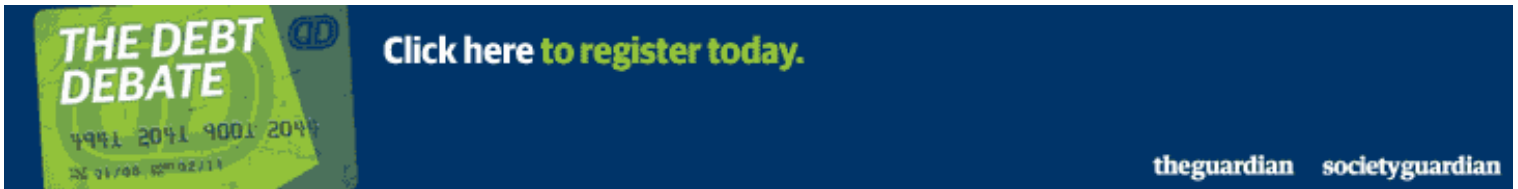


- [Jump to content \[s\]](#)
- [Jump to site navigation \[0\]](#)
- [Jump to search \[4\]](#)
- [Terms and conditions \[8\]](#)

- [Sign in](#)
- [Register](#)
- Text [larger](#)
- [smaller](#)



THE DEBT DEBATE

Click here **to register today.**

theguardian societyguardian

guardian.co.uk

[TheObserver](#)

Search:

- [News](#)
- [Sport](#)
- [Comment](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Money](#)
- [Life & style](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [A-Z](#)

- [News](#)
- [UK news](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

Suspect in O'Hagan murder flees south

Loyalist terrorist finds refuge in Republic after eluding raids by the police

Henry McDonald, Ireland editor
The Observer, Sunday September 14 2008

The loyalist terrorist who police suspect pulled the trigger in the murder of journalist Martin O'Hagan has fled to a safe house in the Irish Republic to avoid a series of raids on his home last week.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland's chief suspect in the 2001 murder managed to elude detectives who carried out a number of search and arrest operations in Northern Ireland last week related to the O'Hagan killing, The Observer has learnt.

It has also emerged this weekend that at least one of the five people still being questioned by police in connection with the O'Hagan murder has been moved into protective custody.

Four men and one woman were arrested last week and remain in custody over the weekend. They include a husband and wife from Mid Ulster.

The searches and arrests were carried out by a new police unit which has been given powers to re-investigate murders committed between June 1998 and June 2004.

The Retrospective Murder Review Team is headed by Supt Alan Skelton and Dt Chief Brian Murphy. Their brief includes re-examining many unsolved paramilitary-related killings, including that of the Sunday World reporter.

Skelton and Murphy reopened the O'Hagan murder file last year.

The journalist, who was 51, was shot dead in front of his wife on 28 September, 2001, as they walked home from a pub in the centre of Lurgan, Co Armagh. Detectives investigating the case believe O'Hagan's killers had been tipped off by a phone call from the bar that he and his wife were leaving for home. O'Hagan was gunned down close to the loyalist Mourneview estate. The Loyalist Volunteer Force was blamed for the journalist's killing. O'Hagan had a reputation for breaking stories about loyalists and their criminal enterprises, particularly in the Mid Ulster and North Armagh area where he came from.

He was the second journalist in Ireland to be murdered in just under a decade. Five years earlier a Dublin crime gang shot dead Sunday Independent reporter Veronica Guerin. So far no one has been charged or convicted over O'Hagan's murder.

Last night security sources in Northern Ireland said their main suspect had fled the Province to the Irish Republic. 'This guy has long-standing connections with criminals in the south and wouldn't find it hard to get a safe house down there,' one source told The Observer.

'He got wind of the operation and despite his house being hit a number of times there was no sign of him last week.'

He said that their chief suspect had recently returned from Mexico, where he had been on holiday.

The LVF gunman also has a car business in the Netherlands, where he spent most of this year, and close ties to southern Irish criminals operating in Amsterdam, the source added.

