

Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA)

OVERVIEW

AS OF JULY 2026

The Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA) is a paramilitary group that advocates for violence to achieve a united Ireland independent from British control. The group emerged in 1986 as the clandestine armed wing of the Sinn Fein political separatist group before fully splintering off and becoming a separate organization in 1998. CIRA has sometimes cooperated with other Northern Ireland-based terrorist groups, including the New IRA, and rejects the authority of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

Operating Area

Northern Ireland, with strongholds in Londonderry and County Tyrone

Members

At least 50

Tactics And Targets

CIRA has primarily targeted Northern Ireland security forces, police stations, and law enforcement agencies, as well as drug dealers, criminals, and members of rival groups. CIRA has used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and shootings in its attacks and has access to high-caliber weapons. The group uses criminal activities, including bank robberies, extortion, and smuggling, to fund its operations.

Terrorist Group Designation

In July 2004, the US State Department designated CIRA as a foreign terrorist organization.

KEY LEADERS



Ruairi O Bradaigh [DECEASED]

CIRA and Sinn Fein founder; died in 2013



John Connolly

Current leader; connected to other Northern Ireland dissident groups; former Real IRA commander



Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA) *(continued)*

NOTABLE ATTACKS

6 February 2020

Lurgan, Northern Ireland

PSNI officers diffuse an IED that CIRA had placed on a truck trailer and timed to explode upon arrival at the Belfast docks or aboard a ferry to Scotland.

20 August 2019

Newtownbutler, Northern Ireland

CIRA claims responsibility for a bombing near the Republic of Ireland–Northern Ireland border that caused no casualties. Authorities believe a prior hoax bomb warning was used to draw law enforcement to the scene before the device detonated.

1 February 2016

Dublin, Ireland

CIRA kills one person and injures two others in a shooting at a boxing match weigh-in, probably to take revenge against the deceased victim for killing a CIRA member in 2012.

9 March 2009

Craigavon, Northern Ireland

Two CIRA members shoot and kill a PSNI officer while he is responding to an emergency call.

