11:51
6 had been willing to be interviewed but had not been.
7 And there were some other matters referred to as well.

8 A. Mm-hmm.

9 305 Q. In 2009, by which time you were no longer the Police
10 Ombudsman -- 11:51

11 A. Yes.

12 306 Q. -- the Chief Executive Officer of the Ombudsman upheld
13 the part of the complaint relating to the failure to
14 interview him and concluded that the comments relating
15 to that person may have given the impression that the 11:51
16 individual was culpable, whereas the thrust of your
17 report had found culpability rested at a corporate
18 level?

19 A. Yes.

20 307 Q. First of all, can I check that you've understood what 11:52
21 I've just been talking about?

22 A. I think so.

23 308 Q. I've dealt with that at a high level and I will simply
24 ask you whether there is any comment that you would
25 wish to make about that or about interviews with RUC 11:52
26 officers more generally?

27 A. In the first instance, I think it would be important to
28 say that the officer who received the 4th August call
29 is not the officer we're talking about here, we're

1 talking about another officer, I think.

2 309 Q. You're being very careful not to name that person?

3 A. I am. Of course, I am, yes. So, we had sought to

4 interview that officer and he had not been interviewed,

5 he would not come forward for interview. When we 11:53

6 considered it -- he finally, I think, came forward on

7 3rd December, when we considered it we knew that he had

8 made a statement to the McVicker Review about what had

9 happened there, so we had information on his responses,

10 on the information. So, we determined that given that 11:53

11 that statement existed we did not need to take any more

12 and we could proceed. So, I mean, to the extent that

13 the wording in my report may have indicated that he,

14 you know, that there may have been misconduct issue

15 with him, that certainly wasn't intended and I 11:53

16 certainly would want to apologise to him for any

17 distress caused. But we didn't -- we simply were

18 always enquiring about is there misconduct here, and I

19 think that's where the problem arose.

20 310 Q. And so, you're very clear that you were not intending 11:54

21 in the report to indicate a misconduct issue in

22 relation to him?

23 A. No, no. These are misconduct enquiries of necessity.

24 311 Q. I'm still paused. You told me earlier that you

25 considered, when you started this investigation, that 11:54

26 there was a need for urgency, for all the reasons that

27 you gave, and after that, the investigation broadened

28 out for the reasons you've told us about. Had the need

29 for urgency reduced by the time the Terms of Reference

were expanded?

A. I think the need for urgency derived from the fact that if the RUC were not managing intelligence received properly and if bombs -- if there was the possibility of another bomb exploding, then the intelligence systems, and particularly the systems for disseminating information from Special Branch to CID, which was a major problem, that those issues needed to be resolved so that investigations could take place because there were linkages between the people involved, as I understand it, in the Omagh bomb and the people involved in some of the earlier bombs that year. So, there was an urgency attaching to could these people carry on if they're not apprehended. So, that was one part of it. The other part of it was the families. And the third part of it was the sort of reputational issues for the RUC, which I thought were important. So, the urgency had not diminished.

11:55

11:55

11:55

312 Q. We were dealing with interviews with RUC officers.

A. Mm-hmm.

11:56

313 Q. It might be thought the ideal is that any person who
may have any information of relevance to give should
provide a statement or be interviewed; was that ideal
achievable in the circumstances of urgency that you've
described?

11:56

A. well, we started looking for those two officers, I think, in mid-September, I'm not sure I can put a date on it.

314 Q. I'm not talking specifically about those two officers.

1 A. Oh, sorry.

2 315 Q. I'm just inviting you to address a more general point.

3 A. I think, generally, you want to get information from

4 people who may be able to supply that information which

5 provide the different parts of the jigsaw puzzle that 11:56

6 you're trying to complete. You don't go and get the

7 same information from ten different people, so you

8 don't necessarily interview everyone who was involved

9 in a particular thing. It's an iterative process, I

10 suppose. 11:56

11

12 we did interview a lot of police officers and some of

13 them were really, really helpful. There were one or

14 two who didn't want to be interviewed. We had no

15 powers to compel them, they weren't suspects. So, we 11:57

16 had no powers to compel them into interview.

17 316 Q. Because there was no conduct issue in relation to them?

18 A. Yes, exactly. They weren't under investigation for

19 misconduct.

20 317 Q. So, you were dependent upon their voluntary 11:57

21 participation in the process?

22 A. Yeah, yeah.

23 318 Q. Let's pick up with the list that you were providing us

24 with of what your investigation comprised. And we

25 learn from sub-paragraph (i) that it involved an 11:57

26 examination of the McVicker Review, an examination of

27 correspondence and the minutes of meetings, an analysis

28 of the content of and response by the RUC to the report

29 of the McVicker Review. And, as I say the RUC, during

1 the course of your investigation the RUC became the
2 PSNI on the th November. The preparation and repeated
3 checking of assertions by those to whom you spoke,
4 against evidence. And, obviously, work to produce a
5 draft Regulation 20 Report?

11:58

6 A. Yeah.

7 319 Q. And it involved the provision of notice on 22nd
8 November that your draft Regulation 20 Report would be
9 supplied to PSNI on 28th November for a response on 5th
10 December as to any factual errors identified in the
11 draft report?

11:58

12 A. Yes.

13 320 Q. So, a point that has been raised is that you had spent
14 a number of months carrying out an extensive
15 investigation and here, PSNI was being given a period
16 of about a week in order to read the report and address
17 any factual errors. The question that has been posed
18 is would you accept that that was too short a period of
19 time for a meaningful response and reaction?

11:58

20 A. Well, really what we were talking about was on factual
21 errors, the information of 4th August, the Kevin Fulton
22 information. The review. And the Chief Constable and
23 Assistant Chief Constable, Mr. White, had been involved
24 throughout the review and, indeed, Mr. White had had
25 responsibility for the Omagh bomb investigation. So,
26 it didn't seem to me that this was material which would
27 be unfamiliar to them. There were a series of letters,
28 we extended it to the 7th December, but in the end we
29 decided that we needed to go ahead and report, because

11:59

11:59

1 we really had reached the point at which I was
2 absolutely satisfied that what was in that report could
3 be corroborated by the evidence which we had. So, I
4 was in no doubt that what we were saying was correct.
5 And I think that that has proved to be the case, apart 12:00
6 from errors like -- there were a couple of errors we
7 gave the wrong date for the Patten Report which was
8 unfortunate, it was a "9" instead of an "8" I think,
9 but things like that, for the most part there was no
10 actual errors in the report. So, we decided that the 12:00
11 needs of the Inquiry, the Omagh bomb investigation, the
12 need to move the thing on, the need to take care of the
13 families and the need to resolve the issues required us
14 to report in what was actually a very limited report.
15 My Regulation 20 Report was limited. It did contain 12:01
16 criticisms about the systems and the processes. And
17 some of the response we had received. But those were
18 issues like tangential to the Omagh bomb investigation
19 issues.

20 321 Q. Let me just invite you to address one point that I know 12:01
21 those representing the Chief Constable would wish to
22 hear your evidence about, which is, as you said, there
23 were criticisms, within the report, and it might be
24 thought that there were some swingeing criticisms
25 within the report. 12:01

26 A. Mm-hmm.

27 322 Q. One of the conclusions you came to with sadness, indeed
28 great sadness, was that the judgment and leadership of
29 the Chief Constable and the Assistant Chief Constable

1 had been seriously flawed, and the chances of detaining
2 and convicting the Omagh bombers had been significantly
3 reduced.

4 A. Mmm.

5 323 Q. which is serious criticism made of individuals. And 12:02
6 how would you respond to a suggestion that they did not
7 have an adequate opportunity to respond to that
8 criticism in the time that was available?

9 A. I think that the issues which we had been facing had
10 been raised both with ACC White and with the Chief 12:02
11 Constable throughout the period from 2nd August because
12 they were absolute -- I mean, the Chief Constable knew
13 everything that was going on throughout this
14 investigation. So, I don't -- we could have allowed
15 more time and indeed in the final -- when the Police 12:02
16 Association withdrew their judicial review which we may
17 come to later, I did say I could have given them more
18 time but it wouldn't have actually changed anything.

19 324 Q. I'm just going to make sure that I've understood your
20 position. You believed that PSNI, the Chief Constable 12:03
21 and the Assistant Chief Constable were engaged
22 throughout and had an understanding of what was coming
23 and that, moreover, you had to take into account the
24 urgent need, as you understood it and believed it to
25 be, to publish your report? 12:03

26 A. Yeah, for the sake of the families, for the sake of the
27 RUC, for the sake of the confidence in policing, which
28 was profoundly important. Yeah, there was one other
29 thing I wanted to say but I can't remember what it was.

1 Carry on.

2 325 Q. If it comes back to you, you just tell me and you can
3 say.

4 A. Mm-hmm.

5 CHAIRMAN: Could I just ask you something before we 12:03
6 lose sight of it, Lady O'Loan. If I've understood what
7 you've just explained to Mr. Greaney, by the stage of
8 late November and December you had reached conclusions
9 and you set those out. So, it wasn't as if you were
10 setting these out for consultation and discussion? 12:04

11 THE WITNESS: No.

12 CHAIRMAN: These were your views.

13 THE WITNESS: Yes.

14 CHAIRMAN: And, as you say, you weren't inclined to
15 change your mind about them. 12:04

16 THE WITNESS: No.

17 CHAIRMAN: Because you considered they were justified?

18 THE WITNESS: That's correct, Sir, yes.

19 CHAIRMAN: The issue of time to respond is, perhaps,
20 something of a red herring because you weren't really 12:04
21 looking for a response, you were inviting a response,
22 you were setting out what your conclusions were?

23 THE WITNESS: We were. If I may, we were inviting a
24 response if there were any factual errors in the
25 report. But, I mean, one of the major criticisms was 12:04
26 the fact that the Omagh bomb investigation was very
27 quickly wound down by the police, you know, the number
28 of officers involved and the way in which it was
29 conducted was flawed and I think that's accepted now.

1 So, you had that flawed investigation, you had the
2 period of the review, the McVicker Review. The
3 McVicker Review reported in November 2000. The Chief
4 was telling us constantly that he was thinking about
5 and no more resources were put into it, except for the 12:05
6 forensic and the HOLMES resources. And it seemed to me
7 that there was a huge, huge problem there in terms of a
8 fundamental investigation of the biggest tragedy of The
9 Troubles, just left drifting. And we had asked and
10 asked about that. So, we were seeking -- and the 12:05
11 requirement, when you do publish a report, is to seek
12 correction of any factual errors. We didn't receive
13 anything until 22nd January, and then we responded to
14 them and dealt with them and we didn't find the factual
15 errors. 12:06

16 CHAIRMAN: You weren't setting out your conclusions for
17 observation?

18 THE WITNESS: No, they were the conclusions. It was
19 the facts we were inviting comment on. Thank you, Sir.

20 326 Q. MR. GREANEY: So, when the parties in litigation are 12:06
21 supplied with a draft judgment on an embargoed basis,
22 that is for factual corrections. And if a party were
23 to seek to persuade the judge into some different
24 outcome, that would be most unwelcome. And it sounds
25 as if that is the kind of process you were involved in. 12:06
26 You had reached your conclusions, they were going to be
27 expressed and the only changes that were going to be
28 made were to correct any error of fact?

29 A. Yes.

1 327 Q. Had the process of writing that Regulation 20 Report
2 been a very lengthy one?
3 A. It was. It started really as the inquiry started. As
4 we came close to the end it ran night after night in my
5 office when those involved would report on particular 12:07
6 sections of it and then I would say to them, 'Okay, get
7 me this evidence, get me that evidence.' David Wood
8 and Martin would have gone through the evidence but I
9 required to see every piece of evidence to be sure,
10 because it was such an important report, to be sure 12:07
11 that what we were saying was corroborated by the
12 evidence and was justifiable. So, it was a very
13 lengthy period. And I did actually have them running
14 up and down the stairs at 11 o'clock at night, and
15 things like that. But it was the only way to do it 12:07
16 given the burden of work that we had apart from that.
17 The staff were very good, I couldn't have expected more
18 of them.
19 328 Q. And Mr. Bridger described something similar to that
20 which you've just described, of being required to 12:07
21 substantiate every detail with the report and it sounds
22 as if that accords with your recollection?
23 A. Yes, absolutely. And that was always my way with all
24 the reports we did, but with this one it was so big.
25 329 Q. And on 28th November 2001 did you provide your draft 12:08
26 report to those who were entitled to receive it?
27 A. I did.
28 330 Q. And did you make arrangements for the provision to the
29 Omagh families of the final report with

1 recommendations?

2 A. We did. We did that in conjunction with the families.
3 There was a lot of discussion about would it be wrong
4 do it before Christmas and in the end I said the
5 families need to tell us what they want. So, I sent 12:08
6 Martin Bridger and company to go and talk to the
7 families about what they would want and how it should
8 be, because it was going to be traumatic, there was no
9 question about it. So, we needed to do everything we
10 could to try and, if you like, hold them through the 12:08
11 process that we were going to engage in.

12 331 Q. And on 12th December, did you deliver the Regulation 20
13 Report to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland,
14 the Chief Constable and the Northern Ireland Policing
15 Board? 12:09

16 A. Yeah. I mean there were two reports, the one for the
17 Chief Constable contained -- it wasn't redacted or
18 anonymised in any way, the ones to the Secretary of
19 State and the Policing Board were.

20 332 Q. On that same date did you meet with the Omagh families 12:09
21 in order to give them a briefing about your
22 investigation, your findings and recommendations?

23 A. I did, and I made absolutely sure that we met the
24 families before anything went to the media. So, the
25 families would be the first to hear. 12:09

26 333 Q. Next, I'm going to turn to the issues that you
27 encountered in that process. This is page 28. Many of
28 these I think you will have dealt with. If you think
29 that I'm passing over these too quickly then please do

1 tell me. We start at page 28. And the issues that you
2 encountered included the provision of inaccurate
3 information and the non-provision of information --
4 A. Mm-hmm.
5 334 Q. -- as you and I have discussed. 12:10
6 A. Mm-hmm.
7 335 Q. Delays in the provision of information as again we have
8 discussed.
9 A. Mm-hmm.
10 336 Q. A significant issue that you encountered related to the 12:10
11 discovery by your team of the McVicker Review as
12 opposed to it being volunteered?
13 A. Yes.
14 337 Q. And you also, at paragraph 92, encountered issues in
15 relation to intelligence? 12:10
16 A. Yes. This is a major issue, this was one of the major
17 issues of the Inquiry.
18 338 Q. Shall we delve into this in further detail then.
19
20 At paragraph 92 you say: 12:11
21
22 "In this, as in many other cases, my office identified
23 significant problems in relation to the receipt,
24 recording, evaluation, handling and dissemination of
25 intelligence information received." 12:11
26
27 A. Yes.
28 339 Q. Obviously, we will need to tread carefully given the
29 nature of this topic. You say, "in this case," so in

1 the Omagh case, "as in many other cases" you identified
2 significant problems. By using that phrase, "as in
3 many other cases," were you indicating that you had
4 encountered a trend or a general issue across a number
5 of cases that you had investigated?

12:11

6 A. Yes, it was the control that Special Branch had over
7 the information which they received and the decisions
8 which were made by junior officers about what
9 information would be disseminated to investigators.
10 And the lack of dissemination of information was, I
11 think, a major cause of the inability of investigators
12 to pursue lines of inquiry which they might otherwise
13 have followed. You know, I say in paragraph 94 that
14 the ACC North, having taken over responsibility for the
15 investigation, wrote seeking the RUC information which
16 we had identified from the systems because he knew that
17 he hadn't got all -- that the Omagh bomb investigation
18 had not got all the intelligence. He also told me, in
19 2001, that he had been refused the information, that as
20 a chief officer he had asked for information specific
21 to Omagh and had not received it, and asked then could
22 he have the information which we had, which was PSNI
23 information. So, then I had to go back to the chief
24 and say your 'Assistant Chief Constable wants this
25 information which belongs to you, can we hand it to
26 him.'

12:12

12:12

12:12

12:13

27 340 Q. So, what you encountered in the Omagh investigation and
28 in other investigations was Special Branch officers,
29 sometimes at a junior level, deciding what intelligence

1 information to give to investigators?

2 A. Yeah. The operation of Special Branch and the way in
3 which information was managed by Special Branch derived
4 from a report, the Walker Report, which gave some
5 guidance, you know, it said you can't -- in certain 12:13
6 cases you can't make an arrest unless you get consent
7 from Special Branch. You can't carry out a search
8 unless you get consent from Special Branch. All of
9 these things were contained in the Walker Guidelines.
10 It was suggested that the Walker Guidelines no longer 12:13
11 applied but there was no guidance of any kind which we
12 could find and the Assistant Chief Constable North,
13 Mr. Kincaid told us that there was no guidance about
14 how information should be disseminated from Special
15 Branch to investigators, and that was a major, major 12:14
16 problem. It was a problem for, I think, huge numbers
17 of investigating officers and it's one that they raised
18 repeatedly. I think it's even one that they raised
19 with the Patten Inquiry. So, yeah.

20 341 Q. Did it seem to you that one of the problems with 12:14
21 Special Branch being the gatekeepers for the
22 intelligence and deciding what to give to investigators
23 was, or might be, that they would not have touch and
24 feel for the investigation and might well, therefore,
25 not be in the position to make a judgment about what 12:14
26 was and was not relevant?

27 A. Yeah, because, I mean, if you've got information about
28 Man Z and you don't know that Man Z has somehow
29 appeared on the horizon of an investigation, you don't

1 know that that investigation should be supplied. If
2 you asked for that information and you decide that's
3 not relevant, then the investigating officer has no
4 power to come back. And that was a major problem.

5 342 Q. And just to bring the focus in to the Omagh
6 investigation, you say at paragraph 96:

12:15

7
8 "In the case of the police Omagh bomb investigation,
9 critical intelligence was not received by the police
10 Omagh bomb investigation until 9th September although
11 it was available on 15th August."

