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**United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548**

**Office of Special Investigations**

B-286317

September 29, 2000

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Caucus on International Narcotics Control  
United States Senate

Subject: No Information to Link Irish Terrorist Organizations to International  
Narcotics Trafficking

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As requested, enclosed with this letter is a copy of a briefing that GAO's Office of Special Investigations gave to William Olson, Staff Director, Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control on September 20, 2000. At that time, we presented the results of the work that you had requested: to determine, through the cognizant authorities, if Irish terrorist organizations are engaged in international narcotics trafficking.

As background, Irish terrorist organizations are classified into two main groups: Loyalist (Protestant) and Republican (Catholic). The Loyalist terrorist organizations operate mainly in Northern Ireland (Ulster), while the Republican terrorists operate in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Irish and British law enforcement officials provided no information that Irish terrorist organizations are engaged in international narcotics trafficking. However, some Loyalist and Republican terrorist organizations are engaged in street-level narcotics, dealing in such drugs as heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, and cannabis (marijuana). Irish police officials believe that shootings of major drug dealers in Belfast and Dublin were related to in-country conflicts and not international narcotics trafficking.

We interviewed knowledgeable officials of the U.S. government (Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Customs Service), Irish Customs and Excise, Garda Siochana (Irish National Police), Royal Ulster Constabulary, British Customs and Excise, United Nations Drug Control Program, and European Police Office.

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We will make copies of this letter available to others. If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Director Patrick Sullivan at (202) 512-6722. Senior Special Agent Thomas Wiley was a key contributor to this case.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert H. Hast". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "H".

Robert H. Hast  
Assistant Comptroller General  
for Special Investigations

## BRIEFING PAPER

### No Information to Link Irish Terrorist Organizations to International Narcotics Trafficking

#### Highlights of Findings

According to Irish and British law enforcement officials and corroboration from other sources, all of the Irish terrorist organizations—Loyalist and Republican—are engaged in some type of criminal activity to support their organizations financially. Further, the Loyalist and Republican terrorist organizations—with the exception of one Republican group noted below—routinely engage in acts of violence, including murder.

#### Irish Terrorist Organizations

Irish and British law enforcement officials with jurisdiction over illicit drug trafficking identified the following Loyalist and Republican terrorist organizations and provided the following information about them.

##### Loyalist Terrorist Organizations

- Ulster Defense Association – The largest Loyalist terrorist organization. Its political wing is the Ulster Democratic Party.
  - Ulster Freedom Fighters – A more militant faction within the Ulster Defense Association.
- Ulster Volunteer Force – The second largest Loyalist terrorist organization, which has been in existence since the mid-1960s.
  - Loyalist Volunteer Force – Formed in 1996 by members of the Ulster Volunteer Force who were opposed to the Irish peace process.

##### Republican Terrorist Organizations

- Irish Republican Army (IRA), also known as the Provisional IRA
  - Provisional IRA – One of two factions of the IRA, formed in the early 1970s when the IRA split. The Provisional IRA supported the use of force to unite Ireland. It is the largest, best equipped, and best financed of the Republican terrorist groups and officially and publicly takes an anti-drug stance. Its political wing is Sinn Fein.

Direct Action Against Drugs is the cover name used by the Provisional IRA, ostensibly to promote the “official,” public anti-drug position of the Provisional IRA. Direct Action Against Drugs has taken credit for killing and wounding

drug dealers.

- Real IRA – Formed in 1997 by dissident members of the Provisional IRA who rejected the political leadership of Sinn Fein. The Real IRA claimed responsibility for the August 1998 bombing of Omagh, Northern Ireland, which left 28 dead and hundreds injured. After this bombing, the Real IRA called a cease-fire.
- Continuity IRA – Continues to reject the peace process and draws its support from radicals formerly associated with the Provisional IRA and the Real IRA. Its political wing is Republican Sinn Fein.
- Official IRA – The second of two factions formed from the IRA split in the 1970s. The Official IRA renounced violence and supported a political solution to uniting Ireland. Its members are actively involved in criminal activity, largely financial crime. Its political wing is the Irish Workers' Party.
- Irish National Liberation Army – Formed by the more violent criminal element formerly associated with the Official IRA. Its political wing is the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

### **Irish Terrorists' Local, Not International, Narcotics Trafficking**

Although Irish and British law enforcement officials and other corroborating sources had no evidence to link Irish terrorist organizations and international narcotics trafficking, we learned that some Loyalist and Republican terrorist organizations are engaged in street-level narcotics dealing. The narcotics include such drugs as heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, and cannabis.

According to Irish law enforcement officials, Loyalist terrorist organizations control most organized criminal activity, including street-level drug dealing, in the Protestant neighborhoods of Northern Ireland. The Loyalist groups are not as sophisticated as Republican terrorist organizations and do not have access to the same international network of terrorist and criminal connections.

Also according to Irish law enforcement officials, Republican terrorists control organized criminal activity in Northern Ireland, except in the neighborhoods controlled by the Loyalist terrorists, and in parts of the Republic of Ireland. In these areas, narcotics traffickers can operate only with the acquiescence of the Republican terrorists.

In addition, we learned that Direct Action Against Drugs, a cover name for the Provisional IRA, has publicly acknowledged killing and wounding drug dealers in Belfast and Dublin. That terrorist group initiated these actions ostensibly to support the Provisional IRA's anti-drug position. However, police officials believe that the drug dealers were shot because they had failed to pay "protection" money to the Provisional IRA. Further, counter to the Provisional IRA's official anti-drug position, individual members of the Provisional IRA, the Continuity IRA, and the Real IRA are

Enclosure I

known to engage in drug smuggling/dealing activities. The Irish National Liberation Army also regularly engages in street-level drug dealing.

**Additional Illegal Activities by Irish Terrorists**

According to Irish law enforcement officials, Republican terrorists are expert at international smuggling operations and have established relationships with other terrorist organizations and criminal organizations throughout the world. The Provisional IRA has been very successful in smuggling weapons into the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Great Britain. That terrorist group also controls the smuggling of untaxed tobacco products, untaxed liquor, and counterfeit consumer goods (e.g., CDs, videotapes, watches, and clothing) into Northern Ireland. In addition, the Official IRA is expert at international financial crimes, including tax fraud schemes, money laundering, and counterfeiting. According to these same law enforcement officials, the eventual large-scale international smuggling of narcotics may be the inevitable natural progression of these activities.

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