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SDLP COMMENT ON 'USEFUL' JUSTICE MEETING

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Commenting following a useful meeting with the Security Minister Paul Goggins, SDLP MLA Alex Attwood stated:

“The secret review of Omagh intelligence following the BBC Panorama programme is untenable. It does not build confidence. The Assembly unanimously expressed its serious misgivings. That is what the SDLP told the Minister. The GCHQ intelligence must be shared with the families and their lawyers, as a first step to get to all the truth of Omagh.”

The SDLP also raised issues around the British Army/Ministry of Defence cooperation with the HET. Mr Attwood continued:

“The SDLP understands that there are issues about British Army and HET cooperation with the HET, particularly around British Army killings in the 1970's. The British Government has a major obligation to guarantee that all its agencies – not least MI5 and the British Army – cooperate with the HET. The Bloody Sunday Tribunal demonstrates how the MOD and Army tried legal process to delay the tribunal, even derail it. This must not happen with the HET.”

The SDLP also raised the crisis in the police budget, Ashdown on parades, and restorative justice. SDLP Justice Spokesperson Alban Maginness MLA stated:

“The SDLP told the Minister bluntly – whatever the budget crisis, continued recruitment to the PSNI and 50:50 are articles of faith for nationalism and the SDLP. There must be no deferral of planned PSNI recruitment and no delay in the Patten threshold of 30% Catholics in the PSNI by 2010/11.

The SDLP also called for a snapshot review by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate of restorative justice schemes. The schemes now get substantive public funds – what is their current relationship with the PSNI? Has it gone backwards or forwards? Do they have credible complaints mechanisms? Have they broadened their volunteer base? These are the limited standards set by the NIO for Restorative Justice schemes – the NIO should again assess if these are being achieved.”

ENDS

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