

Collusion inquiry 'needed to protect sovereignty'

Sunday, December 03, 2006 - By Colm Heatley

The government needs to hold a public inquiry to "protect Irish sovereignty", according to one of the authors of last week's Oireachtas committee report into British collusion in bombings in the Republic in the 1970s.

The report found significant and "disturbing" evidence of British government collusion in the Dublin airport bomb in 1975, the Kays Tavern bomb in Dundalk in 1975 and a bombing in Castleblayney in Monaghan in 1976.

It said collusion took place in the Miami Showband massacre in August 1975, in which five people, including three members of the showband - Fran O'Toole, Tony Geraghty and Brian McCoy - were killed.

Independent TD Finian McGrath, a member of the committee, said that debating its findings in the Dail and Seanad was "nowhere near enough".

"This report and its findings need to be the subject of a full public inquiry into the British government's role in killing Irish citizens in cold blood," said McGrath.

"What we have found amounts to international terrorism perpetrated on Ireland.

"It is a scandal and successive Irish governments have done nothing to examine it down the years. We need a public inquiry to get the truth for the victims and to protect our own sovereignty as a nation."

Last Thursday, relatives of the victims of the Miami Showband massacre met Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to discuss the implications of the report.

Afterwards, Steven Travers, one of the survivors of the attack, said he did not need a public inquiry to tell him "that the British army was involved".

He recounted how the fake military patrol which stopped him was friendly at first, and then opened fire on the band members as they stood by the side of the road.

Travers was left for dead, but managed to survive, despite being shot with dum dum bullets.

One of the men suspected of masterminding the massacre, Robin 'The Jackal' Jackson, was caught in possession of four shotguns in a field near Banbridge just seven weeks before the attack.

However, Jackson was not charged with any offence so, was at liberty when the attack took place.

In the past, Fred Holroyd, a former British Army intelligence officer, has told how, just a few weeks before the attack, a former senior RUC Special Branch member asked him to provide British Army uniforms for a UVF gang based near where the massacre took place.

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