

## THE BLOODY SUNDAY INQUIRY

### I, General Sir Frank Edward Kitson will say that:

1. In January 1972 I was a Brigadier in command of 39 Airborne Brigade ("39 Brigade"). At that time I had eight battalions in Belfast under my command on four month emergency tours. My task was to look after the security of Belfast, part of County Down and County Antrim. In addition to these battalions there were two more battalions on two year tours with their families in my area. One of these, stationed in Holywood Barracks, was designated as my Brigade Reserve and was fully under my command unless specifically required by the Commander Land Forces (CLF) for duties outside my Brigade area. In 1972 this was the First Battalion of the Parachute Regiment. The other battalion on a two year tour was stationed at Ballykinler and was designated as Province Reserve. It was available to me if not wanted elsewhere.
2. I arrived in Northern Ireland in September 1970. My headquarters were based in Lisburn in buildings adjacent to the Army's Northern Ireland headquarters (HQ Northern Ireland). I reported to the CLF. Until some time in 1971 this was Major-General Farrar-Hockley, when he was replaced by Major General Robert Ford.
3. My job involved working with the police within my area of responsibility to ensure that law and order was preserved. I had frequent and regular contact with the Assistant Chief Constable of Belfast and my battalion and company commanders worked harmoniously with their opposite numbers in the police.
4. At this time the army relied on the RUC for intelligence; it was disseminated initially from special branch of the RUC to HQ Northern Ireland who would pass it on to the relevant Brigade HQ who would then pass it on to relevant units as necessary. Most intelligence was passed in writing or by word of mouth because the telephone was insufficiently secure.
5. During my time in command of 39 Brigade, the army set up a more effective network of information gathering. It was not intelligence as such (this was the role of the specialised intelligence agencies and the RUC) but troops on the streets collected and collated as much overt information as possible to allow the Brigade to do its job effectively.
6. I have been asked whether I provided input into the formulation of military policy<sup>FK.</sup> for Northern Ireland as a whole while I was commanding 39 Brigade. Formulating policy was the function of the GOC as Director of Operations and a member of the Joint Security Committee. The GOC exercised command of military forces through the CLF, the three brigade commanders being his subordinates. Obviously in advising the GOC the CLF would take into account the situation in each of the brigade areas which the CLF would assess in the light of information provided by the relevant brigade commanders. The GOC himself did not hold meetings with the three brigade commanders at which policy for the whole of Northern Ireland was discussed. I was never asked for my views on security policy outside my own brigade area. I knew nothing about the political decisions which governed security policy and very little about the situation elsewhere in the Province. I don't recall ever visiting the town of Londonderry during my period in command of 39 Brigade, although I did attend a lunch party given by Brigadier Cowan

in his house outside Londonderry shortly before his departure. I had met Brigadier MacLellan in the past when we were both commanding battalions in England and I expect that I met him occasionally after he took over 8 Brigade when he was visiting HQ Northern Ireland.

7. It has been suggested that I might have had some special influence in Northern Ireland because of my earlier experiences of counterinsurgency and peace-keeping and because I had recently prepared a report for the army on these matters which was published as a book called "*Low Intensity Operations*" in November 1971. I had also written an account of my personal experiences during the Kenya emergency published in 1960. I do not consider that either my experiences or my books would have been of much interest to my superiors at the time, most of whom had been involved in these sorts of operations themselves. Furthermore, "*Low intensity Operations*" was only published towards the end of my time in Northern Ireland and did not become very well known until some months after I left the Province. I very much doubt whether the GOC or the CLF had read it by January 1972; indeed they may never have read it.
8. I have no recollection of the days leading up to 30 January 1972. I remember that towards the end of that month I went on leave to England. I have no record of the dates, but I think that I was away from Northern Ireland for about a week up to 3 February. While in England I heard on the wireless or read in the newspaper that there had been a serious disturbance in Londonderry.
9. I do not remember when the decision was made to reinforce 8 Brigade for the illegal march in Londonderry that had been arranged to take place at the end of January 1972. Commander 8 Brigade must have felt that he needed to be reinforced and the GOC and CLF must have decided to send the province reserve battalion and 39 Brigade's reserve battalion (1 Para). In making this decision they would have considered the risk involved in removing 1 Para from Belfast for the short period concerned. It is probable that CLF would have asked for my assessment of the risk and it is unlikely that I would have objected to the move, as Belfast was relatively quiet at the time apart from bombing and isolated attacks on soldiers. If any battalion had to go from 39 Brigade it would have to be the brigade reserve as my other battalions were deployed around Belfast and could not easily be extracted.
10. It would have been the responsibility of HQ 39 Brigade to pass on the order to 1 Para for their move to Londonderry. If it had come through before I went on leave I would almost certainly have spoken to Lt Colonel Wilford myself. I have no recollection as to whether or not the order came through before I went on leave or, if it did, of any conversation I may have had with Lt Colonel Wilford. The employment of 1 Para once they were under command of 8 Brigade would of course be a matter for Brigadier MacLellan.
11. When I returned from leave I was told about the events that had taken place in Londonderry on 30 January 1972. Arrests had been made, civilians killed; 1 Para had been involved. I realised that members of 1 Para would be required to give evidence in court in the normal way regarding those who had been arrested and that they would have to participate in the routine inquiries that were always carried out by the military police and RUC when shooting incidents occurred. Soon afterwards I heard that there was to be a judicial inquiry under Lord Widgery. My concern was that the absence of officers and men involved in these proceedings would reduce the effectiveness of the battalion for some weeks.

12. I have no recollections now of discussions with Major-General Ford about the general situation in Northern Ireland. As we were both based in Lisburn, I expect that we would have chatted about things generally from time to time, but he never asked me for a considered view of the situation outside my area. I have now been shown a copy of a memo dated 7 January 1972 written by Major-General Ford to General Tuzo in which he outlines the position in Londonderry and puts forward suggestions for dealing with the hooligan element. I have never seen this before and nor would I expect to have done so, as it did not relate to my area.

Signed

*Frank Kitson*  
-----  
General Sir Frank Edward Kitson

Dated

*18 February 2000*  
-----

Kitson 1.

This is non-~~attributable~~ attributable to Brigadier Kitson, Commander of 39 Brigade (Belfast). I have interviewed him twice, once arranged at Lisburn and then by chance at Gloucester's Headquarters after the Divis Flats Operation. First Para has been under his Brigade since it arrived, he is by far the most experienced ground commander here, and we are the only people through to him.

His main points are: 1 It is absurd to say that First Para was used in a 'sensitive situation in Derry. They were used in reserve. They only came into action when the march had degenerated into stone and missile throwing. He says that when the Paras were committed the situation had become an aggressive riot, confirmed by TV shots of missiles, etc. It was no longer sensitive but the sort of situation that First Para has been used in time and again in Belfast.

2 First Paras History of riot control in Belfast has had only one allegation of brutality - the blinding of one woman by a rubber bullet in Anderson's. This is despite the fact the Battalion has been here 19 months.

3 Present Military situation. Says: "We are making a profit in attrition terms. As far as the day to day battle with the Provisional IRA is concerned we are doing well". Evidence is that the age of gunmen and bombers is constantly going down. He says that if they want to avenge Derry with 26 dead troops, that will mean hitting over 100 and would take more than 400 shooting incidents on present averages. To do this the IRA would have to take some 60 dead. They could not afford this without using 15 or 16 year olds, who have no positional sense and often are vague ~~as~~ as to how to use their weapons.

4 He does not consider this a military problem - any purely military result would be meaningless without destroying the IRA's political strength.

MF

Kitson 1 Contd.

