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North Belfast News editorial

North Belfast News

Editor

02/02/2007

Rallying cry no substitute for resolute action

The 'confidential' email sent by Chief Constable Hugh Orde as a rallying cry to the entire membership of the PSNI was tetchy, ill-advised, badly timed and just plain silly.

Mr Orde sent out the memo after Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's damning indictment of his force in her report into the activities of serial killer and RUC/PSNI agent Mark Haddock. It's clear Mr Orde felt he had to make some sort of gesture to lift the sagging morale of the troops and in what still remains a largely unionist service it is always popular to lash out at the nationalist politicians.

Hugh Orde must have known he would be out of the country when the storm broke so he would be spared having to make any further comment. However, whatever he thought he would achieve by sticking two fingers up at the nationalist parties his attempt to play to the gallery has completely misfired.

Mr Orde's sensitivities around criticism of his force and its predecessor the RUC might just have been warranted if last week's Ombudsman's report was into motoring offences committed by his merry men and women. Instead the Ombudsman was investigating the activities of just one of a plethora of RUC/PSNI agents operating inside loyalist paramilitaries. That agent was involved in more than a dozen murders and was given a pay rise by the RUC after murdering Good Samaritan Sharon McKenna. Members of first the RUC and then Mr Orde's PSNI covered up evidence of these murders. They withheld information, they perverted the course of justice and stood back and allowed people to be killed when they had information prior to their murders that attacks were imminent. These officers had an arrogance born out of a belief that they were untouchable.

Mr Orde would serve the community better and help build public confidence in policing if he went after those in his ranks who refused to co-operate with Ms O'Loan's multiple murder inquiry.

Attacking those whose public duty it is to make the police democratically accountable is no substitute for resolute action in rooting out those officers who ran the death squads or who were involved in covering up their activities.

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