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**Special report
Northern Ireland**

RUC and army 'backed killers'

Owen Bowcott, Ireland correspondent
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The Guardian

As many as 74 murders by a loyalist paramilitary gang in Ireland during the mid-1970s may have involved collusion with serving police and soldiers, an international lawyers' report alleged yesterday.

The independent inquiry focused on allegations that some of the worst atrocities of the Troubles - including the 1974 bombings in Dublin and Monaghan, which killed 33 people - were carried out by an Ulster Volunteer Force faction operating under security force protection from a farm near Glennane, County Armagh.

The authors of the study, sponsored by the Derry-based Pat Finucane Centre, said they had found credible evidence of training, weapons and information being provided by Royal Ulster Constabulary officers and Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers. Such claims surfaced repeatedly during the Troubles and their aftermath but this report suggests that collusion in Armagh was systematic and involved senior officers.

It relied on ballistics evidence as well as the testimony of a former RUC officer who has admitted involvement with the gang. Among cases investigated were the Miami Showband massacre in July 1975 and the shooting of Catholic policeman Sergeant Joe Campbell in February 1977.

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Douglass Cassell, of Notre Dame Law School in the US, who chaired the panel, said it had been denied access to some Northern Ireland police documents and called for a wider inquiry.

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