

## Loyalist killer to be quizzed over 1971 bombing

Sunday, May 13, 2007 - By Colm Heatley, in Belfast

A former loyalist paramilitary who admits working as an agent for the British Army is to be interviewed as part of two inquiries by the Police Ombudsman and the Historical Enquiries Team.

John Black, who told The Sunday Business Post earlier this year that he and his army handlers took part in the murder of six Catholic men in the New Lodge area of Belfast in 1973, is currently living outside Ireland.

In recent weeks, investigators from the Historical Enquiry Team have been trying to establish his whereabouts and contact details.

The HET was set up to investigate unsolved murders of the Troubles. Both it and the Ombudsman are investigating the 1971 McGurk's Bar bombing which killed 15 people, including two children. Responsibility for the atrocity was later claimed by loyalist paramilitaries.

The Ombudsman was recently asked by relatives of the McGurk's Bar bombing victims to investigate whether collusion took place in the atrocity.

Black claims that the bombing, one of the most deadly in the Troubles, was organised by his handlers in the British Army's Military Reconnaissance Force.

For years, the families of the victims have been lobbying for the bombing to be re-investigated. They have long suspected it to be the result of collusion.

Last week, Black, a pseudonym for the former north Belfast UVF man, said he would co-operate with the Ombudsman, but expected to be arrested by the HET. He said he would be prepared to meet relatives of victims in the near future.

"If Nuala O'Loan gets in touch with me, then I will talk to her, but I won't be making any moves to contact her," he said. "I won't be surprised if I'm arrested by the Historical Enquiries Team, and if I am, then I guess I will speak with them."

Pat Irvine, whose mother was killed in the McGurk's bombing, said the fresh evidence provided by Black should be used to "uncover the truth about that night".

"From information we have come across, it is clear that the attack took place in collusion with the British state," she said. "Black's claims back that up. But we are not interested in seeing John Black arrested or prosecuted.

"We are concerned with ensuring that his paymasters, and those who took the decisions at the highest levels of the British establishment, are exposed for their role in collusion."

In the immediate aftermath of the McGurk's bar bombing, the British Army told the media that the bomb had belonged to the IRA and had been inside the bar waiting to be transported when it exploded. Those claims were subsequently dismissed as completely false.

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