

BILLY WRIGHT INQUIRY

Day 99: 9th October 2008

Anonymous Witness DCI Rep Knock. He was the Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) representative at the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Special Branch HQ located at Knock. He was referred to as DCI Rep Knock for the purposes of the Inquiry and gave his evidence from behind a screen.

Questions by Mr Angus Stewart QC, Counsel to the Inquiry

The witness accepted that he was in a position of some authority and influence within the intelligence structures of Northern Ireland. He said that he did not have prior knowledge of the means or risk or threat of a murder attempt on Billy Wright whilst held at HMP Maze. He explained that his team was responsible to seeking warrants to conduct covert surveillance. Their information was sent to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He said that not all intelligence cases resulted in a warrant but those that did would have records stored in the "warrantry unit" at RUC (police) headquarters at Knock. He said that warrants were needed for all covert surveillance work.

The DCI confirmed that he understood a newspaper report existed saying that a threat had been known by the RUC regarding Billy Wright. He said that there had been a problem with the distribution of the Northern Ireland Information Report (NIIR) describing the danger posed to Billy Wright in being moved to HMP Maze. He implied that he had not seen it but said that he would have expected to have seen it and to have been on the circulation list. As a matter of probability he said that he thought that he would have been told about the danger of Billy Wright being moved to HMP Maze. The circulation list did not include the Security Minister, he confirmed. He explained that it was a policy issue for the responsible Minister rather than for himself as a civil servant.

Anonymous Witness DO3. In April 1997 she was the team leader of the Assessment Group for the Northern Ireland Republican Desk of the Security Service (MI5)

Question by Mr Angus Stewart QC, Counsel to the Inquiry

The NIIR was the only method of communication used by her assessment group Mrs DO3 explained. She said that it was the exception rather than the rule that information was sent to the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). She was shown the NIIR from the 24th of April 1997 which referred to Billy Wright as being in danger. She described how the document had said that "the INLA intended to kill Billy Wright at the first opportunity if he were to be transferred to H Block 6 at the Maze". She said that she was surprised that the information had not been sent to the Security Minister at the time. She suggested that her equivalent on the loyalist desk may have signed off on the NIIR rather than herself. She said that it was her team's role to check the

quality of the report and she was surprised that she had not seen it. She said although she had no recollection of this particular report she said she believed that if the NIIR did not go to the Minister such an error would have been unintentional. She said that this was her “categorical” opinion.

Questions from Mr Waite, Counsel for the Prison Officers

She said that at the time she was aware that there had been controversy in the press about where Billy Wright might be housed. She said that the information contained in the NIIR was significant enough to have been sent to the Prison Information Unit (PIU – actually called the Prison Intelligence Unit) of HMP Maghaberry. She said that she was aware that a member of the Security Group regularly attended the prison liaison meetings and that it could have provided an opportunity to pass on the information in the NIIR about Billy Wright.

Questions from Mr Brangam QC, Counsel for the Northern Ireland Police Service (NIPS)

Mrs DO3 said that she was aware of Billy Wright’s position and the difficulties surrounding which prison the authorities might house him in during 1997. She said that although she had not seen the NIIR at the time she agreed that the information within it would have been very important to the Security Minister of the time in Northern Ireland.

Questions from Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, Counsel to the Security Service.

Mrs DO3 said the information within the NIIR of April 1997 regarding Billy Wright was of a fairly common nature to the Security Service. She explained that her job was completed once the NIIR had been sent to the recipients on the NIIR regardless as to whether they responded. She said that there had never been a shortcoming in her department and that the idea of it had never occurred to her.

Witness Markus Lewis. He was a Prison Officer at HMP Maghaberry in 1997.

Mr Lewis said that he had submitted at least three affidavits to the Inquiry and that he may have submitted more but that he was not sure. He explained his past history in the NIPS where he had been held hostage at gun point and moved to a young offenders’ institute for over a year to protect him from threats against him. He explained that the court case on the incident took six years to come about during which he received threats from prisoners because he had named those who had taken him hostage. He explained that during this he was dismissed from the Prison Service for providing information to the media. He explained the reasons behind the previous dismissal came from the desire of the NIPS not to disclose the extent of the problems within the Prison Service at the time. He said that this was the reason that the appeals board had decided to re-instate him to HMP Maghaberry.

Mr Lewis alleged that a Prison Officer who he was not able to name had been involved in the destruction of HMP Maze files whilst based at HMP Maghaberry. He explained that he could not understand why any files were being destroyed at HMP Maghaberry as the Martindale Report had only suggested increasing the security of access to files, rather than destroying them.

He said that in May 2006 he filed a report with the Security Information Centre (SIC) on a Sunday afternoon at 16. 15 where he saw Officer William McCrumb and Nigel Jopling with a HMP Maze personnel file. The following day he saw the file being locked in a filing cabinet. He agreed that the Staff Communication Sheet (SCS) with the drugs incident that led him to the SIC had actually been on a Saturday, the 29th of April 2006. He denied the evidence from Officers Joplin and McCrumb and said that he could remember the lock on the filing cabinet and that the incident with the file being placed in the filing cabinet was real. Mr Lewis did not wish to mention the names of the individuals who could support his explanations but after time he felt more comfortable writing them on a piece of paper for the Inquiry.