

Black economy



A thriving underground enterprise culture has grown up around

music—bootlegged vinyl, pirate radio, warehouse parties. It's a black economy powered by black aesthetics, but its consumers are often white. Sample it inside.

Gibraltar: Duncan Campbell exclusively reveals why the SAS shot to kill

Occupied: on patrol with the Israeli army on the West Bank

Panic in the street

Why did the SAS shoot down the IRA bombers? The answer, Duncan Campbell reveals, is that security officials in Gibraltar panicked when they lost track of a fourth terrorist.

Blunders by the security forces in Gibraltar led to the public killings of the three IRA bombers in March. According to information given to UK intelligence officials, British and Spanish security watchers tracking a fourth, still unapprehended member of the IRA team in Gibraltar lost contact with her. An "over-exuberant" reaction by the Gibraltar police provoked panic in the street and the three killings by the SAS soldiers.

The original intention was that the SAS would move against the three IRA members — Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage — in the middle of the airstrip across which the road from Gibraltar to Spain passes, well away from the potentially inconvenient presence of independent eyewitnesses.

The sudden decision to stop tracking and move in on Farrell, McCann and Savage came — according to the intelligence information — when a separate surveillance team lost the fourth member of the IRA squad, a woman called Parkin. She had been the IRA squad's watch-keeper. She had driven regularly from Malaga to Gibraltar to watch the weekly parade by the band of the Royal Anglian Regiment from Inces Hall to the official residence of the Gibraltar Governor. The security forces had throughout assumed that she would either control or supervise the detonation of the bomb once it had been left in position by the other three.

On the afternoon of the killings, the security officials in charge of the operation believed that the car bomb was in place (in fact, the car the IRA squad had left was merely saving a place for the bomb car) and that the bomb would be detonated as the Royal Anglian band paraded the following morning. That morning signals to London confirmed an assessment that the bombing was about to go ahead and authority was given for the SAS to move in as the IRA squad left Gibraltar. No prisoners were to be taken.

But when Parkin was lost to the watchers as she once again travelled to Gibraltar, and then disappeared, the security chiefs in the colony lost their composure. Her departure had been taken to be the signal that detonation of the



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bomb was imminent. With her now missing, the assessment of the timing of the bombing seemed less certain. So they decided to move in on the remaining three in case they, too, evaded surveillance and dispersed, thus blowing the whole operation. Orders were radioed to the Gibraltar police and to the SAS soldiers tracking the bombers to move in without waiting for them to approach the Spanish border.

Hence the Gibraltar police car with its blaring siren. Hence the very public killings.

Army and intelligence officials had long been keen to see the deaths of the three experienced IRA members. The Gibraltar team are believed to have been responsible for several spectacular IRA successes recently, including the killing of Lord Justice Gibson and his wife by a roadside car bomb in Northern Ireland last year.

But army circles are deeply unhappy about what may happen at the Gibraltar inquest in August. The confused and panicky behaviour which characterised the final phase of the operation has left Special Branch and security officials, and the SAS, exposed to public cross-examination. It has finally been accepted that they cannot evade the demands for the SAS soldiers to give evidence at the inquest, but

there will be strong attempts to limit what they reveal about the operation.

The off-the-cuff statements made about threatening hand movements by Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, in the House of Commons immediately after the killings have especially dismayed security chiefs. They believe that Howe was "shabbily" briefed for the occasion and are unhappy about having to back up the statements against the testimony of independent witnesses. Intelligence sources say that "Geoffrey Howe wasn't responsible for the operation", but he was left, as so often, to find something plausible to say in parliament on the prime minister's behalf.

Official sources in Whitehall are now briefing journalists to the effect that the issue of whether the SAS challenged the IRA bombers before they opened fire — the critical issue at the centre of the controversy over the Thames *This Week* programme — is "of secondary importance". Again Howe — and George Younger, the Defence Secretary — stated immediately after the killings that challenges were given and official sources have done their best to hold that position. But the independent evidence to the contrary is strong.

Intelligence sources, however, say that the idea of the bombers using a remote control device to activate a bomb was yet another post-hoc invention, like Howe's threatening hand movements; and is even less plausible on technical grounds. The possibility most certainly wasn't part of the briefing to the SAS soldiers, even during the panic. The intention was always, quite simply, that the four IRA members should be shot.

It is still not certain whether Gibraltar's attorney general or coroner Felix Pizzarello will be as compliant as Sir Geoffrey Howe and Whitehall would wish. Nevertheless the inquest has been conveniently postponed on dubious grounds until August. "The delays have been really helpful," says one source. "The dirty tricks team has had plenty of time to go in and nobble [the credibility of] the key witnesses." And Whitehall has had more time to perfect its version of events. ●