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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 27, Number 1

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RUC Could Have Averted Atrocity

A MAJOR investigation has revealed that the Royal Ulster Constabulary had information about a planned attack in Omagh 11 days before the Aug. 15, 1998, bombing that left 29 people dead and more than 200 injured. The dissident Real IRA claimed the Omagh bombing.

The findings are contained in Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland **Nuala O'Loan's** draft report, which she placed with the chief constable of the police and with the Northern Ireland secretary in Dec.

The report finds that the RUC Special Branch had been warned twice about a planned attack but did not pass that information to police officers on the ground.

The report is understood to make serious criticisms of how intelligence information was handled by the police. It says there were "systemic failures in the handling of intelligence." This had deprived the murder investigation team of "important investigative and evidential opportunities." The arrangements for the interchange of information between officers were "totally unsatisfactory." The report also says information about the warning 11 days before the attack was in a Special Branch file marked: "Intelligence does not refer to Omagh."

The ombudsman describes this as a "significant error" and as "inexplicable and inexcusable." It should have formed "significant lines of enquiry" for the murder investigation team.

The main criticisms in the report are about how the RUC Special Branch treated colleagues within the RUC and how it responded to the ombudsman's investigation. The report

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Finucane Case Collapses

THE TRIAL of the only man charged with the murder of Belfast human rights lawyer Pat Finucane 12 years ago collapsed Nov. 12, after the prosecution said it would offer no evidence in the case. A formal verdict of not guilty was therefore returned against loyalist **William Stobie**.

Finucane was shot dead in front of his family in his north Belfast home in 1989. Stobie, a self-confessed loyalist quartermaster and police informer, supplied and disposed of the weapons the murder gang used. He admitted knowing the identity of the gang who carried out the shooting.

Stobie said he informed his RUC Special Branch handlers at least twice of an imminent loyalist attack and identified the gang involved just prior to the killing.

The law firm Madden and Finucane of Belfast lodged judicial review proceedings against **John Stevens** Nov. 13 for failure to provide any relevant documentary material to the Finucane family relating to the murder. The Finucanes believe loyalists colluded with the British military to murder the prominent civil rights attorney. Stevens was heading the investigation into the murder. The Finucane family has consistently refused to acknowledge the Stevens investigation as a legitimate truth seeking process.

Madden and Finucane will argue that the refusal to provide the material sought is unlawful and in violation of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to life) and the recent European Court ruling in *McKerr, Jordan, Kelly and Shanaghan versus UK*.

Following the collapse of the case against Stobie, the law firm pointed out that on Oct. 9 police commissioner **Hugh Orde** wrote to Finucane's widow, **Geraldine Finucane**, offering her "any support (she) may need before, during or after the trial 'of Billy Stobie.'

Finucane's lawyers requested copies of all relevant documentary material relating to the murder investigation and indicated that she would welcome a meeting after the material was provided. Despite his offer, Orde refused access to any of the material requested, including the trial papers.

Geraldine Finucane said, "I think

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Our View: RUC by Any Other Name is the RUC

2002 begins with our contemplating what is new in Northern Ireland. We are faced with news that the Finucane murder investigation has collapsed. We are faced with news that the RUC had advance information about the 1998 Omagh bombing and could have averted an atrocity that cost 29 lives. We know that one of the last acts of the Police Authority was to order 50,000 plastic bullets--this, amid growing demand for an alternative to the lethal weapon.

At the same time, unionists and the British establishment in the North salt and pepper this news with by saying none of it is true and that, after all, decent folk make up the police force and the rest of the system.

Hate monger Ken Maginnis of the UUP even called Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan a suicide bomber. Leave it to him to equate anything that smacks of a question concerning the British establishment in Ireland to resort to name calling. This from a lawyer and a knight.

What has changed in the North? A name. The same old RUC is now the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The same old boys and girls who populated the services before the name change populate it now, and they're doing the same job. They're working to shore up a failed system.