12:15

12
13 A. That's absolutely correct, Special Branch had the
14 information on 15th August. The information which was
15 provided which led to arrests, was not the information,
16 or the information provided on 9th September should
17 also have been provided.

12:15

18 343 Q. In terms of other issues that you encountered, at
19 paragraph 97 you deal with what you describe as
20 instruction not to impede the Omagh police
21 investigation; and would you tell us what you meant by
22 that, please?

12:15

23 A. Well, by 9th October we were seeking access to the PSNI
24 data system for intelligence and we were seeking other
25 information and suddenly out of the blue I got a letter
26 saying that the Omagh police investigation was ongoing
27 and shouldn't be compromised by my staff. He said it
28 who would only take another six months. But we hadn't
29 had any suggestion at all that our work was in any way

12:16

1 impeding the Omagh bomb investigation. And I found it
2 very strange. No reason was given. No complaints had
3 been received either from the chief, from the ACC or
4 from the senior investigating officer of the Omagh
5 investigation and I had made it clear I wanted the
6 Omagh bomb investigation to proceed. I wanted them to
7 find those who had planted this terrible bomb. So, it
8 just seemed very odd that suddenly we got this letter
9 but it was part, I think, of that rather difficult
10 period.

12:16

12:17

11 344 Q. Another issue, you have dealt with already, the vetting
12 of your staff?

13 A. Yeah.

14 345 Q. And then at page 32, paragraph 99, and following, you
15 deal with what you describe as intervention by the NIO,
16 the Northern Ireland Office?

12:17

17 A. Yes.

18 346 Q. And had you always ensured that the Secretary of State
19 and the Permanent Under-Secretary, who are senior civil
20 servants, were kept informed of progress?

12:17

21 A. Well, the Permanent Under-Secretary always attended the
22 meetings with the Secretary of State so, yes, that
23 happened. I provided a confidential briefing and I
24 mean the content of that confidential briefing is held
25 by the Ombudsman's Office and I briefed him in detail
26 on 6th September, and I briefed him as we extended the
27 investigation, et cetera. So, yes, I did. I tried to
28 keep him informed because he had a responsibility to be
29 able to answer questions in Parliament and things like

12:17

1 that.

2 347 Q. And were you, as you briefed the Secretary of State,
3 telling him, in an unvarnished way, about the things
4 that you were discovering?

5 A. Yes. 12:18

6 348 Q. As your investigation progressed, did you begin to
7 experience a series of communications which you
8 considered went beyond that which was necessary to
9 enable the Secretary of State, John Reid, to discharge
10 his functions, paragraph 102? 12:18

11 A. Yes.

12 349 Q. So, let's work through those.

13 A. Mm-hmm.

14 350 Q. When, on 19th September, you informed the Secretary of
15 State about the extension of the Terms of Reference for 12:18
16 your investigation --

17 A. Mm-hmm.

18 351 Q. -- and was there a reaction to that almost immediately?

19 A. Yes, the member of staff at the NIO -- because one of
20 these issues was the 4th August information -- 12:19

21 352 Q. Yes.

22 A. -- which had come in about an attack on police in Omagh
23 on 15th August, and one of the staff attempted to
24 explain to me what the police had done with that
25 information. Well, that, to me, was not his role, that 12:19
26 was the role of the police to explain to me. And I
27 would not have sought that information from him because
28 it would have been third party evidence anyway. So, of
29 it just seemed odd that suddenly I was getting this.

1 And then on 21st of September he suggested to me that
2 it would be better, perhaps, if we dealt with only the
3 exploitation of intelligence, which really affected the
4 families and leave everything else. And I just
5 explained to him, 'this is the remit of my 12:20
6 investigation and this is what we will deliver on.'

7 353 Q. So, there was an attempt to suggest a different scope
8 of your investigation?

9 A. A different approach, perhaps, yeah.

10 354 Q. A different approach. 12:20

11 A. Yeah.

12 355 Q. On 1st October were you asked to meet with the
13 Permanent Under-Secretary?

14 A. I was, and I was asked -- he just asked me to come up
15 and see him on my own which I did and it was a long 12:20
16 meeting. And it was a very difficult meeting.

17 356 Q. What was the thrust of what he said to you?

18 A. What he was saying to me was that relations between my
19 office and the police were breaking down and he wanted
20 to organise a meeting. And he talked about 12:20
21 conversations with six named people, including Her
22 Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Sir John
23 Stevens. And he said to me, 'I expect you're aware of
24 those conversations,' and I wasn't aware of any
25 conversations having occurred let alone the content of 12:20
26 them. And he asked -- because I was expressing my
27 concern about the lack of disclosure and things like
28 that. And he said to me, did I accept there was a lack
29 of trust in me. And I asked why there might be a lack

1 of trust in me. And he didn't tell me why. He said to
2 me that I needed to understand that anything I said to
3 the Secretary of State was said to the Northern Ireland
4 Office as a whole and that to me was a huge, huge --
5 almost a red flag. It almost felt like I shouldn't
6 talk to the Secretary of State because I was telling
7 the Secretary of State confidential things which I
8 thought the Secretary of State needed to know and which
9 certainly the Permanent Under-Secretary could know and
10 should know. But I was not telling the whole Northern
11 Ireland Office those things. It was very odd. I was
12 required to report to the Secretary of State on what
13 was happening. So, it did make a major difficulty for
14 me. So, I had that meeting and then I went back to my
15 office and I talked to my senior staff about it and we
16 thought it was odd. Then the Permanent Under-Secretary
17 asked for a second meeting on 5th October, to which I
18 went with Mr. Pollock and Mr. Wood, possibly
19 Mr. Bridger, I can't remember. So, there was a second
20 meeting and it was sort of suggested to me that RUC
21 trust in me was at a dangerously low ebb and that I had
22 the burden of retaining police and public confidence.
23 But that's not what Section 51 says. Section 51 says I
24 must exercise my powers and when I think best
25 calculated do so. It told me to protect national
26 security, proposed a meeting. We said we'd be happy to
27 meet. That meeting was arranged for 9th October. But
28 I said before I left the meeting that if I did not get
29 the access I needed then I would have to go to court

12:21

12:21

12:22

12:22

12:22

1 and seek that access.

2 357 Q. And by that did you mean access to police material?

3 A. Yeah. So, that was where it was left. A meeting was

4 arranged for 9th October at five o'clock, if I remember

5 correctly, and at 3:45 that day the Chief Constable 12:23

6 informed me that we could have the access we required

7 to one database.

8 358 Q. So, by this stage did you feel supported or unsupported

9 by the Northern Ireland Office?

10 A. I didn't feel supported, no. 12:23

11 359 Q. Let's move forward to 7th December, did something in

12 connection with this issue of the Northern Ireland

13 Office occur?

14 A. Well, the report was delivered to the Chief Constable

15 on 28th November. The Sunday Times, on 2nd December - 12:23

16 and forgive me if I get the dates wrong - 2nd December

17 reported quite extensively on the report so there had

18 been a leak and I knew the leak had not come from my

19 office because we had been so careful to keep

20 everything absolutely tight. 12:24

21 360 Q. So, it had come from elsewhere?

22 A. It had come from elsewhere. The report had been sent

23 to the Chief and to the Secretary of State. So, then

24 on 7th December - and there was significant media

25 activity between 2nd December and 7th December - and 12:24

26 then the Minister of State, the Northern Ireland

27 Office, rang me and she told me that at a media

28 dinner --

29 361 Q. Was that a person called Jane Kennedy?

1 A. It was, yes. A media dinner on 4th December
2 journalists were saying they'd been briefed extensively
3 on my forthcoming report, that they may even have seen
4 a draft of it and that they're going to make it clear
5 they're being briefed not from the police or the NIO 12:24
6 and that Derek Henderson was at the dinner. I actually
7 asked her who was at the dinner she mentioned Derek
8 Henderson.

9 362 Q. Who was Derek Henderson?

10 A. He was the Press Association in Northern Ireland and he 12:25
11 actually is from Omagh. So, I thanked her and I told
12 her we weren't briefing journalists about my
13 forthcoming report. But Mr. Henderson and others
14 subsequently confirmed that the information which they
15 had received had not come from my office. And that was 12:25
16 profoundly important, but it seemed very odd that the
17 minister would ring me and sort of warn me that I need
18 to be careful because the media were saying and had
19 said at a dinner.

20 363 Q. Just pause there for one moment. It was apparent to 12:25
21 from the reporting, and also from what you were being
22 told, that there had been a leak?

23 A. Yes.

24 364 Q. You believed very strongly that had not come from your
25 office? 12:25

26 A. Absolutely.

27 365 Q. And that's what Derek Henderson subsequently said?

28 A. Yeah.

29 366 Q. And there were only a limited number of other sources

1 for that leak?

2 A. Yeah.

3 367 Q. On 10th December did you ring the Secretary of State?

4 A. I did. This was on the foot of the earlier

5 conversations about what I tell the Secretary of State, 12:26

6 I tell the whole Northern Ireland Office and I needed

7 to be able to send him the report, the final report.

8 But I needed no leaking of the final report. The

9 families needed to be told first. And I said I would

10 only send it to him if he gave me an assurance that he 12:26

11 would keep it confidential. And the Secretary of State

12 got quite angry and he asked was I suggesting the NIO

13 had leaked the document. I had no idea who leaked the

14 document. He said that if I sent him my final report

15 it would remain confidential. And I said to him, on 12:26

16 that occasion, and notes of all these conversations are

17 available to the Inquiry.

18 368 Q. Yes.

19 A. I said to him that I saw the way forward as being for

20 those responsible to accept that there's a problem with 12:26

21 the management of dissemination of information and

22 intelligence from Special Branch to the rest of the

23 PSNI and that there's a problem with the Omagh bomb

24 investigation, and to see that both issues were dealt

25 with immediately and then we could all move on. And 12:27

26 then, very shortly after, that I went to Hillsborough

27 Castle to the Human Rights Day reception.

28 369 Q. I'm just going to pause for one moment. So, that same

29 day, that evening, so 10th December, you went to the

1 Secretary of State's Human Rights Day reception?

2 A. Yes.

3 370 Q. And were you told that the Secretary of State, the
4 Chief Constable and the GOC, so the General Officer
5 Commanding the Army in Northern Ireland were going to 12:27
6 have dinner after the reception?

7 A. Yes.

8 371 Q. And were you being invited to attend that dinner with
9 them?

10 A. No. 12:27

11 372 Q. Were you asked to speak to the Chief Constable before
12 the others had dinner?

13 A. Yes.

14 373 Q. And did you do so?

15 A. I did. I went up to a separate room in Hillsborough 12:27
16 Castle and spoke to him.

17 374 Q. In headline form, what did he say to you?

18 A. It was a long meeting. He said a lot of things to me.
19 I have listed in my statement some of the things he
20 said, the rest of them are contained in my Regulation 12:28
21 20 Report. So, I won't say any more than that. But
22 he, among other things, told me that I was going to
23 destroy the Peace Process, that my office would never
24 recover. That the RUC Omagh bomb investigation
25 investigating officer had said he got everything he 12:28
26 needed. That had he gone to judicial review on 4th
27 December, which he had threatened to do, he would have
28 got his judicial review.

29 375 Q. So, judicial review of what, your process and/or

1 report?

2 A. He said he was going to judicially review me to stop me
3 publishing my report on 12th December. That was what I
4 heard, and there was a letter, I think on 5th December,
5 from a legal officer of the PSNI indicating that there 12:29
6 were legal proceedings, but there weren't in the end.
7 He commented at length on Person A, 'Mooch' Blair, that
8 you've described in the report. And he said that they
9 were on the verge of a breakthrough. And he told me I
10 would never be able to mend the bridge and that I had 12:29
11 destroyed by relationship with the police. It was --
12 and I said to him, 'all you have to do, Ronnie, you
13 have to admit there's a problem with the Omagh bomb
14 investigation and really get it going and resourced,
15 and you have to set up systems for the dissemination of 12:29
16 intelligence.' And that was it. I left them, they
17 went to dinner. I went and sat in my car and made
18 notes of what he'd said to me because I was shocked.
19 CHAIRMAN: Could I enquire, Lady O'Loan, was it just
20 the two of you? 12:29
21 THE WITNESS: Just the two of us in the room.
22 CHAIRMAN: I see.

23 376 Q. MR. GREANEY: Now, in your --
24 A. He asked me not to report.
25 377 Q. He asked you not to report? 12:30
26 A. Yeah. Not at that point. He said, 'don't publish.
27 Don't publish.' He rang me the next morning too about
28 7:30 or something, and asked me not to publish, on the
29 11th, we were publishing on the 12th.

1 378 Q. So, from paragraph 103 page 37 of your statement --
2 A. Yes.
3 379 Q. -- you deal with the circumstances in which, the
4 chronology by reference to which your report came to be
5 published and we've dealt with many of these dates and 12:30
6 I will just go through them in summary from
7 paragraph 106. As we know, on 22nd November, you
8 informed the Chief Constable that you would provide
9 your draft report to him on the 28th to enable any
10 factual corrections to be identified. 12:30
11
12 On the 28th you did deliver the draft report in
13 confidence to the Chief Constable and to the Secretary
14 of State for Northern Ireland.
15 12:31
16 On November, the Chief Constable said that more than a
17 week was required and he requested two weeks. And you
18 responded the same day granting that extension to 7th
19 December and pointing out the level of knowledge that
20 the Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable of 12:31
21 Crime had. Then you say, "on 30th November," so two
22 days after the delivery of the draft report to the
23 Chief Constable, he made an announcement, and what was
24 that announcement
25 A. He said if it were true, he would resign his position. 12:31
26 380 Q. Did the police respond to identify any factual
27 inaccuracy?
28 A. No, not until, on the 20 -- I'm not sure if it was 22nd
29 or 23rd January.

1 381 Q. 22nd, I think, is the first document, 22nd January?
2 A. But I received it on the 23rd. I received it in the
3 afternoon of the 23rd. And it was a very garbled
4 document which contained inaccuracies and which didn't
5 really take the thing forward. 12:32

6 382 Q. I'm going to deal with the order of responses and
7 rejoinder in due course at a very high level.
8
9 On 5th December, had you received a letter from the
10 lawyer or a legal adviser to PSNI stating that the 12:32
11 draft report:
12
13 "...suffers from significant factual inaccuracies and
14 warranted assumptions, misunderstandings and material
15 omissions and seeking a further period of two weeks for 12:32
16 a response."
17

18 A. Yes.

19 383 Q. Telling you that in default of agreement, the Chief
20 Constable would consider legal remedies? 12:32
21 A. Yes.

22 384 Q. And then, I think, you resisted?
23 A. Yes.

24 385 Q. And in the result no legal action was taken by the
25 police? 12:33
26 A. My Director of Legal Services responded to the Director
27 of Legal Services at the PSNI and he explained why, in
28 the interests of the public and, in particular, the
29 deceased and the injured in the Omagh bombing,

1 warranted as prompt a conclusion as possible consistent
2 with fairness to those affected in the investigation.
3 And he referred to the extensive nature of the contact
4 and consultation with the police that was set out in
5 the report. And he said, inter alia, that factual
6 comment only was required and that the timeframe would
7 not be further extended.

12:33

8 386 Q. On 3rd December, so just before the letter of the legal
9 adviser to the police, had you received a telephone
10 call from someone in the Northern Ireland Office?

12:33

11 A. I did, I did, I received, I think he was the Deputy
12 Permanent Under-Secretary or something like that was
13 his title. He said the Secretary of State didn't want
14 us to publish the report on 12th December as he
15 wouldn't have time to prepare politically. He said
16 No.10 would have to be informed. He didn't know how
17 long the Secretary of State wanted me to delay.

12:34

18 387 Q. Did you become aware of rumours circulating at about
19 this time of the Chief Constable bringing judicial
20 review proceedings in relation to the draft report?

12:34

21 A. I did. I had gone to the United States on 3rd
22 December, there was a policing thing there. We were
23 trying to -- we were trying to help the Americans to
24 understand that policing was moving on, et cetera. So,
25 I had gone on 3rd December, I was told there were
26 rumours. And then on 5th December the letter from the
27 PSNI legal adviser arrived in my office threatening
28 judicial review proceedings, and I returned immediately
29 from the United States. On 5th December David Wood, my

12:34

1 senior Director of Investigations, was in Germany
2 speaking to a policing conference and he came back too.
3 One of the problems was that ACC Raymond White was in
4 South Africa at a policing conference, he did not come
5 back. 12:35

6 388 Q. And did you, on 4th December also receive a telephone
7 call or at any rate did Mr. Wood receive a telephone
8 call from an official within the Northern Ireland
9 Office?

10 A. Yes. Again, they were saying that we mustn't make any 12:35
11 press statement and the report had to be laid before
12 Parliament first and announced in Parliament and then
13 put in the House of Commons Library. And that
14 conversation referred to my proposed report to the
15 Omagh families. And I knew in legislation that there 12:35
16 was no requirement for me to lay such a report before
17 the Secretary of State for placing before Parliament.
18 So, we told them that.

19 389 Q. Now, we know from evidence you've given already that
20 there was a leak of your draft report with a piece in 12:36
21 The Sunday Times on 2nd December?

22 A. Yes.

23 390 Q. Did there then follow, I'm paragraph 123, weeks of
24 extensive media coverage nationally and internationally
25 in relation to that report? 12:36

26 A. Yes.

27 391 Q. Including calls for your resignation?

28 A. Yes.

29 392 Q. And including serious criticisms of a report that had

1 by that stage not even been published?

2 A. Yes.

3 393 Q. And with attacks upon you of a personal nature?

4 A. Well, a very serious attack, I was called a suicide
5 bomber and it was said that I'd outlived my usefulness, 12:37
6 which was dangerous.

