

# BELFAST TELEGRAPH



THE WORLD REALLY IS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.  
**CONTINENTAL.COM.**  
continental.com. Consider it your one-stop travel center.

ADVERTISEMENT

Belfast Telegraph - IPR Website of the Year

Search Site

Advanced Search

- Loadzajobs.co.uk
- Propertynews.com
- Belfast Telegraph TV
- Family Notices
- Belfast Telegraph**
  - Home
  - News**
    - Local & National
    - World news
    - Politics
    - Education
    - Letters
    - Opinion**
    - Technology
    - Election 2007
  - Breaking News
  - Northwest Edition
  - Business
  - Business Telegraph
  - Sport
  - Health
  - Features
  - Columnists
  - Entertainment
  - Homefinder
  - Weather
  - Archive
  - Calendar 2007
  - Telegraph Travel
- Inside Belfast**
  - Jobs
  - Training
  - Dating
  - Gaming
  - Reader Offers
  - Diners' Club
  - Services**
    - RSS
    - Media Kit
- Other Titles**
  - Sunday Life
  - Ireland's Saturday Night

[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Opinion](#)

## Opinion

### Viewpoint: Inquiry process must be questioned

Thursday, April 12, 2007

Revelations that MI5 and the Army have been shredding files which may be needed in public inquiries into collusion raise enormous questions about the future of investigations into Northern Ireland's "dirty war".

There was so much skulduggery and deception involved, to save lives, that there will always be arguments for preventing the truth from being known.

Both intelligence services - plus the RUC - ran informers deep within republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations and they obviously have a duty to protect them, where necessary. That explains why, with the first public inquiry into the murder of LVF leader Billy Wright due next month, they want the return of documents supplied to the police teams led by Lord Stevens, former head of the Met, who found much evidence of collusion.

But instead of keeping the files safe - and it is claimed that during three investigations 9,000 statements were taken and more than a million pages filed - some of them are being destroyed. Those that have not been copied will be lost to the public inquiries, so the investigators are resisting requests and conserving whatever they can. Already the Prison Service has admitted that key documents relating to the Wright murder have been lost or destroyed.

The whole purpose of the Government-ordered inquiries into high-profile murders on both sides of the border, including the UDA killing of solicitor Pat Finucane in 1989, was to find out if collusion, negligence or obstruction of justice was involved. Yet if allegations by the Stevens inquiry teams are correct, the intelligence agencies are making sure that vital evidence will be unavailable.

This would make a mockery of the whole inquiry process, set in motion by Tony Blair, and already beset by complaints that the Secretary of State can prevent certain evidence being heard, under the Inquiries Act. If there is official interference before the cases are re-opened, the public is entitled to ask what purpose the inquiries will serve, if only a sanitised version of the truth can emerge. The Finucane family, which has resisted the restricted nature of an inquiry, would feel vindicated.

It is all too easy, where informers are involved, for the authorities to argue that evidence must be withheld, to save lives and keep intelligence-gathering methods secret. A balance must be struck between uncovering the truth and protecting informers - and, in the present relaxed political climate, the emphasis should be on truth.

Surely it should be possible to find someone with wide experience in the intelligence field, and an independent mind, to hear the arguments for and against particular evidence being withheld - and give a ruling. Otherwise the public may conclude that a costly inquiry process has been rigged from the start.

- Email Article
- Print Version
- Search
- +Most Emailed
- +Most Read

#### Related Articles

- [Appeal after rioting teenagers go on rampage](#)

#### Don't miss . . .

##### Beckham's stolen Beemer



David's BMW being used by Macedonian government?

##### All-female conception?



Scientists create sperm cells from bone marrow

##### In Pictures: Champions League



View action from the quarter-final second legs

##### Yuri Gagarin



Kremlin vetoes inquiry into death of first man in space

##### Obituary: Kurt Vonnegut



One of America's best-loved novelists who died this week

##### People's Petition



What do you want from the new Assembly?

#### ADVERTISEMENTS

#### ADVERTISEMENTS

NEW



tv

BELFAST TELEGRAPH

LoadzaJobs.co.uk  
Your search ends here

BELFAST TELEGRAPH



Letters...

[Click here to read your views](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS

