

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 310

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. ....310.....

**Witness**

Mr. James Grace,  
24 Haddington Road,  
Dublin.  
**Identity**

Member of I.R.B. Dublin 1912 -  
" " 'C' Company, 3rd Battalion  
Dublin Brigade 1915;  
Lieutenant 3rd Battalion Staff 1917-1921.

**Subject**

- (a) National activities 1912-1916;
- (b) Easter Week 1916 - 25 Northumberland Road;
- (c) Imprisonment and release.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. ....S:624.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT BY SEUMAS GRACE,

24 Haddington Road, Dublin.

Thirty three years have passed since the battle of Mount Street Bridge, and as the sole survivor of the little band who held the fort of outpost No. 25 Northumberland Road, I feel that the time is overdue when a tribute should be paid to the leader of that fight, Lieutenant Michael Malone, who fell at his post on April 26, 1916. I first met Michael about 1911 in the St. Patrick's Branch of the Gaelic League, Ringsend. He was a fine well-built young man with good features, serious minded but with an excellent sense of humour, but when occasion arose could be a very strict disciplinarian.

About 1912 I joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Meetings were held about once a month at 41 Parnell Square. George Irvine was Centre of the Circle of which I was a member. The I.R.B. issued me with a .22 or .25 automatic pistol.

In August 1913, I went to America. Before leaving I was given credentials from the I.R.B. to Clan na Gael in America. In the rush to catch the Mail Boat I unfortunately left the credentials at home. I remained in America for about one year and eight months. I then went to Canada. I joined a Canadian Territorial Regiment for the purpose of getting military experience and learning the use of the rifle. At the end of about

three months some British agents called at my digs and made enquiries about me from the nature of which I knew that I was a suspect, and having received a letter from D. Balfe of Irishtown (who was an I.R.B. man, and who afterwards fought in the Mendicity Institution under Seán Heuston, was badly wounded and taken prisoner), which said in Gaelic "we are waiting for you", I decided to return home immediately. So, leaving my luggage and uniform behind in the digs I took a train that night, bringing with me a long Lee Enfield rifle and twenty rounds of ammunition.

I embarked on the 'Carthagenia' at Montreal and had the rifle under the mattress of my cabin bunk. We were fourteen days at sea and arrived at the Clyde in August 1915. The bursar of the vessel attempted to make me give up the rifle which was in a canvas case, saying I should have declared it when I embarked. I pushed by him and told him we were within the three mile limit and no longer under his jurisdiction. It was then very dark and the Customs Shed was being handled by an old man with a lantern. He asked me if I had anything to declare. I said, "no". He did not notice the rifle. I took the train to Holyhead and arrived at Dún Laoghaire. On the boat were some British soldiers returning on leave and I left my rifle among theirs on deck but keeping a watch on it.

When we disembarked at Dún Laoghaire I fell in near the British soldiers. There were some D.M.P. on duty at Dún Laoghaire in charge of Inspector Barrett. I bluffed through the police and customs and intended to take the train for Westland Row. I was half way down the platform when two British Military Transport Officers called out to

me to come back. I ran down and jumped on an outside car and arrived home safely with the rifle.

That evening, August 1915, I reported to the Irish Volunteer training ground at Camden Row, and while standing in the ranks a young officer in Volunteer uniform came down along the line. He stopped and said, "Is this Seumas Grace?". I said, "yes. Am I in the right Volunteers?". He said, "yes. I am Lieutenant Michael Malone". I looked at him and said, "yes, I remember you, Micheál". I became a member of "C" Company, 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade. The officers at that time were - Eddie Byrne, Captain; Simon Donnelly, Lieutenant; Michael Malone, 2nd Lieutenant.

We continued to parade and train at Camden Row. After a week I had been made section commander of No. 4 Section which was mostly made up of University students and included among them Arthur Griffith. Our first big parade in Dublin City was on St. Patrick's Day, 1916. There were 2,000 men present in Dame Street. I had been given to understand by my I.R.B. Centre, George Irvine, that the rising was to take place on that day.

On the Thursday of Holy Week I was in charge of a detail guarding Headquarters in 2 Dawson Street where I first met The O'Hanrahan. My instructions were to defend Headquarters by force of arms if necessary.