7 394 Q. So, on Newsnight on 6th December, Lord Drumglass --

8 A. Yes.

9 395 Q. -- referred to you as "a suicide bomber who had
10 outlived her usefulness"? 12:37

11 A. Mm-hmm.

12 396 Q. Which was, you said, dangerous?

13 A. Yes.

14 397 Q. In the sense that it gave rise to concerns about your
15 security? 12:37

16 A. Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN: Who was Lord Drumglass, Lady O'Loan?

18 THE WITNESS: I beg your pardon.

19 CHAIRMAN: Who was Lord Drumglass?

20 THE WITNESS: Ken Maginnis, he was an MP before he came 12:37
21 into --

22 CHAIRMAN: Yes.

23 398 Q. MR. GREANEY: We were told by Martin Bridger, the lead
24 investigator, that this period was one of very
25 considerable stress for the team as a whole and he said 12:38
26 in particular for you, and was that how it felt to you?

27 A. Yes.

28 399 Q. But, nonetheless, did you press ahead and provide your
29 final report to those who were entitled to receive it?

1 A. I did.

2 400 Q. And did you, that same day, 12th December, publish your
3 Section 62 public statement or summary?

4 A. I did.

5 401 Q. We've dealt with issues of process and I'm going to 12:38
6 come on to some later events in due course. What we
7 haven't done yet is to deal with what your key findings
8 were.

9 A. Mm-hmm.

10 402 Q. We will not, I think, quite finish your evidence before 12:39
11 lunch but we won't be very far from concluding.

12 A. Right.

13 403 Q. So, I'm taking you now to page 43 of your report,
14 paragraph 130 and I'm just going to take you through
15 these one after another. I'm certain that everyone in 12:39
16 this room will have read carefully your Section 62
17 summary.

18

19 Of the conclusions that you reached, is it your view
20 that it was difficult to say which one was more 12:39
21 important than another?

22 A. Yes.

23 404 Q. In relation to Kevin Fulton, did you conclude that at
24 the time of the Omagh bombing he was considered a
25 reliable source and information he provided in 1998 was 12:39
26 so regarded?

27 A. Yes.

28 405 Q. That he had provided information about dissident
29 terrorist activity in 1998?

1 A. Yes. 12:40

2 406 Q. And that the information he provided was not disclosed
3 to the investigation into the Omagh bombing or to the
4 McVicker Review?

5 A. Yes. 12:40

6 407 Q. Did you conclude that Man A, Patrick 'Mooch' Blair, who
7 had been mentioned in the Fulton information, should
8 have been treated as a firm suspect by the Omagh bomb
9 investigation team?

10 A. Yes. 12:40

11 408 Q. And that the Omagh bomb investigation senior
12 investigating officer had accepted on 21st November
13 2001 that his assessment sheet had been incorrectly
14 completed and that Man A, Patrick 'Mooch' Blair, should
15 have been a firm suspect once it was correctly 12:41
16 completed?

17 A. Yes.

18 409 Q. Just pausing for one moment. At any stage did the
19 Chief Constable say anything to you about whether he
20 considered that Patrick 'Mooch' Blair was a suspect? 12:41

21 A. I'm sorry, I'm slightly tired but I think he told me
22 that he wasn't a suspect or shouldn't be a suspect.
23 But I almost would have to check that but I'm fairly
24 sure that was his response.

25 410 Q. But did you conclude, however, that even if reasonable 12:41
26 action had been taken in respect of the Fulton
27 intelligence alone, it's unlikely that the Omagh
28 bombing could have been prevented?

29 A. Absolutely.

1 411 Q. Did you conclude that anonymous information was
2 received in a telephone call on 4th August 1998
3 containing detailed specific information?
4 A. I did.

5 412 Q. With the caller stating that an attack would be made on 12:42
6 police in Omagh on 15th August, the day of the bombing?
7 A. Yes.

8 413 Q. Did you conclude that the police officer who received
9 the call drove to Enniskillen to hand it to Special
10 Branch officers but that it had been dismissed by 12:42
11 Special Branch as a fallout between smugglers?
12 A. Yes, that officer was hugely concerned about what he'd
13 heard.

14 414 Q. So, the officer who had received the call?
15 A. Yes. 12:42

16 415 Q. Was it your view, expressed in the report, that there
17 was no investigation of the content of that call, with
18 very limited action taken in the following days?
19 A. Yes. I have seen something that says the PSNI
20 consulted An Garda Síochána but we were not told that 12:42
21 and I have never seen any evidence of that. I do know
22 that Special Branch agreed to provide somebody to
23 attend should the caller call back on the second day
24 and they said that if it was serious he would call
25 back, but I don't think that necessarily followed. I 12:43
26 do know that they considered setting up a
27 reconnaissance, if you like, on the building to which,
28 in which the guns were to be stored, and mortars were
29 to be stored pending their delivery to another unstated

1 destination and that happened between ten o'clock on
2 the 6th August and 7:00 a.m. on 7th August but they
3 found that they didn't have an opportunity to set up
4 the kind of undercover thing that they wanted to set
5 up. So that was it. That was the action that was
6 taken. I think that the dismissal of this as a fallout
7 among smugglers, to me that was bizarre and absurd.
8 One of the things that I have thought and this is --
9 you could criticise me for speculation, but if you
10 knew, if you were involved in a forthcoming terrorist
11 bomb of this kind and you wanted to get it stopped, you
12 might decide that you would provide information which
13 would be specific, which would require action, with a
14 specific date. The specific date. So, you would want
15 the police or military to take some action to prevent
16 it but you'd be afraid of disclosing too much lest it
17 should, if you like, blow your cover and make you
18 identified as the person who had informed. So, it
19 seemed to me the information of 4th August was, in
20 itself, capable of being part of information about a
21 proposed terrorist attack. Because we know, for
22 example, when the IRA attacked Loughgall they didn't
23 just have a bomb but they had a mortar and they had
24 guns, heavy guns. So, we knew that those kind of
25 things had gone hand in hand. So, just saying that
26 this was, you know about guns and that this wasn't
27 about a bomb to me was to dismiss it. And the fact
28 that it was 15th August seemed to me that if that had
29 been communicated, as was required by RUC Force

12:43

12:44

12:44

12:44

12:45

1 order 99/91, to the Sub-Divisional Commander, he would
2 at least have had the opportunity to think about it and
3 to talk about it to Special Branch, and he was never
4 given that opportunity.

5 416 Q. And this, again, is a finding you came to that the 12:45
6 Sub-Divisional Commander had not been informed and the
7 Threat Book could not be found?

8 A. Yes, yes.

9 417 Q. And in relation to this, was it your conclusion in the
10 report that it was not possible to say what impact 12:46
11 action between 4th and 15th August would have had, or
12 whether action other than that taken by Special Branch
13 could have prevented the Omagh bomb?

14 A. Yes.

15 418 Q. I'm going to come on after lunch to seek your views as 12:46
16 you sit there about the issue of preventability, but
17 that was your conclusion at that time?

18 A. Yes, yes. And I put it on the front of the report that
19 the people who bombed Omagh were the terrorists, et
20 cetera. 12:46

21 419 Q. I mean you were very clear about that in the report and
22 in your Section 62 statement:
23
24 "The persons responsible for the Omagh bombing are the
25 terrorists who planned and executed the atrocity, 12:46
26 nothing contained in this report should detract from
27 that clear and unequivocal fact."
28
29 A. Yes, thank you.

1 420 Q. So, that was the finding in relation to Fulton, and in
2 relation to the 4th August call.
3 A. Yeah.

4 421 Q. Did you also conclude that the discovery of and
5 ensuring the progression of the recommendations of the 12:47
6 McVicker Review was an important outcome arising out of
7 the work of your evidence?
8 A. Yes.

9 422 Q. And as you have told us, it should not have taken a
10 third party telling you about this report for it to 12:47
11 come to your attention?
12 A. Yes.

13 423 Q. And that you conclude that the report identified very
14 many significant and fundamental errors in the
15 investigation? 12:47
16 A. Yes. And I did read the McVicker Report from cover to
17 cover and I know that it was a really sound report and
18 it was quality assured by HMIC who also said that, and
19 I think it has stood the test of time. And I think
20 there was an extent to which it was almost dismissed, 12:48
21 it was as if the police didn't know what to do with it,
22 whereas all they had to do with it was proceed down the
23 recommendations and try and conduct a full
24 investigation.

25 424 Q. And did you conclude that had all the recommended 12:48
26 actions in the McVicker Review been implemented
27 expeditiously, the chances of a successful
28 investigation could have been enhanced?
29 A. Absolutely. And there's one other thing I want to say,

1 there was a problem that we had in a number of
2 investigations we conducted where the military would
3 have videos that they had of traffic movements and all
4 sorts of things, and in this Omagh investigation the
5 SIO wasn't allowed to look at the Army and Special 12:48
6 Branch videos for South Armagh. The Army looked at
7 them for him but this kind of attitude to me and this
8 failure to cooperate fully with an investigation of a
9 major bombing, so that people could be identified very
10 quickly, and the fact that, you know, a mobile phone 12:49
11 used in the connection with the bombing was discovered
12 in a house search and it was missing. Those kind of
13 things were profoundly important outcomes. The fact
14 that the car was lying rusting not properly protected
15 at all. Nobody actually knew where it was, it took 12:49
16 Mr. McVicker and his staff to actually find the Omagh
17 bomb car. Yeah, sorry.

18 425 Q. Did you also conclude, as you explained to us earlier,
19 that there was a deficiency in information flow from
20 Special Branch to the rest of the police service? 12:49

21 A. Yes.

22 426 Q. And as you've explained earlier and I'm now at
23 paragraph 142, did your investigators identify 360
24 intelligence documents within Special Branch which may
25 have had varying degrees of relevance to the police 12:50
26 investigation?

27 A. Yes.

28 427 Q. But only a modest proportion of those had found their
29 way to the investigators?

1 A. Yes.

2 428 Q. Did intelligence analysed by your analysts in your view
3 present a compelling picture from which informed
4 judgments could have been made as to the possible
5 involvement of individuals? 12:50

6 A. Yes, and we did provide all that analysis to the PSNI
7 subsequently.

8 429 Q. And, ultimately, as you tell us at paragraph 147, and
9 as I mentioned earlier, did you conclude with great
10 sadness that the judgment and leadership of the Chief 12:51
11 Constable and the Assistant Chief Constable Crime had
12 been seriously flawed?

13 A. Yes.

14 430 Q. That the chances of detaining and convicting the Omagh
15 bombers had been significantly reduced? 12:51

16 A. Yes.

17 431 Q. That the victims of the attack, their families, the
18 people of Omagh and the officers of the RUC and PSNI
19 had been let down by defective leadership, poor
20 judgment and a lack of urgency? 12:51

21 A. Yes.

22 432 Q. And, ultimately, was it your view that that should not
23 have been the response for the murders of 29 people and
24 two unborn children?

25 A. Absolutely. 12:51

26 MR. GREANEY: I'm just going to check how Ms. Harrison
27 is getting along. [Short pause]. Obviously, you've
28 given a lot of evidence this morning. The environment
29 is quite intense. We are obviously going to have to

1 take a break, it seems to me that now is probably a
2 good time to take a break and we'll resume after lunch
3 and after you've had a chance to have rest and a bite
4 to eat.

5 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

12:52

6 MR. GREANEY: If that suits you, Sir.

7 CHAIRMAN: Of course. Shall we sit again at two
8 o'clock, Mr. Greaney?

9 MR. GREANEY: Yes, please.

10
11 THE HEARING ADJOURNED FOR LUNCH AND RESUMED AS FOLLOWS:

12:53

12
13 CHAIRMAN: Now, Mr. Greaney, we're a little later than
14 we thought we would be.

15 MR. GREANEY: We are, Sir, and can I apologise to, in
16 particular, you and to the witness for the fact that we
17 are starting later than we anticipated. There were a
18 series of issues, relating principally to the need to
19 make some further disclosure to Core Participants of
20 relevance to the evidence of the witness. But, also,
21 there was a technical difficulty, albeit a short-lived
22 one, which means that we are starting, well almost 30
23 minutes later than we should have been. So, as I've
24 said, I'm very sorry, about that.

14:26

25 CHAIRMAN: Why do we find ourselves having to make
26 further disclosure at this stage?

14:27

27 MR. GREANEY: There were -- the reasons, principally,
28 relate to evidence given by the witness about notes
29 that she had made of discussions that she had with

1 particular individuals on 10th and 11th December 2001.
2 And it turned out that very recently, indeed - by which
3 I mean this week - we had been given disclosure by the
4 Police Ombudsman of certain notes which, Sir, as you
5 know, documents when they are disclosed need to go 14:27
6 through a process of review and their relevance isn't
7 always immediately identified so that the fault in that
8 situation is not the fault of your team. And, Sir,
9 we've also been seeking to track down one set of notes
10 which we have not yet had disclosure of, those being 14:28
11 the notes that Lady O'Loan believes she made, or said
12 that she made in the car on the night of 10th December
13 having had a discussion with the Chief Constable prior
14 to the dinner.

15
16 So, Lady O'Loan has explained to your team, Sir, that
17 she is confident that she has provided those notes to
18 Police Ombudsman but at the moment we believe that they
19 have not been disclosed to your team. So, we're sorry
20 to have to say all of that publicly, but there does 14:28
21 appear to have been a breakdown in disclosure of some
22 relevant material by the Police Ombudsman to the
23 Inquiry Legal Team. I hope that provides an
24 explanation, Sir.

25 CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you. 14:29
26
27
28
29

BARONESS NUALA O'LOAN CONTINUED TO BE QUESTIONED BY
MR. GREANEY AS FOLLOWS:

- 1
2
3
4 433 Q. MR. GREANEY: So, I'm going to go back to evidence,
5 Lady O'Loan, that you gave in relation to the events of 14:29
6 10th and 11th December. So, you'll remember we dealt
7 with your principal conclusions before lunch and
8 shortly I'll move on to the recommendations that you
9 made in the course of your 2001 report. But as will be
10 apparent from that which I've just said to the 14:29
11 Chairman, relevant notes have now been found. So,
12 let's just remind ourselves of what you gave evidence
13 had happened. You gave evidence of having had a
14 telephone conversation with the Secretary of State for
15 Northern Ireland on the early evening of 10th December 14:29
16 2001, is that correct?
17 A. Yes.
18 434 Q. You gave evidence of having a discussion at
19 Hillsborough Castle with the Chief Constable later on
20 that evening of 10th December, is that also correct? 14:30
21 A. Yes.
22 435 Q. And you also gave evidence of a telephone conversation
23 you had with the Chief Constable the following morning
24 at, you record 7:30 a.m., 11th December 2001?
25 A. Mm-hmm. 14:30
26 436 Q. So, let's just work through what we now have,
27 Lady O'Loan. And can we have on the screen please,
28 INQ 049753. I'm very grateful to Ms. Quick for taking
29 the steps to ensure that this material was available

1 straight away on the screen. [Short pause]. Thank you
2 very much, indeed. This is headed:
3
4 "Note of a telling phone conversation with the
5 Secretary of State on Monday, 10th December 2001 at 14:31
6 6:30 p.m."
7
8 what were the circumstances in which this note was
9 typed up? And as you'll appreciate, I'm concerned to
10 understand to what extent it represents a 14:31
11 contemporaneous account of that conversation?
12 A. As I was talking to the Secretary of State that evening
13 I made notes. And then the following morning, when I
14 came back to the office, I dictated those notes on
15 dictaphone and my secretary typed this up for me. 14:31
16 437 Q. And so they are a near contemporaneous record?
17 A. Yes. Yes, they are.
18 438 Q. Of notes that were made contemporaneously?
19 A. Yes.
20 439 Q. And are you satisfied that they are an accurate 14:32
21 representation of what occurred during that
22 conversation?
23 A. Yes.
24 440 Q. I'll simply read those out so that they are in the
25 record: 14:32
26
27 "I rang the Secretary of State to explore with him my
28 feelings in relation to the leaking of the draft report
29 and the subsequent sending of the full report to him.

1 I explained that I have been enormously bruised by what
2 had happened and that I was absolutely determined that
3 there would be no leaking of the final report. I was,
4 therefore, only prepared to send it to him if I got his
5 assurance that he would keep it confidential. I said I 14:32
6 was not in any way being disrespectful but that
7 Joe Pilling..."

8
9 who was Joe Pilling, do you recall?

10 A. He was the Permanent Under-Secretary at the NIO. 14:32

11 441 Q. "...but that Joe Pilling had told me that 'what I give
12 to the Secretary of State I give to the whole Northern
13 Ireland Office' and I have to understand that."

14
15 which is what you told us about earlier. 14:33

16
17 The note continues:

18
19 "And for that reason, I did not feel in a situation in
20 which I could move without asking him to assure me of 14:33
21 confidentiality on this matter."

22
23 So, pausing; were you seeking an assurance of
24 confidentiality from the Secretary of State?

25 A. I was. 14:33

26 442 Q. "He [the Secretary of State] became rather angry and
27 said that I was suggesting that the Northern Ireland
28 Office had leaked the document and I said I did not
29 suggest that, nor did I think that, but that I did

1 think that I needed in some way to protect myself. My
2 office, my report and I have all been the subject of a
3 very significant attack over the past week. He said he
4 understood this and he said well, would I not be
5 sending it the to the Chief Constable? And I said I 14:33
6 had a certain reluctance to send it to the Chief
7 Constable because he had commented about the draft
8 report."

9
10 So, do you mean the Chief Constable had said something 14:34
11 in public about the report that he'd received in draft?

12 A. Yes.

13 443 Q. "He [the Secretary of State] asked me was I saying that
14 the Chief Constable leaked it and I said I wasn't. I
15 didn't know who had leaked it but I was very clear that 14:34
16 the leak had not come from my office. After some
17 discussion, however, he said that if I sent the
18 document to him he would make sure it remained
19 confidential where he could not never promise 100%
20 confidentiality. He told me that he would be in London 14:34
21 today and I asked did he want me to put somebody on a
22 plane with it to him but he said no, if we delivered it
23 to the Northern Ireland Office he would get it
24 confidentially faxed through to him in London."

