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Local & National

Wright inquiry delays blamed on PSNI

Monday, January 21, 2008

By Chris Thornton

The PSNI was bracing itself today for a storm of blame on delays in the Billy Wright Inquiry.

This morning the inquiry panel looking into the murder of the LVF chief was due to publicly disclose the reasons why they are "not satisfied" with documents provided by the PSNI.

Hearings have been suspended since last September, in part because the inquiry says the PSNI has failed to hand over intelligence material they believe police should have.

Missing documents have hampered the inquiry for more than two years. In November 2006, the inquiry held special hearings that revealed the Prison Service lost intelligence files about Wright and his killers and destroyed thousands of other records from the Maze.

Full hearings into the murder of Wright - shot dead by INLA prisoners inside the Maze Prison 10 years ago last month - are due to resume a week from today after inquiry chairman Lord MacLean outlines where the panel believes the PSNI has fallen short.






He said last year that "outstanding gaps are in the intelligence information that we think exists and is not being produced".

The PSNI has told the inquiry panel that it has conducted multiple searches of its records and they believe they have handed over all the available material. They said record keeping was poor at the time of Wright's murder and documents were scattered over 41 different locations.

Last year Assistant Chief Constable Alistair Finlay told the Belfast Telegraph that 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".

In October, the PSNI submitted a special report to the inquiry by retired Assistant Chief Constable Sam Kinkaid, indicating all the efforts put in to recovering documents. But the inquiry panel said it "has not led to the production of specific intelligence documents that have been sought by the inquiry."

The inquiry has indicated problems with every intelligence agency from which it has sought material.

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