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## MI5 will assess risk to police witnesses

(Barry McCaffrey, [Irish News](#))

The mother of an IRA man shot dead in disputed circumstances last night hit out after it was revealed that MI5 will be allowed to decide whether police witnesses should be given anonymity at her son's inquest.

Teresa Jordan was speaking after an inquest into the murder of her son Pearse was told that MI5 had now taken over responsibility for assessing the potential threat to 14 police officers who are due to give evidence about the shooting.

The 23-year-old from Ballymurphy in west Belfast was shot dead as he ran away from a stolen car after it was rammed by an undercover RUC unit on Falls Road in November 1992.

His family have fought a 16-year legal battle to have the policemen involved in his killing give evidence in court.

In 2001 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the British government had failed to properly investigate the killing and ordered it to carry out a new investigation.

However, at a preliminary inquest hearing yesterday (Monday) a barrister for the police told the court that MI5 and not the PSNI would now carry out assessments on the potential threat to police officers giving evidence in open court.

The MI5 admission is understood to be the first time in which it has been officially confirmed that the secret service has taken over powers from police.

MI5's new role in Northern Ireland has been strongly criticised by Sinn Féin and the SDLP.

In June 2006 then justice oversight commissioner Al Hutchinson, now the police ombudsman, warned that the transfer of powers to MI5 had "profound potential implications for the police service".

Yesterday's hearing was told that the transfer of powers to MI5 had only recently taken place and that officials from the secret service were due to meet with the PSNI today to discuss management protocols, which had still to be confirmed.

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Speaking after the hearing, Teresa Jordan said: "MI5 and the Special Branch set in place the operation that led to the killing of Pearse.

"This included the calculated misinformation in a series of subsequent attempts to somehow justify the killing of Pearse, by falsely claiming that he was armed and that the car in which he was travelling had a bomb, which was later proved to be untrue.

"It is our firm view that any so-called risk assessment must be undertaken independently of those responsible for planning and carrying out Pearse's killing and must be conducted by the police ombudsman."

Questioning further delays in the case, solicitor Fearghal Shiels said: "The Jordan family are disappointed that in the current political climate, 17 police and military witnesses will seek anonymity when giving their evidence to the inquest.

"Those witnesses, like all other witnesses at the inquest, should be required to give their evidence openly and transparently in court under their own names."

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