25 14:34
26 And now I've been able to draw that note of yours to
27 your attention, does it seem to you that that provides
28 very clear confirmation of the oral evidence you gave
29 earlier?

1 A. I think so. Mr. Greaney, I'm sorry I do have to say
2 that in the third line from the bottom "he told me he
3 would be in London today," I have a notion that might
4 be tomorrow, I know I was going to his Human Rights Day
5 reception later that evening, so unless, of course, 14:35
6 they were flying back after, because they do helicopter
7 backwards and forwards, I don't know. So, I don't know
8 if that is 100% correct, otherwise, yes.

9 444 Q. Thank you for drawing that to our attention.
10 14:35

11 Now, turning next, we're still that evening of 10th
12 December. I've indicated already that you made notes
13 in the car of that conversation and that your belief is
14 that you have handed those notes to the Police
15 Ombudsman's team? 14:35

16 A. Yeah, the notes should be in the office. I had a note
17 of it, a typed note of it which I believe I did, yes.

18 445 Q. So, it's a typed note of the sort that we've just
19 looked at?

20 A. I think so. 14:36

21 446 Q. And as you will have heard me say, we do not believe
22 that those have found their way to the Inquiry Legal
23 Team yet. But what we do have is something that you
24 referred to a little earlier which is your Regulation
25 20 Report? 14:36

26 A. Yes.

27 447 Q. And I have provided you with pages 174 and 175. It
28 hasn't been possible to circulate this as you have it
29 in front of you to the Core Participants at the moment

1 because there is an issue taken in relation to one part
2 of it and whether it needs to be redacted, that issue
3 being taken by --

4 A. Mr. Greaney can I just say? Sorry.

5 448 Q. Of course. 14:36

6 A. This document is from my response to the Chief
7 Constable's response not from my Regulation 20.

8 449 Q. You are quite right, so I'm sorry about that and that's
9 my fault for seeking to mislead you, but you were not
10 misled. You refer to your Regulation 20 Report? 14:37

11 A. Yes.

12 450 Q. We know that there were then responses to that report
13 from the Chief Constable on 22nd and 24th January and
14 then in April there was a response by the Police
15 Ombudsman or a rejoinder by the Police Ombudsman to the 14:37
16 response of the Chief Constable?

17 A. Yes.

18 451 Q. So, what we are looking at, as you rightly point out to
19 me, is a part of that rejoinder of April 2022?

20 A. Yes. 14:37

21 452 Q. And so, as I was indicating, it's not been possible to
22 circulate this in this form to Core Participants yet
23 because HMG, His Majesty's Government has a concern
24 that one part of it may need to be redacted. But with
25 their agreement that isn't going to stop me putting the 14:38
26 document before you and inviting you to confirm some of
27 the content of it.

28

29 So, this refers, on the first page, 174, to you meeting

1 the Chief Constable on 10th December at Hillsborough
2 Castle for over an hour. And you then list a whole
3 series of matters that the Chief Constable raised with
4 you.

5 A. Yes. 14:38

6 453 Q. And I'm not going to go through all of those for what I
7 know you will accept is good reason, but if you go over
8 the page to page 175, you identified, in this document,
9 and I should have asked, was this document based upon
10 notes that were available to you? 14:38

11 A. This response?

12 454 Q. This response?

13 A. This response was taken from our papers in the Police
14 Ombudsman's Office at the time.

15 455 Q. So, among the bullet points: 14:39

16

17 "The Chief Constable said that the Omagh SIO had had
18 access to all Special Branch material last week. There
19 was no intelligence of relevance to the Omagh bomb
20 investigation in Special Branch." 14:39

21

22 A. Yes.

23 456 Q. "The Chief Constable said he could have obtained his
24 judicial review to prevent publication as his legal
25 advice was that the Police Ombudsman's stance was 14:39
26 unreasonable. The Police Ombudsman said he should seek
27 the judicial review if that was his view."

28 A. Yes.

29 457 Q. I'm going to skip over the next one and then come back

1 to it at the end.

2

3 "The Chief Constable said he was on the edge of a

4 breakthrough in the Omagh bombing investigation."

5 14:39

6 A. Yes.

7 458 Q. "The Chief Constable said that the Police Ombudsman

8 would never be able to rebuild trust with police and

9 that she..." in other words you, "...had destroyed the

10 relationship with them." 14:40

11 A. Yes.

12 459 Q. Now, I'll return now to the other bullet point that I

13 said I would. Do you recall that I asked you earlier

14 whether the Chief Constable had ever said anything to

15 you about the suspect status, or otherwise, of Man A, 14:40

16 Patrick 'Mooch' Blair?

17 A. Yes.

18 460 Q. Now that you've been able to see this document, can you

19 confirm that during that meeting before the Chief

20 Constable's dinner on 10th December, he said of Patrick 14:40

21 'Mooch' Blair, that he was not a suspect nor should he

22 be?

23 A. Yes, that's correct.

24 461 Q. And just to complete the picture in relation to those

25 days in December, I'm going to ask that we have on the 14:41

26 screen INQ 049754, headed:

27

28 "Note of a telephone conversation with the Chief

29 Constable on Tuesday 11th December 2001 at 7:45 a.m."

1 So, this is the next morning?

2 A. Yes.

3 462 Q. And is this a conversation that you had recalled being
4 at about 7:30 a.m.?

5 A. Yes, I apologise. 14:41

6 463 Q. Well, I wasn't inviting an apology I was going to point
7 out that you were very nearly correct. Was this note,
8 this typed note, prepared in the same way as the typed
9 note that we looked at in relation to 10th December?

10 A. Yes, I made a note and then I dictated it to my 14:41
11 secretary and she typed it.

12 464 Q. And should we conclude from the fact that we've now
13 seen two notes of a similar type that it was your
14 practice to make notes and then have them typed up?

15 A. Yes. 14:42

16 465 Q. And I'll read it out:

17

18 "The Chief Constable phoned me at home. He said he had
19 been reflecting on our conversation last night."

20 14:42

21 So, would that have been the conversation at 6:30 at
22 Hillsborough Castle?

23 A. It was the conversation after the reception about eight
24 o'clock, nine o'clock.

25 466 Q. So, the one before the Chief Constable went to 14:42
26 dinner --

27 A. Yes.

28 467 Q. -- with the GOC and Secretary of State?

29 A. Yes.

1 468 Q. "He said that he had been reflecting on our
2 conversation last night and he was wondering whether
3 there was any possibility that I might wait because the
4 work which he was doing would take only to the
5 weekend." 14:42
6
7 was the waiting that he was asking about awaiting the
8 publication of the report?
9 A. Yes.
10 469 Q. Or of the Section 62 summary? 14:43
11 A. Yes.
12 470 Q. "I said to him that he told me on Friday that he was
13 not bringing anything to me. That he had left me in a
14 position in which I had gone forward and I was not
15 going to inflict further pain on the relatives. I 14:43
16 thought I owed it to them to go forward.
17
18 The Chief Constable told me that Paul Priestly had said
19 to him that Michael Gallagher had said to the Secretary
20 of State last night that he had questioned the 14:43
21 Secretary of State last night as to whether the
22 Ombudsman was definitely going to go ahead on
23 Wednesday."
24
25 And who was Paul Priestly? 14:43
26 A. He was a member of staff at the NIO, I can't remember
27 his --
28 471 Q. But that's where he fits into the picture, the?
29 NIO?

1 A. Yes.

2 472 Q. "The Chief Constable said it seemed as if it might be
3 that the relatives would have been happy for me to
4 wait. I said that really wasn't my understanding of
5 Mr. Gallagher's position, that I had spoken to him last 14:43
6 night and he certainly seemed keen to get the results.
7 I said that in all the circumstances I really thought
8 that we now needed to go ahead."
9

10 Then the Chief Constable told you something about his 14:44
11 movements that day.

12 A. Can I say one thing; after that conversation with the
13 Chief Constable I went and I got hold of Martin Bridger
14 and I asked him to check with Mr. Gallagher and with
15 the relatives' self-help group whether they wanted me 14:44
16 not to go ahead. And he did so and he came back with
17 information that they did want me to proceed.

18 473 Q. So, you did the following day, the 12th?

19 A. Yes.

20 474 Q. So, I hope you found it helpful that we've been able to 14:44
21 locate those notes?

22 A. I'm most grateful, thank you.

23 475 Q. Let's turn then to the six recommendations made by you,
24 and the Northern Ireland Policing Board response to
25 them. So, I'm now, for those following it in the 14:44
26 report, at page 49, paragraph 148. We don't have very
27 far to go.

28 A. Yes.

29 476 Q. Did you make six recommendations in your public

1 statement and in your Regulation 20 Report?

2 A. Yes, I did.

3 477 Q. At a meeting on 17th December in your office between
4 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Chief
5 Constable and you, did the Chief Constable tell HMIC 14:45
6 that he would implement all of your recommendations?

7 A. He did.

8 478 Q. On 5th February 2002, did you and your senior staff
9 attend a meeting at the Policing Board?

10 A. Yes. 14:45

11 479 Q. And what occurred at that meeting?

12 A. We made a presentation to the Policing Board, it took
13 about an hour and we invited questions and then there
14 was discussion about the recommendations.

15 480 Q. Did you come to an agreement about the conclusions and 14:46
16 decisions of the Policing Board in relation to your
17 recommendations?

18 A. I don't know that we came to agreement, I do know that
19 we discussed it and then on 8th February anyway, after
20 our meeting with them, they published this document. 14:46

21 481 Q. So, I may have put it too high by talking about
22 agreement, there was discussion?

23 A. Yeah.

24 482 Q. And the end point of that discussion, have I understood
25 correctly, was three days later on 8th February -- 14:46

26 A. Yes.

27 483 Q. -- the recommendations and the response of the Policing
28 Board were published?

29 A. Yes.

1 484 Q. Did the Policing Board say in that response that:
2
3 "Since unique circumstances demand unique solutions,
4 these arrangements satisfy the joint recommendations
5 for continuity in the investigation whilst injecting 14:47
6 crucial independent elements."
7
8 A. Yes.
9 485 Q. Was your first recommendation that an investigation
10 team, led by a senior investigating officer independent 14:47
11 of the PSNI, should be asked to conduct the Omagh bomb
12 investigation?
13 A. Yes.
14 486 Q. So, you were suggesting that someone external to PSNI
15 should come in to that role? 14:47
16 A. Yes.
17 487 Q. Was the Policing Board response:
18
19 "The Board devised a structure comprising a Deputy
20 Chief Constable or Assistant Chief Constable from 14:47
21 another police service, a PSNI SIO and an external
22 senior officer or ESO from another police service."
23
24 A. Yes.
25 488 Q. And the responsibilities of those officers were 14:47
26 defined; the external deputy or Assistant Chief
27 Constable was to have, without operational control, an
28 overview of all matters and Terms of Reference that
29 included the following:

1 "To critically examine the resource and skill levels
2 needed to satisfactorily conclude the investigation;
3
4 To undertake a quality assurance role with particular
5 reference to the content of the McVicker Review; 14:48
6
7 To monitor progress in the investigation, including the
8 implementation of the McVicker Review;
9
10 To enhance further working practices with the AGS in 14:48
11 relation to the Omagh bomb police investigation and
12 linked inquiries;
13
14 To identify any obstacles standing in the way of
15 progress; 14:48
16
17 To offer strategic guidance to the Policing Board in
18 relation to its responsibilities; and
19
20 To report to the Policing Board at agreed intervals." 14:48
21
22 A. Yes.
23 489 Q. In terms of the responsibilities of those in the
24 response, the SIO from PSNI was to have operational
25 command of the investigation with a direct reporting 14:49
26 line to the relevant ACC and the Chief Constable, and a
27 reporting line on matters under his Terms of Reference
28 to the External Deputy Chief Constable or Assistant
29 Chief Constable appointed by the Policing Board?

1 A. Yes.

2 490 Q. And was in response to Recommendation 1, Deputy Chief
3 Constable of Merseyside Police, Mike Tonge, appointed
4 to that external DCC role?

5 A. Yes. 14:49

6 491 Q. And the current planning is for former now DCC Tonge to
7 give evidence tomorrow.

8

9 So, the response of the Policing Board was to introduce
10 a substantial element of outside PSNI involvement into 14:50
11 the investigation?

12 A. Yes.

13 492 Q. Recommendation 2 was that:

14

15 "An officer in overall command from an outside police 14:50
16 force be appointed to carry out the investigation of
17 the potentially linked terrorist incidents identified
18 in the McVicker Review."

19

20 A. Yes. 14:50

21 493 Q. So, an outside officer in relation to those terrorist
22 attacks or attempted attacks that occurred in a period
23 before the Omagh bombing?

24 A. Yes.

25 494 Q. And were believed to be linked to the same gang of 14:50
26 dissident republican terrorists?

27 A. Yes.

28 495 Q. Was the response of the Policing Board that the
29 external senior officer, the ESO appointed by the PSNI

1 from another police service in the United Kingdom
2 should have responsibility for (a) scrutinising the
3 current inquiry and the McVicker Review to ensure that
4 all opportunities to gather evidence were maximised and
5 that all recommendations relating to the Omagh
6 investigation were fully addressed?

14:51

7 A. Yes.

8 496 Q. Those were the recommendations made by Detective Chief
9 Superintendent Brian McVicker?

10 A. Yes.

14:51

11 497 Q. The responsibility would include exploring any
12 outstanding lines of inquiry into potentially linked
13 incidents identified in the Omagh Bomb Review Report
14 and McVicker Review.

14:51

15
16 Determining the relevance of investigative
17 opportunities presented in connection with similar
18 offences perpetrated in Northern Ireland in 1998.

19
20 Making decisions as to whether or not any such offences
21 should be investigated separately or absorbed into the
22 ongoing investigation.

14:51

23
24 Determining whether or not the appointment of another
25 officer to investigate these incidents was appropriate.

14:51

26
27 Identifying any obstacles to progress.

28
29 And, was this ESO to be given direct access to the

1 Chief Constable in respect of any matter of concern and
2 a direct reporting line to the relevant Assistant Chief
3 Constable?

4 A. Yes.

5 498 Q. Did the response further involve the appointment of 14:52
6 Detective Chief Superintendent Phil Jones of Merseyside
7 Police to the ESO role?

8 A. Yes.

9 499 Q. Did the Board state that the PSNI SIO and the ESO would
10 have equal status and that the ESO, Detective Chief 14:52
11 Superintendent Jones, should have access to all
12 investigation relevant intelligence?

13 A. Yes.

14 500 Q. With Detective Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter
15 appointed the SIO over the Omagh bomb police 14:52
16 investigation reporting to Assistant Chief Constable
17 Sam Kincaid?

18 A. Yes.

19 501 Q. Was Recommendation 3 that the senior investigating
20 officers in the Omagh bomb investigation, and all other 14:53
21 investigations, should be given appropriate access to
22 all relevant intelligence. The test for relevance
23 being that of the senior investigating officer?

24 A. Yes.

25 502 Q. In response, did the Policing Board state that it was 14:53
26 "aware that the Police Service of Northern Ireland and
27 senior officers had already taken considerable action
28 in relation to the reorganisation of Special Branch and
29 that the Police Service of Northern Ireland had already

1 agreed that SIOs should be given appropriate access to
2 all relevant intelligence."
3
4 A. Yes.
5 503 Q. Was Recommendation 4 that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of 14:53
6 Constabulary be invited to carry out a review of
7 terrorist-linked murder inquiries with a view to
8 reporting on structure, resources, strategies,
9 policies, practices and processes which should include
10 lines of communication and sharing of intelligence 14:54
11 between Special Branch and CID generally, and also with
12 a senior investigating officer in charge of any murder
13 inquiry?
14 A. Yes.
15 504 Q. In response, did the Policing Board say that PSNI 14:54
16 should now request HMIC to conduct a full review of
17 terrorist-linked murder inquiries with a view to
18 reporting on structure, resources, strategies,
19 policies, practices and processes?
20 A. Yes. 14:54
21 505 Q. To that end, did one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of
22 Constabulary, namely David Blakey carry out that review
23 and report in May 2003, making 15 recommendations for
24 the future conduct of murder investigations by the
25 Police Service of Northern Ireland? 14:55
26 A. Yes.
27 506 Q. And fifth of the six recommendations, did you recommend
28 that a review take place into the role and function of
29 Special Branch with a view to ensuring that in future

1 there were clear structures and procedures for the
2 management and dissemination of intelligence between
3 Special Branch and other parts of the Police Service of
4 Northern Ireland and that Special Branch be fully and
5 professionally integrated into the Police Service of 14:55
6 Northern Ireland?

7 A. Yes.

8 507 Q. Did the Policing Board, in response, acknowledge that
9 there were important issues around the structures and
10 procedures for the management and dissemination of 14:55
11 intelligence between Special Branch and other parts of
12 the service, and request HMIC to carry out a focused
13 review into Special Branch, as had been outlined, and
14 report to the Policing Board and Chief Constable to
15 provide an independent scrutiny to assist the Board in 14:56
16 assessing progress on these significant issues?

17 A. Yes.

18 508 Q. Was that review conducted by another of the inspectors,
19 Dan Crompton, with Mr. Crompton reporting on 29th
20 October 2002? 14:56

21 A. Yes.

22 509 Q. Did the Policing Board further state that a committee
23 of the Board assisted by a nominated chief officer from
24 PSNI should consider how, in practical terms,
25 intelligence was managed and disseminated between 14:56
26 Special Branch and other parts of the service so as to
27 ensure confidence?

28 A. Yes.

29 510 Q. And, finally, was Recommendation 6 that the PSNI should

1 adopt the policy of ACPO (the Association of Chief
2 Police Officers) in relation to murder reviews?

