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Stalker to assist in shoot-to-kill case

29 July 2007 By Colm Heatley

John Stalker, the English police chief who originally investigated shoot-to-kill allegations in the North in the early 1980s, has said he is willing to help the fresh inquiry by the North's Police Ombudsman into a series of RUC killings which left a number of republicans dead.

Stalker, the then Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, was appointed to look into the controversial killings in the mid-80s, but was removed from duties while he was on the brink of obtaining crucial information from secret intelligence files.

The Ombudsman said that shoot-to-kill allegations - particularly the 1982 killings by the RUC of three unarmed IRA men, Gervais McKerr, Sean Burns and Eugene Toman - would be re-examined following a directive from the Council of Europe.

The victims' families have called for Stalker's report to be made public as a minimum requirement of any Ombudsman investigation.

Stalker told The Sunday Business Post that after two decades of silence on the allegations, which centre on claims that republican suspects were deliberately killed rather than arrested, he was willing to talk to the Ombudsman.

"I only found out about the re-examination of the cases through the papers, but I will talk to the Ombudsman if that is requested," he said.

Stalker's evidence, and uncompleted report, will be vital in establishing the truth around the killings. The issue has long been a subject of controversy for nationalists in the North, who believe the cases go to the heart of British policy in the North.

An RUC unit fired 109 bullets into the car in which McKerr, Toman and Burns were travelling in Lurgan, Co Armagh, on November 11, 1982. The same unit was involved in three other killings of

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unarmed republicans.

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Stalker said he was “not surprised” the killings were again the subject of a public inquiry. He said he believed the shoot-to-kill policy did not originate with the RUC.

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Following Stalker’s removal from the investigation, a series of allegations were made against him. All were categorically disproved, but succeeded in terminating his police career.

Stalker has said that he was obstructed from getting to the truth in his report.

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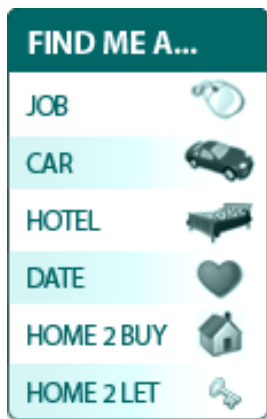
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