In 1919, Ireland was plunged into a brutal guerrilla war. Paul O’Brien, a military historian who works for the Office of Public Works at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, said, 'Prime Minister Lloyd George wanted the trouble in Ireland to be crushed whatever the cost but did not believe in declaring war against rebels. So although unconventional warfare made the British government uncomfortable, senior politicians realised a specialist unit was needed to fight the insurgency.'

In July 1920, a paramilitary corps of former soldiers was deployed in a supportive role to the police, tasked with taking the fight to the IRA. In his new book, Havoc (The Collins Press, price €19.99), O’Brien reconstructs the actions of the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary (ADRIC), providing a balanced examination of their origins and operations, without glossing over the brutal details. The ADRIC were sent into a war zone with little or no understanding of the conflict or the locals and trailed a wake of death, hatred and destruction in incidents such as the Burning of Cork, the Limerick Curfew Murders and the Battle of Brunswick Street. Trained for swift, surgical assaults, the ADRIC can be considered the world’s first anti-terrorist unit. Referring to the Auxiliary Division, Michael Collins, on a visit to the constituency of Armagh in September 1921, is quoted as saying, 'Wherever they appeared it was because the men of the place had put up a good fight. The Volunteers knew generally they were the best fighters they had to meet.'

Inaccurate reporting and IRA propaganda also influenced the impression of these soldiers as bogeymen. As long as operations and personnel records remain unexamined, their legacy will be mired in hearsay. By capturing key insights from their manoeuvres, O’Brien gives a controversial account of a side of the War of Independence rarely studied from an Irish perspective.

**HAVOC**

The Auxiliaries in Ireland’s War of Independence

Paul O’Brien

*They were sent over here to break the people and they were a far more dangerous force than the Black and Tans.* – Commandant Tom Barry
Notes on *Havoc* by Paul O’Brien

- **Paul O’Brien**, a military historian, works for the Office of Public Works at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. The author of ten books, he has written extensively on the military strategy of the 1916 Rising, as well as the British army in Ireland. Two of his books, *Blood on the Streets* and *Crossfire*, were turned into the critically acclaimed drama-documentary *A Terrible Beauty*. He lives in Santry, Dublin, with his wife, daughter and two cats. He has been fascinated with military history since he collected toy soldiers as a small boy.

- Churchill approved the creation of the British Commandos during the Second World War but this type of special forces group had its origins in the activities of the ADRIC. Covert actions, black ops, holding without trial, snatch operations and the assassinations of high-value targets were used by the ADRIC and are tactics and strategies that are still deployed on an unprecedented scale throughout the world today.

- Members were former commissioned officers who had fought on the fronts of one or more wars – approx 95% listed just one former occupation: military officer. Special forces units today also recruit from within the military.

- They were often confused with the Black & Tans but were a different unit: Black & Tans were hated but the ‘Auxies’ were feared.

- Special forces operatives rather than police cadets, they were known as T/Cadets and had the insignia T/C on their shoulders. Some, when asked what it meant, replied ‘Tough C***s’. There were 2,263 members in total in service for a 10-month period.

- ADRIC were not mercenaries – they were fighting for King and Country.

- ADRIC lost the propaganda war – their counter-insurgency campaign failed to win the hearts and minds of the populace. Reprisals against people were alienating the police and military.

- The Auxiliaries posed for a number of media photographs depicting the aftermath of an ambush, which they claimed had taken place in Tralee, County Kerry. No ambush actually took place but the resulting photos were to be used in the national press to show that the ADRIC were winning the war. The actual location of the photo shoot was Dalkey, County Dublin.

- They used hostages in an attempt to avoid ambushes.

- 60 ADRIC died during the War – 44 were killed by the IRA, others died by suicide or natural causes.

- Only two ADRIC interred in Ireland: T/ Cadet Cleve Soady was buried in Macroom.

- Counter-insurgency (COIN) has been defined as ‘comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes’. Counter-insurgency are high-risk affairs.

- Special forces took the fight to the enemy but were then deemed to have broken the rules of engagement.

- Guerilla warfare is fought against superior forces where insurgents are forced to target their attacks because of lack of ammunition, numbers.

- Frustrated with ambiguous loyalty of the population: they couldn’t tell who was enemy or friend.

- Use of machine guns enabled ADRIC to gain the advantage.

- The capture of arms and ammunition dumps reduced the firepower of republicans as these weapons could not be easily replaced. Towards the end of the conflict, following extensive seizures of weapons, the IRA had only 569 rifles with 20 rounds per weapon and 477 revolvers with limited ammunition.

- Special units targeting prominent republicans were formed from the ranks of the RIC, Black & Tans, military and ADRIC.

- The IRA targeted ‘helpful citizens’ – those local spies and informers who aided the RIC and ADRIC. They found names in a notebook left at Dunmanway Workhouse but the origins of the notebook remain a mystery: was it left by an incompetent officer or were the ADRIC using the IRA to tie up their loose ends?

- In unconventional warfare, many people in non-combat roles are part of the clandestine infrastructure of the insurgency; they shelter and supply the combatants with food, funds and other resources; provide intelligence, lookouts, messengers, weapons caches and transport, safe places, including religious buildings, hospitals and schools. Some activists are women, children, older people and clergy. Without such a supportive covert organization, insurgency is not possible.

- Collateral damage, as it has become known, is an outcome accepted by governments and the military because the

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advantage to the authorities (that of killing insurgents) outweighs the value of civilian lives caught in the crossfire.

- Sir Ormonde de l’Épée Winter, the Chief of British Army Intelligence in Ireland, revelled in his new role as spymaster and looked the part, being described as ‘conforming to the stock image of the spymaster’; he had greased-back hair, wore a monocle, permanently kept a cigarette dangling from the lips and surrounded himself with a dense cloak of secrecy – he preferred to be known by his codename ‘O’. Republican forces gave him the moniker of the ‘Holy Terror’ during his campaign against them. He inherited a broken and failed intelligence service that had been infiltrated by republican agents. Military and police failed to liaise and share information. It took time to build a new network.
- They were case officers rather than spies: their objective was to develop assets – turning local people into informants. Meanwhile the IRA intelligence network was widespread and they had many assets within the RIC.

Important dates

- 21 January 1919: The first Dáil met on the same day that two members of the RIC were killed at Soloheadbeg, County Tipperary, the first skirmish of the War of Independence.
- 11 May 1920: Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill proposed at a cabinet meeting the formation of a Special Emergency Gendarmerie, which would become a branch of the Royal Irish Constabulary.
- 6 July 1920: Tudor, Police Adviser to the Dublin Castle Administration, endorsed the scheme.
- 23 July 1920: The Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary (ADRIC), considered by many to be the world’s first anti-terrorist unit, came into being.
- 4 August 1920: The T/Cadets were under the command of Brigadier General Frank Percy Crozier. He later resigned over controversial issues relating to the disciplining of his men – see raid in Meath on 9 February 1921.
- 19 September 1920: The first contact with republication forces at Kilmashogue, in the Dublin Mountains, in the district of Larch Hill, the location of an Irish Republican Army training camp.
- 20 September 1920: Two members of the RIC were shot by the IRA in Balbriggan. Auxiliary Cadets and Black and Tans rushed to the scene, stole a substantial amount of liquor from the first public house they came across and surged across the village, setting fire to buildings and firing wildly.
- December 1920: Ernie O’Malley was captured with intelligence notes in his pockets that led to the identification and subsequent capture of almost all the active IRA members in the region. On 21 February 1921, O’Malley along with two other prisoners, Frank Teeling and Simon Donnelly, made a daring escape from Kilmainham Gaol. During his incarceration, O’Malley’s real identity was never discovered by the authorities.
- 15 December 1920: near Dunmanway, County Cork, Auxiliaries came across three men with car trouble. Section Leader Hart shot and killed two of them Canon Magner, parish priest of Dunmanway, Timothy Crowley, a local farmer’s son. He was found guilty but insane.
- 28 November 1920, KilMichael Ambush: Commandant Tom Barry, commander of the 3rd West Cork Brigade flying column of the IRA, had noticed the platoon had become complacent and patrolled in predictable patterns and prepared to ambush the patrol. This ambush is significant for the controversy of the ‘false surrender’ – where IRA Volunteers claimed they shot ADRIC officers after what some believed was an attempt to lure the IRA gunmen from their concealed positions. Barry’s unit were in a state of shock following the ambush.
- 26 November 1920: Patrick and Harry Loughnane were taken for questioning by an Auxiliary unit based at Drumharasna Castle near Ardrahan in south Galway A post-mortem examination carried out by Dr James Sandys on the bodies of the two men detailed the horrific wounds they received before death, including broken bones, lacerations and evidence of torture. The doctor thought it possible that explosives were used, i.e. hand grenades may have been placed in the mouths of their victims and then detonated.
- November 1920: The Dáil sanctioned operations in the UK: it was felt that the people in England should be made conscious of what the people in Ireland were suffering as regards depredations carried out by the Crown Forces.
- 11 December 1920: the IRA attacked ‘K’ Company of the ADRIC, based in Victoria Barracks, at Dillon’s Cross,

