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'No evidence' on collusion

North Belfast News

by Alana Fearon

After almost two years of investigations into the 15 murders Historical Enquiries Team (HET) bosses said would take 16 weeks, review experts have uncovered "no evidence" of collusion.

Absolutely disgusted

But families of the McGurk's bar bomb victims say they are "absolutely disgusted" by the HET's findings.

Despite years of protestations from families that police had colluded with loyalist paramilitaries or had been involved in the supply of the explosives used, the HET report has found "nothing" which points to the involvement of the then RUC as an entity or the individual involvement of an RUC officer.

British Army

Following revelations in the media last year that a former UVF terrorist had allegedly claimed the British Army organised the McGurk's bar bomb, families demanded the truth about collusion to be revealed.

Under the pseudonym John Black, the former UVF man-who alleged to have been a British Army agent-claimed the McGurk's atrocity was orchestrated by his handlers in the Army's Military Reconnaissance Force.

Motive

He claimed the motive behind the bombing was to discredit "republican terrorists" amongst the Catholic community by making the attack look like an IRA bomb.

Truth

But despite families' calls for John Black's allegations to be used to uncover the truth about the fateful night in December 1971, the HET review found "no independent evidence or grounds to support the theories advanced by John Black".

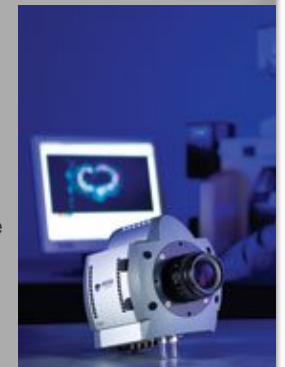
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Business & Recruitment

Increase in pre-tax profit of 22.2 per cent for Andor

WEST Belfast-based firm Andor Technology has announced operating profits of £0.81 million for the six-month period until March 31. The company, which develops and manufactures high performance digital cameras for industrial and scientific use, released the interim results on Tuesday. The firm's turnover was up 10 per cent to £11.5million, operating profit was up 14.8 per cent to £0.81million, and profit before tax was up 22.2 per cent to £0.8million.



Pat Irvine-whose mother Kathleen was among those killed in the blast-slammed investigating officers, saying the truth about collusion lies in the fact the HET admitted stories were fabricated at the time to achieve a "desired outcome".

Insult

"This report insults all our intelligence and I am absolutely disgusted that this is what we have been presented with," she fumed.

"How can the Government talk of a new future when it can't even give us the truth?"

"We put our trust in the HET and they let us down from a height, they got our hopes up to no avail because the report gives us nothing."

Agree

HET officers did trace John Black's publisher as part of its enquiry but, despite having agreed to co-operate with the police ombudsman's investigation into the McGurk's bar bombing, the publisher did not agree to meet the team.

Patrick Kane, whose brother Edward was among those killed in the blast, admitted he was not expecting too much from the HET's report.

Agreeing with several other families to reserve judgement on the report until they had time to read it, Patrick said he expected nothing more than a gloss-over.

Speculate

"I don't want to speculate on what's in or not in this report and I would love to be proved wrong but I expect nothing from this report," he told the North Belfast News.

"I plan to go through it with a fine tooth comb and take my time over it as going on past experience I imagine this is nothing more than a cosmetic exercise."

Property News

Co-ownership tells buyers: 'Opt out or continue at your own risk'

More than 250 households stuck in the Co-ownership Housing Association's funding crisis can accept their registration fees back and quit the application process, or continue to wait for help, Belfast Property has learned.