Is it any wonder the GAA in five of the six Northern Ireland counties did not want to allow the cops and British soldiers into the GAA? Their GAA counterparts in the South thought letting the armed representatives of the British government in Ireland in might do something for peace and reconciliation. It might reflect Southern open-mindedness. Maybe it was an important gesture, or maybe it came too soon. When will the South hold Britain accountable for its crimes in the North,, and why not let the British earn the privilege of membership by showing respect for Irish life?

Peace Process Update

November 6

UUP LEADER **David Trimble** is reelected first minister of Northern Ireland. SDLP leader-elect **Mark Durkan** is elected deputy first minister. Ninety-nine members vote after the Assembly allows three Alliance Party members to re-designate themselves unionist to achieve the required cross-party consent.

November 13

The DUP pursues legal action against Trimble to prevent him and Durkan from fulfilling the functions of their office because it objects to the manner in which the men were elected. The party also challenges Northern Ireland Secretary **John Reid**'s decision to postpone Assembly elections until May 2003. Reid, who will review some of the Assembly's voting procedures, says there is no need to have an Assembly election before May 2003 following the Nov. 6 election of a first and deputy first minister. The latest case is based on the contention that the election of the two ministers, with the help of re-designated Alliance Assembly members, was unlawful because it took place after the statutory six-week deadline.

November 16

Members of the UUP's ruling council call for a meeting Dec. 1 to discuss a power-sharing exit strategy under which the party would again leave the Stormont Executive if the IRA were to fail to meet UUP demands for further decommissioning. Meanwhile, Trimble lifts his sanctions preventing Sinn Fein ministers from meeting their Southern counterparts on official North-South business.

November 19

Trimble calls on the IRA to finish decommissioning by Feb. "Decommissioning has begun. We must continue. There must be a realistic date for the full implementation," he says. "On that basis, we will be content to leave it to

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American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC

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From the North: Omagh Report Shows Policing Reform Is an Illusion

By Robert Heatley, *co-founder of the campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization, Belfast, Northern Ireland*

BEFORE the ink was dry on a report damning the RUC for ignoring evidence of a planned bombing, a row blew up Dec. 7 over a report from the office of Ombudsman **Nuala O'Loan**, who is investigating the incident.

The report said the RUC had information about a planned attack in Omagh 11 days before the Aug. 15, 1998, bombing that left 29 people dead and more than 200 injured. The Real IRA claimed the bombing.

Police Chief Constable Sir **Ronnie Flanagan** was quick into the media with his indignation. Omagh was the greatest single atrocity of the 30 years' conflict in the North, and he had not liked the outcome of the inquiry.

O'Loan's report raised serious questions regarding the RUC's handling of the affair, in particular the RUC Special Branch's performance. Her report conflicted with what the RUC had been saying hitherto.

Northern Secretary **John Reid** was early into the fray as well. He said, "It's contrary to natural justice to base our decisions and discussions on an inquiry that's not finished." That, of course, had not kept Flanagan from rubbishing the report.

Flanagan and Reid had a draft of the report for a week. According to Reid, the report was "not finished." Perhaps that explains why, despite his initial rebuttal, Flanagan was able to state, "The Police Service (the renamed RUC) has asked for the final report's publication to be delayed to give the Police Service more time to respond." The Ombudsman rejected that request.

Sir Ronnie then said he was considering calling in (yet another) investigation squad to look into the matter. **Alban Maginnis** MLA,

whose SDLP has nominated representatives to the Policing Board, then reminded the chief constable that police accountability was now the responsibility of the Policing Board. Sir Ronnie had apparently forgotten that.

He and Reid had their backers-up, though. The recently-enobled Lord Maginnis, formerly known as UUP MP **Ken Maginnis**, described O'Loan as a "suicide bomber." Maginnis was one of the first unionists to imply that her office ought to be remodeled (stacked with unionists, like the Policing Board) or abolished.

The DUP's MLA, **Sammy Wilson**—never absent from any assault on a democratic reform—accused O'Loan of pursuing an "anti-police agenda." The Police Federation, the leadership of which is comprised of people who like Wilson, called for O'Loan to "consider her position."