The Lurgan-born LVF terrorist and former associate of the murdered loyalist leader Billy 'King Rat' Wright was first arrested by detectives six years ago and questioned about the murder of O'Hagan.

A number of human rights organisations, along with the National Union of Journalists, have raised concerns about the failure to prosecute anyone over the O'Hagan killing.

The Mid Ulster LVF was notorious for being full of police and MI5 informers, even though some state agents were involved in crimes including murder.



• **A** [larger](#) | [smaller](#)

[UK news](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)

[World news](#)

[Ireland](#)

[Politics](#)

[Observer](#)

[More news](#)

[Printable version](#) [Send to a friend](#) [Share](#) [Clip](#) [Contact us](#)

[Related information follows Ads by Google](#)

**Bestsellers from
the Guardian shop**



- [Mondaine Swiss Railway Watch - leather strap](#)

Based on the clocks seen in Swiss railway stations and a Design Museum 20th century classic.

From: £79.99

- [Visit the Guardian offers shop](#)
- [Buy eco, organic and fair trade products](#)

Free P&P at the Guardian bookshop



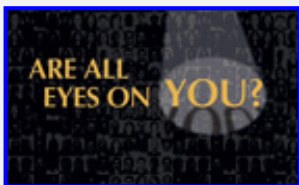
- [Deer Hunting with Jesus](#)
- £8.99 with free UK delivery



- [Gods That Failed](#)
- £12.99 with free UK delivery

- [Browse the bestseller lists](#)
- [Buy books from the Guardian Bookshop](#)

• Sponsored features



[Enter to win](#)

And become part of the Courvoisier Future 500 exclusive network



[Mazda Triathlon](#)

[Click here for all you need to know](#)

[guardianjobs](#)

- [UK](#)
- [USA](#)

UK

- [Public Search Room Assistant](#)

english heritage. swindon. £14,718 per annum.

- [FCO Schools Day](#)

foreign and commonwealth office. king charles street, westminster, london sw1a 2ah. unspecified.

- [Area Business Managers](#)

crown prosecution services-1. hertfordshire, devon and warwickshire. £43,566 - £59,951 + £1,000 RRA for Herfordshire, £40,968 - £55,001 for Devon and Warwickshire.

[Browse all jobs](#)

USA

- [Senior Lead, Charge Capture Integration](#)

facilities, clinical department managers/directors, and all levels of the finance team. they also serve as a resource to legal and compliance for cdm regulatory... . wy.

- [Local Sales Manager](#)

solutions to lead a team of media account executives... qualifications: minimum of 4 years of broadcast/media sales management experience. must have a proven... . az.

- [Become a Finance Specialist in the US Military](#)

the us army: the world's finest the us army provides a soldier with two major options: active duty or army reserve.. wy.

[Browse all jobs](#)

Related information

[UK news](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)

[World news](#)

[Ireland](#)

[Politics](#)

[Observer](#)



May 20 2007

[A poor advertisement for politics](#)



[The end of Operation Banner](#)

Jul 31 2007: July 31 2007: Operation Banner, the army's longest continuous deployment, comes to an end tonight after 38 years. Troops were sent in as a last resort as the Troubles flared up in 1969; a total of 763 soldiers died in the conflict. The army was also accused of murdering civilians, including the 13 who were shot dead on Bloody Sunday in 1972. A peacetime garrison of around 5,000 troops will remain in Northern Ireland.

[More galleries](#)

[EU treaty: Ireland votes no](#)

Jun 13 2008: Reaction to vote tallies that show Ireland has effectively vetoed the Lisbon treaty

[More video](#)

Mar 4 2005

[The Editor: The view from ... Dublin](#)

Feb 4 2005

[Sinn Féin and Dublin in grudge match](#)

Nov 9 2003

[Garda deny access to tip-off agent](#)

- [License/buy our content](#) |
- [Privacy policy](#) |
- [Terms & conditions](#) |
- [Advertising guide](#) |
- [Accessibility](#) |
- [A-Z index](#) |
- [Inside guardian.co.uk](#) |
- [About guardian.co.uk](#) |
- [Join our dating site today](#)

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2008

Go to: