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- INTERACTIVE CRIME MAP OF NORTHERN IRELAND: Every crime in your area

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By Lisa Smyth  
Saturday, 22 November 2008

There was uproar last night after it emerged that a man convicted of offences arising from a UVF murder has been appointed chairman of a Co Londonderry branch of the Royal British Legion.

Members of the organisation contacted the Belfast Telegraph after Bobby Douglas was elected on Thursday night. The Coleraine man, a former UDR soldier, was acquitted of the bloody paramilitary murder of Samuel Patton in 1988 but jailed for related offences.

One member said: "There is a lot of anger about this. People aren't happy."

A number of members of the branch walked out of Thursday night's meeting in protest after Mr Douglas was appointed chairman election.

And last night SDLP MLA John Dallat called for an investigation into election procedures in the organisation — a UK charity providing

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From The Belfast Telegraph Archives

financial, social and emotional support to the millions who have served and are currently serving in the armed forces.

What are these?

He said: "I have been inundated with phonecalls about this. I think someone in authority really needs to carry out an investigation into this. The Royal British Legion has worked hard to portray itself as a neutral organisation and something like this will undo all that work. This is something that needs to be addressed as it certainly makes it difficult for Catholics to embrace the efforts of the legion to portray itself as politically neutral."

This is the second time the branch of the organisation has come under fire for electing a person with a terrorist past to its committee.

In 2006, the Belfast Telegraph revealed that Russell Watton — who was convicted of wounding three men with intent during a gun attack on a bar in Dunloy in the 1970s — had been elected as assistant secretary of the branch.

Publicity generated by the revelation prompted Mr Watton to step down from the post.

But speaking to the Belfast Telegraph last night, Mr Douglas said he will not be pressurised into resigning from the post.

"This is just about sour grapes," he said. "I was voted in by a majority of the members and there is no way I will be resigning or standing down."

During the trial into the death of Mr Patton, the court heard that four men, including Geoffrey Boyd and Brian Gamble, who were subsequently convicted of the murder, drove the victim to a field. One started firing shots at him and he shouted: "Don't be killing me. What are you shooting me for?"

One of the men told police he thought Mr Patton was to be punished because he had angered fellow members of the UVF by refusing to hand over proceeds of a robbery he had committed and because he was suspected of giving information to the police.

No-one was available from the Royal British Legion last night to comment on the matter.

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Ernest - a South American death squad? Dear me, that's rich considering the missing ira victims here. You seem to believe the UDR as a whole just jumped up and shot people - the ira were in the middle of a dirty war that was as much to do with

land as anything else. I was here in the middle of that filthy war. Were you? I carried colleagues's coffins after culvert bombs and drogue bombs and shots in the back. The Legion does not need people like Douglas, but then we don't need Ernests in London either. Both of them shame the British Legion.

*Posted by Old Soldier | 24.11.08, 00:14 GMT*

- I will never set foot again in the Coleraine legion. This was set up. I honestly would of thought that after the last time this happened the club wouldn't have allowed this to rear its ugly head. The Club needs to be closed and a full investigation to be carried out asap. The legion doesn't need this coverage on newspapers but if it puts in place the shameful members involved you all know who you are (ladies and gents) shame shame shame  
I would like to call on all respectful members please its time we closed the doors as yet again we are a laughing stock and those same members have brought shame to the club

*Posted by squad | 23.11.08, 21:36 GMT*

- If all prisoners were released under the good friday surely then he has regretted what has happened. Was there not the same when other people when got elected as ministers. Let these people moan and let Northern Ireland get back to living in harmony and not bickering over who is head of a small British Legion unit.

*Posted by Sam McNicholl | 23.11.08, 18:52 GMT*

- " Such as? What atrocities did the UDR commit? "

It is not so much that they committed this or that atrocity, it is the fact that their members were widely involved in murder and violence, and were double-jobbing for UDR and UVF (read ex-RUC man John Weir's account of UDR activities, read about their members' involvement in the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, in the Miami showband massacre, in the murder of Patrick Kelly by a UDR patrol etc). The murderers in their ranks were protected and were sure never to face justice. This is an accepted fact, and it is why UDR no longer exists my friend, sorry. They fostered, promoted and reinforced sectarianism in their ranks, and half of Northern Ireland's population were in fear of them so most right thinking folk would agree "Good riddance to bad rubbish".

ex RUC man,  
Kenny K

*Posted by Kenny K | 23.11.08, 17:45 GMT*

- This man has paid his debt to society and should be left to move on with his life. Why can he not take this post when there are known terrorists elected into government, i can not see the difference. Articles like this just stop the country from moving forward and are distressing to the people mentioned families the people who are objecting are stuck in the past and are to small minded to move on.

*Posted by Carol | 23.11.08, 14:42 GMT*

- BFTT,

`considering some of the atrocities they were involved in with the nationalist and Catholic community`

Such as? What atrocities did the UDR commit?

I'm sure that you might be able to consult your big book of republican greivances and come up with the odd example of a rogue member out of the tens of thousands professional soldiers (like this individual) who was in the paramilitaries. That is a million miles from equating the UDR with UVF or UDA. It is a very similar attitude in fact, to condemning all Catholics as IRA members.

Perhaps the atrocity you have in mind is having the gall to stand up to you beloved PIRA and contributing to their eventual defeat.

For what its worth, I am an exservice man and I am disgusted that this man is allowed in the legion at all, never mind being allowed to hold office.

*Posted by Steve W | 23.11.08, 10:09 GMT*

- i see dallat sticking his nose in were it does not belong give us a break dallat and do something to stop people burning down our hall it would fit you better but then there again you dont have the guts to

*Posted by alfie | 22.11.08, 20:56 GMT*


- He sounds like the calibre of a man that does the British army proud : an ex-terrorist who was involved with the killing of a fellow terrorist over the proceeds of an armed robbery, choice

*Posted by Neil | 22.11.08, 17:54 GMT*


- The UDR was no normal regiment...it was a sectarian Protestant militia involved both directly and indirectly in countless murders of innocent people, including the Miami showband.

In case you did not know, it was disbanded because it was such a disgrace and an embarrassment even to the English mandarins who could no-longer deal with the PR side of having a latin american style death squad on their payroll.


*Posted by Ernest, London | 22.11.08, 17:47 GMT*

 Perry, how else would you suggest someone express their disapproval? Suggestions please. No point being a smart-arse on here.

*Posted by Will Dodds | 22.11.08, 15:48 GMT*

 Billy's remark, "I will be writing to the legion for a full explanation" will no doubt have the upper echelons of the organisation hyperventilating.

*Posted by perry | 22.11.08, 13:12 GMT*

 Dear Gary  
I seem to have touched a raw nerve with you, which wasn't my intention, but you seem somewhat confused about the issue. The Legion is a charity, not a government. The legion depends on the charity of all, and as one who has donated to the Legion, I will be expressing my outrage to them concerning my money going to give jobs to loyalist terrorists. Now, what the government does is of no concern of mine as I have no faith in politics or politicians, but what the Legion does, is a concern of mine. I hope this clarifies things for you? Oh, and not everyone subscribes to your notion of the UDR being 'soldiers', considering some of the atrocities they were involved in with the nationalist and Catholic community. As an ex-service man, I most certainly wouldn't...

*Posted by Billy for the Truth | 22.11.08, 12:55 GMT*


 Peter Wilson,

Of course that's not hard to understand. And I would indeed be one of those such people that you describe


However I am simply saying that the vast majority (apparently) who support the inclusion of terrorists in our government cannot criticise this appointment without being blatantly hypocritical.

Of course those who do not support terrorists in government, nor this appointment are not hypocrites and have every right to condemn this appointment without being hypocrites etc

*Posted by Gary | 22.11.08, 12:49 GMT*

 I'm pretty sure that there are many unionists who support and donate to this charity who are very much against this appointment. You can mention the makeup of the government all you want - but there are people who support/donate to the legion and don't necessarily agree with who is in government. Is that hard to understand?

*Posted by Peter Wilson | 22.11.08, 12:40 GMT*

 True. We can't be hypocritical here. There are people in government (on both sides) who had links to or were involved with terrorist/paramilitary groups. So we cannot be shocked at this or call for him to be removed. However unionists should refrain from harping on about and be outraged when nationalists and republicans don't support the British Legion with poppies. Particularly when they are appointing these people to senior posts. Nobody suggests Unionists should be voting Sinn Fein or wearing Easter lilies. Can't have it all ways. Respect each other's positions and move on. If this guy has put his past behind him and has moved on then fair play. He might be great at the job. However as a PR move for the British Legion - it is a very stupid move.

*Posted by Jeff Mason | 22.11.08, 12:33 GMT*

 "Billy for the truth"

how is it an insult for them to call him an ex soldier?


He was in the UDR. A perfectly legitimate army within the British Army

I do however oppose this appointment, and the kindest way I can describe it is misguided and stupid.

However I am assuming that those in our society (apparently the vast majority) who support and happily accept terrorists in our government at Stormont, and allow them to have control over our country, won't have a problem with this appointment at all? Surely they shouldn't?

Surely they wouldn't be hypocrites?.....

*Posted by Gary | 22.11.08, 12:25 GMT*

 The British Legion's disgraceful behaviour in hiring this loyalist terrorist will not surprise too many nationalists (any wonder why most nationalists see the poppy as a sectarian symbol???) . I will be writing to the legion for a full explanation. In the meantime, could the Belfast Telegraph please explain why the journalist covering the story (front page of the printed

newspaper) described this terrorist as a former 'soldier'? Or, is it simply keeping in line with calling the UDR, RIR, et, 'soldiers'? That is as insulting as the legion's behaviour.

Posted by *Billy for the Truth* | 22.11.08, 11:06 GMT

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