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## Net's closing on Haddock's team

**HET vows to bring UVF tout's notorious killer gang to book**

By Stephen Breen  
Sunday, 24 August 2008

A top cop last night vowed to smash a notorious loyalist murder gang by declaring: "We're going to crack this".

In his first interview since the formation of the specialist team tasked with nailing Mark Haddock's blood-thirsty Mount

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Vernon UVF unit,  
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What are these?

Operations Steve Hobbs told Sunday Life how the net was closing in on the ruthless terror gang.

The former Metropolitan Police detective — who was due to retire before accepting an offer from PSNI Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde to dismantle the serial killer's gang — is the new unit's Senior Investigating Officer.

And he has promised to use his 30-plus years experience of investigating murders in London in his team's efforts to bring Haddock's henchmen before the courts. The detective told how his team are re-investigating 19 murders, 14 attempted murders and 25 punishment shootings by the gang between 1991 and 2003.

But he also told how:

I Witnesses to crimes were coming forward.

I Experienced officers were using advanced forensic techniques.

I More arrests would be made.

I New criminal legislation would be used by his officers and how.

I The terror group's victims were also coming forward.

Said the leading cold-case cop: "We're going to get there. I know we will. This whole thing is unravelling and we are working from the outside in to bring these people to justice.

"Witnesses to crimes and victims of crimes committed by these people, who may have been afraid to speak out in the past, are now coming forward.

"For example, we intend to talk to people who escaped from this gang after they tried to kill them. We will be asking people who shot them.

"The crimes under investigation include sectarian murders, feud killings, punishment shootings and other serious crimes that these people were involved in.

"Our investigations are focused on forensic applications and there are a good number of cases we can progress because of the advances in science and technology.

"I could have been in retirement now, but I took an undertaking to bring these people to justice and I intent to fulfil it for the fam

ilies who are paramount in our investigations."

Although his team are dedicated to bringing down the "main players" of Haddock's gang, Det Hobbs has also vowed to track down the UVF members who were on the "periphery" of the terror group.

Added the senior cop: "There are people who were on the fringes of this group and who may have helped planned serious crimes such as murder. If these people don't come to us with information then we will go after them.

"But this investigation is about going after the major players who committed serious acts of crime over many years.

"Witness protection schemes are in place and people should not be afraid to come forward because we will protect them.

"We are positive of the government legislation we intend to use to bring these people before the courts and



HET head Dave Cox

enlarge

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we also intend to link various crimes committed by these people since 1991. Our work is ongoing and we will continue to explore the full range of criminality committed by this group."

Paul McKenna, whose Good Samaritan sister Sharon was murdered by Haddock's gang in 1993, hopes to meet with the HET's senior officer next month.

The Belfast man remains hopeful that the families of victims of Haddock's gang will receive justice, adding: "I've met with Steve

Hobbs and I do believe there is a will among his team to bring these people to justice. I just hope they're allowed to do their job.

"Although my sister's murder was before the Good Friday Agreement, I still believe that the people who killed her should be jailed.

"They may only do a short period of time for her murder, but if they are in jail for other offences then they could end up being behind bars for a long time.

"I was told a couple weeks ago that there would be arrests and this wouldn't come as a surprise to me. The victims' families will be meeting again with the HET to discuss the progress which has been made.

"We still deserve justice after all these years and we hope the HET can help us achieve this aim."

The police unit was established after former Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's damning report into the 1997 murder of Raymond McCord Jnr.

The report — entitled 'Operation Ballast' — confirmed that Haddock was working as a Special Branch informer when dozens of murders were committed by his gang in the 1990s.

The investigation by the Police Ombudsman was only launched after a complaint was made by Raymond McCord Snr.

Mr McCord claimed Special Branch agents, including Haddock and other top gangsters, had a role in the murder of his son.

The report outlined how Haddock's gang had participated in murder, attempted murder and punishment attacks.

Mr McCord last night welcomed the senior cop's vow to bring more of Haddock's thugs before the courts. Said the crusading dad: "I have 100% confidence in Det Hobbs' team.

"The killers of my son and other victims should realise that they won't get away with what they did over the years."

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