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Ombudsman's report on McGurk's due out in a year

By Aine McEntee

"No-one is above the law" – that's what a McGurk's massacre relative has been told by the Police Ombudsman who is preparing a report into allegations of state collusion with loyalist paramilitaries in the early 1970s. Pat Irvine, whose mother Kitty was killed in the bombing, met with officials from the Ombudsman's office this week to discuss developments in the case and the news that its long-awaited report is due out next year. Earlier this year a UVF man known as 'John Black' alleged that he was trained in Palace Barracks in the construction of bombs by members of the British army.

The Ombudsman's office began investigating the case at the end of 2005. They have now appointed a new team of investigators to the case. Their report is due out 11 months from now.

"We will wait with anticipation the conclusion of the Ombudsman's report," Pat Irvine said.

"We will also be getting in touch with the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) to ask them have they managed to interview John Black and have they made any progress on the names of those we believe were responsible for carrying out the bomb.

"We want full and public accountability and we want all the names out in the open, be they bombers, military or handlers."

The Irvine family have publicly appealed to the man known as John Black for a meeting, but as yet they've heard nothing.

Pat Irvine lost her 53-year-old mother, Kitty, in the horrific blast on December 4, 1971. Kitty Irvine was born and reared in Hardinge Street and had a family of eight children. She had worked at a variety of jobs all over Belfast so that she could provide for her family.

"My mother and all the other victims deserve the truth," Pat said.

The Police Ombudsman's office has confirmed that a new team has been assigned to the McGurk's massacre case.

"The change in personnel is due to restructuring within the Ombudsman's office, and this small increase in resources to the case is a result of that," a spokesman said.

In recent weeks, investigators from the HET have been trying to establish John Black's whereabouts and contact details.

The HET was set up to investigate unsolved murders of the Troubles.

Both the HET and the Ombudsman are investigating the 1971 bombing of McGurk's, which killed 15 people, including two children.

The atrocity was the largest loss of life up to the Omagh bomb and the families hope the Ombudsman can explain why no investigation took place



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into the outrage. Relatives of the dead and injured believe it was one of the earliest cases of British state collusion with loyalist paramilitaries in the Troubles. Only one man, Robert James Campbell, who confessed seven years later to his part in the atrocity, has ever served a sentence for the mass murder. Responsibility for the atrocity was later claimed by the UVF. However, the RUC and the British army deliberately spread the lie that the bomb was an IRA 'own goal'.

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