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PropertyNews.com**Sunday Life****Ireland's****Saturday Night****Gaming****Top 100 Companies****Home Delivery****Online Archive****Calendar 2007****Ads For Free****At The Movies**Belfast Telegraph Home > **News****Files on Wright killers are among thousands destroyed or missing**

By Chris Thornton

10 November 2006

Security files on 800 terrorist prisoners - including virtually every inmate released under the Good Friday Agreement - were burned by prison officials, the Billy Wright Inquiry has learned.

And another 42,000 files from the Maze Prison were destroyed in a "freedom of information exercise" in 2004.

The security files on two of Wright's INLA killers have been confirmed to be among the missing material.

The Belfast Telegraph today reveals the full hidden extent of the destruction or loss of thousands of files that could have been of benefit to the inquiry.

The inquiry, which is investigating whether there was any collusion in the 1997 murder of the LVF leader inside the Maze, held hearings in Belfast last week about the extent of material that has gone missing.

The inquiry's senior lawyer says the Prison Service has supplied "substantial documentation" to the inquiry.

But significant material remains missing, including documents that could explain how guns were smuggled into the prison.

The missing material also includes documents that were previously available to Justice Peter Cory, the retired Canadian judge who recommended the inquiry.

The sensitive security files on prisoners had been kept after the Maze closed in 2000 in case any of the inmates were returned to jail.

The Prison Service also had an agreement with the Public Records Office to keep the prisoner files in case they had any historic value.

But two officials claimed last week that Martin Mogg, the governor in charge of the Maze at the time of the murder, ordered the destruction of the files in 2002. Mr Mogg died in 2005.

The destruction contravened an official policy Mr Mogg wrote in 1997.

Lawyers for David Wright, the father of the murdered LVF

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chief, had also warned the Prison Service in 2001 to retain any material that might be useful to the inquiry.

When the inquiry returns for further hearings in December, they may now argue that the inquiry can draw inferences about collusion from the material that has gone missing.

The SDLP's Alban Maginness said today the disappearance of the files was "highly disturbing".

Told by the Belfast Telegraph about the full scale of the missing or destroyed documents, he said: "You would have thought that such files would have been treated with care and sensitivity. It is very disturbing they have simply disappeared or been destroyed without proper process.

"I am further disturbed, in relation to the Billy Wright murder, that the prison authorities either neglected or were cavalier in dealing with serious and sensitive aspects of events relating to Billy Wright's murder.

"The fact these files have disappeared creates suspicion surrounding Billy Wright's death."

Last week the inquiry subjected 17 witnesses from the Prison Service to searching questions about the missing material. In many cases, the answers were conflicting. One witness said there was no internal report on the Wright murder. The next said that he and the first witness had compiled an internal report together.

A security official told the inquiry that RUC Special Branch officers were not routinely in the Maze. Another said they were a regular presence.

There was also considerable conflict about how the Maze prisoner files were destroyed.

The inquiry will return to Belfast in December, when it will hear from one more witness and recall at least one of those who testified last week. Then it will hear from lawyers for the Crown and David Wright, the father of the dead loyalist.

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