

## **BILLY WRIGHT INQUIRY**

**Day 42: 4 March 2008**

**Witness: Referred to as Witness FG. He was a Detective Inspector in charge of E3A desk (republican) at Special Branch HQ between April 1995 and November 1997. He then moved with the same rank to the Tasking and Co-ordinating Group (TCG) in Belfast.**

During the period between 1996 and 1998, the E4 department was primarily responsible for conducting covert operations in Northern Ireland on behalf of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). FG was in charge of the North desk which included dissident republican groups including the PIRA. E3 later changed its name to the Intelligence Management Group (IMG) as a result of the Warner Recommendations. A Detective Chief Superintendent headed IMG; and the role of IMG was to obtain intelligence from human sources (also technical sources) which was collected in the Northern Ireland subdivisions.

FG was questioned about how information was received and recorded. FG stated that during 1997, the organisation was in transition from a paper based to a computer based electronic system; therefore it may be that there was still some intelligence that had to be inputted onto paper copies on SB50 forms. So rather than having a PRISM entry (electronic entry) there would be an SB50 if, for example, some intelligence could not be electronically inputted on to the computer. FG did not have access to the PRISM terminal at HQ in 1997. Once recorded and received they were printed off on a laser jet printer in Headquarters.

There was a degree of discretion as to whether intelligence and information would be passed down to desk level (especially if an operation was currently taking place). Therefore it could be the case that intelligence would be passed from regional heads to the head of IMG without FG even seeing it. This could happen if they simply felt there was something they needed to discuss and agree themselves without FG's input. Therefore, FG was not part of the decision making process as to how the intelligence could be used, managed and handled.

It was established that an SIR was "a slightly sanitised version of the intelligence debrief and provided the relevant information, but not necessarily any particulars about the source: and this would have been prepared by the agent handler or case officer and inputted on the CAISTER/MACER system".

In general terms, the Security Service provided source information to FG in the form of a NIIR (Northern Ireland Intelligence Report) where a copy would go to the registry; and FG stated that he would read it and would only make a note of what it said if there was a need - such as if he was writing a particular paper and there was a piece of intelligence that he needed to refer to.

If FG needed a copy it was in the registry so he could refer to that. When questioned as to whether he would remember that it was there, he said it

would come up in a search of the MACER database or through a direct request to the registry. Paper records were phased out in 1998; therefore PRISM records did not go to the registry; they were stored on file instead. FG had files on paramilitary factions and all were paper based.

Reference was made to the Warner Recommendations for the E9 desk to target strategic paramilitary figures in all paramilitary groups, loyalist and republican. However, in practice, the main focus of that desk's activities was still in relation to PIRA North Command.

FG was the main analyst within Headquarters for dissident republican groups, where he would have operational summaries of ongoing operations within the province. He would have background information on ongoing operations within Northern Ireland and he would create target lists which would include leaders of dissident republican groups and the structure of their organisation, as well as people who might be involved in paramilitary activity. These reports were passed on by FG to supervisors (which included the Head of IMG, Head of Intelligence, Deputy Head of Special Branch and the Assistant Chief Constable).

FG stated that heads of desks would have a daily meeting to carry out a review of intelligence collected at HQ over the past 24 hours, and would discuss actions, and allocate tasks. This included the E9 operations and when asked, FG stated that he did not recall E9 conducting operations against the INLA. In any event threats from a republican group would be processed in HQ through the republican desk.

The Lisburn Subdivision would have had a threat log in relation to the Maze Prison and if an action sheet was issued a copy would be held at HQ. FG stated that if there was ever a threat to life there should always have been an action sheet regardless of the threat assessment. This would require intimation to the individual and in terms of someone within prison custody, it would require intimation to the prison authorities. FG was presented with a MACER document dated May 1997 entitled "INLA: desire to murder Billy Wright." This was on the police MACER computer system and the information was received from the security service by a NIIR dated 24 Apr 1997.

FG confirmed that he saw the summary of intelligence that came from the security services documents and that was couched in general terms. He understood that it included information of an intention by INLA to kill Billy Wright if he were transferred to the Maze Prison in April 1997. Yet in FG's statement, he said that he could not remember ever being involved in passing on any threat to a prison: "I cannot remember being personally involved in this process or passing any threat on to a prison." FG did not remember ever carrying out an assessment of INLA's intentions in relation to the transfer of Billy Wright to HMP Maze.

FG confirmed the following statement in relation to the specific threat of INLA to kill Billy Wright were he transferred to the Maze Prison: "Any intelligence regarding threats should have been brought to the attention of the Head of

IMG at the morning meeting. In relation to something like this [INLA's reaction to the transfer of Billy Wright to the Maze Prison] which was more high profile, it would have been brought directly to his attention as soon as it was known, especially if previous threats had been given." Therefore if such intelligence had been received on 24 April 1997, it should have been discussed in the morning meeting by 25 April 1997 at least, with the head of IMG chairing the meeting. The decision in relation to what action was necessary in respect of this threat would be taken at that morning meeting if not before. But FG had never seen this information and was never required to process it.

When asked who received the intelligence, FG confirmed that it would have come to him but it depended on whether the operation was ongoing. FG stated that he did not receive the information personally and that it would have been the DCI and Inspectors who would have answered the phone and received the threat. FG stated that he had never seen an action sheet, nor was he personally aware of any documentation indicating a threat to Billy Wright.

FG was aware that there was a publicly issued death threat by the Combined Loyalist Military Command, and that Billy Wright was under threat from three different areas, but FG was not aware that it was specifically communicated to the Prison Service.