

Findings of collusion report to be released

Sunday, March 18, 2007 - By Colm Heatley in Belfast

The North's Police Ombudsman is due to release the findings of her investigation into possible security force collusion in the 1992 IRA killing of RUC constable Colleen McMurray in Newry, Co Down.

McMurray, 34, was killed when a horizontal mortar bomb, triggered by a flash mechanism, slammed into her patrol car as it passed through Merchants Quay in the town.

A male colleague lost both his legs in the attack. The Ombudsman's investigation was instigated after McMurray's husband made a complaint. The investigation centred on claims that the British Army helped the IRA to develop the flash, the detonation device that triggered the mortar bomb, and on allegations that the security forces may have had advance warning of the attack.

According to Kevin Fulton, the pseudonym used by an IRA informer who was based in the Newry area in the 1990s, he passed on details of the IRA's new mechanism for detonating bombs to his handlers in the British Army.

His handlers decided it was best to help the IRA to develop the technology, to make it easier to counter it in the future. The report into the killing is to be released within weeks. At its core is the claim that the RUC allowed the attack to go ahead in order to protect an informer in the Newry area who was more important than Fulton.

In a separate development, the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Historical Enquiry Team (HET) last week tried to obtain a transcript of a recording made by one of the security force handlers of IRA informer Freddie Scappaticci.

The transcript was made by Scappaticci's handler a number of years ago when the man was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He has since died. It is believed the former handler outlined security force knowledge of Scappaticci's role in a series of murders and abductions in the North in the 1980s.

Officers from the HET have requested the transcript from a person who was entrusted with it by the former security force handler. The HET is looking into a number of murders in which it is alleged Scappaticci may have played a role.

The switch in emphasis to British state collusion with republicans comes after the Ombudsman's report in January into Special Branch collusion with the UVF in north Belfast in the 1990s and early 2000s.

That report centred around allegations that Raymond McCord, a Protestant man, was beaten to death by UVF men working as informers. It found evidence of collusion in almost two dozen murders carried out by the same UVF unit.

Several senior RUC members refused to cooperate with that investigation.

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