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SDLP BACKS OMAGH FAMILIES ON FULL INQUIRY

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SDLP Deputy Leader Dr Alasdair McDonnell said the Omagh families deserve to know exactly what GCHQ eavesdroppers knew about the Omagh bombing and when they knew it.

Dr McDonnell met the families following their meeting with Gordon Brown in Downing St today. He said: "Naturally the families were disappointed that the British Prime Minister had nothing to offer on the issues raised in the Panorama programme. Given the murky involvement of British intelligence services in the events of the last 40 years, no one in the north of Ireland should be expected to take their word for the role they played with respect to Omagh.

"Nor can we or the families simply accept that an Intelligence Services Commissioner appointed by the British government is an appropriate organ for investigating the role of GCHQ in tracking the Omagh bombers that role. The families' demand for a full cross-border judicial inquiry should be supported.

"The GCHQ intercepts may well have relevance for the civil case being taken by the families. It has long been the practice in the Diplock courts that a judge could make a decision on whether intelligence material has relevance for a case, and it would be appropriate if the judge in this case had access to the GCHQ files.

"In dealing with all such events, it is important that we have a firmly victim-centred approach."

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