Martin McGartland, an ex-informer for the Special Branch whose activities are the focus of the inquiry, gave his tuppens'-worth: "I fully expect the claims to be discredited."

David Burnside of the UUP expressed outrage at the leak, not at its contents. He wanted the perpetrators to be "dealt with and disciplined," his assumption being that the ombudsman was responsible.

A source close to O'Loan office said that the leak was "... a carefully stage-managed public relations exercise. All parties had a draft copy of the report for a week, which gave them plenty of time to devise a leak plan—basically, the best form of defense is attack. It was designed to look as if it was leaked by the ombudsman's office. It had that desired effect. She has been taking the flak all week."

Everyone knows who made sole use of the so-called leak. The most damning aspect that upset them was the charge that the police had received information about the bombing.

In his column in Ireland's *Sunday Business Post* (Dec. 9), **Tom McGurk** asked the question: "Was somewhere a calculation made that carnage in Omagh would once and for all end even the most marginal support for paramilitarism? Would such an act then provoke the authorities into such a level of Draconian legislation that the security services would finally have the sort of security legislation that they had always complained of not having had in the first place?"

All of which makes very curious Sir Ronnie's call for a delay in publication and his toying around with the idea of calling in yet another squad of outside investigators. O'Loan's Omagh investigation team is led by Commander **David Woods**, on secondment from Scotland Yard where, according to Ireland's *Sunday Business Post*, he has earned a reputation as a police sleaze buster, though something worse than sleaze might require resolution in this case. Woods has more than 40 experienced operators working with him. They come from South Africa, Hong Kong, New South Wales, and other British police forces. Whatever the outcome of this affair, the failure of Mandelson's legislation, which is still extant, to deal with the RUC's Special Branch in a way prescribed by Patten, is a crucial reason why Sinn Fein is continuing to eschew the Police Board. Until that and other deficiencies are rectified, Sinn Fein will continue to have a good case for saying that the promised new start to policing in the North has not yet begun.

Newsbits

THE PSNI/RUC today visited more than 40 building sites in and around Derry city to warn of a serious threat to Catholic workers from loyalist paramilitaries. The majority of the workers are on Housing Executive contracts working to upgrade public housing stock. The threat comes just over a week after the attempted murder of a building worker in the Waterside area of Derry and an early morning gun attack on another Catholic worker waiting for a lift to work in Clady, County Antrim. (*Pat Finucane Center* 11/20/01)

Britain's Northern Ireland security minister has said loyalist paramilitaries have been responsible for three times as many terror attacks as republicans this year. Replying to MPs at question time in the House of Commons, the minister called for an end to all paramilitary activity, preparations for such activity, intimidation, racketeering and violence. (*IAIS* 11/7/01)

An English court has overruled a decision by the Bloody Sunday Inquiry that former and serving British soldiers should give their evidence in person in Derry about the events of Jan. 30, 1972. Fourteen civil rights demonstrators died when soldiers opened fire on a march and rally against internment in Derry's nationalist Bogside. Between 200 and 400 soldiers or former soldiers are due to give oral evidence over six months or more, starting in the middle of next year [2002]. The high court ruled on Friday that a decision by the inquiry to compel former soldiers to come to Derry should be quashed, and the inquiry should make a new ruling. The soldiers claimed their safety would be at risk if they were forced to come to Derry. Lord Saville, who presides over the Inquiry, had said he was persuaded in light of protection offered

by the British military that the soldiers would not be put at risk if they appeared in person. (*RM Dist.* 11/20/01)

Journalist Martin O'Hagan was set to expose an RUC Special Branch officer's collusion with a notorious loyalist killer when loyalists shot him dead in Lurgan in Sept. [2001], it has been revealed. The *Sunday World* journalist was researching material for a book on Portadown gunman Robin Jackson, known as The Jackal. Jackson, who died of cancer in the mid-1990s, has been linked to numerous UVF murders of Catholics in the mid-Ulster area. O'Hagan discovered evidence that suggested two senior RUC police officers and a prominent member of the Orange Order had supplied loyalist killer Billy Wright with false alibis in relation to three incidents. According to the information, the RUC supplied a cover story for Wright in connection with the UVF shooting of four men in Cappagh. (*RM Dist.* 11/30/01)

