



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **RE POLICE OMBUDSMAN'S PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING THE MURDERS OF SEAMUS MORRIS & PETER DOLAN ON 8 AUGUST 1988**

We represent the family of Seamus Morris, who was callously murdered by the UVF on 8/8/1988 not far from his home in Ardoyne. Seamus was going to play snooker with his brother Conor and a friend when a loyalist gang fired at them from a passing car, hitting Seamus 4 times. The gang then travelled a short distance before firing again, this time at a delivery lorry, killing Peter Dolan.

A VZ58 rifle and a 9mm Browning pistol were used in the attack. The pistol was recovered on the Crumlin Road in 1989 in the possession of Brian Robinson who was killed by the FRU shortly after he and Davy McCullough murdered Paddy McKenna in Ardoyne.

The VZ58 rifle was part of the arms shipment brought into the jurisdiction from Beirut in late 1987. Due to an erroneous report by RUC Special Branch's ballistics unit WERC, the rifle was wrongly linked to the murders at Sean Graham bookmakers on the Ormeau Road in 1992. It was later established that the rifle used to murder Seamus had been recovered in North Belfast in September 1988. Due to the inaccurate weapons linkage by WERC, the person found in possession of the rifle was not questioned about Seamus' murder whilst in custody in 1988. In fact, the PSNI did not arrest and question this individual despite having this information since circa 2016.

Speaking after meeting with Marie Anderson, the family solicitor Setanta Marley said:

“Seamus was 18 years old when he was killed. He was a civilian with his entire life ahead of him. He was an adored son and brother to his parents and younger siblings. His death shattered the family and his mother, Madeline died prematurely in 1992 at the age of 43.

Seamus' murder was a demonstration of senseless, naked sectarianism, and the family have raised serious and compelling concerns in their complaint to the Police Ombudsman regarding the role of RUC agents in the murder and the RUC investigation thereafter.

The Morris Family's complaint to the Police Ombudsman has been ongoing for over a decade. They are relieved to finally receive the Public Statement, particularly in circumstances where many families will not due to the British Government's Legacy Act. They thank the Ombudsman and her investigators for their efforts to get the report published in time.

Today's Public Statement represents a damning indictment of the RUC who absolutely failed the Morris family. Sadly, this morning they learned about a litany of failings and omissions including incorrect linkage of weapons; wider links to the 1987 importation of firearms; a series of missed



investigative opportunities; a failure to verify a key suspect's alibi; a failure to seize a suspect's clothing and arrest another suspect together with mishandling of exhibits and many other failings.

Unfortunately, this latest statement chimes with an ever expanding and depressing back catalogue of Police Ombudsman statements all of which collectively point to institutionalised RUC failings right across the conflict. How many of such similarly themed statements must families of Troubles victims have to read before the British Government and its agencies finally accept that such failings were systemic and not isolated? Instead of trying to flog the dead horse that is the ICRIR perhaps the government would be better advised to put its resources into effective investigative bodies such as the Police Ombudsman or establish those agreed under the Stormont House Agreement.

We now call on the Chief Constable to apologise to the family. It's the very least they can expect on what has been a very difficult day for them.

The family will now need time to digest the report and obtain advice on its contents.”

Seamus' sister, Lisa Morris made the following comment outside the Police Ombudsman's office:

“We are aware that because of a court ruling the Police Ombudsman cannot make a finding of collusion or collusive behaviour. As far as we are concerned, the contents of the report confirm there was collusion. It's a pity that the Ombudsman has been prevented from going that far.”

ENDS

**KRW LAW LLP**

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, The Sturgen Building

9-15 Queen Street

Belfast Co Antrim

BT1 6EA

[Setantam@kevinrwinters.com](mailto:Setantam@kevinrwinters.com)

028 9024 1888