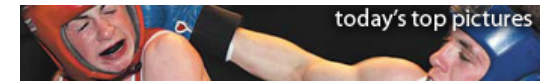


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PSNI gave £5m contracts to 'UVF-linked company'

By Barry McCaffrey

06/11/08

A Co Armagh building company linked to an alleged UVF leader was paid more than £5 million by the PSNI, it can now be revealed.

In January 2000, alleged mid-Ulster UVF leader Richard Jameson was shot dead by the LVF near his home in Portadown.

The murder sparked a bitter loyalist feud that claimed the lives of Protestant teenagers David McIlwaine and Andrew Robb less than a month later.

Jameson's building company had been awarded a series of contracts to work on police stations, prisons and British army bases.

Concern was also expressed over claims Jameson's firm received the lucrative contracts despite twice failing police vetting procedures.

In September 2007, Paul McIlwaine's family was informed by Deputy Chief Constable Paul Leighton that the building company had been paid £320,000 for work on police stations.

However, the force has now admitted that the information it provided to the dead man's family was "inaccurate" and the actual figure is £5 million.

When Mr Leighton first wrote to the McIlwaine family, he said there was no information held by the PSNI that would "by or in itself" preclude Jameson's company from being awarded contracts.

He said police may continue to use the company if it successfully tenders for future contracts.

"Our vetting of civilians is undertaken within a framework agreed with the Northern Ireland Office," Mr Leighton said.

"An identical process is followed in each case irrespective of the individual concern."

However, Mr McIlwaine's father has now demanded a meeting with Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde over claims that Jameson had twice failed PSNI vetting.

It is thought a third vetting process also resulted in rejection but was overturned on appeal by the Northern Ireland Office.

"The PSNI claimed this company was only paid £320,000 but when I challenged them they finally admitted that the true figure was £5 million," Mr McIlwaine said.

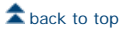
"I am asking the chief constable to explain to me how a man who was regarded as a leading member of an illegal paramilitary organisation was allowed to work in some of the most highly sensitive police stations in the world.

"I want to know why he twice failed police vetting but then mysteriously had the ban lifted by the Northern

Ireland Office.

"Why was the government paying millions of pounds to someone who it suspected to be a leading member of a paramilitary organisation?"

The matter is to be raised by Sinn Fein at a meeting of the Policing Board today.



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