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Stalker to give evidence on shoot-to-kill policy

14 October 2007 By Colm Heatley in Belfast

John Stalker, the former British police chief who investigated the killings of three IRA men in the 1980s, will be called to give evidence in public by an inquest into the 'shoot-to-kill' deaths.

Stalker has been called before the inquest into the 1982 shootings of Gervais McKerr, Eugene Toman and Sean Burns, which opened in Belfast last week. It is the first time that Stalker - whose report into the shooting dead of six people in the North by an undercover RUC unit has never been made public - has been asked to give evidence into the controversial shootings.

Stalker was asked to investigate the killings in the mid-1980s, but was removed from the inquiry as he was poised to receive vital information which would have clarified if the British government had instituted a shoot-to-kill policy in the North.

After Stalker was removed from the investigation he was the subject of a series of allegations that effectively ended his police career. All of the allegations were subsequently disproved.

"I will go over (to Belfast) when the request comes," Stalker told The Sunday Business Post. "It is very hard for me to comment because I don't want to do anything that will jeopardise myself."

It has also emerged that the PSNI has only located a copy of Stalker's report in recent days.

"Am I surprised that it took all these months to locate a report which has been in their possession for the best part of 25 years? Yes, a little, to say the least," said Stalker.

Motoring

Three RUC men were charged with murdering the unarmed IRA men in the 1980s, but all three were acquitted and the trial judge said the dead men had been "taken to the final court of justice".

Agenda

The Police Ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan, has said her office will re-examine the shoot-to-kill incidents, but it is unclear if she has any legal authority to do so.

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