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Saturday, November 15, 2008

Troubles inquiry in shortfall

GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor

THE HISTORICAL Enquiries Team (HET), which is investigating almost 3,300 unresolved killings in the Troubles, is facing a serious cash shortage that could force redundancy notices to be issued to some 170 of its 180 staff.

The HET, which comes under the ambit of the PSNI, is seeking special funding of £1.5 million (€1.75 million) from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) to tide it over until the end of the financial year next April, when normal funding will resume.

But in the six months until April it needs £1.5 million, in addition to its £34 million six-year budget. The HET has put a case to the NIO that it needs the extra finance because of special pressures put on the investigative body over the Operation Ballast report.

This report, by former police ombudsman Nuala O'Loan, exposed how a UVF gang run by Mark Haddock was allowed to operate in north Belfast and carry out numerous killings even though elements of the then RUC Special Branch were running Haddock and other members of the gang as informers. This prompted detailed special investigations by the HET.

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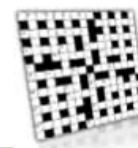
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