Anger has greeted the revelation that one of the last acts of the Police Authority was to sanction an order for £300,000 worth of plastic bullets. The Policing Board replaced the Police Authority, the supervisory board for the RUC, last week. It has emerged that the Police Authority, at its very last meeting on Nov. 1, approved the purchase of more than 50,000 plastic bullets--almost as many as have been fired in the last 30 years (*See Action Request, Page 8*). (*RM Dist.* 11/13/01)

A 16-year-old has died after a homemade bomb exploded in his hand during rioting in north Belfast. A number of police officers saw the teenager with what appeared to be a pipe bomb in his hand when it exploded. He was taken to hospital

where he later died. Riot police are on the streets in the area tonight in an effort to quell any subsequent trouble. The trouble started in the area earlier in the afternoon after a Remembrance Day Service. (*IAIS* 11/11/01)

The inaugural meeting of the new Northern Ireland Policing Board has been held in Belfast. The Board, formed as part of the Patten recommendations for a new police service in the North, met in its offices at the city's Clarendon Dock. Part of the meeting was held in public. The 19-member board replaces the Northern Ireland Police Authority; it is intended to hold the chief constable and the police to account. The UUP, the SDLP, and the DUP nominated members to the board in Sept. Sinn Fein refuses to support the new policing implementation plan, arguing that the implementation plan does not fully implement the Patten report's recommendations intent on providing a new beginning to policing in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein's two seats have been reallocated—one each to the UUP and DUP under the d'Hondt system. (*IAIS* 11/7/01)

Education Minister **Martin McGuinness** has announced at a human rights conference that special teaching posts will be advertised to help raise awareness of human rights issues in Northern Ireland. The Human Rights commission is working closely with the Department of Education to promote a human rights culture in the education sector. (*Just News* 10/01)

Northern Ireland comes bottom of a list of industrial nations in adult literacy. Around 26,000 adults--almost a quarter of the adult population--are classified as having a serious literacy problem. (*Just News* 10/01)

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says the Special Branch was "close to obstructive."

The ombudsman began examining police intelligence on the Omagh attack after an informant claimed in two newspapers last July that he had passed on information about a bomb being made by republican dissidents.

One of those papers, the *Sunday People*, claimed no action had been taken because the bomb maker, named as **Kevin Fulton**, was also a police agent.

It is known that the Special Branch has in the past allowed or encouraged some paramilitary attacks to proceed to protect the identity of its informers or for military and propaganda purposes. Relatives of those killed in the 1974 loyalist attacks on Dublin and Monaghan have suggested they were the victims of such actions.

In his newspaper account, Fulton said he tipped off the Special Branch in advance about the location of the bomb materials destined for Omagh and the identity of one of those involved in the attack. He also alleged that Special Branch and the Gardai were informed in advance about the car used to transport the bomb to Omagh.

Tapes of conversations between Fulton and his handler earlier this year confirm the Special Branch was informed of the attack. According to a transcript of one tape, which was passed to the Ombudsman's office, Fulton can be heard asking his handler whether he recalled the warning he had passed on before the Omagh bomb was planted. In the cagey conversation, the handler replies: "I vaguely remember, but I'd have to check my notes. I remember something. I do remember bits and pieces."

The ombudsman's investigators also discovered there had been another warning to the police.

Eleven days before the attack, a detective constable in Omagh had spoken to an anonymous caller for more than 10 minutes and had been told of a planned attack in the town. The anonymous caller said that weapons were being smuggled over the border in preparation for an attack on police in the town on Aug. 15, the day of the bombing. The detective constable passed that information to special branch, but they did not alert officers on the ground.

It had been alleged Special Branch claimed two men whom the caller named as likely to take delivery of the weapons in the days before the attack were criminals, and the information was "not connected" to Omagh.

