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Local & National

Nelson inquiry loses disc

Saturday, May 17, 2008

By Emily Moulton

A disc containing highly sensitive information relating to the Rosemary Nelson Inquiry has been lost, it emerged last night.

The disc, containing personal and protectively marked material, went missing on May 6 but is not thought to have been stolen.

In a statement, the inquiry said that it did not believe the loss of the disc would compromise the ongoing examination into the murder of the Lurgan solicitor and apologised for its "breach of secure data handling protocols".

"The inquiry has been advised that there are currently no grounds to suspect that there will be any adverse consequences as a result of this loss," the statement said. "Given the nature of the information, it would not be appropriate to say more about the material involved.

"The inquiry deeply regrets this serious breach of secure data handling protocols within the inquiry. Immediate steps have been taken to avoid any recurrence and a comprehensive review of all aspects of data handling has been initiated. The inquiry is determined that the incident should not in any way compromise or impede its investigation."

The PSNI and other agencies have been informed of the loss.






Northern Ireland Secretary Shaun Woodward said there had been a "serious breach of data handling protocols".

"The government has made clear to the inquiry its grave concerns about the breach of the detailed agreement it has with the inquiry on the handling of data," he said.

"As soon as we were made aware of the loss, the government instituted all necessary steps to meet its obligations."

Rosemary Nelson was killed when booby-trap bomb, planted by loyalists underneath her car, exploded as she left her Lurgan home on March 15, 1999. Collusion allegations arose because of Mrs Nelson's role as the legal representative in a number of high profile cases, including that of the nationalist Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition in Portadown.

Under the inquiry's remit, the inquiry must determine whether "any wrongful act or omission by or within the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Northern Ireland Office, Army or other state agency facilitated her death or obstructed the investigation of it, or whether attempts were made to do so; whether any such act or omission was intentional or negligent; whether the investigation of her death was carried out with due diligence; and to make recommendations."

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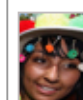
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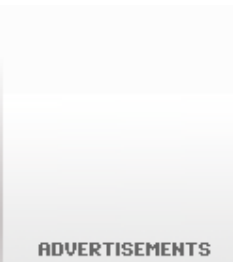
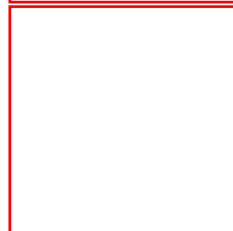
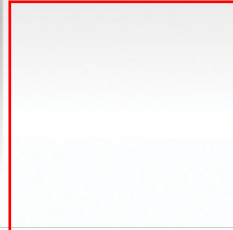


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