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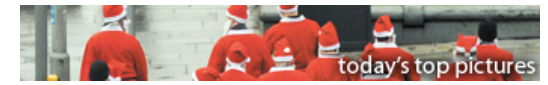
Monday, 15 December 2008

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Adair link to Nelson car bomb murder

By Barry McCaffrey

12/12/08

A NOTORIOUS loyalist Belfast bomb-maker

had been under Special Branch surveillance meeting with the LVF in Lurgan weeks before the terror group murdered solicitor Rosemary Nelson, it has emerged.

The mother-of-three, was killed on March 15 1999 when a bomb exploded underneath her car as she left home in Lurgan, Co Armagh.

No-one has ever been convicted of the killing.

The public inquiry has now, for the first time, heard evidence identifying the bomb-maker who made the device which killed Mrs Nelson and details of how the device was sold to

the 'C' company of Johnny Adair weeks before the attack.

The bomb-maker was not publicly named in the inquiry.

But loyalist sources last night identified him as east Belfast loyalist Thomas "Tucker" Ewing, who is understood to have died of a sudden illness last year.

A Special Branch officer identified as 'B511', gave evidence to the inquiry revealing details of the bomb-maker's role in the murder.

"We had a source of intelligence that started to report on the activities of the bomb-maker," he said.

"Any intelligence relating to the bomb-maker seemed to be very topical."

Questioned whether anyone, other than the east Belfast loyalist, could have made the bomb which killed Mrs Nelson, the Special Branch officer said: "On the loyalist side the capability to make UCBTs (under car booby traps) was limited.

"Historically there were bomb-makers that could make such devices.

"However, the recent attacks and the UCBTs that had been used, we believed came from this one individual from the east Belfast area.

"He had produced, I think, a variety of bombs at a certain point in the 1990s."

Revealing how the bomb-maker had sold six under-car boobytrap devices to Johnny Adair's 'C' company, he said: "The bomb-maker had links to what would be classified as 'C' company, UDA, in west Belfast.

"This grouping had also close links with the LVF. Its leader had close links to the LVF."

The inquiry was told that the bomb-maker's father and stepbrother were members of Adair's 'C' company.

It is now known that the mercury tilt-switch used in the bomb which killed Mrs Nelson had been part of a batch stolen from Shorts in east Belfast.

The Special Branch officer said that police had secretly watched as the bomb-maker met with the LVF in Lurgan weeks before Mrs Nelson was murdered.

The inquiry's senior counsel Peter Skelton asked: "So back in February 1999, ie pre-Mrs Nelson's murder, you would have been aware of contact, would you?"

"Yes," the officer said.

"I would have been aware of meetings between figures within the LVF in mid-Ulster and the bomb-maker, yes."

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