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Provisional and Real IRA members amongst cigarette smugglers arrested in Spain



The suspected leader of the Real IRA, Sean O’Feach, along with the alleged former boss of the Provisional IRA in Dublin, Dickie O’Neill, have been arrested in connection with a massive cigarette smuggling operation in Spain.

Police detained Dickie O’Neill at his home in Alicante where he has been living for several years, after allegedly being removed from his post in charge of the IRA’s so-called southern command. O’Neill was said by gardai to have been in charge of the Provisionals’ southern units in 1996 when Det Garda Jerry McCabe was murdered by an IRA gang during an abortive raid on a postal van at Adare, Co Limerick.

The Real IRA claimed responsibility for the August 15, 1998, car bomb attack on Omagh, where 29 people – including a woman with unborn twins – were killed and more than 300 wounded, Also arrested by Spanish police was a 32-year-old man with addresses in Dublin and Kildare and a 42-year-old man from Lisburn in Northern Ireland.

These arrests resulted from the seizure of half-a-million packets of cigarettes, worth €1m on the Spanish market.

The cigarettes were found hidden in furniture in two lorries and were thought to have been one of a series of shipments from Spain to the UK.