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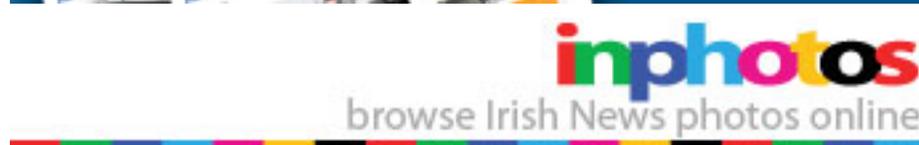
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NEWS >

# British army 'kept off Omagh streets on day of atrocity'

By Staff Reporter

15/10/2008

THE British army may have been kept off the streets of Omagh on the day of the 1998 blast, one of the relatives claimed yesterday. Godfrey Wilson, whose 15-year-old daughter Lorraine was one of 29 killed in the Real IRA attack, also claimed there could have been a reduced police presence in the Co Tyrone town.

He is pressing for an independent cross-border investigation into alleged security force failings before and after the worst atrocity of the Troubles.

“There was the question of the government doing a deal and reducing policing on the streets, keeping the army within the barracks on the day,” Mr Wilson said.

No-one has been convicted of murder at Omagh. Victims have taken a civil case for damages against those they blame.

They were at Stormont yesterday for a debate on their demands for an inquiry into security force intelligence and events surrounding Omagh.

“There are questions which need to

be answered,” Mr Wilson said. “I have a 15-year-old in her grave.

“There were too many issues before the bomb and certainly too many issues after Omagh.”

His concerns include revelations that phone conversations between the bombers on their way to Omagh were being taped by the government’s electronic intelligence agency, GCHQ.

British prime minister Gordon Brown announced the review following the allegations.

Questions have also been raised about how much security agencies on both sides of the border knew about Omagh in advance.

Only one person, Sean Hoey from Jonesborough, Co Armagh, was accused of murder at Omagh but he was cleared.

The Alliance Party introduced a debate on calls for a cross-border investigation at the assembly yesterday.

“The single-issue parties need to put their political games aside and recognise the need for total clarity on the events surrounding the bombing,” party leader David Ford said.

“I hope that our assembly debate can

increase the pressure on the British and Irish governments to commence a legally-binding cross-border process to uncover the truth.

“So far the Omagh families have been denied real justice.

“The least they deserve is the support of the Stormont assembly in their bid to seek the truth about that fateful day.”

A Northern Ireland Office spokesman

rejected the allegation.

The motion, amended by the DUP, was passed unanimously.

The SDLP supported the Alliance Party and both parties opposed the DUP amendment while not forcing a formal vote.

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