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Policeman told to take on Nelson inquiry as 'no-one else would do it'

By Barry McCaffrey

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A SENIOR British policeman has admitted he had to be ordered to head an investigation into the murder of

Lurgan solicitor Rosemary Nelson because "no-one else would do it".

Colin Port was giving evidence yesterday at the public inquiry into the murder of the mother-of-three in March 1999.

Revealing how he had been reluctant to leave his post as deputy chief constable of Norfolk to lead the investigation three weeks after her death, he said: "The Chief Constable (Norfolk) changed his mind.

"He told me that I had to do it. He said there was no alternative as no-one else would do it."

Mr Port said he had been given assurances that the inquiry would only take three months but he had ended up working in Northern Ireland for nearly three years.

He said during his first meeting with the then RUC chief constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan had told him that the murder was a "serious issue" and that people were already drawing comparisons with the murder of Pat Finucane.

Mr Port said the chief constable told him that he

was in "continuing dialogue" with then secretary of state Mo Mowlam about the killing.

Mr Port added that he did not encounter opposition from the RUC when he first moved to Northern Ireland.

However, he said he expected that RUC Special Branch would have made investigations into his past before his arrival.

"I have little doubt that they would have researched me as they did not know me," he said.

Mr Port said it was one of his "greatest regrets" that he had not been in charge of Mrs

Nelson's murder inquiry from its inception.

He arrived three weeks after the murder investigation had begun.

"It would have been a lot better if I had been there from day one," he said.

Mr Port is due to resume giving evidence to the hearing today.

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