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NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

4 March 1985

STATEMENT TODAY BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND,
RT HON DOUGLAS HURD, MP, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

I shall with permission, Mr Speaker, make a statement on last Thursday's attack by the Provisional IRA on Newry Police Station and on later incidents in which two members of the security forces died.

At about 6.40 on the evening of 28 February, 9 mortars were fired at Newry Police Station from a lorry parked about 200 metres away. The lorry had earlier been stolen near Crossmaglen. Seven mortar bombs exploded. One of these hit the prefabricated canteen at the back of the police station. Three exploded at the front of the police station, two more exploded on derelict property opposite and the seventh exploded in the garden at the rear of this property. The two mortar bombs which did not explode landed in a street near the police station.

Nine police officers, including two policewomen, were killed. Seven other officers were taken to hospital, one of whom is still detained, and 23 civilians also received treatment.

Later that evening at about 10.30 a device beside a telegraph pole in Pomeroy, County Tyrone, exploded as a UDR foot patrol passed. One soldier, a part-time private in the Regiment, was killed and another soldier was injured.

Yesterday morning outside St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church in Enniskillen, two terrorists shot dead an off-duty RUC officer in front of his wife and children. The terrorists escaped in a stolen car towards the border, and abandoned the vehicle at Belcoo.

The Provisional IRA has claimed responsibility for all these brutal murders.

I reviewed security arrangements with the Deputy Chief Constable and the GOC on Friday and these are now being urgently re-examined. So far as the attack at Newry is concerned, no building can be made impregnable and the risks faced by the security forces in Northern Ireland are well understood. I have already approved a capital expenditure programme for police building of between £20 and £25 million in the next three years, including a new police station in Newry. We shall now look carefully and urgently at possible further physical measures for the protection of buildings and at all the procedures designed to forestall attacks of this kind.

These attacks on Protestant and Catholic members of the security forces show once again the callous savagery of the terrorists. I know the whole House will wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families of the dead and injured and our appreciation of the courage and steadiness of the security forces. I believe this House will want to send out another message; we must not and will not bow to terrorism = the terrorists will not win.