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Top officer denies being told to keep evidence from Wright probe

By Lisa Smyth Saturday, 7 February 2009

One of Ulster's highest ranking PSNI officers has denied he was ordered to withhold evidence from the Billy Wright Inquiry.

Assistant Chief Constable Alistair Finlay was giving evidence at the public investigation yesterday into the murder of the notorious LVF killer in the Maze prison in 1997.

He also revealed that Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde ordered a review of the PSNI's contribution to the inquiry after suspicions were raised that some people were deliberately withholding evidence

Speaking at Banbridge Court yesterday, ACC Finlay refuted the suggestion that he deliberately failed to provide all the intelligence in his possession surrounding the killing.

Counsel for the Wright family asked: "Were you directed by anyone that there were certain pieces of information, protected for security reasons, national security reasons, or for the protection of agents, that should not be handed over?"

"Absolutely not," he replied.

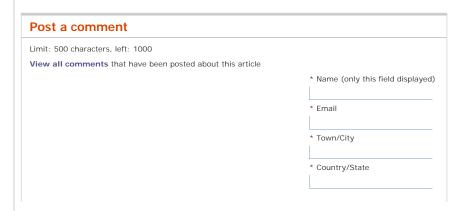
ACC Finlay was asked whether he thought there may have been people within the PSNI who suppressed information that should have been made available to the inquiry after the panel complained in 2007 that it believed there was missing information.

He replied: "That was considered. I reported this to the Chief Constable and he ordered Kincaid to order a review to quality assure to the searches that had been undertaken."

ACC Finlay added that if police officers had been aware of a threat against the life of Wright, they would have passed this information onto him.

He said: "You will find many detective officers are fully frustrated by the fact that they were not given information by Special Branch which may have assisted them in their enquiries over a particular crime."

He added that while there was intelligence available regarding the fact that at least five senior ranking INLA members met at a house in Belfast, the incident in itself would not necessarily have been considered significant enough to merit any further investigation.







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