The two men with addresses in the greater Omagh area have never been questioned. The caller has never been identified, and the call was never traced.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland has said O'Loan's report "contains so many significant factual inaccuracies, unwarranted assumptions, misunderstandings, and material omissions that a request has been made to the ombudsman's office for a reasonable period of time to respond in detail with what we see as the serious deficiencies in this report."

The PSNI said it "absolutely rejects that either information provided by an agent code named Fulton or an anonymous call could have led to the prevention of the atrocity."

This report could lead to calls for a public inquiry into how and why Special Branch officers failed to pass on information following the anonymous telephone tip-off three days after part of Banbridge, County Down, was wrecked by a car bomb in a series of attacks by the Real IRA in the run-up to Omagh.

Northern Ireland Secretary **John Reid** said that he would not be commenting on revelations that Special Branch failed to warn senior RUC officers of a terrorist threat to Omagh until he had seen the final version of the report.

Reid added: "There is one point everyone should bear in mind: whether or not there are lessons to be learnt in this case—and with hindsight, there will always be arguments about specifics—nothing should ever distract our attention from the suffering caused to the victims and their families by the evil people who planted the bomb in Omagh."

The revelations have led to conflicting resignation demands, with nationalists calling on PSNI chief **Ronnie Flanagan** to go and unionists demanding that O'Loan resign her post. Efforts to clean up the image of the discredited RUC (now the PSNI) have been set back by the revelations, and demands for the full implementation of policing reforms and the disbanding of the Special Branch are now louder than ever.

Sinn Fein West Tyrone MP **Pat Doherty** MLA has demanded an urgent meeting with Reid. Doherty said, "The concern would be that if a bomb attack like that in Omagh were to happen again tomorrow and if the Policing Board were to ask for information that Ronnie Flanagan could block access to full details of Special Branch operations. In a tragic way this shows up the flaws in the current policing board. The Special Branch, Ronnie Flanagan, and those who control the Special Branch are still there. These are the people in a position to avert this catastrophe. These people stood back and let 29 people and 2 unborn children die. They must be removed immediately followed by an full independent investigation into the matter."

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that this failure reinforces my suspicions that the Stevens investigation was established to prevent or obstruct the truth getting out. The trial of Billy Stobie, although a public proceeding, does not satisfy the search for the truth about all the circumstances surrounding my husband's murder. I had no input into this trial. My legal advisors were not able to call or question any witnesses, and now Mr. Orde has refused to give my legal advisors access to the undoubtedly voluminous relevant material. It is nothing short of astonishing that whilst Mr. Stobie, the prosecution, the RUC, the trial judge, and others have access to voluminous documentation, the victim's family is being provided with absolutely nothing."

The case against Stobie was withdrawn after the Director of Public Prosecutions said it was concerned about the mental state of the key witness, former British government press officer and journalist **Neil Mulholland**.

More than 10 years ago, Stobie told Mulholland, then a reporter with the *Sunday Life*, he knew Finucane was the intended target. Shortly after making this admission, the RUC Special Branch arrested and interrogated Stobie but released him without charge. He has since denied knowing Finucane was the target. Stobie was not charged until 1999, when the reporter made a statement to the Stevens team.

That summer, Stobie gave **Ed Moloney** of the *Sunday Tribune*, the go-ahead to publish the story he had told him nine years before. The ex-Ulster Defense Regiment soldier said he was the UDA's quartermaster in north Belfast at the time of the Finucane murder. But he was also supplying information to RUC Special Branch.

Commenting on the decision to abandon the case, Orde, who had been in day-to-day control of the Stevens investigation, insisted his officers were thorough.

The Finucanes have dismissed the announcement of a fresh judicial investigation as another delaying tactic to avoid a full public inquiry. It was revealed that "a judge of international standing" would be appointed by April to conduct an investigation into the murder and into others in which there is evidence of Crown force collusion.

The Finucanes said the appointment would delay a public inquiry for another 4 to 5 years because the judge would be asked to review evidence in half a dozen complex cases.

They insisted: "Justice demands that [British Prime Minister] **Tony Blair** should announce the establishment of a public inquiry now (See Action Request, Page 8).

