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Local & National

Ex-officer glad to be exonerated

Friday, July 20, 2007

By Ashleigh Wallace

One of the three ex-Special Branch officers at the centre of collusion allegations has said he feels he has been exonerated.

Raymond White, along with former colleagues Chris Albiston and Freddie Hall, were accused in the House of Commons earlier this year of failing to co-operate with a Police Ombudsman report into alleged collusion between the RUC and loyalist terrorists.

Mr White said he was adamant "we were neither interviewed nor spoken to in relation to any specific investigation".

After being named by Foyle MP Mark Durkan in January, NIO minister Paul Goggins publicly stated this week that the ex-officers in question "served with commitment and distinction".

Mr White said: "It's going to be terribly hard to get any sort of repair done to our reputations but I do feel there is a lot of relief tinged with regret at the position we are now in.

"We held ourselves in readiness to answer any questions put to us regarding our tenures in office but no-one came and spoke to us.

"We have quite clearly stated we have done nothing wrong."

He said that while allegations were raised in the Ombudsman's report, he and his two colleagues "held ourselves in readiness" for questioning which he said never transpired.

Mr White, who retired in 2002, added: "We never expected to be named and shamed because we were not guilty of anything so it came as a great surprise to us to be accused of not co-operating."

Mr White revealed he and his two colleagues were "indebted" to Mr Goggins for "being so forthright in clearing our names".

He also paid tribute to Lagan Valley MP Jeffrey Donaldson, saying he had "clearly shown he is prepared to listen to both sides of the story before making his own judgment."

He also questioned whether "retrospective investigations" by the Ombudsman's office were the "right and proper way forward."

A spokesman for the Ombudsman's office said: "We cannot comment on the identity of individual officers mentioned in the House of Commons.

"It is the case that a number of retired police officers refused to co-operate with our enquiry.

"We would ask that anyone who has information which would help police in the investigation of the deaths referred to in our report, to provide that information to police."

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