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Rea to be questioned on Orde dossier

Policing Board chairman Sir Desmond Rea was today urged to rule on a deepening row over Special Branch collusion with loyalist killers.



Raymond McCord Snr

Sir Desmond was meeting justice campaigner Raymond McCord and his wife Vivienne to discuss Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's devastating report into their son's murder by paramilitary informers.

Her revelations that ex-Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) boss Mark Haddock was shielded from prosecution for up to 15 murders stretching back to the early 1990s unleashed a barrage of criticism against former chief constable Sir Ronnie Flanagan.

Even though Sir Ronnie insisted he knew nothing about any officers under his command collaborating with UVF men in north Belfast, Mr McCord and nationalist political leaders have rejected his denials.

They have pointed to allegations first raised months after Raymond McCord Jr, 22, was beaten to death in November 1997 by members of Haddock's Mount Vernon gang.

Sir Desmond and his vice chairman, Barry Gilligan, will be told that before current chief constable Hugh Orde was appointed by the board, he investigated loyalist collusion with the RUC as part of the sprawling Stevens Inquiry.

Mr McCord claimed Sir Hugh passed a dossier of his findings to police in Belfast.

He also stressed that he held talks with Sir Ronnie back in 1998 to discuss what rogue Special Branch officers knew about the UVF killing of his son.

"If Ronnie Flanagan's trying to say he didn't know about collusion what was it I went to meet him about? The traffic arrangements in north Belfast?" he said.

With the furore over Mrs O'Loan's findings — and what police chiefs did and didn't know — still to subside, Mr McCord vowed to put Mr Rea on the spot.

"After studying the report, does he believe Hugh Orde's version or Ronnie Flanagan's version of who knew about collusion and who didn't.

"This is in his remit as chairman of the Policing Board that holds the chief constable to account.

"He has to make a decision whether Hugh Orde is fit to hold the office bearing in mind all that has been said."

A spokeswoman for Sir Desmond said the meeting with Mr McCord and his wife was private. "Issues raised will be brought to the Policing Board when it meets next on February 7th."

PA

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