3 A. Yes.

4 511 Q. Did the Policing Board agree that recommendation?

5 A. Yes. 14:57

6 512 Q. Which required an early review into undetected murders
7 with the PSNI accepting that in principle?

8 A. Yes.

9 513 Q. In general terms, were you satisfied with the response
10 of the Policing Board to your recommendations? 14:57

11 A. Yes, I had two concerns.

12 514 Q. And what were those two concerns?

13 A. The response to Recommendation 2 didn't deal with the
14 issue of the test of whether information or
15 intelligence was relevant to any particular 14:57
16 investigation, who should have that test. And it
17 seemed to me that to establish a committee of the Board
18 assisted by a nominated chief officer from within the
19 PSNI, it seemed to me that it was unlikely that they
20 would be able, in practical terms, to consider how 14:57
21 intelligence is managed and disseminated between
22 Special Branch and the other parts of the service. It
23 requires a very extensive knowledge of a whole range of
24 other issues and matters with which Board members would
25 generally be unfamiliar. 14:58

26 515 Q. Did the Policing Board issue a press statement on 7th
27 February?

28 A. They did.

29 516 Q. And was there within it a sentence which said that:

1 "Following discussions between the Board, the Police
2 Ombudsman and the Chief Constable, it was agreed on the
3 basis of the information available that the Omagh bomb
4 could not have been prevented."
5 14:58

6 A. They did, but I didn't agree to that and I have not
7 agreed to it.

8 517 Q. And, in response, did you articulate the position that
9 you held, at that stage, in a letter to the Chairman of
10 the Policing Board of 11th February 2002? 14:58

11 A. Yes.

12 518 Q. And what did you say in that letter on this particular
13 point?

14 A. I said that my position was that it wasn't possible to
15 say what impact other actions between 4th and 15th 14:59
16 August would have had or whether other action than that
17 taken by Special Branch could have prevented the Omagh
18 bomb.

19 519 Q. I'm just going to pause for a moment. That was your
20 position as of February 2002? 14:59

21 A. Mm-hmm, yes.

22 520 Q. And, obviously, time then passed and anyone is entitled
23 to reflect and people ought to reflect.

24

25 On the 20th anniversary of the bombing, on 15th August 14:59
26 2018, did you appear on the radio programme "Good
27 Morning Ulster"?

28 A. Yes.

29 521 Q. And do you recall that you were asked whether you had

1 changed your mind in relation to anything that had been
2 stated in the report?

3 A. Yes.

4 522 Q. We have a recording, in fact, of what you went on to
5 say and we're going to listen to it. We might just 15:00
6 capture the question that you were asked, we will
7 certainly capture your response. For the transcript,
8 what we're going to play is a recording at INQ 044372
9 and we're going to listen to a passage from one minute
10 and ten seconds in to four minutes and about six 15:00
11 seconds in. The reference is, I think it's 044372.
12 Bear with me. It's entirely possible I have given you
13 an incorrect reference. [Short pause].

14

15 I have given you the reference to the transcript not 15:01
16 the recording. The actual recording, thank you very
17 much, Ms. Briggs, the actual recording is INQ 044246.

18

19 [Good Morning Ulster recording played].

20 15:01

21 "Q. It took 17 years to make you change your mind on
22 those findings?

23 A. The only finding on which I have changed my mind,
24 regrettably, is I said that we could not know, on the
25 information that we then had, we could not know whether 15:01
26 the bomb could have been prevented. But my view now is
27 that it could have been prevented, that had the various
28 intelligence services worked in a more cohesive way and
29 had the necessary action been taken by senior officers

1 in Special Branch, then the information about the
2 attack on police in Omagh, which had been received on
3 4th August, would have been -- you know, if that had
4 been conveyed to the Sub-Divisional Commander in Omagh,
5 he could have just set checkpoints up around town and 15:02
6 the effect of that could have been to drive the bombers
7 to abandon their bomb, this was the eighth bomb of the
8 year, to abandon their bomb outside the town.

9
10 Q. But what has changed? Why could you not have made 15:02
11 that conclusion in 2001?

12 A. Because there have been other inquiries now into
13 the intelligence which was available and more
14 information is available and I'm now convinced that had
15 they acted, not just on that piece of intelligence 15:03
16 which was received on 4th August - and the reason I
17 still think, although that was dismissed by police as
18 an argument among smugglers or something, although that
19 was dismissed I still think it was profoundly
20 important. It was a very, very specific piece of 15:03
21 information. It was very detailed, it gave names and
22 all sorts of things. My feeling was that the person
23 who phoned that warning in knew that something was
24 going to happen. Knew the date on which it was going
25 to happen. Didn't necessarily want to say exactly what 15:03
26 it was, maybe through fear, but did want to be so
27 informative that police would take action, but no
28 action was taken. The warning wasn't communicated, as
29 I said. No action was taken, and the bomb occurred.

1 And we know now, of course, that the intelligence
2 services were actually tracking the movements of this
3 car and we know that -- from the South, and we know
4 that the telephone calls which were made, well the
5 numbers were given, the telephone kiosks for the 15:04
6 numbers were given the day after the bomb, that didn't
7 just happen overnight, they knew that day. So, I think
8 things could have been done. And a consequence of that
9 might -- but that is no consolation whatsoever to the
10 people of Omagh. 15:04

11
12 I think what we do need now is an inquiry, a full
13 public inquiry to find out why this happened and how it
14 could have been prevented. I am not yet convinced that
15 the way in which we handle intelligence across the 15:04
16 United Kingdom is adequate to secure maximum
17 information.

18
19 Q. As you say, those words will be of no comfort at
20 all to the families. 15:04

21 A. No."

22
23 So, you expressed the view that you considered that the
24 bomb could have been prevented?

25 A. Yes. 15:04

26 523 Q. And in what you said to the broadcaster, you
27 identified, it seems, three particular points and I'm
28 simply going to rehearse my understanding of what the
29 points were in summary, not by way of endorsing them

1 but simply so we can understand what was motivating you
2 to express the view you did.

3
4 First of all, the 4th August telephone call. You said
5 to the broadcaster, very much as you said to us 15:05
6 earlier:

7
8 "My feeling was that the person who phoned that warning
9 in knew that something was going to happen. Knew the
10 date on which it was going to happen. Didn't 15:05
11 necessarily want to say exactly what it was, maybe for
12 fear but did want to be so informative that police
13 would take action, but no action was taken."

14
15 A. Yes. 15:05

16 524 Q. So, in other words, your theory was that someone wanted
17 to trigger a reaction in Omagh without specifying --

18 A. Yes.

19 525 Q. -- with detail what was believed by that person to be
20 going to happen. 15:06

21
22 Secondly, you referred to the fact that the
23 intelligence services were tracking the movements of
24 the car and by that were you referring to the bomb car?

25 A. Yes. 15:06

26 526 Q. And, thirdly, you were referring, in general terms, to
27 telecommunications evidence which in context would seem
28 to be the type of communications that we referred to in
29 our opening statement, namely mobile telephones being

1 tracked --

2 A. Yes.

3 527 Q. -- on a journey from the Republic of Ireland to Omagh?

4 A. Yeah.

5 528 Q. And the extent to which those numbers, or any number, 15:06
6 may or may not have been a matter of awareness by the
7 UK State before that date?

8 A. Yeah.

9 529 Q. I hope I have fairly captured those three points, if in
10 any way I haven't or you want to say anything else 15:07
11 please tell me?

12 A. Well, the only other thing I would say, if I may, is
13 that I said that, you know, among other things and
14 among the other things were that we'd had a series of
15 legal trials. We'd the David Rupert evidence and a 15:07
16 huge amount of evidence which came out from
17 David Rupert in the course of the civil action, I think
18 it was a civil action, and we'd had --

19 530 Q. So, that would have been his evidence, or the
20 transcripts of it in the Breslin civil action and his 15:07
21 live evidence in the trial of Michael McKeivitt in the
22 Republic of Ireland?

23 A. Yes. And there were a lot of emails, I think, too.

24 531 Q. There were emails.

25 A. And, also, we were aware there was other disclosure 15:07
26 which came out as a consequence of the civil action
27 which the families brought. So, there was a huge
28 growing body of evidence of activity by one group or
29 another which was more than I had expected.

1 532 Q. So, thank you very much for explaining that those
2 additional factors were also in your mind.
3
4 Later on that day of the 20th anniversary, you were
5 interviewed on BBC Talk Back and I don't believe we 15:08
6 have a recording of that but what we to have is a
7 transcript and I'm going to put what appeared to us to
8 be the relevant page on the screen. Hoping that you
9 have notice of this, it's INQ 043399, and if you have
10 that it's page 7. [Short pause]. 15:08
11
12 Yes, this is the page. Thank you very much. So, do
13 you see three lines down from the top there's a passage
14 that starts "but since then?"
15 A. Yes. 15:09
16 533 Q. So, you've been asked about the development in your
17 opinion, even the change in your view --
18 A. Yes.
19 534 Q. -- in the 20 years since the bombing. In the 17 years
20 since your report. And you said: 15:09
21
22 "In the 20 years since then we have seen very, very
23 significant developments in terms of understanding the
24 whole issue of the Omagh bomb, what was happening
25 before it, how the Real IRA were working." 15:10
26
27 In context, was that a reference to what David Rupert
28 had been able to contribute to --
29 A. In part it was that, but in part it was the series of

1 linked bombs, what we call the linked bombs.

2 535 Q. "All those bombs that Norman Baxter talked about in
3 1998 and Omagh was the eighth of eight bombs. There
4 was a bomb, for example, that was destined for London
5 in a red BMW that was intercepted on a ferry."

15:10

6
7 which in context would appear to be the interception at
8 Dún Laoghaire in April of 1998.

9
10 "All those, all that we have a greater knowledge and
11 understanding now. GCHQ did cooperate with me to some
12 degree and we did get some information but I'm quite
13 sure there was a lot more information than that which
14 GCHQ chose to share with me, but it was enough for me
15 to be sure of where I was."

15:10

16
17 So, additional factors that you appeared to have
18 mentioned in that interview dealing with the delay, at
19 a high level, which had caused you to adopt the
20 position you were then adopting.

15:11

21
22 "More is known about the Real IRA."

23
24 The previous linked incidents and information emanating
25 from GCHQ?

15:11

26 A. Yes.

27 536 Q. Can I ask you before we just deal with two final short
28 topics, does it continue, as you sit there today, on
29 14th October 2026, continue to be your view that the

1 Omagh bombing could have been prevented?

2 A. I think that's now a matter for the Inquiry to decide.

3 But it does seem to me THAT if there had been -- you

4 know, my understanding is that the individual bombs

5 before the Omagh bomb were individually investigated, 15:12

6 there was no linking of them, no handling of them by a

7 single SIO to determine common factors and common

8 suspects. And I think if that had happened it's

9 possible that the activities of the Real IRA, at this

10 stage, could have been hindered, very definitely, and 15:12

11 because of what we know about the telephone numbers

12 that were being recorded and all that sort of thing

13 now. Sorry, the analysis of the calls between one

14 another, the phones, when you put all this together, it

15 seems to me that there's a very cogent argument for 15:12

16 saying that there must be something that could have

17 been done. But I defer to the Inquiry because you will

18 know much more than I do by the end of all this.

19 537 Q. Thank you. I said there were two final short topics,

20 there may in fact be three. Well, there are three. 15:13

21

22 And the first is events after the publication of your

23 report. And I'm going to deal with this very much in

24 headline form for the reasons I gave earlier that it's

25 not necessary to delve into all of the details of this 15:13

26 or perhaps helpful to anyone. But there was a very

27 strong immediate response from the Chief Constable?

28 A. Yes.

29 538 Q. Indicating what he would do if your findings proved to

1 be correct?

2 A. Yes.

3 539 Q. And a response for which he has expressed regret in
4 this Inquiry as I can see you know.

5 A. Yes. 15:13

6 540 Q. There were then detailed responses in January 2022 from
7 PSNI carrying out, essentially, paragraph-by-paragraph
8 analysis of your report, critical of your report. And
9 then as we know from your evidence a little earlier, in
10 April 2022, in considerable detail, you and your team 15:14
11 replied to that document?

12 A. Yes.

13 541 Q. And in very simple terms, PSNI were saying that they
14 believed you were wrong but you remained convinced that
15 you were right? 15:14

16 A. I think the evidence which we presented indicated that
17 we were right.

18 542 Q. And in between those two points, so PSNI's response and
19 the Police Ombudsman rejoinder, a threat of judicial
20 review was raised, not by PSNI but by a staff 15:15
21 association, is that correct?

22 A. Yes.

23 543 Q. But in the result that did not come to anything?

24 A. No.

25 544 Q. We know - second topic - from Mr. Bridger that contact 15:15
26 was made with the Ombudsman's Office by a relative of a
27 victim of the bomb in Omagh to say that a detective
28 sergeant from the AGS had information about the Omagh
29 bomb?

1 A. Yes.

2 545 Q. And that was Detective Sergeant White?

3 A. Yes.

4 546 Q. And Mr. Bridger has given information about that. Did
5 you consider that it was appropriate to carry out some 15:16
6 enquiries in relation to that issue?

7 A. I was asked whether we would receive Mr. White's
8 information and I said we would, but on the basis that
9 we would only do so within very limited confines. And
10 then having received the information I asked, I think 15:16
11 Mr. Bridger, to write up what his view of it was. I
12 then asked him to supply me with all the documentary
13 evidence, and there was a very significant pile of
14 documentary evidence which Sergeant White provided. It
15 was things like his duty sheets and his travel costs 15:16
16 and all sorts of things, which, if you like, provided
17 some triangulation of the assertions which he was
18 making in his allegations. And there was, certainly,
19 sufficient corroboration there for me to be concerned
20 enough to say we need to ask the Irish Government to 15:16
21 look at this. Nothing that we could do with it,
22 nothing at all, but the Irish Government did need to
23 look at it.

24 547 Q. And what was a short report - to use that word in a
25 general sense - prepared and provided to the Government 15:17
26 of Ireland in the form of the Minister of Foreign
27 Affairs?

28 A. I think I took a 57-page report to Brian Cowan who was
29 then the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

1 548 Q. And, in due course, we know that the investigation that
2 resulted in the Nally Report was prepared. Did you
3 yourself have any involvement in that process?
4 A. Yes. We were invited, David Wood, Martin Bridger and
5 I, I think, were invited to meet Nally Tribunal or 15:17
6 Nally Commission, and we did. And I was concerned that
7 they would have access to all the information they
8 needed to establish the facts. And I asked them did
9 they have any access to Garda Special Branch materials
10 and they said no, but they didn't need that. And at 15:18
11 that point I thought there is not going to be a
12 credible outcome from this inquiry. And the other
13 thing that happened was that the inquiry were offered
14 evidence by I think ACC Kincaid and I think Detective
15 Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter, Norman Baxter was 15:18
16 the SIO running the inquiry and I think the PSNI had
17 taken a statement from John White, a very long
18 statement, much more than we had done, because we'd
19 referred it to the PSNI, and both ACC Kincaid and
20 Detective Chief Superintendent Baxter would have had 15:18
21 information which I felt the Nally Tribunal would have
22 needed to hear but they didn't even want to hear from
23 them. So, at that point I felt I'd done my duty and
24 there was nothing more I could do.
25 549 Q. The final topic, just to identify some of the roles 15:19
26 that you have performed since you've ceased to be the
27 Ombudsman, and this takes us to page 8, paragraph 23 of
28 your statement.
29 A. Yes.

1 550 Q. So that the Core Participants and the public can
2 understand something of your life since then.
3
4 In 2009, did you become the Chair of the Equality and
5 Human Rights Commission formal investigation into human 15:19
6 rights in England and Wales?
7 A. Yes.

8 551 Q. In 2009, did you become a member of the House of Lords?
9 A. I did.

10 552 Q. And have you, thereafter, served on a number of Select 15:19
11 Committees?
12 A. I have.

13 553 Q. Playing an active legislative role?
14 A. Yes.

15 554 Q. Between 2010 and 2014, did you establish an independent 15:19
16 monitoring panel for an operation called Operation
17 Stafford?
18 A. I did.

19 555 Q. Which was an investigation into criminality of the most
20 serious nature by the Ulster Volunteer Force? 15:20
21 A. Yes.

22 556 Q. Between 2014 and 2021, were you the Chair of the Daniel
23 Morgan Independent Panel of Inquiry?
24 A. I was.

25 557 Q. Which was the inquiry into the handling of the 15:20
26 circumstances of the murder of a private investigator
27 called Daniel Morgan and, in particular, whether there
28 had been any police involvement and police corruption?
29 A. Yes, and media corruption.

1 558 Q. In 2015, were you appointed a member of the
2 International Steering Group for Operation Kenova which
3 was, as we all know, investigating the activities of
4 British Army agent known by the name "Stakeknife"?
5 A. Yes. 15:21
6 559 Q. And those are simply some examples of the public roles
7 that you have had since you ceased to be the Ombudsman?
8 A. Yes.
9 MR. GREANEY: well, Lady O'Loan, thank you very much
10 indeed for answering my questions. Ordinarily, we 15:21
11 would take a break at about a quarter to four, bearing
12 in mind -- am I wrong Sir? We've been going since
13 2:30, so I'm in your hands. It may be sensible, given
14 how far we're going to go this afternoon, to have a
15 break now so as to divide the afternoon up. 15:21
16 CHAIRMAN: would you welcome a short break at this
17 stage, Lady O'Loan?
18 THE WITNESS: It's up to you, Sir.
19 CHAIRMAN: we always have a break for the shorthand
20 writer, in event. So, if you're comfortable with that 15:22
21 we'll take it at this stage.
22 THE WITNESS: Yes.
23 MR. GREANEY: Thank you very much, Sir. Can I indicate
24 that, as you will be leaving the hearing room, everyone
25 should remain seated and in silence until you have 15:22
26 left.
27
28 THE INQUIRY ADJOURNED BRIEFLY
29

1 THE INQUIRY RESUMED AS FOLLOWS:

2
3 CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Greaney.

