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Local & National

Fears for future of collusion probes as government refuses to provide funds

Friday, July 20, 2007

By Chris Thornton

The Government has refused to pay for ongoing police investigations into collusion cases, raising concerns that the probes could be choked off.

The Policing Board revealed last night that Security Minister Paul Goggins has told them he can't find the £1.5m a year needed to pursue investigation into allegations that police colluded with UVF killers in 10 murders.

Board members said last night that the NIO's decision was "unsatisfactory" and sent their chairman, Sir Desmond Rea, to seek an urgent meeting with the Minister.

The board asked for the cash in February after meeting Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde and Dave Cox, the head of the Historical Enquiries Team (HET), about the fallout from the Police Ombudsman's collusion report.

Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan reported there were several instances of collusion between police and UVF killers in north Belfast during the Nineties, including the 1997 murder of Raymond McCord jnr. The HET was already looking at some of the cases concerned, but Mr Cox is said to have told the Board that he would need an extra £1.5m a year to give greater focus to the cases highlighted by the Ombudsman.






The board wrote to the NIO asking for the additional cash, but Mr Goggins wrote back on July 4 saying that "no additional resources will be available for this purpose".

He blamed "financial pressures" for the decision.

Raymond McCord snr, the campaigning father of the UVF victim, said the decision was "unbelievable".

"To me, this means one thing: the Government doesn't want the truth to come out," he said.

Yesterday the board also heard a report stating that the PSNI is making satisfactory progress in addressing Mrs O'Loan's report.

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
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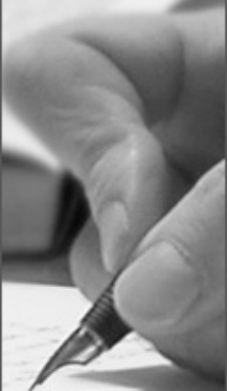


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