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## Victims campaigner to sue Sir Hugh over security breach case

By Barry McCaffrey

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A victims' campaigner has said he will sue Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde after his personal

details were passed on to loyalist paramilitaries by a computer operator who was working for the PSNI.

Relatives For Justice director Mark Thompson, pictured, was among 117 nationalists in the mid-Ulster area whose details were leaked.

On Wednesday, former Wrightbus

manager Darren Richardson pleaded guilty to possession of information likely to be useful to terrorists and possession of 30 bullets found in his Ballymena office in April 2007.

Aaron Hill (24), from Neillsbrook Park in Randalstown, Co Antrim, had earlier pleaded guilty to using his job as a PSNI computer operator to collect details on nationalists in the mid-Ulster area.

Hill also pleaded guilty to misconduct in a public office. Both men are due to be sentenced next month for what is understood to have been a UVF 'intelligence-gathering' operation.

A Wrightbus spokeswoman said Richardson had resigned from the company.

However, Mr Thompson last night called for an independent inquiry into how loyalist paramilitaries accessed police computer information.

"I have instructed my solicitor to initiate legal proceedings against the PSNI for failing to prevent my details from being passed on to loyalist paramilitaries," he said.

"The PSNI repeatedly refused to provide me with any information about this case, while the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) even refused to allow me to make a witness statement.

"There are a number of serious issues surrounding this case which need to be addressed, including the fact that the Police Ombudsman is not allowed to question PSNI civilian employees."

It is understood that the majority of the nationalists who were targeted had taken part in a policing debate at a hotel in

Co Antrim in December 2006.

Solicitor Kevin Winters confirmed that five other nationalists would also be taking civil actions against the chief constable as well as against Richardson and Hill.

Sinn Fein's Alex Maskey said he would now be asking for a Policing Board investigation into the security breach.

"There are serious questions as to how a well-known loyalist was given unfettered access to a police computer

and allowed to hand over the personal details of more than 100 nationalists to the UVF," he said.

"This is a very serious matter which can not be brushed under the carpet."

SDLP assembly member Alban Maginness described the case as "alarming".


"It is unacceptable that information from the PSNI computer system was being passed on to loyalist paramilitaries for two years without being detected," he said.

"There should have been some system in place to detect what was going on.

"I will be asking the PSNI what mechanisms have been put in place to ensure such an appalling lapse in security never happens again."

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