Persistent allegations that Crown forces and British Intelligence (MI5) colluded with his loyalist killers raises the

specter of a much wider and possibly officially-sanctioned conspiracy, which may have claimed many other lives.

A number of loyalists have also stated that RUC officers had encouraged them to target Finucane while the loyalists were being interrogated in Castlereagh Detention Center outside Belfast.

During his trial for possession of arms in 1990, Stobie instructed his lawyer to tell the Crown lawyer privately that he would tell all he knew about the Finucane case if he were convicted.

Minutes later, a policeman made a "mistake" in the witness box by referring to previous convictions, and the judge had to declare a mistrial. In Jan. 1991, the charges were dropped and a not-guilty verdict recorded.

In 1994, Stobie spent weeks in hospital after a UFF hit squad shot him six times, leaving him for dead.

Stobie first appeared in court on the Finucane murder charge in June 1999, but a catalogue of delays ensued.

Mulholland, currently on sick leave from his new job as a Northern Ireland Office press officer, tried to withdraw his evidence in April this year on the grounds that he was suffering severe psychiatric problems.

A summons was issued for Mulholland to appear in court. When his psychiatrist testified that making him testify could trigger a mental breakdown, the judge passed the decision back to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The decision by the DPP to discontinue the prosecution leaves many questions unanswered.

Stobie had made a 110-page confession that he did not attempt to retract. Mulholland interviewed Stobie at length and heard the confession again. Mulholland has not tried to deny or avow this lengthy statement.

Now that Mulholland has been deemed to be incapable of giving evidence, Stobie's trial has ended. However, under UK law, if a witness is unavailable, his evidence can be admitted, particularly when it conforms to the statement of the accused.

It is also unclear why the RUC officers who originally questioned Stobie were not called to give testimony.

At the core of the Finucane case are accusations directed toward the RUC's Special Branch. In a recent documentary (See story, Page 8), former RUC Detective in the RUC Criminal Investigation Branch Detective Sergeant **Johnson "Jonty" Brown** said the Special

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GAA Opens Doors to Members of British Military, North's Police Officers

(Dublin – Nov. 17) – THE GAELIC Athletic Association (GAA) has abolished its Rule 21, which prohibited members of the North's police force and the British military from joining the GAA.

An overwhelming majority of GAA members voted to get rid of the rule at a specially-convened congress at the City West Hotel in Dublin.

The Irish government welcomed the move. Prime Minister **Bertie Ahern** said he knew the decision had been a difficult one for some people and had followed an intense debate.

He added: "There have been many divergent views on this issue, but I believe the association has conducted the debate in the most democratic way possible. I want to salute delegates for their vision and their commitment to the further development of Gaelic games on this island. The [Mitchell] Agreement and the policing arrangements that are being put in place in Northern Ireland are creating the environment where nationalists and unionists can live together on the basis of partnership, equality, and mutual

respect. The deletion of Rule 21 is very much consistent with this new beginning and with promoting reconciliation and tolerance in Northern Ireland."

The rule was introduced in 1887 and then revoked in 1900. It was reinstated into the GAA rule book in 1903.

Significantly, County Down was the only convention in the North to support abolition. Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Fermanagh and Tyrone were opposed.

Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs **Brian Cowen** welcomed the move, saying it was good for the GAA and good for the country. "Above all," he said, "it is good for those people, from North and South, who are considering a career in the new Police Service of Northern Ireland."

Cowen added: "As a lifelong enthusiast of the GAA, as a player, an administrator, and as a supporter, I am delighted that the organization is now truly open for all the people on this island."

Northern Ireland Secretary **John**

Reid also welcomed the GAA's decision.

Reid said: "This is a progressive decision made by an association that played a large and important role in community life North and South. I welcome this contribution towards the creation of a more inclusive society."

Michael McGimpsey, sports minister in the Stormont Executive, welcomed the move, saying, "it comes at a time we are moving forward on many fronts and will help us in our quest to build a conclusive society throughout Northern Ireland."

The Ulster Unionist minister, speaking from his party's annual conference in Belfast, said he intended to take up a long-standing invitation to attend GAA events now that Rule 21 had been abandoned.