On the Saturday of Holy Week we were told to carry full equipment and three days' rations for a route march on Easter Sunday and to parade at Camden Row at 12 o'clock noon.

On reporting at Camden Row on Easter Sunday morning we were told the parade was cancelled and were given instructions not to leave the city as there might be another immediate mobilisation.

I was living near Micheál Malone on the South Circular Road and we both went to Holy Communion on Easter Sunday morning.

On Easter Monday morning at about 10 o'clock I was mobilised for Earlsfort Terrace. I took no breakfast and immediately departed for the point named. I was the first to arrive there and a few minutes later Lieutenant Micheál Malone came along. He was the first officer to arrive. He told me he had had no breakfast either. Lieutenant Malone was in uniform with a mauser automatic strapped to his belt. I was in uniform also and had my long Lee Enfield rifle and about fifty rounds of .303 ammunition. I also had an automatic pistol and 200 rounds of ammunition for it.

Gradually the members of "C" Company began to arrive. Captain Simon Donnelly was in command as the former Captain had resigned. Dick Carroll, "C" Company, Quartermaster, arrived on his motor bike and side car in which he had mauser ammunition and which he distributed to members of the Company.

Dick Carroll when on a return journey was pulled from his motorcycle combination in Camden Street by an English Officer, Captain Bowen-Colthurst, and shot. This was a serious blow to us; as a result of it our right flank was left open. Carroll had been detailed with four men to hold

Parsons shop at the corner of Haddington Road and Baggot Street Bridge (now occupied by the National Bank). This house was the property of Mr. Ben. Parsons senior, a Clareman, who was friendly to the cause and now long dead. Later that year he sold these premises to the National Bank and had a large and similar house and shop built on the opposite corner (Mespil Road - Baggot Street Bridge) with a plaque '1916' over the door.

The Company was much below its full strength when we marched off after 11 o'clock under Captain Simon Donnelly. We travelled by Upper Mount Street and on arrival at Mount Street Bridge Lieutenant Micheál Malone told me to take Paddy Rowe and Michael Byrne to the junction of Haddington Road and Northumberland Road and cover the gates of Beggars Bush Barracks. The Lieutenant sent section commander George Reynolds, Jimmy Doyle, Richard Murphy and Willie Ronan to take over Clanwilliam House. Joe Clarke, Joe Christian and Joseph Doyle (Blackrock) were sent to take over the Mission Hall, Northumberland Road. Section commander Dinny Donoghue and four or five Volunteers were instructed to occupy the Schools opposite the Mission Hall.

While we were covering the gates of Beggars Bush Barracks two men, one elderly, the other young, approached us, and the elderly man tried to induce Paddy Rowe to let him look at his rifle. I had my bayonet fixed and I told the man to stand back. He persisted, however, and advanced a few steps towards Paddy Rowe and tried to take the rifle from his hands. I immediately put the bayonet up to his throat and I told him to stand back. He put his hand in his breast pocket and pulled an old bulldog revolver and was just going to shoot when I pressed the bayonet against his throat. The younger man jumped between

us and said, "it's alright, Sergeant, don't shoot my father". I afterwards found out this man was a member of the G.Rs., a pro-British territorial organisation which corresponded to the Yeos of '98. His name was O'Connell and I was guilty of a dereliction of duty in not killing him or in disarming him though mistake in leniency. I heard afterwards that the G.Rs. had instructions to rush and disarm Irish Volunteers when alone or in small numbers.

We went on down towards Beggars Bush Barracks and took cover. As soon as the garrisons of Clanwilliam House, Mission Hall and the schoolhouse were installed, Lieutenant Malone came to me and told me we were to take possession of 25 Northumberland Road at the junction of Northumberland Road and Haddington Road. I smashed in the yale lock with the butt of my rifle and we immediately prepared the house for a state of siege, putting up barricades, filling vessels with water and so on. The following were the garrison:- Lieutenant Micheál Malone, Paddy Rowe, Michael Byrne and myself. The Cussens who owned this house were also friendly, and having been told of events to come, had sent the servants away and evacuated the house themselves. Notwithstanding the fact that this house is now set in flats, it is practically the same now as it was then, except that there is now a front entrance to the basement.

Early that afternoon a Company of G.Rs. approached from the direction of Ballsbridge. We opened fire on them and they scattered and retreated. Here I would like to say a word to those who condemn us for firing on them. The local Company of these G.Rs. made up from Ballsbridge and the vicinity, numbered about thirty and for some weeks previous to the rising they held parades from Baggot Street at about 5.30 each Saturday. There were about thirty in the

Company, about twenty armed with Italian rifles and ten armed with Lee Enfield rifles, and the plea has been made that these Yeos were not armed and had no ammunition, but that is false. I had made it my duty to keep these under observation each Saturday at the time named and I saw them carry arms and ammunition. After we had fired a couple of rounds Lieutenant Malone ordered us to cease fire so that the wounded could be removed.

On Easter Monday from that on, and most of the day on Tuesday, we were subjected to persistent sniping, one sniper in particular from a house right opposite giving us a lot of trouble. The Lieutenant and I proceeded to the top of the house and he asked me to take the right-hand room and he would go into the left, and I was to draw the fire of the sniper. I very foolishly poked my head up over the window sill and a shot from the sniper knocked the cap from my head. The Lieutenant called out, "are you alright, Seumas?". I shouted, "yes. He is in the right-hand top window of the house opposite which was No. 28". The Lieutenant fired a few times and the sniper crashed down, dragging with him the window blind. Lieutenant Malone was the crack shot of the 3rd Battalion with the mauser automatic and in the main battle on Wednesday he wrought terrific havoc among the enemy with it, at times recklessly exposing himself.

About 12 o'clock on Tuesday night the Lieutenant called me aside and told me we could not hope to win owing to the confusion caused by the G.H.Q. countermanding order, and also the overwhelming odds against us, and the failure of the expected German aid to arrive. He asked me did I agree that Paddy Rowe and Michael Byrne, who were mere boys, (both were under sixteen) be sent away, that in his opinion they would only be killed if kept on in the house. I agreed. Lieutenant Malone called the two boys and told them they were

to go on despatch work - the despatches were a letter each to Micheál's mother and mine. The boys seemed to realise that the despatches were only an excuse to get them out of danger - they protested they would rather stay.

Micheál said gently but firmly, "it's orders, boys, you must go". So at about 2.30 a.m. they crept out through the skylight and over the roofs, gloomy enough, because they had been told that under no circumstances were they to come back to No. 25. Lieutenant Malone asked me if I was in the I.R.B. I said, "yes". He told me he was not.

Lieutenant Micheál Malone up to about one hour before the main battle on Wednesday visited his outposts night and day at intervals, each time braving the fire of enemy snipers. Micheál Malone told me that he had reconnoitred the whole area with Commandant De Valera some time previous to the rising.

After the boys had gone I noticed that Micheál looked very grey and haggard. Neither of us had slept since Sunday and then I remembered suddenly that he had told me that he had little sleep or rest during Holy Week. I took command and ordered him to bed. I set booby traps in the hall and on the stairs and kept a lonely vigil, but eventually sleep overcame me too.

Next day, Wednesday, about noon, two girls, my sister and a Miss May Cullen (Cumann na mBan) of Percy Place, arrived after an adventurous journey with food and a dispatch. We could not admit them but took the dispatch through the letter box. It said that English troops had landed at Kingstown and that 500 of them were advancing on the city from Williamstown. "This is it! Michael, I said. "Yes", he replied, "this is it". We spoke of moving over to

Carrisbrooke House at the corner of Northumberland Road and Pembroke Road which had been prematurely evacuated by 14 men under the orders of a Blackrock officer, a vital point covering all advance from Ballsbridge, when luckily Micheál went into the bathroom, the windows of which was on the side of the house looking towards Ballsbridge. He said, "look, Seumas". One glance was sufficient. We would have to make our stand where we stood for the khaki clad figures were approaching. Micheál opened fire from the bathroom window which was on the third floor. It was from this window that Micheál operated practically all the time - Malone's window I still call it. I followed suit from another window on the second floor.

