

murder of Pat Finucane

EXCLUSIVE



By Allison Morris

THE British government is to announce within weeks plans to hold a full public inquiry into the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane.

The *Irish News* understands that a decision has been made at the highest level that an extensive inquiry should be allowed into the 1989 killing, although the exact terms of reference have yet to be established.

It comes seven years after former secretary of state Paul Murphy announced his intention to hold a probe under the controversial Inquiries Act, a move rejected by the Finucane family.

The legislation would have allowed some evidence to be withheld from the public.

Secretary of State Owen Paterson had been due to announce whether he would agree to a full public inquiry in January, saying he would be considering a number of public interest matters including potential cost.

He delayed that decision to allow for further consultation and to avoid any politically damaging announcements ahead of last week's elections.

Senior security figures are believed to have vehemently opposed any plans for a wide-ranging public probe because of the sheer level of security-force collusion involved in the murder.

Mr Finucane was gunned down in front of his wife and three children as he ate Sunday lunch in his north Belfast home.

His family have campaigned tirelessly for a fully independent investigation into the murder by an informer-ridden loyalist gang.

Among those expected to be called to give evidence to an inquiry would be a number of

Security figures are believed to have opposed a public probe due to the level of security-force collusion involved in the murder

Family opposed proposal for restricted probe

By Staff Reporter

PAT Finucane was shot dead in front of his wife and three children in their north Belfast home on February 12 1989.

The 39-year-old solicitor's supposed crime was to have successfully defended republicans in court.

Prior to his murder Mr Finucane and some of his colleagues had reported RUC threats against their lives.

In January 1989 Tory minister Douglas Hogg claimed in the House of Commons that there were solicitors in Northern Ireland who were "unduly sympathetic to the cause of the IRA".

It would later emerge that security forces had not only been aware of the plot to murder Mr Finucane but had four agents directly involved in the killing.

Three of those agents were Special Branch informers.

UDA commander Tommy Lyttle would later recall questioning his handlers about loyalists in police custody being asked to kill Pat Finucane.

William Stobie, who supplied the murder weapons, informed his Special Branch contacts that an attack was to take place on the day of the shooting but no attempt was made to apprehend the killers.

former chief constables including Ronnie Flanagan, who was head of Special Branch when loyalist agents linked to the killing were working for police.

Former Tory minister Douglas Hogg, who claimed in parliament there were solicitors "unduly sympathetic to the cause of the IRA", is also expected to be called.

Mr Hogg, then a Home Office minister, was given private security briefings by senior members of the RUC during his



■ **DECISION:** Owen Paterson



Ken Barrett, the UDA gunman who fired the fatal shots, admitted his role to police in 1991 and claimed a Special Branch officer had personally encouraged him to carry out the killing.

Barrett went on trial in 2003 and pleaded guilty - but this

time in Margaret Thatcher's government and could be questioned for the first time on the content of those briefings.

Members of the Stevens team who investigated state collusion with loyalist murder gangs would also be key witnesses for the inquiry.

Lord Stevens stated publicly in 2003 that security force members had colluded in the solicitor's murder and that Mr Finucane's life could have been saved.

In 2007 the director of public prosecutions said none of the security force members identified by Stevens as having been involved in collusion would face charges.

However, an inquiry panel could recommend prosecutions and for files to be re-examined by the DPP.

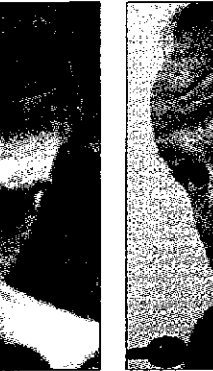
The news comes ahead of the publication on May 23 of the findings of an inquiry into the loyalist murder of solicitor Rosemary Nelson on May 23.



meant that no details of collusion became public.

British army agent Brian Nelson played the single biggest role in the murder.

He compiled a dossier on Mr Finucane, which included a photograph, and even drove Barrett to the solicitor's home



in the lead-up to the murder.

When Nelson's double life was uncovered in 1990 he was charged with 36 offences, including conspiracy to murder. He pleaded guilty to reduced charges and served just five years in jail.

Over a 15-year period a for-



■ **KILLING:** Facing page, main picture, Pat Finucane. This page, clockwise from above, Judge Peter Cory, Douglas Hogg, Brian Nelson, Billy Stobie, Ken Barrett and Lord Stevens

mer commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Lord Stevens, carried out three investigations into security force collusion.

In April 2003 he publicly confirmed for the first time that security force members had colluded in the solicitor's murder and that his life could have been saved.

A year later retired Canadian judge Peter Cory also concluded there was enough evidence of security force collusion in Mr Finucane's murder to warrant a public inquiry.

However, the British government rushed special legislation through parliament giving ministers the power to block some evidence being heard.

The Finucane family's opposition to the prospect of a restricted inquiry was supported by Judge Cory and many of Britain's leading judges, including Bloody Sunday tribunal chairman Lord Saville. The Dail also passed a unanimous motion calling on the British government to allow a proper independent inquiry.

Last November the new Conservative secretary of state, Owen Paterson, met the Finucane family.

Earlier this year he said he would take more time to decide if there should be a public inquiry into the murder.

TIMELINE

AUTUMN 1987 British army agent Brian Nelson begins supplying army intelligence with possible UDA targets

NOVEMBER 1988 Criminal charges are dropped against Patrick McGeown, accused of helping to organise the March 1988 killing of two army corporals. Pat Finucane is Mr McGeown's lawyer

JANUARY 1989 Home Office minister Douglas Hogg claims in the Commons that there are solicitors in the north who are "unduly sympathetic to the cause of the IRA"

FEBRUARY 1989 Mr Finucane is shot dead in his Belfast home

SEPTEMBER 1989 Sir John Stevens, head of the Metropolitan Police, begins to investigate breaches of security by the security forces

JANUARY 1990 The Stevens team identify Brian Nelson as a key suspect and plan to arrest him and others in a dawn raid. Officers return to their secure investigation HQ hours before the planned arrests to find a fire

raging. It destroys many of their files

JANUARY 1992 UDA intelligence officer and former soldier Brian Nelson, being tried on five counts of conspiracy to murder, is revealed as an army agent who tipped off his handlers about a plan to kill Mr Finucane. He is jailed for 10 years

APRIL 1993 Second Stevens inquiry begins after DPP asks for further probe of matters raised in first inquiry

APRIL 1999 Third inquiry launched into the allegations surrounding Mr Finucane's death

JUNE 1999 RUC Special Branch agent and loyalist quartermaster William Stobie is charged with the murder

NOVEMBER 2001 After admitting having supplied the weapons used, the case against Stobie collapses

DECEMBER 2001 Stobie is shot dead

APRIL 2002 Retired Canadian judge Peter Cory is appointed by the British government to examine six murders, including Mr Finucane's, where there were allegations of security force

collusion

APRIL 2003 Stevens publicly confirms that security force members colluded in the solicitor's murder. The Finucane family reiterates its call for a full, independent, public inquiry

MAY 2003 Loyalist Ken Barrett is arrested and charged with the murder

APRIL 2004 Judge Cory concludes there is enough evidence of collusion to warrant a public inquiry but Britain rushes through legislation giving ministers power to block evidence. Secretary of State Paul Murphy later announces his intention to hold an inquiry under the new Inquiries Act

SEPTEMBER 2004 Barret pleads guilty to murdering Mr Finucane

JUNE 2007 DPP announces that none of the security force members identified by Stevens will face charges

NOVEMBER 2010 Secretary of state Owen Paterson meets the Finucane family and says he will consider public interest matters including potential cost before deciding on an inquiry.