4 (Contd) The Army's role is therefore to reduce the number of incidents, contain and weaken the IRA to the point where politics are again relevant for the great majority of moderate Catholics he is convinced still exists.

5 Militarily, December was the month when the army proved it was getting on top. Figures : Ammunition recovered (rounds) November 14,000, December 36,000, January 12,000. Weapons captured: November 89, December 99, January 81, People detained: November 139, December 170, January 120. He says that the tension in Belfast is markedly less than in late October - November. (I would agree). All the above only applies to 39 Brigade.

6 Re. General principles of snatch squads and riots, he says that "If you get the mechanics right here (i.e. Brigade Operations Room) you'll get a good job. You just get them to the right place quickly enough. The big balls ups in the past have been when we run out of troops. Then you can only contain some areas, and concentrate positive action in a few".

7 Kitson made the point about reserve troops from different Brigades only being used in static positions, or in areas where only "Three right turn" would be needed to get into position.

8 He considers Derry to be very much a sideshow. He is convinced that the Belfast area is crucial, and backs this up with the fact that the vast majority of incidents have occurred in Belfast. Please note that he has never been to Derry and that his remarks on the situation there he emphasised, were purely second hand as well as off the record.

End 1607.

## THE BLOODY SUNDAY INQUIRY

### SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT

I, General Sir Frank Kitson, will say that:

1. In a letter dated 8 January 2001 Messrs Eversheds provided a list of further questions on which they would like me to comment.
2. Questions 1 and 2 fall most conveniently to be answered together.

Question 1: "1 PARA was according to General Ford "deliberately trained by Frank Kitson to develop this reputation". What was the form and precise nature of the training and precisely what "reputation" was it sought to develop"?

Question 2: "According to General Ford "The reputation of 1 PARA in Belfast had been deliberately built up". In what sense had the reputation of 1 PARA been built up and why was it done"?

- (a) I am told that the documents from which the quotations used in these questions were taken purports to be notes of a discussion between General Sir Robert Ford and a journalist called Mr Desmond Hamill. I was not party to these discussions and any questions of detail as to the content should properly be addressed to either or both of the participants in the discussion. I will however try to assist the Inquiry by addressing the issues raised where I can.
- (b) It is the business of the commanding officer to train his battalion to carry out the tasks it is likely to be given. It is the job of the brigade commander to train his brigade to work together to achieve their aims. As the brigade I was commanding in Belfast was fully involved in its day to day operational activities I had little opportunity to carry out specific training for anybody. Nevertheless, I and the Assistant Chief Constable for Belfast did approximately every six months summon battalion commanders and the commanders of the police divisions to discuss the best way of tackling problems. These meetings would be run like any army study day with a series of presentations and discussions on relevant issues. I expect that in introducing the day's programme or in summing up at the end I would take the opportunity to cover the general situation and to pass on and explain the policies of the GOC and CLF. The presentations would deal in more detail with the various tasks we faced in Belfast, for example community relations or handling a riot.
- (c) I also held short meetings of all my battalion commanders two or three times a week at which we would review recent and impending events to co-ordinate our actions, but this was no more than normal army routine and could not be described as training. Apart from the study days I did not carry out any specific training of any of the troops under my command.