Here and there British Tommies began to drop. Section commander Reynolds and his men were also operating from Clanwilliam House. The Tommies were bewildered not being able to locate the source of the volleys, and their casualties grew. Soon, however, they had possession of almost every house within point blank range. With the help of hand-grenades they came even nearer, and I was forced from window to window seeking a spot to return their fire.

Do not believe any person who tells you he does not know what fear is, because there were moments from about 3.30 onwards when the fire was so intense that I could not reply, that I trembled from head to foot in a panic of fear and it was only when I was able to reply to the fire that I could overcome the fear.

At about 5 o'clock the English troops covered by terrific fire, sent up a bombing party and a short time after a second bombing attack was made. At about 8.30 another heavy bombing attack was made and the Lieutenant called out

to me to go down and take up a position on the hall floor. I had only just done so when I heard movements in the room on the left and someone trying to turn the handle of the door. I fired through the panels of the door and I heard a rush of feet away from it. A few minutes afterwards I heard the crashing of glass and a door at the rear with steps leading into the back garden, was burst open and some English troops rushed in. I had only just time to reload with a fresh clip. This I emptied at them. They retreated for a moment and made a fresh rush and I was driven down the stairs to the kitchen. I heard the Lieutenant call out, "alright, Seumas, I'm coming", and I heard him rushing down the stairs. He evidently knew what had happened when the door had been forced and was coming down to my assistance. There was a third rush of enemy troops and as they appeared at the head of the kitchen stairs I knelt in the doorway and opened fire. There was a crash of a volley from above and afterwards I heard a few shouting, "get him, get him", and it was in that volley that Michael Malone died. I knew then that I was alone and some sort of desperate courage came over me.

I rushed to the small cellar window and there was an officer leading some men up the steps to the front door. I opened fire and the officer dropped down on the steps. I do not know whether he was dead or not. I continued firing at the party following him.

The automatic now began to jam with the rapid firing and I turned on the water tap in the scullery and put the automatic under it for a few minutes to try and cool it. I loaded up a fresh clip and fired through the chinks of the shutters in the kitchen window; whenever I saw an English soldier move I fired. Just then a bomb was thrown down and

exploded at the kitchen door at my right. There was also a bomb hurled through the little window of the cellar from which I had been firing. I took cover behind a gas stove and after that had some room to room, firing at the English troops in the basement. The automatic still kept jamming now and again.

We had originally arranged to make a final stand at the top of the house, having left upstairs, loaded rifles with bayonets fixed, one Lee Enfield and two Howth mauser rifles, but the forcing of the glass-panelled door at the end of the rear hall corridor by the enemy separated Michael and myself and ruined our plans.

About 10 o'clock that night a whistle blew and I heard a voice shout out, "clear the streets for a bayonet charge". I now got desperate and rushing to the basement corridor I flung aside the heavy iron garden seat which barricaded the rear kitchen door and shot back the bolts. Just as I was getting through the door I was fired on from the stairway and on returning the fire shot my way out through the back and escaped over the garden wall into Percy Lane, but I realised I was trapped within the enemy lines.

About 2.30 on Thursday morning I crept down along Percy Lane and through Percy Place. There was a gun mounted on a lorry at the corner. I learned afterwards that it was a one pounder naval gun which fired incendiary shells at Clanwilliam House and also shelled Captain Simon Donnelly's position near Grand Canal Street Bridge. I approached as near as I could to Mount Street Bridge with the intention of rejoining the main garrison, but I found the enemy in possession of the Bridge and Clanwilliam House was in flames. I saw some bayonets glisten and I fired in their direction.

The enemy returned the fire and I had to crawl back in retreat.

I had several firing exchanges with patrols that night and towards morning I climbed over a wall on my left and lay hidden through the daytime. As I was in uniform I had to lie low by day and fire at night on patrols.

On Saturday morning about 8.30 I was lying under cover in a shed at the rear of 60 Haddington Road. A servant girl came out into the garden and I opened the door of the shed a little way and I asked her for a little bread and a drink of water. She said they had no bread in the house but she would get me the water. The servant girl did not betray me. I learned afterwards that Davis's who occupied No. 60 Haddington Road sent for the English. A friend told me that two English Officers in mufti were staying in the house. She was away I thought a rather long time, but finally came back with a glass jug of water. I left the pistol on the ground and stood up and had just taken a few mouthfuls of water when the glass of the window in the wood shed was smashed open and three or four rifles levelled in my direction. At the same time the door was pulled open and I was covered by the English troops with rifles. I did not even get time to stoop to pick up the pistol. They shouted, "hands up". I was then ordered out of the shed and a soldier sprang forward and drove his bayonet against my chest, but an English officer in plain clothes dashed the rifle on one side and said, "we want this man a prisoner as we want to keep him for questioning".

