

RNI DE-CLASSIFIED

5. As Special Branch owned the intelligence assets they made the judgement on what was disseminated to an investigation. They governed the collection and dissemination of all intelligence in Northern Ireland where it related to terrorism. This at times could be a source of frustration for me as I expected to know the full picture insofar as it related to intelligence on the crime I was investigating. I always tried to push the limits to glean as much information as possible, but it was never straightforward. For example, if Special Branch told me that Mr X and Mr Y were involved in a crime, I wanted to know how they knew this, whether it was human or technical intelligence, the provenance of the intelligence so that I could assess how much weight to put on it.
6. On occasions I had off the record discussions with members of Special Branch about certain aspects of intelligence provided. This depended to a certain extent upon what sort of personal relationship one had with individual Special Branch officers. I had quite a good relationship with Special Branch which helped considerably both with this investigation and other investigations. I had a good understanding of the work that they did and had a degree of credibility because of a close working relationship with them for many years. I had considerable CID experience in J Division and [REDACTED]
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I had and still depended on Special Branch Briefing Sheets to obtain information about any relevant cases I was investigating. On receipt of these I asked questions to validate the intelligence. I believe I had a certain degree of trust with many Special Branch officers and they were aware that if I was told something in confidence that was how I treated it. Special Branch had a legitimate concern that if a snippet of intelligence were disclosed, for example, in a later interview of a terrorist, this could lead to the source being identified and killed. I had a good understanding of the need to protect the source, not only in terms of their own life, but also because I knew that intelligence provided in the past had saved the lives of others.
7. Overall my experience was that we got more co-operation from Special Branch on the Mrs Nelson's murder investigation than I had on other investigations in the previous 25 years.