

Objection to Catholic murder ended British officer's army career

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A former senior British Army intelligence officer has claimed that his military career in the North was ended after he raised objections about the murder of a Catholic man in Co Armagh, which he believes was carried out in collusion with loyalist paramilitaries.

Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Wylde, who served in the North during the early to mid-1970s, told The Sunday Business Post the murder was carried out after information was passed from the British Army to a loyalist gang who then shot dead an innocent Catholic with no political connections.

Wylde, who was awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal for his bomb disposal work at the start of the Troubles, said that after "objecting very strongly" he was transferred back to England within a matter of days. He refused to identify the Catholic man who was murdered.

"It left me very disillusioned with how things were going on," he said. "It was a case of an innocent man being shot dead and there was clearly collusion involved. I objected extremely strongly to what had happened and I expressed those objections at an army meeting."

"It was clear from the meeting that my views on the matter meant further service in Northern Ireland was incompatible.

"I wasn't supported in what I said and very shortly afterwards, not even weeks but a matter of days, I was transferred out of Northern Ireland, I have no doubt that my objections were a cause of that," said Wylde, who is now retired and living in the south of England.

He said that at the time the Catholic man was killed, a number of loyalist sectarian murders were taking place along the border and in Co Armagh.

The former intelligence officer said he left the matter in the hands of the British military but never received any follow-up contact. After being transferred out of the North, Wylde became involved in Cold War spying in the former East Germany, where he was stationed for a time.

An international panel of legal experts, commissioned by the Derry-based human rights group, The Pat Finucane Centre, concluded in a report published earlier this month that there was evidence of RUC and British army collusion in 74 murders by loyalists that occurred between 1972 and 1977.

Wylde, who is an explosives expert, said that after studying the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974 he was convinced that the UVF did not have the capability to make such devices and believes they could only have come from one of two sources.

"It was either republicans who gave them the bomb or the British Army. I would imagine the first option is unlikely," he said.

Wylde said he would consider providing information to Patrick McEntee SC, one of the country's leading criminal barristers, who is carrying out an inquiry into the Garda's handling of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, which killed 33 people.

"If Paddy McEntee approached me to give evidence on the matter, I would give it serious consideration," Wylde said.

Wylde has previously given evidence to the Baron Tribunal, which investigated the Dublin and Monaghan bombings. In December 1998 Wylde was charged with offences under the British Government's Official Secrets Act.

He was accused of giving a journalist confidential security documents relating to British Army conduct in Ireland.

However, in November 2000 the case against him collapsed and all charges were withdrawn.

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