My hands were tied behind my back. I counted all together, 25 English soldiers, a Sergeant and a Corporal, two English officers in plain clothes and two in uniform. I was

brought as a prisoner round to the Mission Hall, Northumberland Road, and everything including my watch, stolen from me, even my rosary beads.

That evening I was marched with a large body of prisoners all in civilian clothes to the R.D.S. grounds, Ballsbridge. I was locked in a coal cellar and three times brought before groups of officers. At these three Courtmartials an enemy officer in the uniform of a Colonel of a Scots Regiment was intensely bitter and urged that I should be shot. He said, "we have four batteries of artillery here and if we get no surrender we shall shell the entire city". They asked me what house I had occupied. I told them No. 25 Northumberland Road. I was then asked what I had been doing since and I very foolishly replied "firing on patrols". They then said, "so you are a sniper. Don't you know you can be shot for that?". They said, "where are the rest of your men?". I said, "I do not know". They then wanted to know the name of my leader, and I said, "I cannot give you any information as a prisoner of war except my own name, my Company and Battalion."

I was asked my rank and name and I told them I was a section commander. They told me I was to be shot at noon on Sunday. I asked to see a priest but this was refused. Once a friendly English guard said to me in a low voice, "I wish I was away from here, some of our fellows shot 30 unarmed civilians on the streets".

At about 12.30 on Sunday an officer of the Royal Irish Rifles named either Hutchinson or Henderson came to me and said, "the rest of your men have surrendered, would you like to be taken to them?". I said, "yes". He brought me a tumbler of hot black tea and some Army biscuits and said,

"I am sorry I have no milk or sugar for the tea". I was then brought over to some stables where I found Captain Donnelly and the rest of the garrison of Bolands Mills were prisoners. I had been four days and four nights without food or drink.

While we were in Ballsbridge a rumour went round among the prisoners that Commandant De Valera was to be shot. A fellow prisoner, named James Doyle (since deceased), "C" Company, 3rd Battalion, and also an I.R.B. man, told me that a tall Volunteer whose name I cannot remember, offered to exchange uniforms with Commandant De Valera and that the Commandant refused the offer.

When we were prisoners in Ballsbridge a few of our lads who had escaped along the railway began sniping the enemy at night from Sandymount Avenue direction. The enemy at the R. D. S. replied with rifle and machine-gun fire. After my release I was told a daring Volunteer sniper was killed on the roofs of Herbert Street. He gave the enemy a lot of trouble and refused to surrender, retiring from chimney stack to chimney stack, and was shot at the end house on the roof near St. Stephen's Church. Another of our snipers used the roofs of Wilton Place near Baggot Street. He escaped. The enemy afterwards fired on some women on Mespil Road from the roofs of this terrace.

Also in Ballsbridge, Bob Cooper, Clarendon Street, "C" Company, 3rd Battalion, told me he was in charge of three or four men who occupied Messrs. Roberts builders' yard (now the Merville Dairy) and acted as supports to Clanwilliam House.

The English troops used a machine-gun from the tower of St. Mary's Church, Haddington Road. I heard afterwards

that the late Bishop Wall (who was then a Curate at St. Mary's) protested vigorously, and the English threatened to shoot him. English snipers also used the turret of Baggot Street Hospital.

We were kept for a few days in Ballsbridge and then we were marched to Richmond Barracks. The naval gun was at the head of the column of prisoners. It was still on the lorry and pointed towards us and an enemy Captain in charge of this gun said, "if there is any attempt to escape, there will be 400 dead rebels on the streets of Dublin". Lines of troops with fixed bayonets marched on our right and left flanks and dense crowds lined the streets as we marched by. At Thomas Street some of the civilian onlookers jeered us.

