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UDA boss Tommy English was murdered eight years ago

By Chris Thornton
Thursday, 7 August 2008

A special police squad may be on the verge of busting up a notorious UVF gang after charging two men with a Halloween feud killing.

In the first case brought to court by the Historic Enquiries Team, the two men were today due to appear at Belfast Magistrate's Court charged with the murder of UDA boss Tommy English eight years ago.

The 38 and 34-year-olds, who are understood to be related, are also accused of membership of an illegal organisation.

The charges stem from a new probe of the north Belfast UVF, set up last year after the devastating Police Ombudsman report into the murder of Raymond McCord jnr.

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Further breakthroughs against the UVF's Mount Vernon unit could follow.

The charges come a week after the Government put aside months of delays and agreed to release £1m for the special probe into 17 linked murders. HET had been asked to review the series of murders linked to UVF leader Mark Haddock, the police informer currently in jail on an assault charge.

Haddock was named in the Dail as a serial killer who was part of the plot to murder English. The 40-year-old was killed in front of his wife in his Newtownabbey home on October 31, 2000, during a bloody feud between the UVF and UDA in which seven people died. Haddock is not one of the men charged last night.

Last year former Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan reported that the informer had been paid and protected by police while being involved in murder and other serious crime.

Afterwards Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde asked the HET to conduct a special review of the cases. HET was already reviewing unsolved Troubles murders, but a separate unit was set up to look at the killings highlighted by the Ombudsman.

Raymond McCord, who has pursued the UVF gang since they murdered his son in 1997, welcomed the new charges.

"I have to praise the HET and hand it to Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde and Assistant Chief Constable Peter Sheridan — they've taken a lot of criticism but they've started to do what they said they could. I hope more arrests will be made in the near future."

A spokeswoman for the HET said "two men have been charged with murder and membership of a proscribed organisation" by a specialist unit within the Historical Enquiries Team.

"The charges have been brought in relation to the murder of Mr Tommy English who was killed 31 October 2000 in Newtownabbey. The men aged 34 and 38 will appear at Laganside Court".

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