

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2022/45/648
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

Secure Fax

To: Gary Ansbro / Fergal Mythen

From: Val O'Donnell

Date: **23 November 1999**

Pages: 1 + 3

SUBJECT: Log Request re. allegations of attempted sabotage of Stevens Inquiry (1990) by a British Army Unit.

COMMENTS: Attached copy of log request which was sent today to the other side for your information. Secretary Gallagher is concerned about the matter following publication of the report in *The Sunday Times* on 21/11/99. Fergal Mythen spoke to me about the matter yesterday afternoon.

©DFA/2022/45/648

NOTE TO THE BRITISH SIDE

Allegations of attempted sabotage of Stevens Inquiry (1990) by an Army Unit (Log 2501)

We have been asked to raise the very serious allegations contained in a report in the Sunday Times of 21 November 1999 (copy attached) relating to the above. The report contains allegations by a former member of the Army's Force Research Unit - whose identity and status have been verified by the paper - that the fire at the Carrickfergus Headquarters of the Stevens policing inquiry into collusion between members of the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries, which occurred on 10 January 1990, was effected by a "covert methods of entry" team from a British Army Special Intelligence wing. It is further alleged that the covert army operation was facilitated by a member of the RUC.

It is recalled that the official explanation for the fire in 1990 at the Stevens Inquiry teams headquarters, was that a member of the investigation team had accidentally thrown a cigarette into a wastepaper basket, which had started the fire.

The new report, based on on allegations by a person who was serving in the FRU at the relevant time, that elements within the British Army acted to sabotage the Stevens Inquiry in 1990 is a most serious one. The report is all the more serious and relevant by virtue of the renewed investigation by John Stevens into the issue of collusion and the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane, following the presentation of new evidence by the British/Irish Human Rights Watch to the Secretary of State earlier this year. As you are aware that investigation is ongoing.

You will appreciate that confidence in the effective and independent operation of this current investigation would be seriously undermined if elements within the security forces, whose own behaviour is the subject of that investigation, were prepared to sabotage it.

In view of the serious implications of this disturbing and worrying report, the Irish Government requests an urgent response to the following questions:

(a) Will this allegation by a former member of the Force Research Unit, serving at the time of the 1990 fire, be investigated, and by whom? The nature of the allegations made, including the possibility of RUC collusion in the alleged incident, raises the need for an independent investigation.

(b) What assurances can be given about the protection of files and records etc. connected with the current Stevens investigation. Will the need for further

©DFA/2022/45/648

measures to protect the integrity of that investigation be considered?

(c) What officer has been nominated to take over day-to-day management of the investigation when John Stevens takes over his duties as Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police on 1 January next?

(d) Does the FRU (or an equivalent army wing/unit) remain in existence and is it deployed in Northern Ireland?

(e) Can you confirm that the new allegations will be included within the remit of any independent inquiry that may be established into the wider issue of security force collusion with loyalist paramilitaries, following the completion of the current Stevens investigation?

Val O'Donnell

Val O'Donnell
23 November 1999

©DFA/2022/45/648