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News

MP bugged by Hain's stonewall

Sec of State sidesteps MI5 jail tape question

Sunday, April 29, 2007

PETER Hain has refused to confirm or deny the existence of MI5 spy tapes at the Maze during the period leading to Billy Wright's 1997 jail murder.

The Secretary of State referred to ministerial convention on security matters as he stonewalled a written question by DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson concerning claims that LVF and INLA inmates conversations were bugged at the jail.

Mr Donaldson MP wrote to Mr Hain asking whether he could make available to the Billy Wright Inquiry surveillance tapes held by the security and intelligence services of conversations that took place in H Block 6 during the period leading up to the LVF chief's murder by INLA inmates.

It follows claims by ex-intelligence services soldiers that MI5 had bugging devices operating inside H Block 6 during 1997.

The soldiers also claimed transcripts of all surveillance tapes were given to RUC Special Branch on a regular basis.

In his written response to Mr Donaldson, the Secretary of State said that by convention he could neither confirm nor deny the existence of the material.

Mr Donaldson said he was deeply disappointed with the Secretary of State's response.

The Lagan Valley MP added that Mr Hain had failed to co-operate in any way in providing any of the material that had been requested.

Mr Donaldson said the Secretary of State had also refused to explain why the Northern Ireland Prison Service had destroyed certain files relevant to Judge Peter Cory's investigation into Billy Wright's murder without first informing the judge of their destruction.

The Billy Wright Inquiry is due to begin full public hearings at Banbridge Courthouse in May.

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