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## Coroner criticises police over delays in IRA man's inquest

By Marie Louise McCrory West Belfast Correspondent

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NORTHERN Ireland's senior coroner has strongly criticised police after an inquest into the killing of an IRA man almost 16 years ago was delayed again.

John Leckey said it was "totally unacceptable" that risk assessments into the potential threat to 13 police officers due to give evidence about the death of Pearse Jordan had not been completed.

He said police had eight months to carry out the assessments and while MI5 had taken over some responsibility for assessing any threat, the security service had "dealt promptly with all they had to do".

Mr Leckey said blame lay "fairly and squarely" with the PSNI.

The coroner made the comments during a preliminary inquest hearing about the death of Pearse Jordan in November 1992.

The 23-year-old, from New Barnsley Drive in west Belfast, was shot dead as he ran away from a stolen car after it was rammed by an undercover RUC unit on the Falls Road.

His family have fought a 16-year legal battle to have the policemen involved in his killing give evidence in court.

In 2001 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the British government had failed to properly investigate the death and ordered it to carry out a new investigation.

Tony McGleenan, for the PSNI, told Belfast Coroner's Court yesterday that it would take another eight weeks for three remaining risk assessments to be completed.

Mr Leckey said this meant the inquest would not take place until January 2009.

"I dread to think what is going to happen in the other so-called legacy inquests when they are going to start from scratch," he said.

The coroner set a deadline of June 6 for the risk assessments, adding that if they are not completed, "I will proceed on the basis that they do not need a risk assessment".

Meanwhile, a barrister representing the Jordan family, Karen Quinlivan, said her legal team had yet to receive certain documents, including radio logs and debriefing notes, from the PSNI which she believed were "crucial" to the case.

She referred to a House of Lords order that there was a duty on police to "furnish the coroner with police reports".

However, Mr McGleenan said there was a "difference of opinion" about the order.


Mr Leckey instructed both teams to produce written submissions on the issue before he discusses it with them on June 10.

Mr Jordan's mother Teresa later expressed anger about the latest delay.

"It is unprintable how we feel about it," she said.

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