

April 23 2007

Lá

Property

Andersonstown News

Home

News

Comment

Sport

Features

North Belfast News

Home

News

Comment

Sport

Features

South Belfast News

Home

News

Comment

Sport

Features

Lineage Advertisements

Death Notices

Aisling Bursary

Aisling Awards

Media Pack

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[Advanced](#)

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## O'Loan should look at state role in McGurk's bombing

Loyalist killer's claims need to be investigated

North Belfast News

By áine McEntee

19/04/2007

Relatives of the McGurk's bombing outrage have demanded the Police Ombudsman investigate fresh allegations from a loyalist killer that British military intelligence instructed loyalists to plant explosives in the bar that fateful day in 1971.

Pat Irvine whose mother Kathleen (53) was murdered in McGurk's as well as 14 other people said it was crucial that the testimony of the man, known only as John Black or JB was examined.

"This man's evidence supports what we the families have said all along. It wasn't an IRA own goal. It was out and out pred-meditated murder supported by the British Government and designed solely to damage support for the IRA."

50 state-sanctioned operations

JB has claimed he took part in some 50 state-sanctioned operations with military intelligence trained, armed and moulded squads of loyalists. He has alleged British spooks instructed loyalists to plant the bomb in McGurk's to make it look as if the IRA had accidentally set off the bomb.

Two weeks

He has also claimed that he was told about the planned bombing two weeks before it happened and was with his handler on the very day it exploded on December 4 1971.

UVF man Robert James Campbell later received 16 life sentences for the atrocity. He was released in 1993.

The Police Ombudsman's office has said their focus is on establishing whether there was any police misconduct associated with the atrocity or its aftermath.

In light of the recent allegations a spokesman added:

"Our investigators will seek to gather and assess as much evidence as is available about any incident under investigation".

Pat Irvine said any probe needed to be "totally transparent".

"We believe no proper investigation was carried out after the bombing.

"When the Ombudsman's investigation is completed we want the truth to be made public and that's what Nuala O'Loan promised us at that meeting," she said.

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"The Ombudsman has already confirmed that the Ministry of Defence knew about the McGurk's bar bombing.

"As far as I am concerned Ted Heath (the then British Prime Minister) sanctioned their deaths.

"That MRF were involved has confirmed what we suspected.

"But this is the first time it's been confirmed by an outside source.

"We also want a full retraction of the statements of misinformation fed to the media in 1971 by intelligence sources and in subsequent years after.

"Someone has to answer for those lies."

Secret Documents

Top secret documents compiled by MOD officials 72 hours after the bombing indicate that already republicans were put in the frame.

One report states:

"Although no inquest has yet been held...the forensic evidence now available shows quite clearly that five of the victims were killed by blast – indicating that the explosion must have been inside the bar, raising a very strong presumption that it was caused by accidental detonation of a bomb being carried by one of the customers – as has seemed likely all along... in the view of Headquarters Northern Ireland it is important to put this point on record, in order to discourage continuing speculation about who was responsible for the explosion."

Confirmed

Earlier this year JB publicly confirmed that he worked with British military intelligence to organise and take part in the New Lodge Six massacre which left six men dead.

The news distressed and angered families who have long maintained that the massacre was a joint operation by Loyalist paramilitaries and the British army, acting on the direction of the Military Reconnaissance Force (MRF) later to be known as the Force Research Unit (FRU).

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