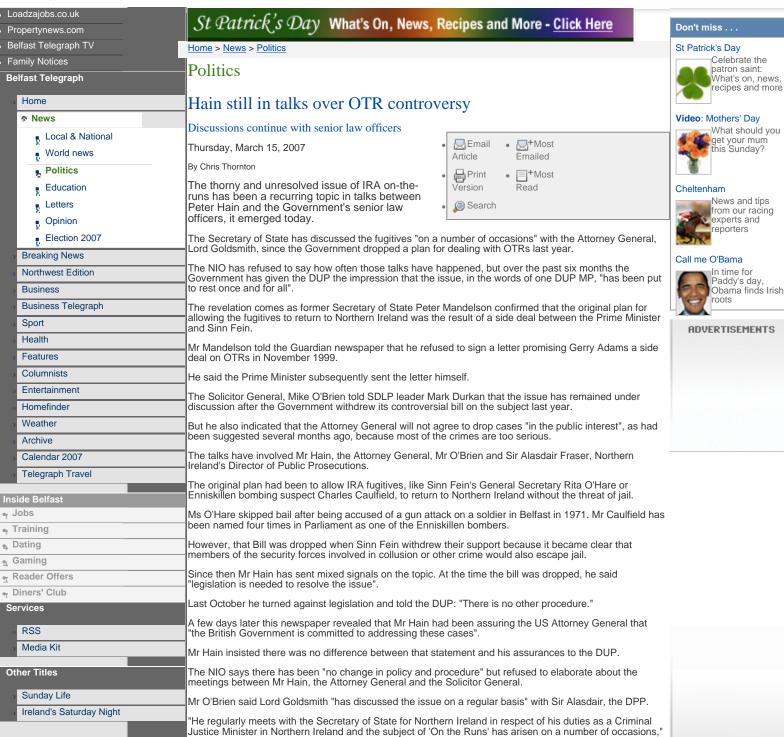
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he said

"I have engaged in some of those discussions."

"The view of the Attorney-General has always been that the position of 'On the Runs' can only be addressed by the prosecution process in a very limited way: by applying the usual test for prosecution to identify those cases where the evidential test is no longer met and, importantly, is no longer capable of being met.

"Given the serious nature of most of the offences concerned, the public interest is inevitably strongly in favour of prosecution. Political considerations play no part of that process."

A Northern Ireland Office spokesman said: "There's been no change in policy and procedure.

"We recognise that OTRs are an anomaly, but the Secretary of State has said publicly and to Parliament that there is no intention to reintroduce legislation or to introduce an amnesty."

Former UUP leader Lord Trimble says the Goverment knows it cannot deal with OTRs "without legislation and they know they can't get legislation through the Lords".

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