

Omagh's darkest day



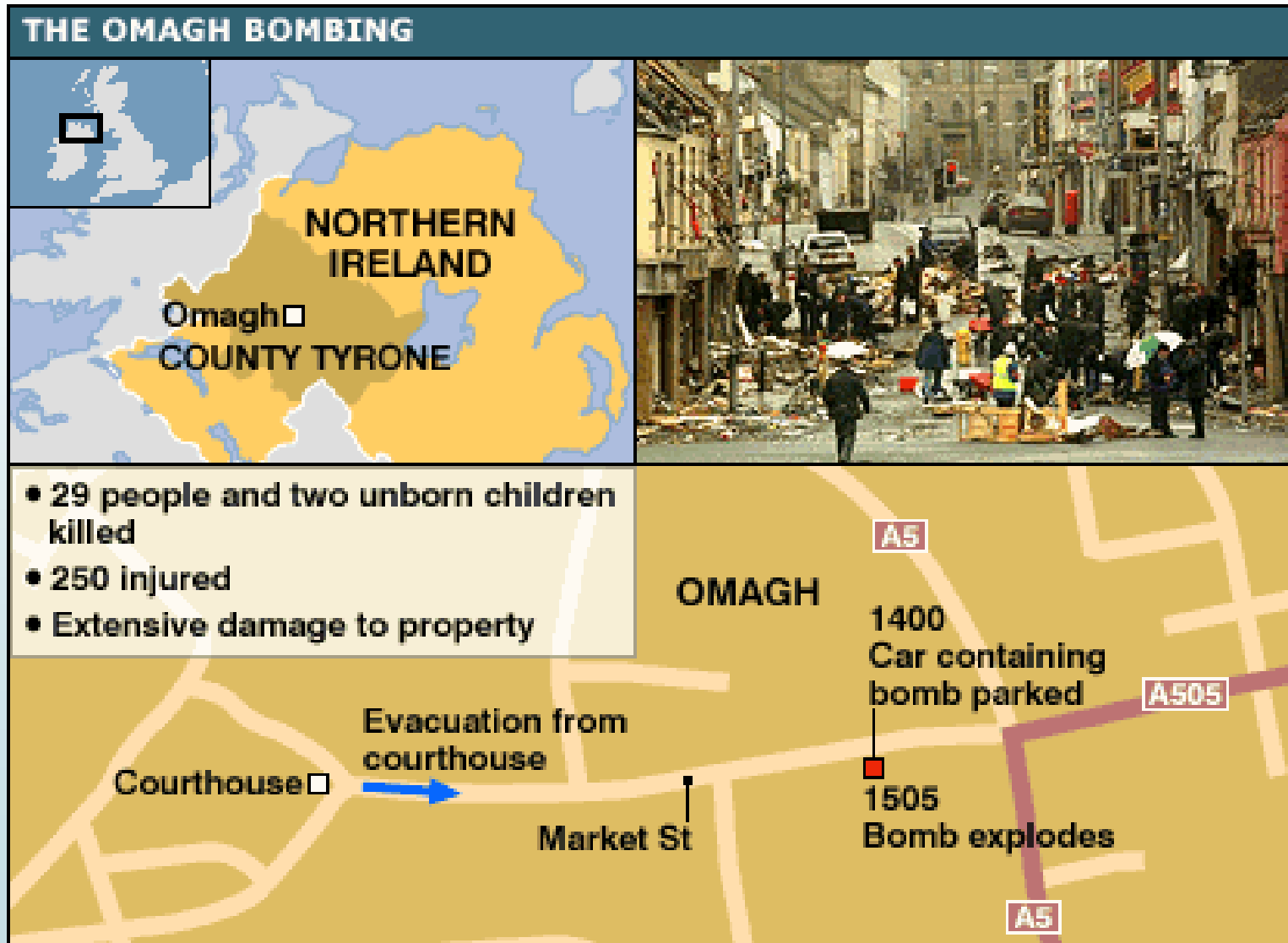
Omagh Support & Self Help Group
Michael Gallagher

Introduction



- The Omagh Bomb and my story of living with terrorism
- First Few Weeks
- International reaction
- Community Spirit
- Forming of the Support Group
- The achievements of working together

