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[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Local & National](#)

## Local & National

### PSNI decision due on Stalker report request

Tuesday, December 04, 2007

By Chris Thornton

The PSNI was expected to declare today that it may let Northern Ireland's Senior Coroner see the top secret Stalker report after years of resistance.

Police are due to give John Leckey an answer to his request to see the classified material about "shoot to kill" incidents in which police killed a teenager and five republicans 25 years ago. A legal ruling earlier this year means the PSNI is obliged to let coroners see all material relevant to an inquest - unless it can obtain a gagging order.

But Government sources have indicated that the PSNI has not asked Secretary of State Shaun Woodward for a gag on the "shoot to kill" reports by English policemen John Stalker and Colin Sampson.

That means that as the PSNI returns to a preliminary inquest hearing to face Mr Leckey this morning, none of the legal avenues for restricting the report are in train.

However, access to Mr Leckey does not mean the reports would then be made public.

A legal battle has been fought for decades over the killings of teenager Michael Tighe, shot on November 24, 1982; IRA members Eugene Toman, Sean Burns and Gervaise McKerr, who were shot on November 11, 1982; and INLA members Roderick Carroll and Seamus Grew, shot on December 12, 1982.

Some police officers tried for the killings were cleared, but there were persistent allegations that the dead men were shot without attempts to arrest them.






An inquest was briefly opened in 1983. Mr Leckey dropped the cases in 1994 because police refused to release the reports.

If the PSNI climb down on that point today, he may be in a position to proceed with the inquests next year.

However, the extent of access may be critical. Police have previously allowed coroners to see secret material, but in extremely controlled circumstances.





But if Mr Leckey decides that the documents are relevant, there will be further battles over how much can be made public.

Last month, Assistant Chief Constable Alistair Finlay wrote to Mr Leckey to tell him the reports remain "top secret".

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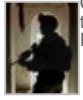
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