

RELEASE IN PART
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From: sbwhoeop [redacted]
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2010 11:19 PM
To: H
Subject: H: couple of things pre-Shaun: bomb in NI and latest UK poll, Labour moving. Sid

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Car bomb explodes in Northern Ireland

Republican dissidents suspected after blast outside courthouse in Newry as evacuation was taking place

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A car bomb exploded last night outside the courthouse in Newry, [Northern Ireland](#), police said. There were no initial reports of any injuries in the blast.

Police said the vehicle was abandoned at the front of the building in the Co Down town at around 10pm. Officers were in the process of evacuating the area when the car exploded.

Suspicion is bound to fall on republican dissidents opposed to the peace process. The incident comes only days after a mortar bomb failed to detonate outside a police station in the nearby Co Armagh village of Keady.

The chairman of the nationalist SDLP in Newry, Gary McKeown, condemned those responsible. "Lives could have been lost as a result of this bombing," he said. "It serves absolutely no purpose and does nothing for the community, or the cause of a united Ireland. If people want to advance their beliefs, they should enter the democratic process and debate with their political opponents, rather than resorting to violence. Planting bombs outside courthouses will achieve nothing." Earlier this month, [police on both sides of the Irish border launched separate operations](#) against dissident republicans. Police in Northern Ireland arrested two men and a woman in connection with the murder of Constable Stephen Carroll, the first PSNI officer killed by terrorists in the province.

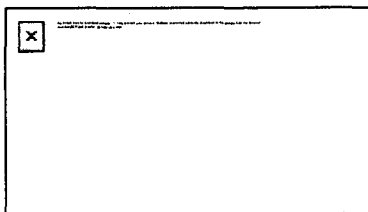
The Continuity IRA shot the 48-year-old policeman dead on a housing estate in Craigavon, County Armagh, on 9 March last year. His murder came just 48 hours after the Real IRA killed two British soldiers outside the Massereene barracks in Antrim. In September police discovered a massive 600lb bomb in the south Armagh village of Forkhill.

On Sunday, Republican Sinn Féin, political allies of the Continuity IRA, [claimed masked undercover soldiers](#) carried out surveillance on two housing estates in Lurgan, Co Armagh, in recent weeks. They claimed the men were scouting the areas in white civilian vans. Republican Sinn Féin said the soldiers belonged to the Special Reconnaissance Regiment. The alleged presence of SRR soldiers – formerly known as the 14th Intelligence Unit – is controversial because British troops are meant to have been pulled off the streets, especially in nationalist areas.

Britain heading for hung parliament – Guardian/ICM poll

Tories might not win election outright, suggests new survey

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The Conservatives should no longer count on winning the election outright, according to a Guardian/ICM poll published today.

The new survey suggests Britain is on course for a hung parliament amid faltering public support for David Cameron's party.

The opposition have also lost ground on key policy issues, including the economy, and in particular may be losing their campaign against Labour's so-called "death tax". Labour leads the Tories by eight points as the party with the best policy on care for the elderly.

The two parties are neck and neck on their ability to sort out the economic crisis, against a nine-point Tory lead when the question was last asked in August 2009.

With no more than three months to go until polling day, the Conservatives have fallen to 37%, down three on last month's Guardian/ICM poll and down two on another ICM poll earlier this month.

The party has not fallen so low in an ICM poll since the tail end of the banking crisis, last falling to 37% in February 2008. As recently as last October the Tories hit 45% in an ICM poll and the party will be alarmed by this latest evidence that the race is tightening, which confirms the findings of some other recent polls.

Meanwhile Labour's support, at 30%, is eight points up on its absolute ICM bottom last May, and slightly above its average for the second part of last year. However, there is no sign of either a boost for the party following Gordon Brown's Piers Morgan interview or a fall after this weekend's reports about Brown bullying his staff.

Labour's support is up one point on the last Guardian/ICM poll and unchanged from the most recent ICM poll. Research began last Friday and most was carried out before the serialisation of Andrew Rawnsley's book in yesterday's Observer, which may have affected Labour support. Around a fifth of responses were collected on Sunday.

Nick Clegg's hopes of a powerful place in a hung parliament are also boosted by today's poll, which puts the Liberal Democrats on 20%, unchanged from the most recent ICM and down one on last month's Guardian poll.

All this suggests that Labour and the Lib Dems are holding steady while the Conservatives lose some ground to smaller parties, which are on a total of 13%. Nationalists are on 5%, Ukip and the Greens on 3% each and the BNP on 2%.

Estimates of what these shares would mean for the parties on polling day vary, but a 7% lead is at the margins of what the Tories think they need to win a majority. One academic calculation suggests the result would leave Labour only 25 seats behind the Tories in a hung parliament, although any improved Tory performance in marginal seats would offset that.

• *ICM Research interviewed a random sample of 1,004 adults by telephone on 19-21 February 2010. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules*