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14 January 2022

POLICE OMBUDSMAN REPORT : OPERATION GREENWICH

Comment in response to the Operation Greenwich report published today by the Police Ombudsman, in respect of the investigation into police handling of certain loyalist paramilitary murders and attempted murders in the north-west from 1989 – 1993.

Marie Anderson's report is clear and unequivocal in its detail, and in its Conclusions, that she has identified actions and omissions of police, which in her view, constitute collusive behaviours, in essence that collusion was a significant feature in the 19 murders that she investigated and that our clients complaints were legitimate and justified.

The families that we represent consider that this report provides yet more irrefutable evidence of the State's overarching policy of collusion, to murder its own citizens.

At a briefing for families yesterday, the Police Ombudsman confirmed that more than one informer was involved in a number of murders. Perhaps most damning is the further confirmation that those informers were retained as informers even after they were suspected by the RUC of having been involved in murder.

These findings represent a further chapter in what now must be considered to be a systematic policy of state collusion with loyalists.

- Loyalists attending RUC intelligence briefings in the guise of UDR membership to use that intelligence to murder people,
- RUC failure to make expeditious arrests in a timely fashion,
- RUC failure to seize exhibits,
- RUC destruction of evidence
- The supervision of the importation of South African weapons which energised armed loyalism and resulted in the 19 murders documented in this report and many dozens more.

Niall Murphy, partner in KRW Law said *"This report proves that collusion was not a case of a few bad apples, confined to a geographic area. We now know from this and other reports, that collusion was systemic, in south Down, south Belfast, south and north Derry and mid Ulster. Different police districts at different times with different informers and killers. However, the blue print remained the same, a blueprint now crystallised and evidenced in this report."*

Partners

Kevin R Winters | Joseph D McVeigh | Gerard McNamara

Niall Murphy | Michael Crawford | Paul Pierce

KEY FINDINGS

1. Intelligence and surveillance failings identified by Dr Maguire in his report of the Loughinisland attacks;
2. The failure to adequately manage the risk to the lives of a number of victims outlined in this public statement, and in particular the failure to warn those individuals of the threats to their life;
3. The passing of information by members of the security forces to paramilitaries has been identified as collusion by Sir Desmond De Silva. The failure by police to adequately address the passing of UDR officers passing information is in my view a serious matter that can be described as collusive behaviour;
4. I have identified that the deliberate destruction of files, specifically those relating to informants that police suspected of serious criminality, including murder, is evidence of collusive behaviour. The absence of informant files and related documentation is particularly egregious, where there was suspicion on the part of handlers or others that informants may have engaged in the most serious criminal activity engaging Article 2 of the Convention;
5. Failures identified in this public statement by Special Branch to disseminate intelligence to the CID Teams investigating the murders;
6. Failures in the use and handling by Special Branch of an informant suspected of being involved in serious criminality, including murder;
7. Failures by Special Branch in the North West region to adequately manage those high risk informants, which they suspected of being involved in serious criminality, including murder;
8. The passive 'turning a blind eye' to apparent criminal activity, or failing to interfere where there is evidence of wrongdoing on the part of an informant, in particular to the deliberate failure of informants to provide information on a specific attack, and the continued use of an informant suspected of involvement in serious criminality, including murder.

KRW Law represent families of 9 families bereaved as a result of murders investigated by the Police Ombudsman in their Operation Greenwich report

- Greysteel (John Moyne)
- Castlerock (James Kelly, Noel O'Kane, James McKenna)
- Eddie Fullerton
- Malachy Carey
- Thomas Donaghy
- Sean Donaghy
- Bernard O'Hagan