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Wednesday, October 15, 2008

Disclosure of Omagh information demanded

GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor

NORTHERN IRELAND politicians have demanded the British and Irish security services release all information that could assist in bringing to justice the Real IRA bombers responsible for the August 1998 Omagh bombing that claimed the lives of 29 people and unborn twins.

But, there was disagreement in the Assembly chamber between the Alliance and the DUP, as members of the Omagh families looked on from the gallery, over the content of an Alliance motion demanding full disclosure.

Alliance leader David Ford led the debate in the Assembly yesterday calling for the creation of a "formal, cross-Border, legally binding process, designed to secure full disclosure" from the intelligence and security services in Britain and Ireland about information they had on the bombing.

The Alliance proposal followed last month's BBC Panorama programme, which reported that the British security intelligence monitoring agency, Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), intercepted mobile phone calls from the bombers on the day of the attack and prior to it. However, this information was not made available to RUC detectives investigating the bombing.

Lawyers for the Omagh bomb victims have warned they will take legal action against GCHQ if the information is not fully disclosed.

British prime minister Gordon Brown, in a response to the Panorama claims, ordered a review of intercepted intelligence material connected to the Omagh bombing.

Several members of the Omagh Support and Self Help Group turned up at Stormont to hear the debate on the Alliance motion.

Godfrey Wilson, who lost his 15-year-old daughter Lorraine in the bombing, hoped a united front from the Assembly would assist in pressuring British and Irish security services to release all relevant information about the bombing.

DUP Assembly member Tom Buchanan from Omagh tabled an amendment generally supporting the thrust of the Alliance motion, but

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adding condemnation of "republican terrorists" who "alone" were responsible, and urging the British government to investigate the new claims "in co-operation" with the Irish Government. The proposal as amended by the DUP was carried.

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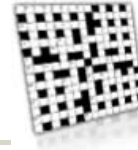
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