Map Omagh Town Centre



Photograph of the bomb car

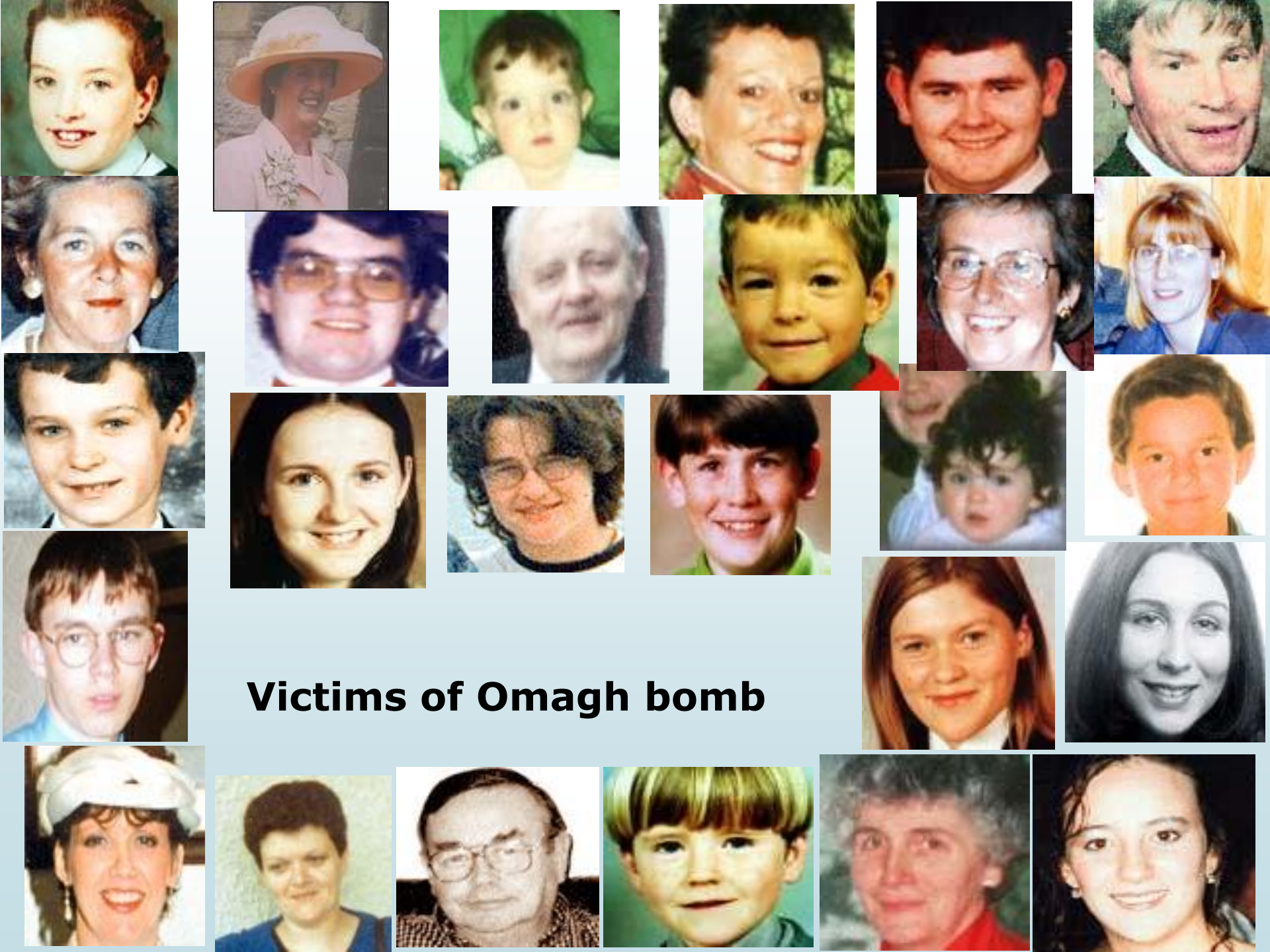


Omagh Bomb Film Footage



Omagh News Coverage





Victims of Omagh bomb



Aftermath



► Omagh leisure centre

Omagh Leisure Centre was used as a base for the relatives and friends of the dead and injured to hear news about what had happened. A temporary mortuary was set up at army barracks.

► Ambulance crash

Tragically an ambulance transferring patients to hospitals in Belfast was involved in a traffic accident with a car on the Knock Road which resulted in the death of the driver of the car.

► Phone systems fail

Communication in the area continued to be a problem. There were so many trying to reach family and friends the phone systems could not cope. Two of the dead had still not been identified by the evening of the second day. At the scene of the bomb forensic officers searched for evidence of the type of device used.