- (d) Nor did I take any steps to build up the reputation of any particular battalion least of all 1 PARA which was very good at using its Public Relations Officer to keep the press and television in touch with its activities. All battalions had Public Relations Officer for this purpose some of whom were naturally more effective than others. With regard to 1 PARA's reputation it may be relevant to point out that other elements of the Parachute Brigade such as 2 PARA, 3 PARA and 4 RHA, the artillery component of the Parachute Brigade, all did four months in tours in Belfast at the time 1 PARA were there. I doubt whether civilians would have been able to distinguish between these units when on the street in combat kit operating as infantry which might account for the reputation 1 PARA had for being at so many trouble spots at critical moments.
- (e) From my perspective 1 PARA's overall reputation was for a high level of efficiency and effectiveness. It was an experienced and professional battalion in which I had great confidence. It operated with a high degree of discipline and on several occasions I was impressed with the willingness of the battalion to take on difficult tasks at short notice. The big riots emanated mainly from the Protestant areas of Belfast and in particular from the Shankhill. The bread and butter work of 1 PARA as the reserve battalion was to send companies to reinforce other units in tasks such as breaking up riots. I believe that they came to be disliked by both communities, not because of any brutality, but because they were very good at sorting out these problems. In my experience they were entirely even handed as between the two religious communities dealing with trouble as they found it in an appropriate and effective way.
- (f) I do not think that the Parachute Regiment in general or 1 PARA in particular went about their duties in an excessively forceful way and on many occasions members of the Regiment exhibited a natural compassion, comforting and assisting the victims of bombs and riots. 1 PARA as the brigade reserve was also heavily involved in community relations. In each police division there was a divisional action committee consisting of the Police divisional commander and the commander of any army troops deployed in that division. When these committees met they had a call on one senior officer of 1 PARA to provide continuity. In addition one or two senior NCO's of 1 PARA were available to help with long term community relations projects.
- (h) If some people in Northern Ireland associated 1 PARA with a reputation for toughness and brutality, I think they were mistaken. The regiment's reputation in this respect was probably fuelled by its effectiveness in controlling difficult situations. By their resolute action they often prevented situations escalating into violence between the Catholic and Protestant communities which was the one thing above all others that we wished to avoid, because it provided an excuse for gunmen to present themselves as defenders of their local community. I believe that 1 PARA's effectiveness in this field contributed greatly to the saving of life.
- (h) So far as I can remember none of the deployed battalions that took companies of 1 PARA under command complained to me of the way in which they carried out their duties. I felt that I was lucky to have 1 PARA.

3. Question 3. "General Ford said that Kitson used to say to him "Why can't you sort out Londonderry?" This raises the issue of Brigadier Kitson's interest in the subjugation of an area outside his own command. What exactly was meant by this question to General Ford?"
- (a) I have no specific recollection of asking General Ford this question, although it would have been a natural topic of conversation bearing in mind that some procedures in force in other parts of the province such as removing all illegal road blocks as soon as erected did not seem to apply in Londonderry. As I explained in paragraph 12 of my first statement to the Inquiry, we were both based in Lisburn and our houses were close to each other. We therefore met informally quite often. Had I asked him the question mentioned he would no doubt have pointed out the political and military factors bearing on the problem, but what was going on in Londonderry did not feature greatly in my mind as I had plenty to keep me occupied in Belfast. In any case such a question to General Ford would not have been concerned with the "subjugation" of Londonderry and I do not understand why such a suggestion should have been made. The army's task in Northern Ireland was to assist in maintaining law and order, not to subjugate the province or any part of it.
4. Question 4. "Brigadier Kitson was in Northern Ireland longer than General Ford. What contact did Brigadier Kitson have with politicians such as John Taylor, Minister for Home Affairs who, on the weekend of 17/18 July defended the actions of British troops in shooting two "Derry" men but added that "it might be necessary to shoot even more on the streets" (Irish News Editorial 21 July 1971)?"
- (a) As a matter of fact I don't think that I was in Northern Ireland longer than General Ford. In any event I have no recollection of meeting John Taylor MP although I may well have done so. For the most part my contact with Stormont MP's was restricted to those representing Belfast constituencies who wanted to discuss matters affecting their constituents. Other Westminster and Stormont MP's, especially Ministers, were sometimes sent to me by HQ Northern Ireland to be briefed on the situation in Belfast. On these occasions they would usually get a formal staff briefing in my headquarters followed by a tour of the city. If I was not too tied up, or if the visitor was a very senior politician such as Mr Heath or Lord Hailsham, I would probably accompany them myself. Otherwise they would be taken by another officer capable of providing them with the information they required. Often several visitors would be briefed and taken round together. No doubt I sometimes met other MPs at social functions but would not have discussed the troubles under such circumstances. I was not a member of either the Joint Security Committee or the Director of Operations Committee.
5. Question 5. "Paratroopers were in "Derry" on 17/18 July and conducted what was described at the time by Ivan Cooper MP as a "high powered campaign of provocation carefully calculated in my opinion to outrage the entire Catholic Community". The climax of this campaign came on Saturday 17 July when the soldiers searched twenty houses in the Creggan and Bogside. What comments does Sir Frank Kitson have in relation to Ivan Cooper's comments?"



