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Local & National

Three ex-RUC officers are 'exonerated' by Goggins over collusion inquiry: MP

Thursday, July 19, 2007

By Ashleigh Wallace

Three former RUC officers accused of failing to co-operate with a Police Ombudsman's report into alleged collusion feel they have been exonerated.

Lagan Valley MP Jeffery Donaldson today revealed the three ex-Special Branch officers feel their names have been cleared and their reputations defended after comments made this week by NI0 Minister Paul Goggins.

Retired policemen Chris Albiston, Raymond White and Freddie Hall were accused of failing to co-operate with an Ombudsman investigation into claims of Special Branch collusion with loyalists during the Troubles. The trio were named, speaking under parliamentary privilege in January, by SDLP leader and Foyle MP Mark Durkan.

Following the accusations, Mr Donaldson asked Mr Goggins if the men were "formally interviewed concerning any alleged offence" of collusion.

Mr Goggins replied earlier this week in the form of a written answer.

He said the three former officers "were not formally interviewed in connection with any alleged offence in the course of the Police Ombudsman's investigation".

He added: "I am happy to put on record that these officers, in common with many colleagues, served with commitment and distinction in very demanding police roles in Northern Ireland."

Revealing that Mr Albiston, Mr White and Mr Hall "felt exonerated" by the comments made by Mr Goggins, the Lagan Valley MP said: "I feel that the response given effectively clears these three men and upholds their professional reputation.

"There is no doubt that the criticism made about the three former senior RUC officers was unwarranted.

"That includes criticism made in respect of the Police Ombudsman's report.

"I believe the Government has made it clear these three men have done nothing wrong in terms of any questions the Ombudsman's report may have raised."

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