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Cork, led by Captain Seán O’Donoghue. The subsequent Burning of Cork is considered to be one of the worst orgies of violence destruction witnessed on the island. Police raided houses in retaliation, set fires and wouldn’t let homeowners save their own homes. Many residents were rounded up – one was saved by a good soldier who ensured he got home. Captain O’Donoghue hid unused grenades at the Delany farm – the occupants were later shot by the ADRIC. ‘K’ Company was disbanded a few months later with their commanding officers and T/Cadets being redeployed to other Auxiliary Companies. Major General Sir Peter Strickland, General Officer Commanding the 6th Division in Ireland, submitted a report in relation to the burning of Cork city and the murders of the Delany brothers. The Castle authorities chose to suppress the findings of a report and to this day it has never been made public.

- 9 February 1921: ADRIC raided a shop in Trim, County Meath, owned by Richard and Frances Chandler and arrested Mr. Chandler. The couple later claimed £355 worth of goods had been taken during the raid. The accusation was investigated and the T/Cadets were placed under arrest. However, RIC Inspector General Henry Hugh Tudor reinstated them and Crozier resigned.

- 20 February 1921: An IRA flying column, resting in an isolated farmhouse at Clonmult, County Cork, was surrounded by British troops. A fierce gun battle erupted between the two groups. Twelve IRA men were killed, eight wounded and one evaded capture in what was to be the greatest single loss of IRA Volunteers during the period. A Company Commander was suspended and several individuals were punished for their share in the destruction. Nothing much happened to the Company Commander after the fuss blew over.

- 25 February 1921: The IRA lay in wait for days at Coolavokig, County Cork. They spent weeks planning the ambush and desperately needed the ammunition they were planning to capture. After the ambush, suspicion fell on Patrick ‘Cruxy’ O’Connor, a decorated former British soldier, who had manned the Lewis gun that had jammed as the battle commenced. On 22 April 1922, a hit squad tracked him to New York City and shot him.

- 7 March 1921: Prominent republicans, municipal politicians and those belonging to republican families were targeted. Councillor Michael O’Callaghan, ex-Mayor of Limerick city, Alderman George Clancy, the serving Mayor of Limerick and a young man named Joseph O’Donoghue, were killed in what became known as the Limerick Curfew Murders. T/Cadet George Nathan, an intelligence officer, carried out these murders. He was described by two former colleagues as carrying himself with great panache, being absolutely fearless and ‘a roaring homosexual’.

- 14 March 1921: The Battle of Brunswick Street was planned in retaliation for six IRA Volunteers who had been captured, tried and sentenced to death. One Volunteer Seán Dolan tosses a grenade at the window of College Green Police Station but it rebounded and detonated near him, severing his leg. A nurse at the hospital phoned the RIC. When she noticed shrapnel in his wounds but a cleaning lady overheard the call and contacted the IRA who extracted him from the building. In total, thirteen people died in Dublin city on 14 March 1921, making it one of the bloodiest days of the Irish War for Independence. They consisted of the six men executed within Mountjoy Prison, two Volunteers killed in action on Brunswick Street, two Auxiliary Cadets killed in the same battle and three civilians caught in the crossfire.

- 26 March 1921: T/Cadets diffused a bomb under Inistioge Bridge: Roads and bridges throughout the country were being laced with mines, exposing convoys to insurgent ambushes.

- 11 April 1921: There was an attack on London & North Western Railway Hotel (LNWR) in Dublin, the operational base for ‘Q’ Company ADRIC. The squads covering the attack were armed with rifles while the assault teams carried revolvers, automatics and grenades. While the explosive devices consisted of incendiary and shrapnel bombs, the IRA also carried a new type of weapon: quantities of a solution of Phosphorus in Carbon bi-Sulphide, packed in small bottles of grenade size. The use of chemical weapons in the form of gas grenades was innovative for the time.

