

Family Report

Paul Rodgers



**Recognition and Acknowledgment
for Victims and Survivors of
Terrorism**

Contents Page

Family Reports	2 - 3
The Context	4 - 8
The Victim	9 - 11
The Facts of the Incidents	12 - 14
Conclusion	15
Endnotes	16

Family Reports

The approach of Ulster Human Rights Watch (UHRW) has always been to respond with dignity and certainty to the human rights violations perpetrated by terrorists against innocent victims and their families. Human Rights has for long been associated with those who would use it as another strategy to follow on from violence to undermine the State and turn it to justify systematic abuse of the right to life. UHRW believe this is grotesque and unacceptable.

As an organisation we are dedicated to supporting and assisting those who have not only been victimised by terrorists but have also been constantly failed by those who should have been supporting them, particularly the justice system. Of course, the innocent victims were the first to be discarded in favour of so-called political progress in the appeasement of terrorism in the Belfast agreement and subsequent deals.

It would be a fair analysis to state that most innocent terrorist victims have now been forgotten from popular memory. Of course, their families can never forget the loss, and the sacrifice made. As a part of the Advocacy Service provided to victims of terrorism by Ulster Human Rights Watch we are working alongside the families of terrorist victims to construct family reports. Given the legislative denial of justice and the failure of the system in favour of the perpetrators of violence and their representatives, the truth must be heard.

Furthermore, we now live in a context where trouble legacy and memory are characterised by hearsay. This false approach underpins much of what is proposed in future arrangements for dealing with the past, and in current legacy inquests. We believe that documented facts must speak for themselves, and that the introduction of a constant speculative approach only serves to undermine the truth, for the sake of politically charged narratives.

Family reports are integral to the support UHRW provide to victims' families, providing them with vital acknowledgment and recognition. They are also a platform for the

world outside to engage with a story that must not be lost. This report presents not only the facts of the matter, but also the humanity of the innocent victim, and the fact that beyond the statistic a life was damaged, and a family devastated.

It is essentially an effort to provide the family with a record of their what happened to their loved one as a part of their journey of recovery, for a loved whose service to Northern Ireland must never be forgotten.

The Context

The terrorist activities by the IRA for a politically united Ireland was one of the most sustained and prolonged campaign of terrorism in Northern Ireland, unparelled in Western Europe since World War 2.

Under the pressure of sustained violence, the British Government engaged in a process that delivered new constitutional arrangements combined with major legislative reforms, giving terrorist-related politicians access to the government of Northern Ireland and control over its destiny¹. Out of 3,365 people who were killed between 1966 and 2001, the IRA was responsible for 1,778 victims; the IRA caused the greatest number of victims and the most damage to property and businesses².

In the context of Paul's 10-year service in the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) from September 1982 until his discharge in 1992 table 1 below shows the number of serving and previous members of the Regiment who were murdered.

Table 1

Number of serving Ex serving UDR members murdered between 1982 and 1st July 1992³			
Year	Serving UDR soldiers murdered	Ex Serving soldiers murdered	Total
1982	7	8	15
1983	10	1	11
1984	10	3	13
1985	4	3	7
1986	8	1	9
1987	8	3	11
1988	12	0	12

1989	2	2	4
1990	8	4	12
1991	8	2	10
1992	5*	0	5
Total number of serving and ex serving UDR members murdered during the period of Paul Rodgers 10 service (1982 to 1992)			109

Source: [www.udrassociation.org/Roll of Honour/roll_of_honour_index.htm](http://www.udrassociation.org/Roll%20of%20Honour/roll_of_honour_index.htm)

On 1st July 1992, the UDR merged to become the Royal Irish Rangers. The 5* shown in the figure for 1992 were 5 UDR soldiers who transferred into the Royal Irish Rangers. Between 1 April 1970 and 30 June 1992 197 UDR officers and soldiers were murdered. A further 61 former members of the UDR were murdered after they had resigned from the Regiment.⁴

The UDR was an infantry regiment of the British Army established in 1970, with a comparatively short existence ending in 1992. It was raised through public appeal, newspaper and television advertisements,⁵ their official role was “defence of life or property in Northern Ireland against armed attack or sabotage” but unlike troops from Great Britain they were never used for “crowd control or riot duties in cities”.⁶ It was the largest infantry regiment in the British Army, formed with seven battalions plus another four within two years.⁷

The UDR consisted mostly of part-time members until 1976, when a full-time cadre was added.⁸ Uniquely in the British Army, the UDR was on continuous active service throughout its 22 years of service.⁹ It was also the first infantry regiment of the British Army to fully incorporate women into its structure. On 1 July 1992, the UDR was amalgamated with the Royal Irish Rangers to form the Royal Irish Regiment. In 2006 the regiment was retroactively awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross, which entitled it to be known as the Ulster Defence Regiment CGC.¹⁰

During Paul’s 10-year UDR service from 1982 to 1992 the following significant major terrorist atrocities and attacks occurred:

- In 1982, the IRA bombed military ceremonies in London's Hyde Park and Regent's Park, killing four soldiers, seven bandsmen and seven horses.¹¹
- The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) was highly active in the early and mid-1980s. In 1982, it bombed a disco frequented by off-duty British soldiers, killing eleven soldiers and six civilians.¹²
- One of the IRA's most high-profile actions in this period was the Brighton hotel bombing on 12 October 1984, when it set off a 100-pound bomb in the Grand Hotel, where politicians including the Prime Minister Thatcher, were staying for the Conservative Party conference. The bomb which exploded in the early hours of the morning, killed five people, including Conservative MP Sir Anthony Berry, and injured thirty-four others.¹³
- On 28 February 1985 in Newry nine RUC officers were killed in a mortar attack on the police station.¹⁴ It was planned by the IRA's South Armagh Brigade and an IRA unit in Newry. Nine shells were fired from a mark 10 mortar which was bolted onto the back of a hijacked Ford van in Crossmaglen. Eight shells overshot the station; the ninth hit a portable cabin which was being used as a canteen.
- On the 8 May 1987, eight IRA terrorists attacked an RUC station in Loughgall, County Armagh, using a bomb and guns.¹⁵ All the terrorists were killed by the Special Air Service (SAS) – the most IRA members killed in a single incident in the Troubles.
- On 8 November 1987, in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, a Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) time bomb exploded during a Remembrance Sunday ceremony for United Kingdom (UK) and Commonwealth war casualties. The bomb went off by a cenotaph which was at the heart of the parade. Eleven people (ten civilians, including a pregnant woman, and one serving member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) were killed and sixty-three were injured. Former school headmaster Ronnie Hill was seriously injured in the bombing and slipped into a coma two days later, remaining in this condition for more than

a decade before his death in December 2000.¹⁶ Another bomb had been planted at nearby Tullyhommon at a parallel Remembrance Day commemoration but failed to detonate.¹⁷

- In March 1988 three IRA terrorists who were planning a bombing were shot dead by the SAS at a Shell petrol station on Winston Churchill Avenue in Gibraltar, the British Overseas Territory attached to the south of Spain. This became known as Operation Flavius. Their funeral at Milltown Cemetery in Belfast was attacked by Michael Stone, an Ulster Defence Association (UDA) terrorist who threw grenades as the coffin was lowered and shot at people who chased him. Stone killed three people, including an IRA terrorist Kevin Brady. Two British Army corporals, David Howes, and Derek Wood drove into Brady's funeral in Andersonstown in a civilian car. They were wearing civilian clothes, and when they were attacked by members of the crowd, one of them produced a gun. They were kidnapped, taken away and shot dead by IRA terrorists. This became known as the Corporals killing.¹⁸
- On 7 February 1991, IRA terrorists attempted to assassinate prime minister John Major and his war cabinet by launching a mortar at 10 Downing Street while they were gathered there to discuss the Gulf War. The mortar bombing caused only four injuries, two to police officers, while the prime minister and the entire war cabinet were unharmed.

The term the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland, has become a phrase used to describe the terrorist activity perpetrated upon innocent victims. In Northern Ireland most law-abiding citizens and those committed to upholding the rule of law, endeavoured to carry on with their everyday lives. Terrorism was used to create fear and anxiety on the innocent people of Northern Ireland.

The people of Northern Ireland have experienced and endured during the terrorist campaign murder, injury, fear, intimidation, loss, pain, hurt, and suffering caused by perpetrators willing and able to use the utmost violence against anyone who did not agree with them.

Innocent civilians and those men and women who joined the security forces to uphold the rule of law and defend the protection of all our civil rights are the only true victims of terrorism in Northern Ireland.

The “Troubles” have had a great impact on the people of Northern Ireland and beyond. Despite the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998 which led to the “peace process” the impact is still being felt today.

The “Troubles” began in the late 1960s and was usually deemed to have ended with the [GFA](#) of 1998¹⁹. Although the “Troubles” primarily took place in Northern Ireland, at times the violence spilled over into parts of the [Republic of Ireland \(ROI\)](#), [England](#), and [mainland Europe](#).

Of those murdered in the terrorist campaign 52% were civilians, 32% were members of the security forces, and 16% were members of paramilitary groups.

The main [participants in the “Troubles”](#) were Republican paramilitaries such as the [Provisional Irish Republican Army](#) (PIRA) and the [Irish National Liberation Army](#) (INLA); Loyalist paramilitaries such as the [Ulster Volunteer Force](#) (UVF), Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) and the [Ulster Defence Association](#) (UDA).

