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North's prison service spends over £2m on Wright inquiry

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inquiry

by

By  **Uinsom** is Anderson
Thursday December 27 2007

THE Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has spent over £2m on work carried out for the inquiry into the murder of former LVF leader Billy Wright.

And Wright's father, David, has again demanded the inquiry finds out the truth about how his son died.

"When Billy died I got as much hate mail as I did sympathy cards," he

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said.

"I just want this matter laid to rest for once and for all.

"All I want is the truth about what happened on December 27, 1997. I don't want anything more or less."

Today is the 10th anniversary of Wright's death at the hands of an INLA gunman inside the top security Maze prison. The LVF leader was sitting in a prison van in the forecourt of H Block 6 when he was shot seven times and died within seconds.

At the time of his death, Wright was despised and feared by nationalists.

Nicknamed 'King Rat' by the media, Wright is reputed to have been responsible for up to 30 murders, a claim his father David fiercely disputes.

"My son was the last person to be executed at Her Majesty's Pleasure -- executed, for that's what he was," Mr Wright said.

"I have never tried to change anyone's view about Billy Wright. My son wasn't a boy scout. He was a UVF man and he remained one till the day he died. I know that," he said.

"If Billy had been murdered in the street I could have lived with that and got on with my life. But Billy was murdered while in the care of the state."

Meanwhile, officials at NIPS headquarters in Dundonald House, Belfast, confirmed a massive £2,141,000 (€2.93m) had been spent since November 2005 on all work for the Wright Inquiry.

In 2005/2006, the NIPS spent £456,000 (€623,000) working for the Wright Inquiry.

The following year, a further £648,000 (€886,000) was added to the bill.

This year (up to November 2007) the prison service has spent another £1,037,000 (€1.42m) on work many people believed had already been completed last year.

Destroy

Although the NIPS did give an overall figure for all work carried out for the Wright Inquiry, it was unable to provide details of exactly where the costs had been incurred.

The NIPS was also unable to say how much it had cost to destroy prisoner security files belonging to the Prison Security Unit at the Maze prison which should have been retained for the Wright Inquiry.

When asked to justify expenditure, a NIPS spokesperson said it would be inappropriate to comment further while the Wright Inquiry is ongoing.

Last night, David Wright said the prison service must be held accountable for what he described as a "flagrant disregard for public money".

- *Chris Anderson*

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