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 TUESDAY
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 12:34:29

No collusion in Cairns murder case says O'Loan

Cairns case findings

There is no evidence the security forces in Northern Ireland colluded with loyalist killers in the murder of two Catholic brothers 14 years ago, the Police Ombudsman said today.

However an investigation by Nuala O'Loan found the police investigation of the murders by the Ulster Volunteer Force - despite early effort - was unacceptably flawed and cut short after three months.

Gerard Cairns, 22, and his 18-year-old brother Rory were gunned down by two masked men who burst into the family home at Bleary, near Lurgan, Co Armagh on the evening of October 28, 1993.

No one has ever been convicted in connection with the murders which, the Ombudsman pointed out, happened in one of the bloodiest weeks of "the troubles".


The Cairns family lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman claiming the police and army had prior knowledge of the attack on the brothers and that they had allowed a clear path for the murderers through what they believed to have been an unusually high level of security force activity in the area.

They further alleged police failed to carry out a proper investigation and failed to keep the family updated on its progress.

Investigators from the Ombudsman's office examined police documents spanning nine years, assessed intelligence about the murder and interviewed serving and retired police officers, retired soldiers from the Royal Irish regiment and 54 civilians.

Mrs O'Loan concluded "There is nothing to suggest that the security forces colluded in the brutal murders of Gerard and Rory.

"There is no evidence that the police had any advance warning, that they knew Gerard and Rory would be targeted and no evidence that they could

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have prevented the attack.

"This was a purely sectarian attack."

However Mrs O`Loan said the investigation of the murder had been flawed - and she revealed Special Branch had failed to pass on all relevant intelligence to the police inquiry team.

At the same time she upheld the complaint the family had not been kept informed about the police investigation.

She said: "Although much good work was done in the initial stages of the investigation, within three months it had been stripped of resources and had effectively ground to a halt."

She expressed "grave concern" the RUC had begun to wind down the investigation within just two weeks of the killings.

"A number of significant investigative opportunities were missed and forensic evidence has since gone missing. It is also a matter of serious concern that Special Branch failed to pass on all relevant intelligence," she said.

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Funny how evidence just seems to disappear sometimes isnt it!!

On 30 Oct at 14:10 - LORNA from ROE VALLEY said:

does mre o'loan not know it was government finances and not the will of the ruc that made many investigations into murders be slowed down, could not afford overtime for officers involved. also many murders were taking place in daily occurrence. how easy now to blame the ruc for all that went wrong. did mrs o'loan not live here in ni.

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