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Blair's Government whitewashes IRA criminality



Shaun Woodward — his words proved to be false!

Just over six weeks ago, Northern Ireland's Security Minister, Shaun Woodward, triumphantly announced — "The IRA is not involved in crime." He went on to say that he understood there would be scepticism but said the next International Monitoring Commission report in January would demonstrate whether the IRA was true to its word. He said the IRA had indicated in their July statement that they would be ending all criminality. "We believe from the evidence we have seen, we believe from the reports, and critically the reports from the Independent Monitoring Commission, that the IRA is keeping to its word.

It now has been revealed that he was in fact telling lies and that he had no basis whatever for such a statement. It is but another example of how the Blair Government will twist the truth and whitewash the evil activities of the IRA in order to force Sinn Fein, the IRA's masters, upon Ulster.

At the time, the DUP's Ian Paisley Jr. said the minister's comments were "nonsense". It turns out that they were more iniquitous than nonsense. They were deliberately deceitful! The exposure of the lie came about at a meeting of the Policing Board in Belfast on January 17th.

At that meeting the Policing Board members were told that the IRA is still involved in organised crime. The PSNI's most senior detective, Assistant Chief Constable in charge of crime operations, Sam Kincaid told Policing Board members that the IRA is still criminally active.

The assessment contrasts with and completely contradicts comments from Security Minister Shaun Woodward last month.

Mr. Woodward was present during Tuesday's briefing and said he stood by his original comments. It is believed Mr. Kincaid said there had been significant progress in terms of ending some activities on the part of the IRA, such as paramilitary attacks and armed robberies. However, he told board members that no paramilitary group, including the IRA, has ceased involvement in organised crime. He said the police had seen no change in this for a year.



Assistant Chief Constable, Sam Kincaid.

Assembly member Ian Paisley Jr., the Democratic Unionist Party security spokesman and a member of the Policing Board, said there had been astonishment when Mr. Kincaid made his comments because it was so at variance with what Mr. Woodward had been saying publicly.

He called for Mr. Woodward to resign as security minister in the wake of the revelations. He said: "The information which Shaun Woodward received was exactly the same as the Policing Board and from the same source yet the interpretation he has put on it is com-



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pletely and unjustifiably different.”

The Independent Monitoring Commission is due to report before the end of January on whether the IRA has been inactive.

The Government is anxious for them to be given a clean bill of health to kick-start a fresh push at a devolved power-sharing administration at Stormont.

The DUP is already insisting there is no prospect of them going into government with Sinn Fein until they are convinced the IRA has stood down. Mr. Kincaid’s words will have come as a total justification to the DUP.

The NI security minister has written to the Policing Board chairman, Sir Desmond Rea, attempting to clarify his position on ongoing IRA activity. In his letter to Sir Desmond, the minister said: “There is clearly a distinction to be made between the activity of individuals and the intention of organisations.” “The point I have been making is that government believes that the Provisional leadership intends to take the organisation in a different direction.”

He added: “I am clear, as are the PSNI, that there have been significant changes in PIRA activity, including in the area of criminality, since July.”

other parties

The Ulster Unionist Party has said the police view was a “damning assessment” of his credibility.

The SDLP leader, Mark Durkan, said that the contrast between the police assessment of IRA criminal activity and last month’s comments by the security minister raises questions about the minister’s credibility.

Board chairman Sir Desmond Rea said that Mr. Woodward’s response did not address the board’s concerns.

In a letter to the minister, Professor Rea said: “. . . on the issues of organised crime the board is clear that PSNI and the other agencies advised that all paramilitary groups were still involved in organised crime.” “This is clearly at odds with your position as stated during the briefing and in your earlier statement of 13 December 2005.”