

Freemasonry and the UDA



Masons under anti-terror surveillance

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Masons under anti-terror surveillance after UDA infiltrates Scottish Lodges Outlawed paramilitary group members used hall to plan strategy while trusting Freemasons drank at bar beneath the same roof by Neil Mackay



Masonic halls throughout Scotland are under covert surveillance by anti-terror police after the outlawed loyalist paramilitary group, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) successfully infiltrated the controversial secret society. David M. Begg, the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, told the Sunday Herald that Freemasons have been advised by police that Lodges throughout the country - particularly in the west of Scotland - are under surveillance by officers targeting the UDA. One Fife Lodge has been penetrated by loyalist terrorists who used the premises for fund-raising and operational planning. For more than 18 months, UDA member Steven Moffat used the St Kenneth Lodge in Kennoway as a cover for loyalist paramilitary activity. The UDA is one of Ulster's most brutal paramilitary organisations. Using the cover-name the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) it waged a campaign of sectarian assassination against Northern Ireland's Catholics. One of its most notorious "brigadiers", Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair, fled to Ayrshire after his expulsion from Belfast following an internecine loyalist feud. Moffat is serving five years in jail after being imprisoned by the High Court in Edinburgh earlier this month under the Terrorism Act 2000 for membership of a proscribed organisation and possession of firearms. He was found with a Browning 9mm automatic pistol and ammunition at his home. Police also discovered flags, balaclavas and other paramilitary regalia, including documents detailing the UDA's initiation ceremonies. Police and prosecutors believed the items "were for the preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism". Moffat joined the UDA in Belfast at least three years ago. The Mason's Fife and Kinross Provincial Grand Master, David Wishart, said Moffat had used the Masonic Lodge in Kennoway for UDA meetings for at least 18 months. A member of the Lodge who was also in the Orange Order had arranged for Moffat and his loyalist associates to hold meetings in the Kennoway Lodge. Wishart insisted that no other members knew the true nature of Moffat's activities. Once Moffat's actions were discovered, the Mason and Orange Order member who assisted him resigned after being threatened with expulsion from the Masons. "I was horrified to find out that this had been going on," said Wishart. Moffat, who was not a Freemason but often drank in the St Kenneth Lodge's bar, used the Kennoway Masonic Hall for two types of meetings. Firstly, regular private "strategy" meetings with Moffat and 10 other men occurred over 18 months. The UDA members discussed their plans in a closed room while Lodge members drank at the Mason's bar in the same building. The second type of meeting was fund-raising events for loyalist causes in Northern Ireland. Up to 70 people attended three fundraisers held at the Masonic Hall over an 18-month period. Wishart said: "The UDA infiltrated and used us for their illegal purposes. These people are very clever. We were trusting; they gained our confidence "I and then we were manipulated". Kennoway Masonic Hall was closed for eight weeks for an internal Masonic inquiry following police raids in the area in connection with Moffat's activities. At the time of his arrest Moffat was planning to hold an initiation ceremony for Scottish UDA recruits at the Masonic Hall. Wishart has since altered hall letting procedures and leasing now has to be cleared by a committee and a Lodge member must vouch for those letting the premises. The Orange Order has been banned from using the Kennoway Lodge's premises. Previously, Orangemen regularly hired out the hall. "Due to rogue members of the Lodge linked to the Orange Order and the UDA we took the decision to no longer allow them the use of the premises," said Wishart. Senior police officers told Wishart that they were "mounting similar surveillance operations in the west of Scotland against Masonic Lodges which might have been infiltrated by loyalist terrorists. "I can't say if there is or isn't a risk elsewhere," said Wishart, pointing out that members of some of the 49 Fife lodges under his command were also in the Orange Order. One other Lodge in Fife also allows the Orange Order to rent its premises for functions. David Begg, the Grand Master [sic] of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, said if any Lodges were involved in supporting the UDA they would be closed. He has warned Scotland's 32 provincial masters to be extra vigilant but cannot compel Lodges to introduce committee led hall letting procedures similar to those adopted by Kennoway. "We can't tell Lodges what to do. It is up to the trustees of each Lodge but we will be producing general guidance in the near future," he said.

NOTE Following the above article the Grand Secretary met with H. M. Chief Insector of Constabulary. It is to be noted that the article refers several times to the fact that a Masonic Lodge was infiltrated. This is not the case. It was the premises owned by the Lodge which were rented to the organisation which is the subject of the article. The Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland wishes to make it clear that it is a Masonic body and has no connection whatsoever with the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland which is not a Masonic body.