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### News

## MP fears gagging of whistleblower

**MoD jail threat could prevent former soldier giving evidence at inquiries**

Sunday, October 28, 2007

A DUP MP has voiced concerns that a former British soldier could effectively be gagged from giving evidence to two major collusion inquiries.

Jeffrey Donaldson spoke out following a decision by Ministry of Defence to charge former military intelligence handler turned whistleblower 'Martin Ingram' with contempt of court.

Ingram, an alias used by the ex-soldier, is accused of breaching a 1999 court order preventing him from disclosing sensitive information about Intelligence Services activities in Northern Ireland.

If convicted, he could face a maximum of two years imprisonment.

That would effectively prevent him from giving evidence to the inquiry into the INLA jail murder of Billy Wright and the Smithwick Tribunal investigating alleged Garda collusion in the IRA murders of RUC officers Harry Breen and Bob Buchanan.

Ingram was first approached two years ago to assist both inquiries and his solicitors contacted the MoD seeking permission to cooperate.

Sources close to the inquiries said the MoD eventually agreed but, within 10 days of doing so, Ingram received a letter and draft 'gagging order' from the Treasury Solicitor's office informing him of the impending court action.

Yesterday, Martin Ingram refused to speak about the MoD jail threat saying: "I have no comment to make".

However, friends of Ingram pointed out the MoD had previously relaxed the 1999 court order to allow him to speak to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry and to the Stevens Inquiry.

"This is a clear attempt to put pressure on Martin Ingram to refuse to give evidence to both inquiries," said the source.

"Especially so in the Breen and Buchanan case, which is charged with establishing the true extent of the role of British Intelligence inside the Irish Republic."

Lagan Valley MP Jeffrey Donaldson said witnesses must be allowed to give evidence without fear of interference from any quarter.

"Martin Ingram was allowed to give evidence in two previous inquiries. It is strange now, when an inquiry is seeking information into allegations of Garda/IRA collusion in the deaths of two senior RUC officers, this particular action is initiated against him."

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