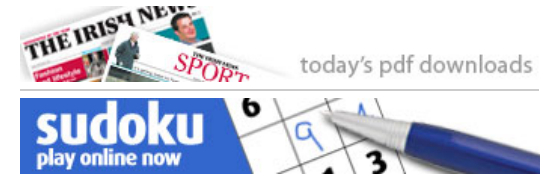


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## New witness hunt in 'cold case' probes

By Allison Morris

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THE Historical Enquiries Team (HET) is to seek out witnesses to killings by the British army in the early 1970s after a ruling that statements taken at the time can no longer be considered reliable.

The ruling means that a 'gentleman's agreement' allowing the army to investigate itself will no longer be valid and new testimonies must be sought.

Referred to as "tea and sandwich" investigations at the time, internal probes examined the killing of about 155 civilians by serving soldiers in 126 incidents in the early 1970s.

An agreement between the then heads of the RUC and British army meant that during three of the bloodiest

years of conflict the army investigated itself.

The practice often referred to in internal army documents as a 'gentleman's agreement' ended in September 1973, from which point the RUC was involved in investigating all fatal incidents involving British soldiers.

Stephanie English of the Pat Finucane Centre said the move was good news for families seeking the truth about their loved ones' deaths.

"We know that the HET are now seeking to trace and interview civilian witnesses from the three-year period," she said.

"This is specific to British army killings between September 1970 and September 1973."

Ms English said the centre had traced witnesses who had given or would give new statements to the HET.

A spokeswoman for the HET said it

would seek fresh statements from witnesses in 126 cases.