- (a) I have no knowledge of the operation that took place in Londonderry on 17/18 July 1971, which is not surprising as it took place outside my operational area. I do not know Ivan Cooper MP and cannot comment on his comments.
6. Question 6. "Sir Frank Kitson is an expert in many areas of high intensity and low intensity conflict. The soldiers who he trained killed and injured civilians on Bloody Sunday and were described by Colonel Wilford as being "battle hardened" and as "trained to move forward and seek out the enemy" (video item 6). Were soldiers who were arguably at the highest range of the spectrum of high intensity capability converted or could they have effectively been converted into a force more suitable for low intensity operations? What steps were taken by Sir Frank Kitson, if any, and over what period of time, to ensure that these soldiers were trained so as to be effective in supporting the civil power using minimal force."
- (a) I have already discussed the matter of training whilst in Belfast in relation to questions 1 and 2. The question of converting soldiers from being ready for high intensity war to low intensity operations is important and was an issue that applied to all battalions sent to Ireland, especially if they came directly from Germany. At the start of the troubles no such retraining was available but soon afterwards units were sent to training areas set up in both England and Germany where exercises involving the handling of shooting incidents and riots took place. These courses and the facilities provided, became increasingly sophisticated as the troubles progressed. I do not know what arrangements were like when 1 PARA was posted to Belfast in September or October 1970 which was some seven months before Lieutenant Colonel Wilford took over. When a battalion arrived in Belfast I met and spoke to as many of the men as possible either with the whole battalion assembled or, where this was not possible, to the companies individually. On these occasions I explained what our purpose was and how it was necessary to conduct ourselves towards the people and when handling disturbances. My talks lasted for about twenty minutes and started by a brief account of the events of the past few years to set the present situation in perspective. I would then say briefly what the aims of the various groups in Northern Ireland were and explain what we were trying to do in order to establish law and order while the politicians were working out the longer term future. Throughout I would stress the need to keep law abiding people on our side and to pursue law breakers vigorously whilst keeping within the law ourselves.
7. Question 7: "How did Kitson's tactics, special training and general philosophy impact on the "mindset" of his troops who had fired on 30 January 1972?"
- a) As explained above, I did not provide any "special training". I do not see how I can be expected to know what effect, if any my general philosophy had on the soldiers who fired live rounds on 30 January 1972. I would in fact be very surprised if these men were in any way conversant with my ideas or had spent any time thinking about me at all. If my experience is anything to go by, their interest would have been limited to their own sections and their section commanders and platoon sergeants. They would certainly not extend to the brigade commander whose ideas would mainly be of interest to commanding officers. As mentioned above, I did try to speak to as many soldiers as possible on their arrival in Northern Ireland, but if I had talked to the men who

fired in Londonderry in January 1972 it would have been over a year earlier and it is unlikely that they would have remembered much about it.

8. Question 8: "Was Sir Frank Kitson party to any discussion with anyone for and against the proposition about using 1 PARA in Londonderry prior to the operation on 30 January, 1972?"
- (a) I have answered this question fully in paragraph 9 of my first BSI statement. My input, if any, would have been limited to discussing the danger to stability in Belfast of removing 1 PARA.

Signed

*Frank Kitson*  
.....  
**General Sir Frank Kitson**

Dated

*18 October 2001*  
.....