I do not remember how long we were kept in Richmond Barracks, but Andy McDonnell was a prisoner in the room with me. At dawn on a day, which I afterwards learned was the 3rd May, we were awakened by a volley and James Doyle said to me, "they are shooting some of the prisoners". I think it was a few days later we were brought to the North Wall having been paraded all day long in a downpour on the Square of Richmond Barracks. We embarked on board the L.M.S. 'Lancastria' and were brought to Wakefield Jail, Yorkshire. For some time we were kept in solitary confinement in Wakefield and then we were allowed visits and parcels. After about three weeks we were transferred from Wakefield to Frongoch Internment Camp, Bala, North Wales. We had a dreadful crossing on the boat and twice we thought the ship was about to sink. There was water pouring over the sides into the hold where we were prisoners. The ship was halted for about twenty minutes and the pumps were kept working.

While we were in Frongoch there were several strikes on

the part of the prisoners. I was insulted by an English Sergeant whose name I cannot remember, nick-named 'jelly-belly'. He had me taken to the guardroom and I was brought before the English officer commanding Frongoch Internment Camp, and sentenced to fourteen days solitary confinement because I had called the Sergeant a liar. I said I would never do the fourteen days and I went on hunger strike. At the end of four days' hunger strike the Welsh civilian doctor attending the prisoners came to me and said I would be forcibly fed. I said, "that will only make matters worse". He said, "Oh!, no, I cannot help it, but I have my orders". About an hour later for some reason I was brought before the enemy Colonel again and his Adjutant recommended my release.

A short time after this there was another strike called the "Ash Pit Party Strike". The prisoners had been compelled up to this to remove the refuse of both English guard and prisoners. We decided to strike against this and Volunteers were called for to lead the strike which meant exile to the North Camp without parcels, smokes or papers. I and several other men asked Dick Mulcahy's permission to be among the first eight; this was granted to us. When we refused to remove the soldiers' refuse we were marched under guard to the huts of the North Camp. Each day a fresh eight men arrived until finally when the North Camp huts were filled the enemy authorities gave in and released us, sending us back to the South Camp.

Some time after this, it was in the summer, we were brought in batches under guard to appear before the Sankey Commission. To my surprise they were able to tell me at this Commission what house I occupied during the battle in Dublin, and also said that I had admitted while in Ballsbridge as a prisoner that I was a sniper. I had previously prepared a

statement which, before leaving Frongoch, I had shown to Tomás MacCurtain later Lord Mayor of Cork. He said to me, "for God's sake tear that up; do you want to get yourself hanged?". He told me I was to say as little as possible and to state that when going out on Easter Monday I thought I was going for a route march.

We were kept in Wormwood Scrubbs military detention Barracks, and after our examination before the tribunal were sent back to Frongoch South Camp. Batches of prisoners were dispatched each week until all were examined and then towards the end of summer releases began until at last only 500 of us were left. About this time we were given route marches under armed guard, and a man named Owen whose surname I forget but he belonged to the 4th Battalion, had a set of pipes which he played at the head of the column. We had about a dozen of these route marches, when for some reason which I do not know, the marches were stopped. The winter was dreadfully severe with snow and ice and intense cold. We were detained until Christmas, 1916.

When the releases stopped we came to the conclusion that we would be detained for a considerable period. A batch of us went each day to the railway under escort to collect stores. We discussed amongst ourselves the possibility of disarming our guard returning to the Camp and disarm the guard there also, take possession of the train and travel to a nearby town occupying the principal buildings there and give the English a taste of their own medicine; but this did not materialise as we were released on Christmas Eve, 1916, before the plans were completed. We arrived home in Dublin, free, on Christmas Day when we received a tremendous welcome by the people.

Shortly after my release from internment I stood in Glasnevin Cemetery beside Micheál Malone's grave, which had been opened for the purpose of identification. I had a last glimpse of my leader and comrade in his blood-stained olive green uniform. Micheál and Seán Cullen of Boland's Garrison and myself fired three volleys over his grave in salute of one of Ireland's most faithful sons - a loyal comrade, a gallant leader, a brave and fearless soldier. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

SIGNED:

James Grace

DATE

20 Oct 1949

WITNESS

Seán Brennan, Comdt.

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|------------------------------------|
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