First Few Weeks



► **Volunteers arrive to help**

Volunteers from all over the province and from the South of Ireland arrived at the hospitals that were treating the injured to offer help. Spanish doctors flew into Northern Ireland with relatives of the injured to work along side hospital staff. The Spanish Deputy Prime Minister Francisco Alvarez Cascos also arrived.

► **Blood Donors**

More than 600 units of blood were used in the first two days to treat the victims of the bomb but more supplies were needed to treat those patients still in hospital.

First Few Weeks



► Flowers

Floral tributes arrived, in their thousands, from around the world. At the end of one message the heartfelt words "We came because we care". The tributes came from throughout Ireland, the UK mainland and from across the world.

► Names released

Police officially released the names of the 28 people who had died. The final total of 29 was reached 3 weeks later, on the 5th September, when Sean McGrath died in hospital.

► Manuel Blasco pledges to return

The father of the Spanish boy killed in Omagh pledged to defy the terrorists by sending his other children on summer courses in Ireland.

International Reaction



Reaction



- British Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned the attack as an "appalling act of savagery and evil".
- Bill Clinton, President, USA On behalf of every American I condemn this butchery, and hope that the culprits will be brought to justice quickly. I extend our deep sympathy to those affected by this tragedy. I renew my pledge to stand with the people of Northern Ireland against the perpetrators of violence. They will find no friends here.
- Spanish doctors flew into Northern Ireland with relatives of the injured to work along side hospital staff. The Spanish Deputy Prime Minister Francisco Alvarez Cascos also arrived.
- Bertie Ahern, then Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister), described the event as "the most evil deed in years" and said that those responsible would be ruthlessly pursued.
- Mary McAleese, President of the Republic of Ireland, also paid a visit to Omagh. From around the world messages of sympathy and grief were sent to the people of Omagh and all those affected.

Community Spirit



► **Special prayer service**

Over 1,000 people-gathered in Omagh on the 1st November and walked behind a wooden cross along a route from the bomb site to the Tyrone County Hospital.

► **'Give a Day to Omagh'**

Shoppers from all over the province were encouraged to visit Omagh to help local people to rebuild and reclaim the town. Omagh' was not a commercial initiative but was aimed at restoring confidence in the town. By coming to the town, people could help restore morale and get the town back on its feet again.

Community Spirit



► Message from the Queen & Pope

A statement on behalf of the Queen and the Pope expressed her shock at the "appalling crime" and asked for "my heartfelt sympathy" to be passed on to the bereaved families, injured and others who had suffered.

► Boyzone & Westlife

Boyzone and Westlife musicians visited Omagh and held a special concert for the bereaved and injured.

► Media and Television

Families were invited to participate in many telephone shows and were invited to many other events globally.

Community Spirit



► Football matches

High profile football matches were held in Omagh Chelsea, Manchester United and Liverpool FC.

► Letters, Emails and Gifts

Thousands of messages of sympathy, emails, teddies, cards, artwork were sent to families. DEL donated 100 computers to families.

► Omagh Fund

Over 6 million was received into the Omagh fund and by the end of September 1998, £46 thousand had been paid out in emergency funding to those affected. Though money could never compensate those who were injured or had lost relatives, the fund ensured that no one would suffer financial hardship in the wake of the atrocity.



Forming of the Support Group

- Families came together in early Sept 1998
- Picketed IRA fundraising events
- Alerted Amazon of RIRA merchandising
- Campaigned for RIRA and 32 County Sovereignty Movement to be placed on the US foreign terrorist list, (Initially resisted by the Irish Government)
- Part of European Victims Network, to bring issues that are important to victims to the European parliament
- Have engaged with the British, Irish, American and Spanish Governments at the highest level

OSSHG links with European Victims of Terrorism



The objectives of the Network have been:

- Development of a unified assistance to victims of terrorism in Europe.
- Development of the European protocol of performance in terrorist attacks.
- Assessment to Governments, NLO, and other organizations which work with victims of terrorism.
- Creation of list of experts in every European country, who could give the most efficient and fast support to victims in any place of Europe.

Omagh bomb Families Civil Action




Call for Public Inquiry

The background of the slide is a sepia-toned photograph. It shows the dark silhouette of a church or cathedral with several tall, pointed spires. The church is set against a light, hazy sky that has a warm, orange-brown tint, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

“Typical events for a public inquiry
are those that cause multiple
deaths or mass murder” wikipedia





"Those who cannot remember the past
are condemned to repeat it"

George Santayana



Thank you for listening

