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News

Bar massacre probe in final stages

Sunday, October 21, 2007

The final touches are being put to the Police Ombudsman's investigation into claims of security force collusion in the last major massacre of the Troubles.

Nuala O'Loan's team have been examining how RUC officers investigated the 1994 UVF massacre in Loughinisland.

However, the report will not be completed before Mrs O'Loan leaves office next month.

Sources close to the Ombudsman's investigation have dismissed speculation that it is as imminent as weeks away.

They have said it could be early next year before the report is complete.

The families of the victims had been critical of the RUC investigation into the atrocity - particularly the failure to forensically examine up to 177 samples gathered in the immediate aftermath of the murders.

Sunday Life first revealed in 2005 that cops called in to re-examine the UVF murders at the Heights Bar in the Co Down village were to be asked by Mrs O'Loan to use advances in DNA technology to help track down the gunmen.

The families claim it contains many similarities to the UFF's Greysteel atrocity which was the subject of a report by Mrs O'Loan last week.

The Ombudsman has assured Down SDLP councillor Eamonn O'Neill that the families will be told in advance before the report is published.

The report on Loughinisland is expected to deal with a series of controversies surrounding the atrocity including:

- ? The RUC decision to destroy the getaway car, two years after the massacre;
- ? The role of a police informer - codenamed 'The Mechanic' - in supplying the Triumph getaway car;
- ? Concerns that police investigators did not follow up a letter purportedly written by someone who was a witness to the planning of the massacre;
- ? The role of a former soldier in helping plan the atrocity and drive the lead gunman from east Belfast from the scene, and;
- ? Whether assurances were given to UVF leaders in the run-up to its 1994 ceasefire that there would be no retrospective charges for atrocities including Loughinisland.

The six victims were shot dead by a Belfast-based UVF gang as they watched a World Cup match on TV at the bar in June 1994.

They included the oldest victim of the Troubles, 87-year-old Barney Green. His 59-year-old nephew Dan McCreanor, died beside him.

The youngest to die was 34-year-old Adrian Rogan. Brothers-in-law Eamon Byrne and Patsy O'Hare, and Malcolm Jenkinson were the other victims.

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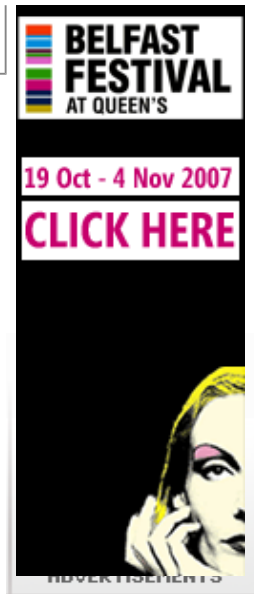
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