



HER MAJESTY'S CORONER

DISTRICT OF GREATER BELFAST

John L Leckey LL.M.
H.M. Coroner
Coroner's Office
Courthouse
37 Church Road
Newtownabbey
Co. Antrim BT36 7LA
Northern Ireland

Dear [REDACTED],

28th April 2000

ROBERT HAMILL dec'd

Earlier this week I sent you a copy of a report in the Sunday Times of 23rd April concerning a call for an independent public inquiry. The same report highlighted the involvement of the Irish government.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I received today from [REDACTED] who acts for the next of kin. Before replying I would welcome an opportunity to discuss the most appropriate stance to adopt. The dilemma I am faced with is balancing the safety of witnesses against the desirability of holding an inquest in which the circumstances of the death can be explored in the normal way.

Setting to one side the issue of the safety of the witnesses, the points Mr [REDACTED] makes in his letter (particularly on the second page) are valid ones. I was as frank as I felt I could be in disclosing in general terms to him the nature of the evidence that the two witnesses could give - indeed I believe it would have been quite wrong not to have done so. He now suggests that to hold an inquest in which I do not introduce such crucial evidence "will serve only to deceive the general public of the true facts surrounding this killing and ... would be a great disservice to your ancient and noble office". If I felt that he was correct I would not hold any inquest. My predecessor in office, the late [REDACTED] took the view (with which I have always agreed) that ultimately the key question was whether the circumstances of the death had been investigated in public proceedings "in a manner in which the public interest has been satisfied". However, neither of us were faced with a situation comparable to that in Hamill - the issues in the so-called "shoot to kill" inquests were completely different.

Obviously, in view of the press report, there is a major political dimension. [REDACTED] told me that he has had meetings with both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I do not know if either are aware of the evidence. Should I take steps to inform the British government (via the Secretary of

