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## Local & National

# Wright inquiry holds probe on lost PSNI files

Police deny they handed over some documents a year late

Tuesday, June 05, 2007

By Chris Thornton

The Billy Wright Inquiry is planning to hold special hearings on the disappearance of police documents about the LVF leader's murder.

The hearings, which will probably take place in the autumn, will focus on the PSNI's response to legal notices to hand over files.

Last week, when full hearings began in Banbridge, the inquiry team criticised the PSNI for delays in producing material, claiming some documents had been delivered more than a year overdue.

The PSNI has also admitted that some material has gone missing, although a source denied that documents handed over last month were due last year.

Hearings later this year may also look at questions about missing MI5 documents - material that the spy agency had admitted should have been kept on file at the time Wright was shot by three INLA men inside the Maze Prison.

The PSNI sessions will be the second set of hearings about missing documents. Last year the inquiry held hearings about missing Prison Service material, including hundreds of security files that were destroyed and documents that went missing after it became clear an inquiry would take place.

The Wright Inquiry's concerns are believed to be related to police intelligence documents.

The PSNI has been served with four legal demands for documents, but the senior lawyer laying out evidence before the inquiry said those notices could not be published because they concern sensitive material.

Last week's opening session heard that every security agency linked to the 1997 Wright murder has been unable to find documents.

Derek Batchelor QC, lead counsel for the inquiry, said last week that there are "evident gaps" in papers that have been supplied.

"In other instances it is clear there are particular documents missing and yet again there are situations where one might reasonably expect a document of a particular type to exist but where no recovery has been made," he said.

Currently the inquiry is taking background evidence about prisons. The PSNI handling of documents will be the last item considered before they examine Wright's jailing and the events leading directly to his murder.

In an interview with the Belfast Telegraph before the hearings began, Assistant Chief Constable Alistair Finlay admitted some documents could not be found, but he said the PSNI had given "them all that we have in relation to the murder inquiry and all the material that we would have as background and such like".

At that stage, he said he expected some criticism over police record keeping, but he said he had found no evidence of material being destroyed to keep it out of the inquiry's hands.

"The inquiry may make comments and may think the police have a particular issue in relation to material, but they haven't found it necessary to take us to a documents hearing on anything like that," he said.

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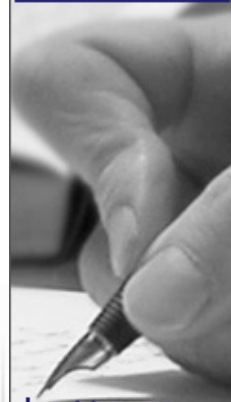
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