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intelligence material

Wednesday, 17 September 2008

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Michael Gallagher at a press conference yesterday

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British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has announced that a review will be carried out into intelligence material gathered from the Omagh bombing.

It follows claims in a BBC documentary that the bombers' phones were being tapped.

The Cabinet Office said the review should be completed within three months.

A spokesman said: "The Prime Minister has invited the Rt Hon Sir Peter Gibson, the Intelligence Services Commissioner, to review the intercepted intelligence material available to the security and intelligence agencies in relation to the Omagh bombing and how it was shared."


Hugh Orde welcomed the review.

"I think it's helpful the the prime minister has made an announcement and the allegations in the TV programme will now be looked at," he said.

"We need to wait to see what comes out of that investigation. I have no intention of talking about intelligence, I never have and I never will.

"I think it's important that we now step back and wait and see what this inquiry uncovers so we can talk about a shared understanding of what the facts actually are."

Yesterday, members of Omagh Support and Self Help Group met at a Belfast hotel to issue an ultimatum demanding potentially damning evidence about those behind the Omagh bomb be handed over within a week or face legal action.

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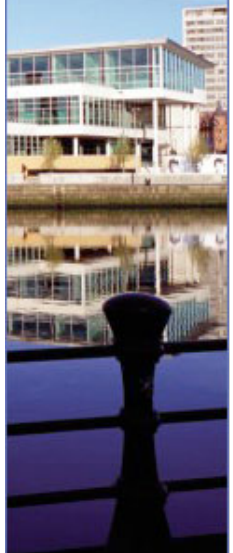
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**It's life
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Chairman of the group Michael Gallagher said: "The 15th of August 10 years ago was earth-shattering for all of us, as it has been for any family whose loved ones are murdered by terrorists. Ten years on and these allegations are just as earth-shattering.

"The programme has raised serious questions. Can the PSNI, Special Branch and the security services confirm or deny the allegations? If calls were recorded, was anyone listening in real time and why if they were, why were the bombers not stopped?

"If the recordings were not listened to in real time, why not? We are aware that the law did not allow the recordings to be used as evidence in a criminal trial but why were they not provided in the crucial first hours of the investigation to help the police? We would prefer not to have to go down the legal route but if the people who know about these recordings are not going to assist the families to get to the truth that will leave us with no option but to examine all possibilities."

The group has been advised by their legal team that they can issue a subpoena in an effort to force GCHQ to hand over any recordings or transcripts.

Jason McCue, lawyer for the families involved in the civil action, would not give details of the recipient of any such subpoena.

Mr Gallagher also revealed that despite requesting a meeting with Mr Brown in January of this year to discuss their fight for justice, the group only received a letter from Mr Brown's office at the end of last month saying he is unable to meet them due to diary commitments.

"The PM is saying he is too busy to meet with us and discuss these serious issues. This is the same contempt with which we have been treated throughout the years," said Mr Gallagher.

The group also plans to write to the Irish and Spanish governments to challenge them about the revelations made in the Panorama programme.

It also emerged that the group wrote to GCHQ in 2001 to request information about any intelligence on the bombers but, to date, they have not received any response. Yesterday, a spokesman from GCHQ declined to comment on the allegations made by Panorama or the threat of legal action.

29 people including a pregnant woman were killed in the 1998 car bomb.

The documentary alleges that intelligence officials were recording the bombers' mobile phone calls as they carried out the attack.

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 For god sake this investigation will yield nothing! Why not a new and *independent* investigation into the Omagh bombings?

Posted by Ciaran Gallagher | 18.09.08, 01:56 GMT

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