

[HOME](#)[History](#)[NewsoftheIrish](#)[Book Reviews
& Book Forum](#)[Search / Archive](#)

Back to 10/96

[Papers](#)[Reference](#)[About](#)[Contact](#)

RUC whistleblower calls for collusion prosecutions

(Barry McCaffrey, [Irish News](#))

A former RUC 'whistleblower' has criticised a decision not to prosecute 20 policemen and soldiers who had previously been identified by Sir John Stevens as having been involved in collusion with loyalist paramilitaries.

Earlier this week the Public Prosecution Service announced that it would not prosecute the 20 security force members identified in evidence gathered by the Stevens inquiry team.

That evidence included collusion in the murder of solicitor Pat Finucane and Protestant teenager Adam Lambert and the RUC decision to hand over weapons to a UDA gang, which were subsequently used in the murder of six people in gun attacks on a west Belfast bar and a south Belfast bookmakers.

The PPS said it had been unable to identify the senior officers who had approved the decision to give the weapons back to the UDA.

The failure to prosecute any security force member was last night (Tuesday) criticised by one of the most successful detectives of the Troubles.

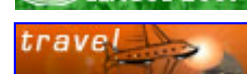
Former RUC detective Trevor McIlwrath was central in exposing the two biggest collusion cases in Northern Ireland over the past 30 years.

In October 1991 the former detective listened to loyalist Ken Barrett as he confessed to the murder of solicitor Pat Finucane.

However, Mr McIlwrath and his CID colleague Johnston Brown were blocked by Special Branch from charging Barrett with the murder.

Two years later the two detectives found themselves in similar circumstances when UVF killer Mark Haddock confessed to the murder of Catholic woman Sharon McKenna.

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Again Special Branch blocked Mr Brown and Mr McIlwrath from charging Haddock with murder.

Over the next 14 years Special Branch protected Haddock from prosecution, despite involvement in more than a dozen murders.

It was information that Mr McIlwrath and Mr Brown provided to the 1999 Stevens III inquiry that provided the first evidence of security force collusion with loyalist paramilitaries.

The two detectives received numerous death threats after their cooperation with Stevens was made public.

However, Trevor McIlwrath last night criticised the decision not to prosecute security force members who had been involved in collusion.

"Yet again it will be the victims' families who will lose out," he said.

"Sir John Stevens was the most senior police officer in the whole of Britain and he believed he had provided the PPS with enough evidence to prove that these people were involved in collusion.

"The PPS is expecting victims' families to believe they could not identify the senior police officers who allowed guns to be handed back to the UDA.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out who gave the orders to give these weapons back to the UDA."

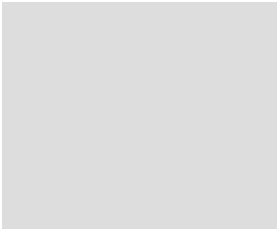
Mr McIlwrath called on the PPS to allow the victims' families legal representatives to study the evidence not to prosecute.

"If the PPS is supposed to be open and transparent then they should allow these families to see the evidence on which they decided not to prosecute," he said.

"Otherwise people are just going to think this is another cover-up."

Taoiseach Bertie Ahern last night described the decision as "disappointing" and told the Dail there was a clear case for an independent public inquiry into Mr Finucane's killing.

"If anything, it is the government's view that this adds (to) the case for an independent inquiry, and that is the attitude that we will persist with," he said.



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[Bookstore](#)

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