- 19 April 1921: The ADRIC rushed a hotel at Castleconnell, Limerick, where off-duty RIC were have a drink – they opened fire which ADRIC returned. This ‘friendly fire’ was covered up by the government, a decision that disgusted the RIC.
14 May 1921: Michael Collins put into action a risky plan to rescue Commandant Seán MacEoin – the Blacksmith of Ballinalee – from Mountjoy. The plan failed because the ADRIC were at the gaol. Collins later negotiated for MacEoin’s release.

22 May 1921: ‘B’ Company (stationed at Uppercass, County Tipperary) carried out a raid. The operation was a success: three insurgents were captured and one killed. The police also recovered an estimated 80 rounds of ammunition, field glasses, wire cutters and seditious literature. DI Naughton’s counter-insurgency operation had depended on overwhelming force and repression in order to succeed. He was commended for his actions and was later promoted to District Inspector First Class.

25 May 1921: The Custom House in Dublin was attacked. The operation took three months to plan and involved the largest force of any IRA operation to date. The plan was for operatives to move throughout the building, setting fires. Other operatives were tasked with delaying the Fire Brigade – when they eventually arrived, some members were either IRA or sympathisers and helped to spread the fires. Many civilians were caught in the crossfire of the running battle. Despite the difficulties operatives had in escaping, the IRA considered this operation a success because the building was destroyed and also in terms of propaganda because the action highlighted the crisis around the world. Many believe it was the last throw of the dice in an attempt to gain worldwide recognition for an independent Irish Republic.

16 June 1921: Rathcoole Ambush, County Cork. The IRA worked on the basis that there was a low possibility of capturing equipment so they aimed to inflict as much damage as possible and then retreat. They laid IEDs on the road and successfully detonated them, however, the soft subsoil of the road absorbed some of the blasts and disabled ADRIC vehicles rather than destroying them. Some ADRIC managed to get away to seek reinforcements but they were then delayed because the IRA had felled trees near Millstreet.

30 June 1921: Volunteer Thomas Carragher was seriously wounded. He later recalled: ‘I proceeded on for a short distance where I heard footsteps and looking around I saw a member of the Auxiliary force had me covered with his rifle. He was only about 1. yards from me and he fired point blank at my head. The bullet entered my right jaw and my tongue and made an exit on my left jaw, shattering all my teeth on both sides. I fell and feigned that I was dead.’

15 April 1921: Auxiliary officers were often singled out for assassination by the IRA. The commanding officer of ‘H’ Company, 1st Class District Inspector J.A. MacKinnon DCM, MC, MM, stationed in Tralee, County Kerry, was one such target for elimination. He was killed while playing golf. When The Liberator paper refused to carry an obituary, the ADRIC burned their offices.

11 July 1921 Truce between the IRA and British Crown forces.

August 1921: Three T/Cadets, Gash, Martelli and Bjorkman, managed to foil an attempt by the IRA to intercept a mail delivery at Ardfert Station, County Limerick. The IRA used these deliveries as sources of intelligence. The T/Cadets were on the train because they were going to Dublin to take some leave. T/Cadets were awarded the Constabulary Medal on 5 October 1921 for valour and bravery displayed.

7 January 1922: the Dáil voted 64 to 57 in favour of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

13 January 1922: ADRIC began disbanding. Local suppliers were out of pocket as units moved out.

16 January 1922, Lord FitzAlan relinquished control of the 26 Counties to Michael Collins, Chairman of the Provisional Government. Police forces in Ireland were renamed – Royal Ulster Constabulary in the North and An Garda Síochána in the South.

Many members of the ADRIC later joined the Palestine Gendarmerie. Tudor was placed in charge but left in 1924 amidst controversy.

High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel requested that no public announcement should be made connecting the Black and Tans with the Gendarmerie. Their reputation, as a corps, had not been savoury and if any idea was created in the public mind in England or here that the Black and Tans, or any part of them, were being transferred as a body to Palestine, the new Gendarmerie might be discredited from the outset.

1926: The Palestine Gendarmerie was disbanded.

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