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## O'Loan challenged to identify officers

(John Manley, [Irish News](#))

The ex-RUC Special Branch officers whose actions are exposed in the Police Ombudsman's damning report have challenged Nuala O'Loan to publicly identify them.

In a statement issued through the Retired Police Officers Association, around a dozen officers are heavily critical of Mrs O'Loan's findings, rejecting her allegations as "unfounded and incapable of substantiation".

The officers claim that if the ombudsman's inquiry had found specific evidence of their involvement in any offence then prosecutions should be forthcoming.

"The ex-senior officers at the centre of this inquiry have no hesitation in inviting the focus of attention to be placed squarely on them by disclosure of the evidence of their individual criminal misdeeds," the statement said.

The former Special Branch officers say they are not surprised by the Public Prosecution Service's decision not to mount criminal proceedings and they accuse the ombudsman of "damaging the reputation of many fine officers who were doing their duty on behalf of the community at great personal risk".

The statement says the officers firmly believed that they had always acted in the best interests of the pursuit of justice by "seeking to minimise the threat to the community and to maximise the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism drive".

The officers are also critical of what they describe as the "orchestrated media hype" which has surrounded the report into Mark Haddock's activities as a Special Branch informant.

"The incessant advance media briefing of information from her office which has been an unsavoury and squalid feature of the investigation including working for months in advance with television programme makers has collapsed any hope that remained amongst the officers that the very serious investigative responsibilities laid upon the office of Police Ombudsman would be discharged to the high standard of professionalism, confidentiality and integrity that the post

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demands," the statement read.

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