4 MR. GREANEY: Sir, when we returned to the hearing at
5 2:30 p.m. this afternoon, I explained in answer to a 15:41
6 question, Sir, that you posed to me, that part of the
7 reason why we were sitting late was that disclosure
8 issue had arisen in relation to Police Ombudsman
9 documents. Over the course of the break, I've had what
10 I'll describe as a helpfully frank discussion with my 15:42
11 learned Friend, Mr. Aiken, and on the basis of what
12 he's been able to say to me I'm satisfied that the
13 position was not so stark as I explained to you, and
14 that instead there are justifications for why we only
15 received the typed notes of 10th and 11th December 2001 15:42
16 on Monday. And, moreover, justifications for why we
17 have not yet received the notes made in the car on 10th
18 December.

19
20 Sir, what we're going to propose in terms of 15:42
21 questioning is, somewhat unusually, I'm going to ask
22 you, Sir, in a moment whether you have any questions
23 whether you would like to ask the witness. I'm then
24 going to invite my learned Friend, Mr. Skelt, to ask
25 any questions that he has, and he's been good enough to 15:42
26 tell me that he expects to be as long as his
27 allocation.

28
29 Once Mr. Skelt has finished his questioning, we know

1 that he has an application to make Sir, to you, in
2 relation to when Sir Ronnie Flanagan ought to give his
3 evidence. And once you have heard that application,
4 and, of course, what anyone else might wish to say,
5 we're going to suggest that that is as far as we should 15:43
6 go for the day.

7
8 I've had a chance to speak to Lady O'Loan and she has
9 confirmed that she is able to return in order to
10 conclude her evidence tomorrow morning. 15:43

11
12 Sir, all of that said, unless there is anything that
13 you would wish to ask me about it, I will ask you
14 whether you have any questions that you would like to
15 ask the witness? 15:43

16
17 BARONESS NUALA O'LOAN WAS QUESTIONED BY THE CHAIRMAN AS
18 FOLLOWS:

19
20 560 Q. CHAIRMAN: well, Lady O'Loan, I think it might be 15:43
21 useful for me to have something of an overview of how
22 the office of the Police Ombudsman operated under your
23 period of tenure. Would you mind if I asked just a few
24 questions to explore that issue?

25 A. Yes, Sir. 15:44

26 561 Q. And it seemed to me that the best place to start might
27 be by understanding what the Ombudsman did. And the
28 current Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's website
29 states that:

1 "The Police Ombudsman's Office investigates complaints
2 about the conduct of police officers in Northern
3 Ireland."
4
5 I assume that's an accurate overview statement? 15:44
6 A. Well, it is, except that it's not just complaints, Sir,
7 there are a number of bodies who can refer matters to
8 the Ombudsman. So, it's not just complaints.
9 562 Q. No. I think I'll come to that just in a moment. The
10 website also states that the Police Ombudsman's Office 15:44
11 is not part of the police.
12 A. Correct.
13 563 Q. And that, perhaps, is a statement which is both
14 important and accurate.
15 A. Yes. 15:45
16 564 Q. Because the Ombudsman's Office, as I would understand
17 it, is a statutory body?
18 A. Yes.
19 565 Q. Created by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act of 1998?
20 A. Yes, Sir. 15:45
21 566 Q. And as a statutory body, the functions of the Ombudsman
22 will be found within the content of the legislative
23 provisions.
24 A. Yes.
25 567 Q. And if we look to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act we 15:45
26 can find that it tells us how an investigation by the
27 Ombudsman can be triggered?
28 A. Yes.
29 568 Q. I'm looking at this in very high level, not in detail.

1 But what we find is that, for example, a complaint
2 could be made by or on behalf of a member of the police
3 force?
4 A. Yes.
5 569 Q. And that would be a complaint about the conduct of a 15:45
6 member of the police force?
7 A. Yes.
8 570 Q. Sorry, a complaint could be made by or on behalf of a
9 member of the public?
10 A. Yes, I thought that was what you meant. 15:46
11 571 Q. And that would be about the conduct of a member of the
12 police force.
13 A. Yes, so long as the member of the public was directly
14 affected.
15 572 Q. Yes. But, of course, investigations, as you've alluded 15:46
16 to, can be triggered in other ways as well. So, for
17 example, matters can be referred to the Ombudsman for
18 investigation by a number of different bodies, I think
19 they probably comprise the Policing Board, the
20 Department of Justice, the Secretary of State and the 15:46
21 Chief Constable?
22 A. And Director of Public Prosecutions, I think, Sir.
23 573 Q. And the Department of justice perhaps?
24 A. Oh, sorry.
25 574 Q. And all of those bodies can refer matters for 15:46
26 investigation to the Police Ombudsman's Office if it
27 appears that a member of the police force has either
28 committed a criminal offence or behaved in a manner
29 which would justify disciplinary proceedings?

1 A. Yes.

2 575 Q. And assuming a complaint is not already outstanding
3 about those matters. But in addition to those
4 processes, the Ombudsman has always had the opportunity
5 to instigate an investigation of his own motion? 15:47

6 A. Yes.

7 576 Q. And that's available where the Ombudsman considers that
8 a member of the police force may have committed a
9 criminal offence or behaved in a manner which would
10 justify criminal proceedings? 15:47

11 A. Yes.

12 577 Q. And, of course, if it appears to the Ombudsman that
13 it's in the public interest to carry out that
14 investigation?

15 A. Yes. 15:47

16 578 Q. In each of the statutory provisions which we've just
17 cantered through, authorisation is provided which would
18 permit an investigation to be launched. But in each of
19 the statutory provisions, the references to members of
20 the police force are references to members of the RUC 15:48
21 or the PSNI?

22 A. There are other police forces for whom the Police
23 Ombudsman is responsible. So, if I remember correctly
24 now the MoD Police operating here, the Harbour Police
25 operating here, the NCA staff operating in Northern 15:48
26 Ireland. There may be others now but...

27 579 Q. That's helpful, thank you very much. And the statute
28 provides that when an investigation is to be conducted,
29 the Ombudsman should appoint one of his officers to

1 conduct that investigation?

2 A. Yes.

3 580 Q. And that, I imagine, is why you had the benefit of the
4 services of officers such as Mr. Wood and Mr. Bridger?

5 A. Yes. 15:49

6 581 Q. And if we then look, with that background in mind, at
7 the December 2001 report, what we know already from
8 your evidence is that that was initially triggered by
9 the article in The Sunday People which was published in
10 July of 2001? 15:49

11 A. Yes.

12 582 Q. Can I ask who you appointed to conduct that
13 investigation?

14 A. Martin Bridger was appointed, subject to management by
15 David Wood. 15:49

16 583 Q. And given the structure which is that an officer of the
17 Ombudsman's Office is appointed to conduct the
18 investigation, it seemed to me that your own role must,
19 therefore, be a different one?

20 A. Yes. 15:50

21 584 Q. And I wondered whether it would be correct to
22 understand that your role would be to act in a
23 supervisory fashion and to give strategic direction?

24 A. I think it's more than that, Sir. Yes, you have to
25 have a strategic direction for the office. The key 15:50
26 things to me were my past as Police Ombudsman as
27 corporation sole, where the investigation of
28 allegations of misconduct, investigation of policy
29 issues, you know like use of force and things like

1 that, reporting on statistical figures in relation to
2 the police complaints system. So, there's a number of
3 other functions. And then my duty was to exercise
4 those roles so that everything I did in the appointment
5 of senior investigating officers such as Martin Bridger 15:50
6 for the Omagh investigation, they would present me with
7 their reports. I would then -- and the way I operated
8 the office was Mr. Wood and Mr. Bridger and others
9 would work together and then they would bring me a
10 report and then I would go through it word by word, and 15:51
11 then I would work out whether I had seen the evidence
12 which corroborated the assertions being made in the
13 report.

14 585 Q. That's very helpful, that gives me a far clearer
15 insight I think. So, for example, I wondered whether 15:51
16 you had carried out any of the interviews?

17 A. No.

18 586 Q. With the individuals who provided information for the
19 December report and the answer is no?

20 A. No. 15:51

21 587 Q. And, I suppose, that means that you never even met
22 Kevin Fulton?

23 A. No, I did not. But what I did do was I read all his
24 statements and made sure that what was proposed was
25 correct. 15:52

26 588 Q. And I think we should understand that he was
27 interviewed in the presence of his solicitor --

28 A. Yes.

29 589 Q. -- by Mr. Bridger, would that be right?

1 A. Yes.

2 590 Q. And maybe I'm incorrect in this, but I had assumed that
3 as the investigation was progressing you would be
4 receiving briefings and updates from your officers?

5 A. Yes. 15:52

6 591 Q. You would?

7 A. Yes. And it was particularly around the problems so
8 that Mr. Wood could deal with some of the issues which
9 arose when, for example, Martin Bridger was seeking
10 information or something like that, but at the end of 15:52
11 the day I would speak to the Chief Constable if I felt
12 that things weren't moving fast enough. And I think on
13 Omagh I had some 25 exchanges with the Chief
14 Constable - I made a list of them once - in the context
15 of needing to maybe seek clarification or push him a 15:52
16 bit or try and get access to something so that the
17 investigation could proceed.

18 592 Q. And were the updates that you would receive from, for
19 example, Mr. Bridger, be written or oral?

20 A. Both. So, I would receive, for example, a draft 15:53
21 section of a report and I would receive an oral, yeah.

22 593 Q. And, it's obvious, I imagine from what you've already
23 said, but as the investigators worked through the
24 investigation, conclusions would begin to be developed
25 and you'd be kept informed of those? 15:53

26 A. Yes.

27 594 Q. And I wondered about what would happen when it came to
28 the point where the outcome of the investigation would
29 have to be set out, but I think you've already

1 explained that, a draft report would be prepared?

2 A. Yes.

3 595 Q. And then you would go through that with the

4 investigator?

5 A. Yes. 15:53

6 596 Q. I think we heard from Mr. Bridger that on the eve,

7 perhaps, of the publication of the 2001 report, you

8 went through that report, effectively line-by-line with

9 him and some of the others?

10 A. Yes, but I had already done so on about ten occasions 15:54

11 before that. But, yes, I did, even that night before I

12 remember saying we have to be absolutely sure because

13 this is the future of the families and the trauma that

14 we might cause if we get something wrong. This is the

15 future of the reputation of the Royal Ulster 15:54

16 Constabulary, then the PSNI, and this is the reputation

17 of my office and all those things are important, so we

18 have to get it right.

19 597 Q. So, Mr. Bridger was entirely accurate in what he said

20 about that? 15:54

21 A. Yes.

22 598 Q. If we move on from that report to think for a moment

23 about the 2002 report, the March 2002 report which you

24 gave to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Republic

25 of Ireland, from what you've explained to us already 15:55

26 and from what Mr. Bridger has explained, it seems clear

27 that this report wasn't triggered in any of the ways

28 contemplated by the statutory provisions?

29 A. That's correct, Sir, it's outside the statute. It was

1 not within my jurisdiction, but a whistleblower had
2 come to us through a relative and it did seem to me
3 that I couldn't walk away, so the only thing I could do
4 was simply deal with it and bring it to the attention
5 of the responsible authority which was the Irish 15:55
6 Government. We didn't investigate, we looked at the
7 papers which he provided. I didn't want to take them
8 from something which I felt was totally lacking in
9 credibility. So, I went through all his corroborative
10 documents and measured them against the occasions on 15:55
11 which he said things happened and, obviously, there was
12 a lot more than appears in the Nally Report.

13 599 Q. That's what I would like just to understand a little
14 better if I may. So, this all started, if I understand
15 it correctly, with an approach to Mr. Bridger? 15:56

16 A. I think it was an approach from a member of the family
17 who encountered Detective Garda Sergeant White and the
18 member of the family came to Martin Bridger.

19 600 Q. And then he no doubt brought it to your attention?

20 A. Yes. 15:56

21 601 Q. And did you meet with Mr. White?

22 A. No.

23 602 Q. Presumably Mr. Bridger drafted the report?

24 A. Mr. Bridger did, and Mr. Bridger met with him. He was,
25 as I recollect, a very frightened man and he, I think, 15:56
26 we possibly took him away to Liverpool and
27 Martin Bridger took him away somewhere so that he would
28 feel safe giving a statement. And we also informed -
29 and you'll forgive me if I'm not absolutely correct -

1 but we also informed the PSNI and they took a
2 several-hundred-page from him, I think, in respect of
3 the evidence which he was providing because it was
4 relevant to their bomb investigation.

5 603 Q. I'm sure all of that is right and it may be that 15:57
6 chronology will fall into place. But, consistent with
7 what you've just explained, we understood from
8 Mr. Bridger that he took Mr. White away for a few days
9 to interview him and he didn't explain to us where it
10 was but it may be Liverpool that you've just mentioned, 15:57
11 and we understood that he interviewed Mr. White for a
12 period of about two or three days there?

13 A. Yes.

14 604 Q. Do you know whether he was accompanied by other members 15:57
15 of your staff at that time?

16 A. I think that he was accompanied by at least one other
17 member of staff because he would have had, if you like,
18 a note taker. We had two particular members of staff
19 who were security cleared and who had experienced on
20 intelligence front, and that sort of thing. I think he 15:58
21 took one of them but I'm sure he could provide that
22 information to you.

23 605 Q. So, Mr. Bridger and one other?

24 A. I think so, yeah. One or more, yeah.

25 606 Q. And in the result there was a report drafted and 15:58
26 prepared and I think it ran to about 11 pages?

27 A. Yes.

28 607 Q. And if I understand correctly you, Mr. Wood and
29 Mr. Bridger all delivered this personally to Dublin?

1 A. The report which I took to Dublin was not 11 pages it
2 was about 57 pages.

3 608 Q. Well, let's just have a look at that. We might get a
4 little bit more clarity on that if we look at the
5 published version of the Nally Group Report, which is 15:58
6 INQ 014752. And page 8. Can we look at paragraph 1.3.
7 A. Yeah.

8 609 Q. So, we can see there at paragraph 1.3 it explains to us
9 that the Police Ombudsman provided a further 57-page
10 report detailing the issues with two further volumes of 15:59
11 supporting documentation.

12 A. Yes.

13 610 Q. I think that's in addition to the original report which
14 you produced?

15 A. Yes. 15:59

16 611 Q. And then further on we can see that towards the end of
17 August of 2002, the Police Ombudsman provided another
18 volume containing further documentation including a
19 39-page document, which appears to have been designed
20 to be made as a statement by Detective Sergeant White 15:59
21 in the presence of his solicitor. That's, perhaps, the
22 one that Mr. Bridger took in the first instance?

23 A. I would think so, Sir. I haven't didn't revisited this
24 at all but I think that's all correct.

25 612 Q. And the 57-page report -- 16:00

26 A. Yeah.

27 613 Q. -- with the two volumes of supporting documentation,
28 would that include Mr. Bridger's notes of the three
29 days of interview?

1 A. It would include the outcome of the three days of
2 interview, yes.

3 614 Q. And we know that the Nally Group carried out its own
4 investigation but as you've alluded to, and I think
5 we've seen mentioned in the Nally Group Report, the 16:00
6 PSNI also conducted a very lengthy interview with
7 Mr. White?

8 A. Yes.

9 615 Q. Do you know if that was before or after you took your
10 report to Dublin? 16:01

11 A. I don't know. I would suspect after but Mr. Baxter, I
12 don't know if Mr. Baxter has given evidence yet but he
13 would be the one who could tell you that.
14 Norman Baxter.

15 616 Q. I think if we look at paragraph 1.4 on the screen it 16:01
16 might give us the answer. It tells us there that:
17
18 "The Police Ombudsman's Office also provided the Police
19 Service of Northern Ireland with a copy of the
20 documentation and two members of the PSNI Omagh 16:01
21 investigation team interviewed the Detective Sergeant
22 in July 2002."
23

24 So, that's after your report?

25 A. Yes. 16:01

26 617 Q. It's clear that a lot of information that was
27 ingathered in one way or another concerning Mr. White,
28 and all of it ended up in the hands of the Nally Group?

29 A. I don't know if all of it did, I don't know if the PSNI

1 handed all of the documentation that they created.

2 618 Q. well, they seem to have given them the interviews at
3 least?

4 A. Yes.

5 619 Q. I think interviews were conducted of Mr. White by 16:02
6 Scottish police officers as well?

7 A. Yeah.

8 620 Q. I'm not sure offhand whether the Nally Group got those,
9 but that's a further set of interviews that were
10 conducted? 16:02

11 A. I mean, Sir, I would have expected that the PSNI would
12 have been looking for corroborating information in
13 their own intelligence databases, and things like that,
14 and I don't think they would necessarily have provided
15 those to the Nally Inquiry, but I do know that the ACC 16:02
16 and Detective Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter did
17 want to go and give evidence but their offer was
18 declined.

19 621 Q. One thing that I'd just like to have a clearer
20 understanding of, if I may, because it's possible that 16:03
21 it's something some others will be interested in. I'd
22 just like to understand, if I may, what you saw as your
23 own office's jurisdiction in carrying out these
24 interviews with Mr. Bridger, both in Northern Ireland
25 and in Liverpool and in drafting a report and taking it 16:03
26 to Dublin?

27 A. It wasn't part of our statutory remit at all, but as a
28 public officeholder I had received information which
29 required to be dealt with. So, it was handed to the

1 police and it was handed to the Department of foreign
2 Affairs, the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Dublin,
3 because it couldn't just be left to sit and simply say,
4 we have no jurisdiction, we had to do something with
5 it.

16:03

6 622 Q. I've no doubt that's the case but I wonder just why you
7 chose do what you did which was to carry out a series
8 of interviews and prepare a report and present it?

