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Police are spending more than £5m a year to service public inquiries into controversial killings during the Northern Ireland Troubles, the chief constable has revealed.

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From The Belfast Telegraph Archives

The continuing financial commitment comes as the service is attempting to manage a £130m cut to its budget

over the next three years.

Sir Hugh only achieved a balanced budget for this financial year after the government gave him permission to draw money from the 2010 budget.

As well as the near £200m bill for Lord Saville's re-investigation of Bloody Sunday, around £50m has been spent on inquiries into the deaths of Rosemary Nelson, a solicitor killed by loyalists, Robert Hamill, a Catholic killed by a loyalist gang, and Billy Wright, a loyalist paramilitary leader gunned down by republicans while in prison at the Maze.

Sir Hugh told members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board yesterday that there was an urgent need for the government to fund legacy issues separately so he could concentrate his resources on policing the present.

"There is one unique pressure, once you've taken out pay and pensions. It is the issue of legacy," he said at the board's monthly meeting in Belfast.

"We are finding that legal costs to support those involved in public inquiries and independent investigations are increasing week on week."

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