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## Families must have the truth

(Editorial, [Irish News](#))

When Nuala O'Loan published her devastating investigation into collusion between the police and Mount Vernon UVF, few believed this type of activity was confined to just one area of north Belfast.

If anything, January's shocking revelations relating to the murderous activities of Special Branch informant Mark Haddock were said to be the tip of the iceberg and it was expected to be only a matter of time before further disturbing information came to light.

Now the police ombudsman is to be asked to investigate collusion allegations involving a UDA killer which potentially could be as bad as – if not worse than – the Haddock disclosures.

Central to these latest allegations is Stephen 'Inch' McFerran, who was sentenced to five years jail earlier this year after he pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of another UDA member, Roy Green, in January 2003.

During the trial, in an unexpected development, it emerged that McFerran had been a Special Branch agent. The implications of this disclosure are enormous.

This man was associated with the UDA in south Belfast since the early 1990s – a time when the organisation was responsible for a series of sectarian murders, including the deaths of five men in a gun attack on Sean Graham's bookmakers in 1992.

In all, this loyalist gang carried out more than 20 murders during a 13-year period. Their victims included five taxi drivers and two women. The husband of Theresa Clinton, shot dead 13 years ago today (Saturday), is to ask Mrs O'Loan to find out if McFerran was protected from prosecution due to his status as a Special Branch agent. Jim Clinton has raised a number of concerns about the police investigation into his wife's death and there are clearly serious questions about this murder and so many others which must be answered.

Of course, there have been accusations of collusion between

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the security forces and paramilitary killers in the past, and a number of high level inquiries encountered considerable opposition and obstruction.

Mrs O'Loan's investigation into the running of police informants in Mount Vernon also experienced difficulties in obtaining information.

The repercussions of that inquiry are still being felt – as they should. Now it is essential that the ombudsman pursues the case of Stephen McFerran with the same determination and tenacity she displayed in the earlier collusion investigation.

This time, however, she must receive the full co-operation of police officers and have access to all relevant information.

The families of those who died at the hands of the UDA in south Belfast are entitled to know the full circumstances of the crimes carried out by these paramilitary killers and what the police knew about these dreadful murders.

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