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## Local & National

### MI5 'spooks' to be screened off at Wright murder inquiry

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Monday, January 28, 2008

By Chris Thornton

A serving MI5 officer will be first witness to testify as the Billy Wright Inquiry resumes today.

Witness DO1 is one of three members of the Security Service who will appear at the tribunal.

All three will be anonymous and screened from the public when they give evidence in Banbridge's courthouse. In his application for anonymity, one of the agents said some of his closest friends are not even aware he works for MI5.

The three agents are expected to be asked about intelligence, including perceived threats against Wright, around the time the LVF leader was murdered.

Wright was shot dead in December 1997 by three INLA inmates who were housed in the same H Block of the prison. Last week, in a report detailing the PSNI's inability to produce some evidence, the Inquiry revealed that a police informer was suspected of smuggling a gun to one of Wright's killers, Christopher 'Crip' McWilliams, in prison sometime before the murder.

The PSNI told the inquiry the Special Branch agent is dead.

The inquiry's report detailed other major gaps in intelligence, including reports on the surveillance of known INLA leaders who were suspected of the plot.

But the report thanked MI5 for its cooperation in resolving a logjam about evidence. The Security Service, along with the Army, had been seeking a restriction notice to prevent some documents being made public, while the inquiry was reluctant to do so.

They reached a compromise in which the evidence will be summarised and the original documents will not be produced.

The three MI5 agents had their applications for anonymity granted by the inquiry earlier this month. They will only be identified as DO1 — for "desk officer" — DO2 and HAG.

Billy's dad, David Wright, did not raise any objections to the screening. He is known to be anxious to avoid any further delays in the inquiry, which is already running behind schedule.

The inquiry had been plagued by significant gaps in the documentary evidence, including the destruction of thousands of prison files. The Maze security files on Wright and two of his killers are among the missing documents.

The file on the third killer, John Glennon, was found by the inquiry among other prison documents. It contained the handwritten note saying a named Maghaberry prisoner was responsible for smuggling a gun to McWilliams.

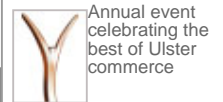
The inquiry later matched his name to a list of informants supplied by the PSNI. It is not clear if the gun was one of the weapons used to kill Wright. McWilliams actually managed to breach high security twice in 1997 to produce guns in prison. On the first occasion, he took a prison officer hostage in Maghaberry, eight months before the Wright murder.

Finance Minister Peter Robinson is due to appear before the inquiry next week. He is being called because he revealed in Parliament in 2003 that he had been sent photocopies of the police file on Wright's murder — one of the documents that the inquiry had trouble acquiring from the PSNI.

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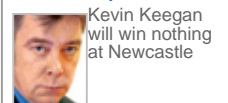
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