Republican paramilitaries, mainly the IRA carried out a terrorist campaign against the British security forces, as well as a bombing campaign against infrastructure, commercial and political targets.

Loyalists terrorists targeted Republicans/Nationalists and attacked the wider Roman Catholic community in what they described as retaliation. At times there were bouts of sectarian [tit-for-tat](#) violence.

The Northern Ireland “Troubles” perpetrated by terrorists has caused and brought great loss, pain, heartache, and despair to many families for over 30 years. The Legacy of the Past continues to affect victims and survivors of terrorism across Northern Ireland and in other parts of the United Kingdom (UK).

The closure of the HET in December 2014 resulted in more than 1,000 outstanding cases. There are still over fifty open inquests into almost one hundred Troubles-related deaths. Many of these cases still require investigation but there is general agreement that the current system in place to address outstanding cases is not delivering enough for victims, survivors, and wider society²⁰.

The Victim

Paul Rodgers was born on 9th September 1955 in York Road, Belfast. He was born to his parents Paul and Louise Rodgers. Paul was born into the Protestant religion. He has two brothers and three sisters.

Paul's father who passed away in early 1970 was a council worker. He had asthma, bronchitis, and a heart problem. Paul's mother passed away a few years after her husband. She had a massive heart attack and died before the ambulance arrived.

Paul would describe a relatively impoverished upbringing. The family lived in Housing Executive property in Belfast. Although they had little money, Paul would say that the family were happy, and he had a good relationship with his parents from childhood into adult life.

Paul attended Lowwood Primary School and then Dunlambert Secondary School. He left school at the age of sixteen without any qualifications.

Immediately after leaving school Paul worked for an uncle of a friend in a petrol station. During his working career, Paul had various jobs including forklift driving at York Road Railway Station, lift manufacturing, wire frame manufacturing and working in other petrol stations.

Paul excelled at playing football and this was the reason why he was approached to join the UDR in 1980. It took approximately eighteen months before he was accepted into the Army. Paul officially joined the UDR on 1st September 1982.

Paul met his future wife Sandra Simpson just after leaving school. She was fifteen and Paul was seventeen. They were married on 1st September 1975.

A couple of years after their marriage they got a home of their own. They had three children, Paul, Karen, and Elaine. Paul has four grandchildren. Sadly, Paul's wife

Sandra passed away on 10th October 2005 aged 48. Paul has now a partner and they have one son called Aston.

A couple of years after he married Paul met a former friend called Billy Aitcheson. Billy was in the UDR, Billy asked Paul what he was working at. At the time Paul was unemployed. Billy asked Paul if he was still playing football.

At the time Paul was playing semi-professional football and earning about £5 per week. Billy told Paul that the UDR had a good football team and that they were looking for good players. Billy gave Paul the telephone number of the Sergeant Major in charge of the team.

Paul applied to join the UDR in 1980 and was finally accepted in 1982. Paul completed a one-week training course, where he was taught fieldcraft, drill and rifle shooting. Unfortunately, Paul's friend Billy who introduced him to the UDR committed suicide in 1982.

The UDR camp where Paul worked was close to where he lived. Paul was not granted a Personal Protection Weapon (PPW) because of there being young children in the house.

Paul's duties in the UDR mainly involved playing football. Paul said he played football for the UDR twice a week as well as playing for a civilian team and two other military teams. He was selected for the Army and Combined Services football team in the same week and is proud of this achievement.

When Paul was not playing football, he carried out duties in the UDR camp. His duties included for example painting Land Rovers, cleaning, and making deliveries, as well as carrying out one 24-hour guard duty per month.

From his early days in the UDR, Paul encountered potentially traumatic events. He recalled being on a recruit's course with a friend who was going to apply for a Commission. During his first guard duty he heard a loud bang. Along with a colleague they ran down a corridor to investigate the bang and discovered that his friend had

shot himself through the head. Paul later found out that his friend failed one of his examinations on his degree course.

During his service in the UDR he had six friends killed whilst off duty by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). Two of these friends played in the football team along with him. Another three friends, including a member of the football team committed suicide.

At first Paul accepted that that these things were part and parcel of what was going on in Northern Ireland. Paul at the time did not realise how much these incidents were affecting him. He said that a friend was killed near to his house. At the time most of Paul's friends were part-time members of the UDR.

By the end of the 1980s Paul was feeling sick and tired of reporting his vulnerability, regarding his personal security situation. He went on to say that as far as he could recall in either 1983 or 1984 his photograph had been published in the 'Soldier' magazine. This photograph gave his name and mentioned that he was a member of the UDR. The 'Soldier' magazine was readily available in any bookshop.

