

Irish document reveals suspicion of RUC collusion in loyalist killings

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According to reports in the *Independent* newspaper, a confidential 11-page document reveals strong suspicions in Dublin that elements of British intelligence were involved in loyalist murders in Northern Ireland.

A copy of the report was sent last month by the Irish government to Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam. The Irish Taoiseach (prime minister) Bertie Ahern has now publicly called for an inquiry into the murders of civil rights lawyers Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson.

Rosemary Nelson was murdered on Monday, March 15 when a car bomb blew apart her BMW as she drove away from home in Lurgan, about 30 miles southwest of Belfast. Only a few weeks prior to her death, Nelson had demanded an inquiry into alleged collusion between elements of the British security forces and Protestant paramilitaries that led to the 1989 killing of prominent nationalist lawyer Pat Finucane. Nelson submitted a report to the British and Irish governments containing new evidence of police collusion in Finucane's murder.

Ulster Defence Association (UDA) members who had been passed information in prison by a British Army Intelligence agent, Brian Nelson, shot Finucane. Nelson's report backed up allegations that the security forces were informed that an attack was imminent, but either took no action to prevent the assassination or, more likely, actively supported it.

Finucane's death immediately provoked allegations of collusion, which have gained credibility in the decade since. The latest document is said to contain new evidence received by the Irish government, including copies of what appear to be papers "originating within the British security and intelligence establishment". The document alleges that named officers in the Royal

Ulster Constabulary (RUC) procured the murder of Pat Finucane, and that RUC Special Branch had detailed advance knowledge of the murder plot.

It speaks of patterns "which tend to confirm widespread suspicions that elements in the security forces were used, at the expense of the rule of law, to prosecute a campaign against those deemed enemies of the state and to conceal what that entailed and who was culpable."

Ahern has already said publicly that he considered Rosemary Nelson's allegations to be "credible", but the document, which was meant to remain confidential, will place added pressure upon the British government as they seek to restore credibility in the RUC.

As well as backing up allegations of British collusion in Finucane's murder, the document cites evidence from military intelligence files and from the diaries of Brian Nelson that give some indication as to the extent of the killings. These indicate that Nelson was involved in 15 murders, 15 attempted murders and 62 conspiracies to murder.

Nelson was the intelligence officer for the UDA. He is said to have received thousands of pages of information on suspected Republicans, much of it emanating from security sources, which he then used to direct UDA assassinations.

In the six years from 1988 to 1994, the UDA killed 107 people. Many were Catholics chosen randomly, but a number of victims were regarded as active Republicans, including members of Sinn Fein. It was the UDA's ability to pinpoint such targets that fuelled speculation that they were receiving information from the security forces in both Britain and Ireland.

Former Hong Kong governor Chris Patten is due to report on the future of policing in Northern Ireland this summer. The issue of RUC reform has become yet

another stumbling block in the way of any solution to the protracted stalemate regarding the Good Friday Agreement for transferring rule to the new Northern Ireland Assembly. Nationalists and Republicans, supported by the Irish government, are pressing for sweeping changes, including in some cases the disbanding of the RUC. Unionists, supported by the British government, are stubbornly defending the police force.



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