Former GAA resident **Joe McDonagh** attempted to remove the ban at special congress in 1998, but the recommendation failed after long debate.

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[decommissioning body head **John**] **deChastelain** to fulfil his mandate. But as [Irish Prime Minister] **Bertie Ahern** said last week, it will become an issue if nothing happens. In that context, Feb. will be significant. Remember, too, it is time loyalism matched the IRA move." Meanwhile, violence continues between nationalists and loyalists in north Belfast. Several Catholic families flee their homes as a result.

November 23

Reid announces the names of four new human rights commissioners: **Christopher McGimpsey**, an Orangeman and Ulster Unionist councilor, Lady **Christine Eames**, wife of Church of Ireland Primate **Robin Eames**; **Kevin McLaughlin**, and **Patrick Yu**. Nationalists are angry over the appointment of McGimpsey, whose anti-nationalist, anti-human rights positions are well-documented. Loyalists suspend their 12-week protest outside Holy Cross Primary School in the Ardoyne district of north Belfast.

November 30

The loyalist paramilitary-linked Ulster Democratic Party announces that it will disband.

December 1

Trimble receives 56 percent of the UUP's ruling council members' support for his motion to the Ulster Unionist Council special meeting calling for support for his strategy for achieving total IRA decommissioning and delivering stable government in the North.

December 7

Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs **Brian Cowen** welcomes President **Bush's** decision to lift a ban on Northern Ireland police officers' training with the FBI. US legislation in 1999 banned members of the force, known then as the RUC, from training in the US because of concern over the RUC's human rights record. A South African mediator permanently withdraws from negotiations between the Drumcree Orangemen and the Garvaghy Road Residents Committee as a result of a decision of the Order's Portadown Lodge to withdraw from talks.

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Action Requests

*Please take the actions recommended below.
Mention that you are a PEC member.*

Contact: **Jane Kennedy**, MP, Minister for State, NIO,
Stormont Castle, Belfast BT4 3SG, United Kingdom

Message: I am concerned that the Northern Ireland Office has not worked with the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets as the NIO has begun research into alternatives to the bullets. Please work with the Campaign and ensure that your research reflects the concerns of Northern Ireland's citizens. This is a matter of great urgency, especially because one of the last acts of the Police Authority was to purchase 50,000 plastic bullets.

Contact: Prime Minister **Tony Blair**, 10 Downing St., London, England, United Kingdom; email
Hon_Tony_Blair@441718399044.1ddd.tpc.int

Message: I urge you to begin a public inquiry into the 1989 murder of Belfast civil rights attorney Pat Finucane. The recent collapse of the case against loyalist William Stobie leaves the public concerned that the British government is interested in protecting its agents even when they might have acted illegally rather than protecting basic human rights of citizens in the North. Please see that justice is done in this case and that a thorough, open, and democratic process resolves all questions of collusion. The perpetrators of this murder must be brought to justice.

Websites Offer Reports on Pat Finucane, Plastic Bullets

A FULL transcript of the UTV *Insight* television program *Justice on Trial* is available on the Pat Finucane Center Website, www.serve.com/pfc. The program examines the role of the security services, RUC Special Branch, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the British Attorney General in the case of Pat Finucane, whom loyalists murdered in 1989.

The Northern Ireland Office Website, www.nio.gov.uk, has published an interim report on the second phase of the research into alternatives to plastic bullets. The NIO initiated the research following publication of the Patten report. There is grave disquiet that those conducting the research have failed to work with the Campaign Against Plastic Bullets and other organizations in the human rights sector. The Home Office, Ministry of Defense and Association of Chief Police Officers are determining the direction of the research (*See Action Request, this page.*)

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Branch routinely blocked investigations and destroyed evidence to protect informers. This included the investigation into, and evidence concerning, the Finucane murder.

Brown has gone on record to confirm that Special Branch had destroyed a tape he made which recorded a confession from a member of the loyalist gang who entered the Finucane home in Feb. 1989. According to Brown, a high level decision was made to block the murder investigation.