When Paul saw the photograph, he visited his 'Intelligence Cell' as he felt under threat. He was told that he would need to increase his personal security. However, he was still denied a PPW. Paul said he felt like a 'sitting duck'. He recalled that when he left the 'Intelligence Cell' he felt that something would happen to him. Unfortunately, he was proved correct.

The Facts of the Incidents

Paul would identify the following list of stressful experiences in the UDR.

Shortly after joining the UDR on 1st September 1982, a young recruit shot himself while Paul was on guard duty. Paul heard the bang of the recruit's weapon. He did not see the recruit's body but saw the bloody scene after his body had been removed. Paul felt "numb" about the incident. Not long after this event, his friend who had encouraged him to join the UDR killed himself while playing Russian roulette.

Paul said that the above incidents were among several where friends or acquaintances were murdered while off duty or committed suicide. A friend was shot dead when asleep with his wife. Another friend shot himself in 1991 after an argument with his girlfriend. Another acquaintance shot himself, and videoed his own suicide.

In 1983 a soldier ran amok in the barracks, discharging his weapon. Paul was on the scene, but was not injured.

During 1988/1989, although he cannot remember the exact date or year, Paul returned from a night out with his wife. At around 11pm his wife asked him to go to her mother's house, 200 yards away for cigarettes. Paul said that as he returned to his home, he noticed a man wearing a balaclava. This man was 100 yards away and discharged six shots at Paul. Paul said that he returned to his home, in a very frightened state. Paul did not report the incident to the Police at the time.

On the following morning he went to the spot where the man had discharged his weapon and lifted the empty bullet casings. He gave these to the Intelligence Officer at the barracks. The incident was investigated by the Police. Paul said that the Police informed him that the gunman was probably a Loyalist.

Paul was advised by the Police to increase his personal security. He made an application for a personal protection weapon (PPW), but this was declined, one of the

reasons being that he had small children at home. Paul said that in the aftermath of this incident he and his wife feared for their safety. He felt that his employers had not taken the incident seriously enough. Nevertheless, he says that he was generally reassured by feedback from people at work, but his wife was not.

In 1990 Paul was attending a course outside Belfast. He received a message to return to his home as soon as possible. When he arrived at his home, he was informed that an incident had occurred outside the house at approximately 4am. Two milkmen witnessed two hooded men carrying a black box into Paul's cul de sac. The gunmen threatened the milkmen. Paul said that the gunmen had planned to put a bomb under his car, but as he was out of town with his car, their plan was frustrated.

Paul said that the most serious incident occurred in August 1991. He returned to his home earlier than usual following a Sunday morning football match. He had not been feeling well, so rested at home. At around midnight, when his family and two visiting nieces were in bed, he got up to check the front door and then went to the toilet. As he sat down, he heard a car pull up outside his house. Two car doors slammed.

Paul heard the sound of a loose flagstone outside his front door, then suddenly heard the sound of hammering against the door. He said that he approached the door. Glass in the door was smashed and cut Paul's hand. Paul said that he suddenly realised that he was in serious danger. He ran up the stairs, throwing potential obstacles behind him. His wife was screaming. She shouted out 'get the gun' although Paul did not have a gun.

A man in the car outside the house shouted that they would be back. He discharged his weapon at the house. Paul said that the attack was followed by a period of quiet. Then another vehicle arrived outside the house.

At first, the family were concerned that the assailants had returned. However, on this occasion it was the Police. Paul recalls feeling extremely aroused and angry. He said that he was accusatory towards the Police officers, stating that nobody wanted to help him and his family. An armed guard was placed at the house and shortly afterwards Paul and his family were moved to live in Palace Barracks, Holywood. They remained

in this location for eight months. Paul was employed at the Barracks carrying out light duties.

Paul recalls that life in Place Barracks was stressful. There was a lot of noise from helicopters and shooting. The family's life was disrupted and the children had to change school. Paul said that his employers were petty. For example, they loaned him money to buy the children's school uniforms, but then deducted this money from his wages.

Conclusion

In 1992, Paul was medically discharged suffering with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault.

Following his medical discharge Paul was not on medication nor was there any medical follow up. The only work that Paul has done since his medical discharge has been what he described as therapeutic work. He spent a couple of years answering telephones at a salary of £170 per month.

Day to day life continues to be a struggle for Paul. He has been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of his traumatic experiences whilst serving with the UDR. He still has nightmares and flashbacks usually two or three times per week. He worries about the slightest things and feels particularly anxious at various times of the year.

Paul does not go out very much and always avoid crowds and public transport. The flashbacks are triggered by loud noises and he prefers being in a calm quiet environment.

Endnotes

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³ www.udrassociation.org/Roll_of_Honour/roll_of_honour_index.htm

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¹⁷ J. Bowyer Bell (1997). *The Secret Army: The IRA*. Transaction Publishers. p.381. ISBN 978-1-56000-901-6.

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