9 A. Because the allegations contained in the Garda
10 Sergeant's documentation as it came to us were very,
11 very serious and they went to a number of bombings
12 which had occurred, not just one but a number of
13 bombings which had occurred both in the North and the
14 South during 1998. They went to the activities of his
15 informant and the people with whom his informant
16 worked, and the way in which An Garda Síochána handled
17 the information which he provided. And we just needed
18 to be clear what it was we were saying because Garda
19 Sergeant White, as I recollect, told us that he tried
20 to raise these issues with his own authorities and had
21 got nowhere.

16:04

16:04

16:04

22 623 Q. That explains the importance of it very clearly and I
23 very easily understand that and I'm not expressing any
24 criticism, I'm just exploring in case the issue is
25 raised elsewhere. So, you explain the importance of
26 it?

16:05

27 A. Yeah.

28 624 Q. But I'm not sure you explain why it was for you?

29 A. Because he came to me, because he was sent to me by a

1 member of the Omagh Family Group.

2 625 Q. why for example, did you not just send him to the PSNI?

3 A. We sent the information to the PSNI and we gave the

4 PSNI his details.

5 626 Q. That was after you conducted all of your own inquiries? 16:05

6 A. I couldn't be sure, Sir, at what point we informed the

7 PSNI. Mr. Bridger, I think, would be the person who

8 could inform you about that. But when somebody comes

9 to you with a whistleblowing situation in a situation

10 which is cross-jurisdictional, and in which we were 16:05

11 investigating potential misconduct within the RUC/PSNI,

12 one of the things I needed do was look and see does any

13 of this relate to the RUC/PSNI, or is he just talking

14 about his own organisation. I discussed it at length

15 with my senior team, including my Chief Executive, 16:06

16 Mr. Pollock, who had a long and distinguished career in

17 the public service in criminal justice and we came to

18 the conclusion that this was the way to deal with it.

19 CHAIRMAN: That's very helpful, thank you very much,

20 indeed. 16:06

21 MR. GREANEY: Thank you. As I indicated then, could we

22 ask Mr. Skelt to ask his questions on behalf of

23 Sir Ronnie Flanagan.

24

25 BARONESS NUALA O'LOAN WAS QUESTIONED BY MR. SKELT AS 16:06

26 FOLLOWS:

27

28 627 Q. MR. SKELT: Thank you, Sir. Thank you, Lady O'Loan,

29 thank you, Sir, for accommodating me out of order, it's

1 very much appreciated.

2
3 Lady O'Loan, just so you're aware, we, for entirely
4 proper reasons, have fairly limited timeframes for
5 questioning and there's some helpful guidance from the 16:07
6 Inquiry to the effect that there are specific topics to
7 be covered and, also, that the questioning has to
8 remain on high level, so bear that in mind please. And
9 also that I'm not asking questions on behalf of the
10 PSNI as a whole, my role in this Inquiry is to 16:07
11 represent Sir Ronnie. And you'll probably pick up from
12 the questions that they're focused more on his
13 involvement rather than the policing response as a
14 whole although, of course, there is some overlap.

15
16 Now, when you first started your investigation, as we
17 know, it's not in dispute, that followed quickly on the
18 back of the article in the Sunday press that related to
19 Mr. Fulton?

20 A. Yes. 16:07

21 628 Q. And you took the step, as you've explained, I think on
22 2nd August, of ringing, telephoning the Chief Constable
23 to tell him that you were intending to look at this and
24 you were making some preliminary enquiries?

25 A. I told him I was making preliminary enquiries, I didn't 16:08
26 say I was intending to look at it.

27 629 Q. Well, sorry, that's me rather crudely paraphrasing
28 other evidence. The point of the question I was coming
29 to is this, I suggest that when you spoke to him on the

1 phone on 2nd August, he welcomed your investigation
2 because this was something I suggest he thought was
3 important, what was in the paper on the Sunday was
4 extremely serious and he wanted it looked at?

5 A. Absolutely. If you look at paragraph 34 of my 16:08
6 statement I say that the Chief Constable responded
7 assuring me of full cooperation.

8 630 Q. That's right, thank you. And when you had moved - and
9 forgive me for going through this slightly briskly but
10 I have to - but when you moved to deciding to make this 16:08
11 a formal investigation, which I think was on or about
12 14th August, he, essentially, and I'm summarising, but
13 he restated to you that same position?

14 A. Yes.

15 631 Q. This was something he welcomed and he, at least, 16:09
16 promised you his full cooperation?

17 A. That's correct, that was paragraph 39 of my statement.

18 632 Q. Thank you. You then commenced your investigation and
19 as the Chairman has also just referred to, you had --
20 you were a creation of statute as the legal phrase 16:09
21 goes, and you as an Ombudsman had certain powers that
22 were provided to you by statute?

23 A. Yes.

24 633 Q. And in this regard the investigation that you had
25 decided to embark upon by that point, again I'm 16:09
26 summarising I'm afraid, but it was specified at you
27 investigating and making conclusions about either
28 misconduct or criminality by police officers?

29 A. Yes.

1 634 Q. Just so everybody understands, misconduct here means
2 suspected breaches of a specific code of behaviour that
3 I think was then referred to as the code of conduct and
4 are now standards of professional behaviour, is that
5 right? 16:10

6 A. Yes.

7 635 Q. Turning then, if I can, a different subject, to the
8 McVicker Report. As we know, that had been
9 commissioned by what was then the RUC and you have
10 talked in your evidence about your team becoming aware 16:10
11 of that in early September, around the 4th or the 5th I
12 think?

13 A. Yes.

14 636 Q. Can I just ask you this; up until then were your team
15 unaware of the existence of the McVicker Report at all 16:10
16 or was it just parts of it that you were unaware of?

17 A. I think we were unaware of the existence of the report.

18 637 Q. At all?

19 A. At all, because we had asked for any intelligence on
20 2nd August, there were a series of three or four 16:10
21 questions on 2nd or 3rd August, asking for information
22 and we would have expected it to come back as part of
23 that information.

24 638 Q. Yes. On or about 2nd or 3rd August, or thereabouts,
25 you'd asked that question. And just before I move to 16:11
26 the response to that, do you accept that the RUC and
27 more specific the Chief Constable hadn't made any
28 secret of the McVicker Report, it had been discussed in
29 the press, there had been press announcements about it

1 and whilst it was a short reference it was in his
2 annual report which I think you had been sent a copy,
3 which was normal practice?

4 A. It was two lines in his very long commentary in his
5 annual report. As to discussions in the media, I can't 16:11
6 comment, if I'm shown them I'll know. But I have to
7 say we were unaware that the report existed and that it
8 was important that we look at it.

9 639 Q. Of course. But as regards any -- if anybody took from
10 the evidence earlier that there had been any attempt at 16:11
11 secrecy around the McVicker Report, would you agree
12 that it had actually been publicly announced, certainly
13 months before your investigation started?

14 A. The fact of the review had certainly been publicly
15 announced. I mean, the fact that I was told that there 16:12
16 was only one copy of it and it's in the ACC's safe and
17 this sort of thing, and I was unlikely to get it I
18 think I was told at one point, was kind of relevant.

19 640 Q. Let me just move to that, because if we take the
20 starting point then as being around 2nd or 3rd August? 16:12

21 A. Mm-hmm.

22 641 Q. Your initial investigation, at that point, at least,
23 was narrow, wasn't it, it was just into the --

24 A. Absolutely.

25 642 Q. Again, I'm summarising for expediency sake. But at 16:12
26 that stage it was just an investigation into
27 essentially what was in the paper, the intelligence
28 that Mr. Fulton had apparently passed and the
29 implications of that?

1 A. Yes. The way it was handled, yes.

2 643 Q. Yes, thank you. And I think that information, it may
3 help just to go to one document to speed the process
4 up, if we could have INQ 000415, which was a bundle of
5 correspondence, I think, that came with your statement 16:13
6 and it's internal page 14, if you can have that put on
7 your screen, turn that up. [Short pause]. Thank you.
8 And it is just the top paragraph, it's slightly faint.
9 Thank you. And just so we can all orientate ourselves
10 around it, this is part of a letter that was sent to 16:13
11 Mr. Wood by Mr. White. And he was responding to
12 something that had been sent and this just reflects
13 some of the chronology?

14 A. Yes.

15 644 Q. There'd been a reference to vigorous pursuit, but 16:13
16 perhaps I'll just read the letter out. This had come
17 from Mr. White:

18

19 "With reference to the vigorous pursuit of the review
20 documentation, this was requested only on Wednesday 5th 16:14
21 September with the relevant intelligence section made
22 personally available to you..."

23

24 That being Mr. Wood.

25 16:14

26 "...by the Chief Constable on 7th September and the
27 complete document provided immediately upon your
28 subsequent request."
29

1 would you accept that's broadly accurate?

2 A. It's not quite accurate. I mean, any intelligence
3 document, et cetera, was asked on 3rd August. When we
4 became aware that the Review Report was there and we
5 needed to look at it we asked for it. The Chief 16:14
6 Constable agreed with when Mr. Wood went to see him,
7 not having received it, that we could have the chapter
8 on intelligence and only that chapter, but the
9 supplementary documents underpinning that chapter. And
10 he said if I wanted the rest of it, Mr. Wood would have 16:15
11 to make a case for it. So, Mr. Wood and I read the
12 document and went back and said, 'yes, we do want the
13 document.' Then eventually on 11th September the Chief
14 brought it down to me, that was unnecessary, because I
15 could have sent someone for it but he did provide it to 16:15
16 me, yeah.

17 645 Q. Well, that's really what I was getting at in the sense
18 that whilst there may be differences of a day or two
19 here and there, the initial Terms of Reference for the
20 investigation were very narrow and intelligence based, 16:15
21 and the intelligence section from the McVicker Report
22 was passed to, I'll use the collective term, the
23 Ombudsman's investigation within days?

24 A. But if we hadn't asked specifically for that --

25 646 Q. Yes. 16:15

26 A. -- the question is would we ever have got it.

27 647 Q. I don't know the answer to that.

28 A. You see another point is, the liaison officer, who was
29 supposed to be providing us and helping us to get

1 information, he didn't know about it.

2 648 Q. Yes, but let's deal with this in stages. There had
3 been no secrecy over the McVicker Report, the fact of
4 it was a matter of public knowledge?

5 A. The McVicker Review was a matter of public knowledge. 16:16

6 649 Q. The review, and it may be thought that that was likely
7 to result in a report?

8 A. Yeah.

9 650 Q. And a request had been made on or about 2nd August by
10 your office and the intelligence section of the report 16:16
11 was provided on or about 5th September, and then a
12 further request, or rather a request was made by your
13 office for sight of the full report, no doubt for good
14 reason, and that was personally supplied to you by the
15 Chief Constable within days of the request? 16:16

16 A. Yeah, but I have to say to you that that's nearly six
17 weeks after we started.

18 651 Q. And can I suggest that when Sir Ronnie provided you
19 with that, he made clear to you that he wanted you to
20 have it and he wanted there to be no obstruction to 16:17
21 this. And that's why he made what may be thought as a
22 slightly unusual step, of personally himself providing
23 you personally with a copy of that?

24 A. Well, yes, he did provide me with a copy of it but he
25 did say to Mr. Wood that he would give him only the 16:17
26 intelligence chapter and that if he wanted more we
27 would have to make a case for it.

28 652 Q. And Mr. Wood made a case for it and it was immediately
29 provided?

1 A. We asked for it. We had asked for it and we asked to
2 get it.

3 653 Q. Turning then, if I may, forgive me skipping around,
4 Lady O'Loan, moving now to working with police systems.
5 Can I suggest, again very generally and I'm sorry for 16:17
6 having to do this so generally, but within a fairly
7 short period of time of you embarking on your enquiries
8 and investigations, you realised that this was actually
9 a much bigger task than you'd originally envisaged?

10 A. When we became aware of the McVicker Report, when we 16:18
11 looked at the intelligence contained in it, when we
12 learned about the 4th August intelligence which was in
13 it, the Kevin Fulton intelligence as I recollect wasn't
14 in it, but we also, having seen the full report, we
15 knew the extent of the problems, even just the 16:18
16 timescale of that report indicated that there were
17 significant problems in the implementation of the
18 recommendations. So, yes, it became a wider
19 investigation. I informed the chief accordingly.

20 654 Q. Yes. That was purely just a statement of general fact 16:18
21 that when you started getting into your work and
22 getting the results it mushroomed?

23 A. Yes.

24 655 Q. This was a much bigger task than you'd originally
25 envisaged. 16:18

26 A. Yeah.

27 656 Q. And at that point, your investigators were using police
28 premises and police systems to do your work,
29 particularly, on the sensitive information?

1 A. Well, you can only examine sensitive information on the
2 police systems.

3 657 Q. That's right.

4 A. We could not have it on our systems, it was not
5 permitted. 16:19

6 658 Q. There are a whole number of reasons, I'm sure, around
7 that.

8 A. Yes.

9 659 Q. You and your staff, I think probably principally your
10 staff, were offered training on police systems; do you 16:19
11 agree with that?

12 A. Yes.

13 660 Q. And in the course of your investigations - and we can
14 see this reflected in the correspondence - there were
15 disagreements or disputes even, however you want to 16:19
16 characterise it, around the removal of secret or
17 sensitive information from the police premises. And
18 again if I can summarise it, let's see if you agree
19 with this or not; your office had requested the ability
20 to remove sensitive information so that you could work 16:19
21 on it away from a police station and that request had
22 been declined; is that accurate?

23 A. Yes.

24 661 Q. And on this issue, there was correspondence between
25 you. And what I would like please to start with is 16:20
26 could we have up please, in that same bundle of
27 correspondence which is 00415 and it's page 11 please,
28 and this will be a letter -- thank you very much. If
29 it's possible to blow the middle of that, this is 12th

1 September 2001, so we can all read it. Thank you.
2 This is a letter that the initials is obliterated but
3 this came from the Chief Constable we can see. But it
4 reflects that there had been a discussion and a letter,
5 10th September. And Sir Ronnie had emphasised, again 16:21
6 in person, that certainly as far as he was concerned
7 there was no question, nor will there be, of material
8 not being disclosed and that was his position, wasn't
9 it?
10 A. Yes. Certainly, that's what he said consistently. 16:21
11 662 Q. Then just moving on, if I can, to access to -- this is
12 page 19, please. [Short pause]. Sorry for this. If
13 you go through to page 22, it might be a more efficient
14 way to do it. Sorry. Same bundle, page 22. There was
15 correspondence and the correspondence, I think, was 16:21
16 largely between other members of the staff, largely
17 Mr. White and Mr. Wood, and also I think it was a
18 Detective Chief Superintendent Flanagan who's a
19 different individual?
20 A. Yes. 16:22
21 663 Q. But you were written to about this issue slightly later
22 in September, and we can see that from this letter.
23 This is the 20th. This records this issue about
24 removal of documentation --
25 A. Yes. 16:22
26 664 Q. -- where Sir Ronnie says:
27
28 "We spoke briefly yesterday by telephone about a
29 request from members of your staff to remove secret

1 Special Branch material from this Headquarters.

2
3 You are, of course, aware of the arrangements that have
4 been put in place for your staff to have accommodation
5 here at Headquarters and unrestricted access here to 16:22
6 any material they require.

7
8 I consider it a most significant departure from
9 anything that has ever previously happened to allow
10 such material to actually be physically removed from 16:22
11 here. You will understand for reasons that I need not
12 fully elaborate herein, that in order to discharge my
13 responsibility to protect, amongst other things, the
14 originators of intelligence, that I must control the
15 product. Please, therefore, outline in detail what 16:23
16 material would you seek to have removed and why so that
17 I may give further consideration to the request."

18
19 And then:

20 16:23
21 "In the absence of some unanswerable reason for actual
22 removal to allow processes which cannot take place
23 within this Headquarters, I have to say I am reluctant
24 to authorise removal, for example, on the grounds of
25 greater convenience." 16:23
26

27 And that was his position, wasn't it?

28 A. Yeah, that was his position. Of course, you have to
29 ask the question of yourself; is material which is

1 classified as secret actually worthy of that
2 classification? And is material contained there which
3 could be disclosed but which has been classified as
4 secret and, therefore, can't be disclosed? And my long
5 experience in this area would tell me that in 16:23
6 circumstances there are documents which shouldn't be
7 classified as secret, they don't merit that
8 classification. Notwithstanding that, we accepted that
9 that was the situation and, as you said, my staff were
10 offered training. And I think because they had to be 16:24
11 in RUC officer with them at all times, we decided it
12 would be better if that RUC officer actually operated
13 the databases and we stood beside them and told them
14 what to do. And that's what we did, and that worked.

15 665 Q. Yes. I take your point, obviously, around sometimes 16:24
16 material is over-classified, but would you accept that
17 there is actually a heavy responsibility, specifically
18 on Chief Constable, who's responsible, ultimately, for
19 the care and protection of intelligence sources which
20 is a very important factor in policing? 16:24

21 A. Absolutely. Absolutely.

22 666 Q. If we could go through to page 30, please, briefly
23 which is in the same bundle. Again, correspondence had
24 carried on and I'm just highlighting this on the same
25 issue. Page 30, please, thank you. It refers to some 16:24
26 previous correspondence. And then the second
27 paragraph, this was again Sir Ronnie writing to you by
28 now 9th October:
29

1 "I have considered the requests in the letter extremely
2 carefully, including having taken legal advice on my
3 responsibilities under the Regulation of Investigatory
4 Powers Act. In this context, I do not consider it
5 appropriate that any of the secret material referred to 16:25
6 be removed from this Headquarters or that it should be
7 scanned on to a laptop computer. As we have done to
8 date, all material requests will be supplied for
9 examination by your colleagues here so that whatever
10 processes they wish to apply (whether analytical or 16:25
11 scientific, etc.) can be conducted here.

12
13 If the premises currently provided are deemed in any
14 way less than adequate, please have Martin contact..."

