

Soldier's role in 8 'shoot-to-

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THE role of a single British soldier in planning up to eight alleged shoot-to-kill operations is to be the "focus of intense scrutiny" at an inquest into the deaths of two IRA men three decades ago.

Solicitors for the families of Daniel Doherty (23) and William Fleming (19) have obtained documents detailing links between a series of shootings resulting in the deaths of 16 people between 1983 and 1991.

The two Derry men were killed as they travelled through the grounds of Gransha Hospital in the city's Waterside on a motorbike in December 1984.

It was reported that they were making their way to ambush a UDR man when an undercover SAS unit struck.

It is also suspected that members of the British army's 14th Intelligence Company, a controversial reconnaissance unit working alongside the SAS, may also have been involved in the operation.

The MoD is seeking public interest immunity certificates in relation to the case. If the certificates are granted, the MoD cannot be compelled to reveal which unit was responsible.

However, it is understood the coroner in charge of the inquest, Jim Kitson, has been made aware of the identity of the unit or units involved.

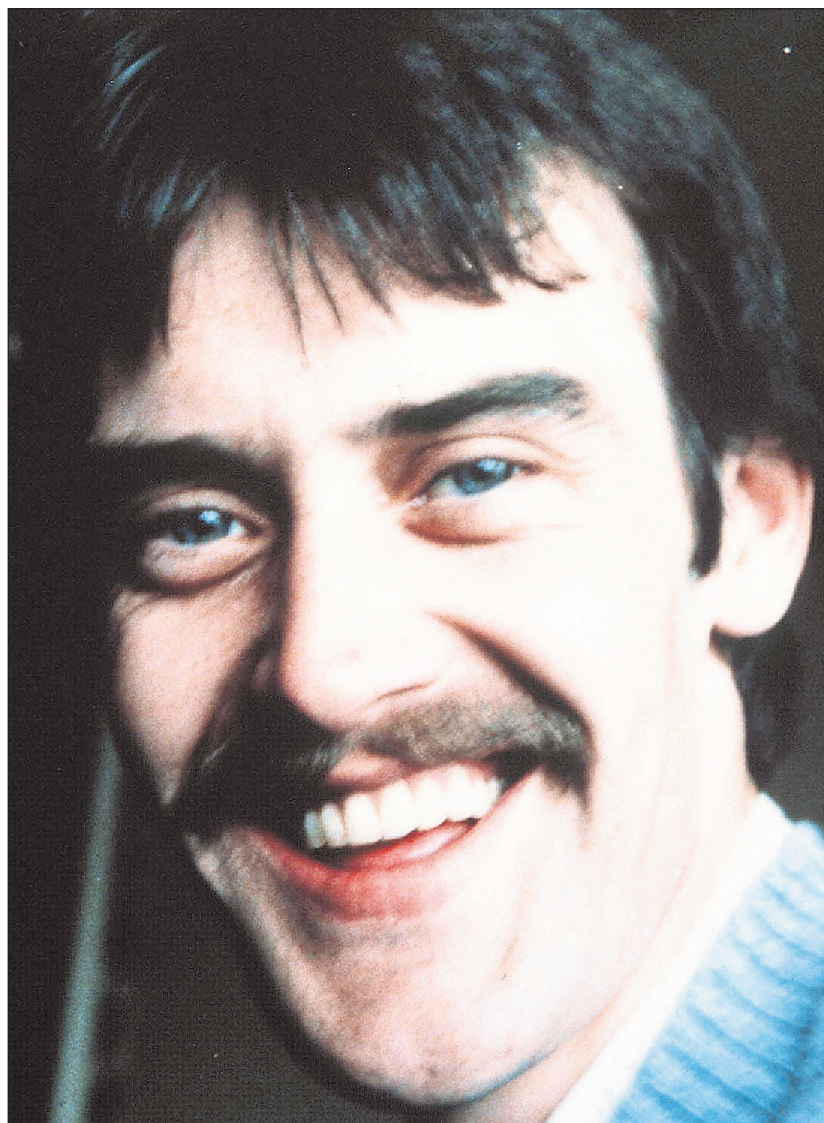
The men's families believe they were the victims of a deliberate shoot-to-kill operation and were given no opportunity to surrender.

The families' legal team have been told of 13 undercover British soldiers involved in the Derry ambush – the majority also playing a part in other lethal operations.

Four soldiers have yet to be identified, while British army officials are still trying to locate one.

However, one trooper, identified as Soldier H, is confirmed as having had a command role in seven other fatal shootings.

Although the exact military unit of which he was a member has not been identified, it has been confirmed that he spent four years and nine days in Northern Ireland as part of a "special unit".



■ **SHOT DEAD:** Danny Doherty, left, and William Fleming were killed by a British army unit while travelling through the grounds of Gransha Hospital in December 1984

It has also been revealed that he was a member of a "specialist unit" between 1983 and 1991.

In documents obtained from the MoD by Fearghal Shiels, of Madden and Finucane Solicitors, each soldier has been identified only by a single letter of the alphabet.

However, while the participation of soldiers in other suspected shoot-to-kill operations has been confirmed, the exact role of the troops in each operation has not been revealed.

Some of the details of the case were discussed at a recent coroner's court hearing

into the Derry killings.

The preliminary hearing was told that three soldiers have declined to be interviewed by the investigating officer appointed to the case and refused to make further statements.

Four others have yet to indicate whether they will give statements.

Mr Shiels said the role of Soldier H will be closely examined.

"This inquest is required to examine the extent to which the operation which resulted in the deaths of Danny Doherty and William Fleming was planned so as to minimise the recourse to lethal force," he said.

"It has now been disclosed for the first time that the officer who planned the operation has been involved in at

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– Fearghal Shiels

least seven incidents in which 16 people died. His planning of all of these operations shall be the focus of intense scrutiny at this inquest."

The solicitor also said it was important for the exact roles of all the soldiers in each op-

eration to be known.

"In order for this inquest to adequately explore the operation of a shoot to kill policy, and to enable the families to participate effectively in the inquest, the Ministry of Defence have been required to disclose details of the other lethal force incidents in which the military personnel were involved," he said.

"This obligation extends not only to those who opened fire or were present, but also to those who were involved in the planning of the operation.

"We will be making applications to the coroner for further disclosure of their roles in these incidents and to cross-examine them on their conduct in other fatal shootings when these soldiers appear to give evidence at this inquest."

■ **CONCERNS:** Fearghal Shiels, of Madden and Finucane Solicitors

PICTURE: Hugh Russell



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