

Decision to delay Arrests

188. The easiest thing I could have done as an SIO in the first couple of weeks was to have implemented a programme of arrests and searches in relation to the key suspects in Mid-Ulster and Belfast. However, whilst this possibility was considered, it was not one I believed was appropriate. This belief was based on a number of factors such as:

- The suspects who were becoming apparent through the various indicators outlined above were experienced terrorists who were well versed in methods of avoiding detection. They had learnt from earlier terrorist investigations where either they or an associate had been successfully prosecuted. They had learnt from details in press reports of other investigations.
- The homes of the suspects had been previously searched. They were unlikely to retain illegal material in their homes.
- As there were neither witness identifications nor fingerprint marks to specifically put to the suspects, arrests and interviews at such an early stage would simply highlight the limited knowledge available to the MIT about the actual details of how the attack was carried out. The interviews would also be very short and the lack of subject matter increased the danger of repetitive questioning.
- As I mention in the section on technical opportunities, I had put a number of requests to Special Branch from very early in the investigation for assistance in development technical methods of gathering evidence [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I believed that arresting them and searching their property at such an early stage would be detrimental [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

189. I made two entries in the Secret Policy Book as I appreciated that any decision not to arrest the various Loyalist suspects needed clear justification.