

Calls for inquiry into British shoot-to-kill policy in Ulster

- Amnesty International called for investigation into torture claims
- Ex-soldier said unit was 'a deadly ghost squad' and 'a shadow troop'
- Police in Ireland started to re-examine 3,260 murders in 2005

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Amnesty International last night called for an independent investigation into claims made today in The Mail on Sunday that British troops tortured terrorist suspects and operated a shoot- to-kill policy in Northern Ireland.

Such allegations have been made for decades but now they are confirmed in a book released by a former member of the mysterious Military Reaction Force (MRF).

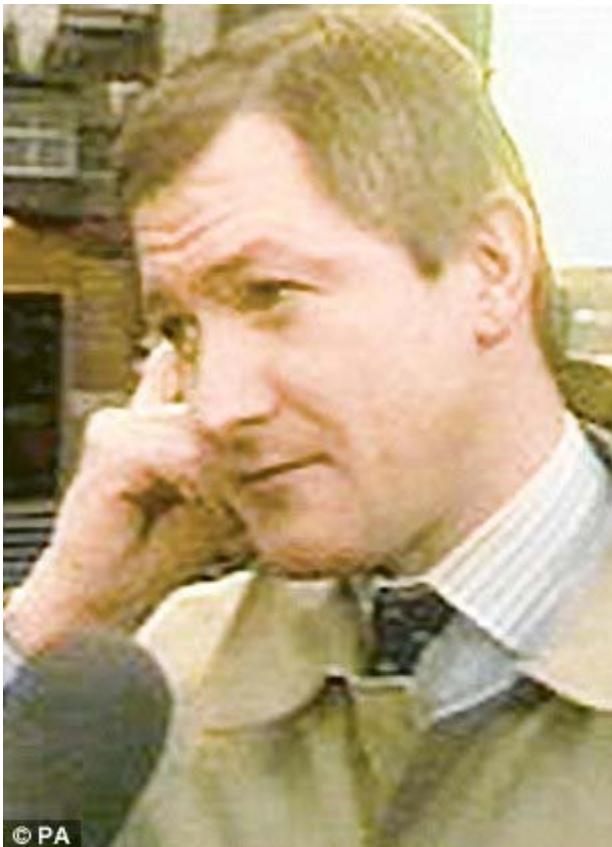
In his new book – extracts of which are printed on these pages – the ex-soldier describes the secret unit as 'a deadly ghost squad . . . a shadow troop'. He says the unit had a list of targets they were ordered to 'shoot on sight'.



Allegations: Last year a former British soldier claims he was part of an undercover unit which carried out a secret campaign against the IRA. Pictured is a soldier in Belfast during The Troubles

His claims were first reported by The Mail on Sunday last year.

Last night, Amnesty's Northern Ireland programme director Patrick Corrigan said the new revelations underlined the need for a full inquiry led by a judge.



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Uncovered: The revelations came a week after a report into the death of pro-Republican lawyer Pat Finucane in 1989

He said: 'The UK Government should establish a new, overarching mechanism to investigate allegations of extra-judicial executions by the security forces and human rights violations.'

'Bereaved family members have a right to truth and justice. Such a process must focus not just on those who pulled the trigger but also those in positions of authority who pulled the strings.'

In 2005, the Police Service of Northern Ireland established a Historical Enquiries Team (HET) to re-examine 3,260 suspected murders by British troops and paramilitary groups.

But Amnesty is calling for HET to be replaced by a legacy commission headed by a judge and with powers to compel witnesses and obtain government documents.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: 'This is a matter for the Historical Enquiries Team.'

'The UK has strict rules of engagement which are in accordance with UK Law and International Humanitarian Law. This applied to operations in Northern Ireland.'

MP Bob Stewart, who commanded British troops in Northern Ireland, said: 'In 1978, I was an intelligence officer in Londonderry.'

I had about 120 people working for me in and out of uniform. They were extremely disciplined. The idea of opening fire unnecessarily was completely alien.'



Gunfight: Bullet holes marked on a Hillman Hunter belonging to the MRF after an IRA shootout