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Explosive Stuff

Provo tells of Bloody Friday shame in car bomb documentary

By John McGurk
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A Notorious former IRA terrorist has revealed his shame over the Bloody Friday car bomb massacre which brought carnage to Belfast city centre.

Tommy Gorman and fellow IRA bomber Marian Price feature in a major new TV documentary on the

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history of the car bomb worldwide, from Baghdad to Belfast.



What are these?

London bomber Price tells how her mini-skirt distracted a soldier from finding explosives while Gorman tells how he feels "utterly ashamed" over the Bloody Friday outrage in which nine people lost their lives.

The two-part Channel 4 documentary, which starts tonight, will highlight how the IRA triggered the world's "first full-scale car bomb war" in the 1970s.

Car Bomb: A History is presented by ex-CIA agent Bob Baer, the inspiration for George Clooney's character in the movie Syriana.

The former Beirut-based Secret Service man travelled to a number of countries, including Israel, Lebanon and the USA, to interview bombers and bomb disposal experts.

In Ireland he spoke to Price, Gorman and to Sean O'Callaghan, the former IRA bomb-maker turned security force agent.

Seventies teenage bomber Marian Price revealed how she used her beauty to avoid security force suspicion when transporting explosives.

"Being young and female really was ideal for the sorts of things we did.

"I remember one time when we had some explosives in the car. They were the old sort and they smelled very strongly of almonds and marzipan.

"We had hidden them in the door panels and were stopped by soldiers. One of them went to open the door and I said, 'No, I can manage'.

"If he had opened the door he would have felt the extra weight.

"Anyway, I got out of the car and I was wearing a mini-skirt. I think he was more interested in looking at my legs than at the car."

Price, now 54, was part of an IRA unit including sister Dolours and now Sinn Fein minister Gerry Kelly, which planted car bombs at the Old Bailey, New Scotland Yard, Whitehall and the BBC in March 1973.

Two of the bombs exploded injuring 200 people, which she regrets. However she has no reservations about having used a car bomb for political ends.

She claimed: "I think car bombs did achieve something at the time.

"I don't think anyone got a thrill from planting car bombs or seeing buildings go up. It was just something that needed to be done to further our cause.

"We were using them as a tool to make Northern Ireland economically unviable for the British Government."

And the bomb disposal expert who tried to defuse the massive 3,500lb IRA truck bomb in the financial heart of London in April 1993 has little doubt that this weapon of destruction helped to change the political landscape of Northern Ireland. Said Mike Coldrick: "When I saw the devastation and realised how large those bombs were, I said, 'This is the beginning of the end. In 18 months, we will be talking peace'."

Tommy Gorman, who was the IRA's chief bomb engineer in 1970s Belfast, explained the effectiveness of the car explosion as a tool of terror.

"The car bomb is just so simple. You can't see it. It's just so simple."

But Gorman regrets the carnage of Bloody Friday in Belfast on July 21, 1972 — with 22 bombs killing nine



Aftermath of the car bomb in London



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people and injuring another 130.

He said: "It was a terrible, terrible day. A blot on any kind of glory you try to make in this sort of struggle. I am utterly, utterly ashamed."

Other lethal attacks featured include the World Trade Center and Oklahoma bombings in the USA in 1993 and 1995 and the Omagh massacre in August 1998.

I Car Bomb: A History, directed by award winning film maker Kevin Toolis, will be shown on Channel 4 at 7pm tonight and August 3.

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