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New battle for father of collusion victim

McCord fights snub over commission job

Henry McDonald, Ireland editor
Sunday June 24, 2007
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The father of a loyalist murder victim who uncovered a web of collusion between UVF killers and the RUC Special Branch is taking legal action after being refused an interview for the post of Victims' Commissioner.

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Raymond McCord Snr's one-man fight for justice led to the explosive O'Loan report earlier this year, which found collusion between a north Belfast UVF gang and their police handlers. Now McCord has opened up a new front - a judicial review of the decision not to grant him an interview for the new post.

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In a letter to McCord last month, the Northern Ireland Office informed him he was not eligible on several grounds. These included the NIO's view that 'you do not show enough awareness of the Troubles'. Among six other reasons was that he 'did not show competence in dealing with the media and press'.

Last night McCord confirmed that he is applying for a judicial review in Belfast's High Court. The new power-sharing government at Stormont, led by Ian Paisley, has promised to appoint a Commissioner by early next month.

'As far back as 1992, I was left for dead after a severe beating by a UDA gang that I had crossed. Since I started campaigning for my son, I've had to move out of my family home in Newtownabbey due to death threats. The police informed me the UVF was planning to blow my car up. Relatives have received death threats. The house in which I live now is surrounded by security cameras, sensors, bulletproof windows and doors. So it's a bit of an insult for the NIO to say I don't know anything about the Troubles,' he said.

Raymond McCord Jnr was beaten to death on 9 November 1997 at a quarry on the northern outskirts of Belfast. He had been facing charges of possession of

cannabis, which had been provided to him by the UVF commander in the Mount Vernon area of the city. The local UVF boss, named in the Irish parliament as Mark Haddock, blamed McCord Jnr for importing the drugs and, to cover his own back, allegedly dispatched a UVF punishment squad to abduct and kill the 22-year-old.

For the past decade his father has fought a lone campaign to expose his son's killers. In the process he discovered that several members of the gang were informers working for Special Branch. McCord has alleged that their handlers turned a blind eye to keep their 'intelligence assets' intact.

Paul Farrell, McCord's lawyer, said he was confident his client could mount a successful challenge. 'This was a blanket refusal to even consider Raymond and I strongly believe he has good grounds to question their reasoning in court,' said Farrell.

Last night McCord said only one thing would dissuade him. 'If the new devolved government at Stormont decided to give the job to Nuala O'Loan [the police ombudsman], then I would withdraw my action. She stood by me and I think she would stand by every victim of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.'

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