15
16 And there's a number there.

17
18 "I'm sure that bigger or different premises can be
19 provided, even if at the temporary inconvenience of E
20 Department staff." 16:25

21
22 There's then a reference to the liaison officer.

23
24 That was essentially how it was left, wasn't it, that
25 he, for his own reasons, was not willing to agree to 16:26
26 secret material going off site and hope that unfettered
27 access could be provided.

28 A. We accepted that and my staff, as I recollect, were
29 allowed to take notes and that's what happened.

1 667 Q. Yes. On a similar but slightly different issue,
2 vetting. Can I make the following suggestion and
3 please disagree if you would wish. At the start of
4 your investigation some of your staff -- forgive me
5 again summarising this. There are different levels of 16:26
6 vetting, security clearance is a lower level than
7 what's called developed vetting and you had some staff
8 that were developed vetted and some that were just
9 security cleared, is that right?

10 A. We certainly had staff who were security cleared. 16:26

11 668 Q. Yes.

12 A. There's a lower level than that too. But the ones who
13 were working on this -- and security clearance gives
14 access secret documentation anyway.

15 669 Q. Yes. 16:27

16 A. So, if we had a member of staff who needed access -- we
17 did actually have these discussions -- I had these
18 discussions with the PSNI and the NIO before the office
19 was established. And, as I said, the chief officer sat
20 on my implementation board to establish the office and 16:27
21 we discussed levels of security clearance and I was
22 advised altogether that security clearance was a
23 satisfactory level because it did give access to secret
24 material. So, that's the basis on which we were
25 working. The people who came to me from the Met all 16:27
26 had been developed vetted in the Met. The ones who
27 were working on this Inquiry have been developed vetted
28 in the Met.

29 670 Q. So, if I put it this way, there were some members of

1 your staff who had developed vetted and some had lower
2 levels of clearance; would you accept that?

3 A. Some had security clearance, yeah. I had staff who
4 didn't work on this investigation who were just CTT.

5 671 Q. I may have just been corrected there. Certainly, in 16:28
6 early October 2001 were any of your staff developed
7 vetted?

8 A. I don't think so.

9 672 Q. Thank you. I apologise for misstating that.

10 A. Because the developed vetting issue had been discussed 16:28
11 and when you're developed vetted as, say, David Wood
12 and Martin, others here, it stays with your
13 organisation. So, if you move out from your
14 organisation it has to be done again for another
15 organisation. We were advised it wasn't necessary 16:28
16 because for the most part we weren't looking at secret
17 stuff but we did have facility to access secret stuff.

18 673 Q. Again, can I try and summarise the position that an
19 issue of vetting clearance and the bars that that may
20 present for accessing secret information, that was a 16:29
21 concern in early October?

22 A. Yes, the Chief Constable raised that.

23 674 Q. Yes.

24 A. He raised it with Mr. David Veness of the Metropolitan
25 Police and he asked Mr. Veness would my staff have 16:29
26 access to Special Branch material. And Mr. Veness came
27 back and said.

28 675 Q. Yes. I see you're looking at a bundle there. It might
29 help to go to page 32 in that same document bundle.

1 A. Yes.

2 676 Q. The point being addressed here is the one that we're
3 referring to at the moment. Just for expediency's
4 sake, if you look in the middle of that letter please,
5 it's slightly faint, I'm not sure, just for the benefit 16:29
6 of people watching if that could be expanded a bit.
7 Thank you. Thank you very much. There's some members
8 of staff referred to in the first paragraph. Then it
9 goes, and this goes from Sir Ronnie:

10

11 "Having consulted Mr. Veness, who is Assistant
12 Commissioner at the Metropolitan Police Service,
13 particularly because I am so anxious on behalf of Omagh
14 relatives to have this matter expeditiously concluded,
15 I am, in this instance, prepared to take the wholly 16:30
16 exceptional step of extending access to your three
17 additional above-named colleagues, notwithstanding that
18 they are not yet developed vetted. I have also pressed
19 on behalf of the RUC, the Permanent Under-Secretary and
20 the person in charge of vetting in London to expedite 16:30
21 proper clearance of your staff to hopefully avoid
22 future delays if similar circumstances exist."

23

24 So, Sir Ronnie took the step, didn't he, of granting
25 access, lest there be any dispute about it, to your 16:30
26 staff, notwithstanding they weren't developed vetted,
27 and did what he could to expedite the vetting process.

28 A. That's correct. I would emphasise again the level of
29 clearance which they had did entitle them to access

1 secret material.

2 677 Q. Turning then, if I may, to the -- or just before
3 leaving that, it may be something you cannot comment on
4 but would you accept that the vetting process,
5 particularly for the developed vetting is very
6 intrusive and lengthy?

7 A. Yes.

8 678 Q. And even a relatively smooth application can be
9 extremely time consuming?

10 A. Yeah.

L1 679 Q. From making it to granting it?

L2 A. From personal experience, it takes a long time to fill
L3 in the forms and to go through the process.

L4 680 Q. Thank you. Turning then to your draft report and
L5 response times. I think all of this is agreed but
L6 please at any point disagree with me if I'm summarising
L7 things incorrectly. Your draft report was supplied to
L8 the RUC and Chief Constable on 28th November and as has
L9 been covered already, I think the initial response
L10 period that you gave was until 5th December?

21 A. Right.

22 681 Q. And I think, I won't split hairs perhaps over this,
23 this falls over a weekend so it was about five working
24 days or thereabouts. And your report had taken you and
25 your team months to prepare; do you agree with that?

26 A. Sorry?

27 682 Q. Your report?

28 A. From 2nd August when we started until 28th November,
29 yes.

1 683 Q. And you'd mentioned the RUC -- sorry, the RUC's level
2 of awareness and Sir Ronnie's level of awareness of
3 that report. They knew, of course, what issues you
4 were looking at?

5 A. Yes. 16:32

6 684 Q. But they didn't know what factual conclusions you'd
7 come to, what assessments you'd made, what
8 recommendations you'd made, what findings you'd made.
9 They weren't aware of any of that until --

10 A. I'm not sure that's correct at all. I would have to 16:33
11 say to you, for example, that there is a letter
12 referred to on 10th September in one of my documents to
13 ACC White, which set out 12 points asking if the RUC
14 would be prepared to agree these as common facts. So,
15 that process went on throughout. I didn't new close in 16:33
16 this, the points in this statement, for obvious
17 reasons.

18 685 Q. Can I at least put it this way, that when your report
19 was eventually supplied, do you agree that it would
20 have contained a great deal in it that was of very 16:33
21 significant importance?

22 A. Yes.

23 686 Q. And whether or not, which is perhaps a matter for the
24 Inquiry, but whether or not a police response that
25 sought to challenge either the underlying facts, the 16:34
26 methods or the final conclusions, it was earnestly held
27 view of Sir Ronnie, and other senior police officers,
28 that they needed to respond to that?

29 A. Yes, we only asked for factual comment, that's standard

1 practice.

2 687 Q. Yes, I accept that. That's the only thing that you
3 asked for. But do you accept that they felt,
4 particularly given the seriousness of that piece of
5 work, that they needed to respond to what was in your 16:34
6 report?

7 A. Yes.

8 688 Q. And, again, it may be that this is reflected in the
9 nature of the type of correction that you were
10 inviting, which is straightforward and factual, and 16:34
11 they were looking at a much more detailed response.
12 There was correspondence, wasn't there, between you and
13 Sir Ronnie, he was asking on behalf of the police for
14 more time to reply, and you were declining that and
15 saying that you wanted, for the reasons you've 16:35
16 outlined, to get the report out.

17

18 Now, I won't, for many reasons, ask you about the
19 detail of that response that was provided, that is a
20 document in this case and will be looked at on another 16:35
21 occasion. We know that you then responded, I think, on
22 or about 22nd April with a rejoinder, a further report?

23 A. That was during the judicial review proceedings.

24 689 Q. Thank you. Now, so far as those judicial review
25 proceedings are concerned - and I'm sorry I'm over 16:35
26 time, I've nearly concluded - a judicial review was
27 brought but the Chief Constable was not an applicant in
28 that case, was he?

29 A. It was a Police Association judicial review.

1 690 Q. That meeting that you've talked of at Hillsborough in
2 the evening, and again I just want to deal with this
3 briefly, can I suggest that the tone of that meeting
4 between you and Sir Ronnie was much more conciliatory
5 than perhaps you've described earlier on today? 16:36

6 A. No.

7 691 Q. In that he was -- I suggest, at least, he was outlining
8 to you that there had been disagreements between you
9 but that he was wanting to put an end to those and move
10 forward in a more positive light? 16:36

11 A. No. I said to him that if he would accept that there
12 were major problems with the Omagh bomb investigation
13 and that there were problems with dissemination of
14 intelligence, that would -- and I also said that to the
15 Secretary of State around that time, that would change 16:36
16 things but no he said no. He said that he was standing
17 as he was, he wasn't prepared to move at all, he was
18 making no concessions. It was a very, very unpleasant
19 meeting. Very unpleasant. And I did -- I sat there
20 and listened to all he said to me and I have reported, 16:36
21 I went back, as I said, and reported on all the issues
22 he'd raised because I wanted to be able to take them
23 back to my staff to make sure I hadn't made any
24 mistakes or anything. It was profoundly difficult. I
25 left. He went for dinner with the GOC and the 16:37
26 Secretary of State and that was it.

27 MR. SKELT: Thank you. You'll understand it's
28 important that I challenge you on your recollection of
29 that. Thank you, I'm sorry for going over time and

1 thank you for giving me that allowance.

2 MR. GREANEY: Sir, as indicated we don't consider that
3 we can go any further with the evidence today and we've
4 been reinforcing that view by where we are now.

5
6 So, we know that Mr. Skelt has an application to make
7 to you. That does not need to detain Lady O'Loan so if
8 you are content she could leave the hearing room now
9 you could then hear from Mr. Skelt.

10 CHAIRMAN: Yes. Lady O'Loan, I'm sorry that we're
11 going to have to ask you to be inconvenienced by
12 returning tomorrow. Are you able to do that?

13 THE WITNESS: Yes, Sir, I can, I just need to know when
14 you want me.

15 MR. GREANEY: Ten o'clock tomorrow morning, if that is
16 convenient.

17 THE WITNESS: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

19 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Skelt.

21
22 SUBMISSION BY MR. SKELT:

23
24 MR. SKELT: Sir, as you are aware, Sir, Sir Ronnie was
25 scheduled to give evidence today, this afternoon. For
26 obvious reasons that has not proved possible. And
27 normally of course, my Lord, you, Sir would expect the
28 case simply to move tomorrow and his evidence to be
29 accommodated in the same order but at some point

1 tomorrow. It's my application and request that his
2 evidence be moved from tomorrow to a different day,
3 although as soon as possible thereafter as can be
4 reasonably accommodated. It's obviously important I
5 explain why that is and make clear that the reason for 16:39
6 that is my professional availability. Sir Ronnie is
7 keen, and it's important, again, I make this clear, he
8 is keen to give evidence to you as soon as possible so
9 that all with an interest in this case and the Inquiry
10 can hear what he has to say on these issues, at what 16:39
11 is, I expect, probably the first of several evidence
12 sessions that he will give.

13
14 As my Lord may be aware, I am engaged, in addition to
15 this Inquiry, with an ongoing High Court case in 16:39
16 Belfast, which has lasted far longer than anybody
17 involved in that case had ever envisaged. It was
18 expected to finish long before this week and in fact
19 finish towards the start of this evidence hearing some
20 weeks ago. The High Court judge who is sitting on that 16:39
21 case has not sat in the matter today to allow both
22 myself and Mr. McGuinness to attend here and also
23 Mr. Aiken, who represents the Ombudsman, who is also
24 engaged in that case in Belfast in the High Court.

25 16:40
26 The unfortunate position is reached that that case is
27 expected to complete with two days' more work on it on
28 Thursday and Friday of this week and there are a
29 substantial number of other parties engaged in it. I

1 appear for one of the applicants, Mr. Aiken appears for
2 the other applicant. And the unfortunate position
3 reached is that as a result of Sir Ronnie's evidence
4 not being heard today, albeit for the very best of
5 reasons, I'm then stuck in a very difficult position of 16:40
6 needing to be here and also needing to be in a
7 part-heard High Court case tomorrow and it would be my
8 respectful submission that you, Sir, could perhaps
9 exceptionally accommodate us, that being myself and
10 Mr. McGuinness to allow us to be here when Sir Ronnie 16:41
11 gives evidence. And I know that will cause frustration
12 to all of those who wish to hear his evidence and
13 frustration to you, Sir, who is keeping a very tight
14 timetable otherwise.

15
16 we mean no discourtesy by, firstly, making this 16:41
17 application and secondly, it is important I make this
18 clear, by not having been here earlier in this case
19 because the reason we've not been here is because of
20 that other matter which has exceptionally overran. We 16:41
21 did write back in, I think mid-September, to notify the
22 Inquiry's solicitor Mr. Suter, of what had become a
23 looming difficulty with that case. But, of course,
24 that's scant realistic consideration in the
25 circumstances. So we apologise for that, and again no 16:41
26 discourtesy is meant by anybody by that.

27
28 In those circumstances, Sir, and with regret, we ask
29 that Sir Ronnie's evidence be moved from tomorrow to a

1 future date, hopefully perhaps if can be accommodated
2 in the hearing in the week of the 9th of November.

3 CHAIRMAN: Can I ask you to help me with correspondence
4 you've mentioned with Mr. Suter?

5 MR. SKELT: Yes, sorry. It was sent on the 18th
6 September just after the close of business, and was
7 from Mr. Clarke who instructs me in this matter, and
8 sent to Mr. Suter by e-mail. I can provide you of
9 course with a copy.

16:42

10 CHAIRMAN: And what was the tenor of the
11 correspondence?

16:43

12 MR. SKELT: It was notifying Mr. Suter, in light of the
13 evidence hearing commencing in what was then next week,
14 that whilst Sir Ronnie would have a solicitor
15 representative present, instructed counsel were unable
16 to attend because of a part-heard judicial review
17 hearing which was listed to be heard last week but had
18 then been adjourned by the judge to recommence on
19 Monday, and given its urgency was then envisaged to
20 last all of that week. That was the envisaged
21 difficulty and then what has happened was that that one
22 week of listing time has become much more expanded.

16:43

23 CHAIRMAN: Well that explains why, in the middle of
24 September and towards perhaps the end of September, you
25 would have a professional difficulty, but the timetable
26 for the current evidence, including Sir Ronnie's
27 evidence, has been published for some considerable
28 time.

16:43

29 MR. SKELT: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN: And it has been known for many weeks, if not
2 longer, that this was the scheduled period for that
3 evidence. And it surprises me that you didn't feel it
4 appropriate to notify the Inquiry of any issue
5 concerning your availability for this week and all the 16:44
6 more is that surprising given your experience of being
7 locked into an overrunning, and continually
8 overrunning, competing process. I feel I have been
9 left with no option. It would be untenable to take Sir
10 Ronnie's evidence in the absence of his own legal team 16:44
11 and I am, therefore, in a position where I feel,
12 subject to what anyone else might say, I've really no
13 option but to accede to your application. But I
14 express the view that it's unsatisfactory, and
15 discourteous. 16:45

16 MR. SKELT: I am sorry for that, the only defence I can
17 properly put forward is that we had anticipated, given
18 the timetable, that both Lady O'Loan and Sir Ronnie
19 could be accommodated and would be heard today. But
20 that's obviously been wrong, that's our fault and not 16:45
21 anybody else's. So we apologise for that. We had
22 taken such steps as we could with the overrunning case
23 to attend here today because that's not sitting today
24 and again, we apologise for that. We have tried to
25 minimise the inconvenience. That's not worked and we 16:45
26 should have kept the Inquiry more abreast of our
27 position than what we have done. We do apologise for
28 that, we realise it causes problems.

29 CHAIRMAN: All right, thank you.

1 MR. SKELT: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN: Does anyone else want to contribute to this

3 matter? Mr. Southey, you look as though you are

4 interested in doing so.

5 MR. SOUTHEY: Sorry, Sir, I was discussing an issue 16:46

6 with my instructing solicitor.

7 CHAIRMAN: Mr. Aiken, did you wish to say something.

8 MR. AIKEN: I was going to say, Sir, that I am involved

9 in the same case as Mr. Skelt. I have spoken to.

10 Ms. McKelvey, who is to my right, the Legal Director at 16:46

11 PONI, and she will attend tomorrow for the conclusion

12 of Baroness O'Loan's evidence if I, with your consent

13 may be excused. I don't represent Baroness O'Loan, I

14 obviously represent the office of PONI but I wouldn't

15 want any discourtesy to be taken from my non-attendance 16:46

16 tomorrow given it is former Ombudsman that is giving

17 evidence.

18 CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you. Mr. Greaney, if I consent

19 to Mr. Skelt's application, that would mean that we

20 will have to reschedule Sir Ronnie's evidence but, I 16:47

21 don't think we will, at this point, have a date in mind

22 for a rehearing, will we?

23 MR. GREANEY: We don't have a firm date in mind at the

24 moment, Sir.

25 CHAIRMAN: We just need to give consideration to that 16:47

26 and pass out information when we are aware of it.

27 MR. GREANEY: Sir, yes. And in terms of Mr. Aiken's

28 situation, it is unfortunate how the timings have

29 played out today. Obviously, we understand that it is

1 unfortunate he will not be able to attend to see the
2 conclusion of Baroness O'Loan's evidence.

3
4 Sir, we will continue, therefore, at 10:00 a.m.
5 tomorrow morning and conclude the evidence of the
6 former Police Ombudsman. And we will then aim to
7 complete all of the balance of the evidence that
8 remains scheduled for tomorrow.

9 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Greaney.

10
11 THE INQUIRY ADJOURNED UNTIL THURSDAY, 15TH OCTOBER 2026
12 AT 10:00 A.M.

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