

143. The enquiry as to the origin of the magnets, like that of tracing the explosives and detonator set out below, was one step in a chain of enquiries, the objective being to identify who removed the magnets from the shipyard, to whom were they given and did the individual know they were to be used in the construction of a UVIED.
144. Terrorists take extreme steps to ensure they avoid detection, to seek to purchase magnets of the type used or endeavour to source one from outside Northern Ireland would expose them to an unnecessary and high risk of detection. Consequently the SMT considered that there was no investigative benefit to be achieved in pursuing any enquires with the makers of the magnets. Taking the circumstances and knowledge of the suspected bomb maker into account, we were satisfied that the magnets used in the murder almost certainly came from Harland and Wolff. If this view was mistaken, it was our opinion that a protracted enquiry to source their origin would not have advanced the investigation or gone any way to identifying who obtained and used the magnets.
145. DCC Port appeared in a television programme on 31.08.00 to make a fresh appeal to the public for assistance in the investigation. During the programme he highlighted the belief that the magnets had been sourced in Harland and Wolff. Unfortunately this did not produce any information or evidence.
146. The MIT forensic team made enquiries with Harland and Wolff concerning the way in which the company kept and audited the movement of parts such as these magnets but the systems in operation were inadequate to provide an audit trail which might have pinpointed when the magnets left the yard or who had handled them. However, we subsequently learnt that a number of magnets of the type used in the device were missing from two specific gas-cutter rails at the yard. One of these rails had three magnets missing from the brackets to which they had been affixed while the other had one missing. Both rails were obtained from Harland and Wolff and submitted to FSANI for examination. The objective of submitting the rails to FSANI was to ascertain if any of the missing magnets were those that had been used in the murder of Mrs Nelson. Forensic examination proved inconclusive and could neither establish nor rule out the possibility that the magnets used in the device originated from either of the two rails that the MIT had obtained.

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