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The Times

January 22, 2007

RUC 'colluded with loyalist killers'

Sean O'Neill

- **Hain shocked by report on UVF gang**
- **Informants and officers are named**

The extent of collusion between police and a loyalist murder gang in the last years of the Northern Ireland Troubles is to be revealed in an official report today.

Peter Hain, the Northern Ireland Secretary, described the report's findings as devastating. But he appealed to republicans not to let it distract them as they prepared for a special conference on policing in the Province, which is essential to the restoration of a power-sharing, devolved administration.

The document, by Nuala O'Loan, the Policing Ombudswoman, focuses on the activities of a unit of the Ulster Volunteer Force which contained a number of Royal Ulster Constabulary informers.

The UVF's Mount Vernon unit was led by Mark Haddock, who is in prison for a hatchet attack on a nightclub doorman. It is suspected that he was a paid police informer.

The report details a number of murders linked to the unit and concludes that senior RUC officers knew about its activities but did not intervene.

The public version of the report is understood not to contain names.

But Mrs O'Loan has sent a confidential dossier to Mr Hain and Sir Hugh Orde, the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, which replaced the RUC as part of the peace process. In it, she names Special Branch and CID officers as well as the UVF agents they ran.



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The inquiry began by looking into the killing of Raymond McCord Jr, 22, a former RAF man who was beaten to death in November 1997. It then widened to examine other murders, including that of Sharon McKenna, 27, a Roman Catholic taxi driver, in 1993.

Mrs O'Loan's staff gathered information about a series of other victims, including the loyalist Tommy English, who was shot during a paramilitary feud, and the Presbyterian church minister David Templeton, who was attacked and killed in his home in 1997.

Mr Hain said: "In my view the ombudsman's report is devastating about the past and especially about the murder of Raymond McCord and other related murders. It is a devastating indictment of that period of policing in the 1990s, but the PSNI has since come into being and policing has been radically transformed."

Mr Hain appealed to republicans to remember that the events covered by the report were in the past.

Gerry Adams and the Sinn Fein leadership are engaged in a series of meetings with the party's grassroots membership to urge them to support the PSNI and pave the way for a power-sharing deal with the Democratic Unionist Party, led by the Rev Ian Paisley.

Mr Hain added: "I would hope that republicans in the run-up to their critical meeting at the Ard Fheis [party conference] next weekend would take the advice of Gerry Adams that if they still have remaining concerns about policing, the best way to influence that is to sign up to supporting policing and the rule of law as a matter of fundamental principle.

"They should participate in the district policing partnerships, as they are entitled to do, and take their seats on the policing board as Sinn Fein representatives are entitled to do. That is how they can best answer the concerns raised in this report."

- Sinn Fein will be looking to Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern to reactivate cross-border bodies if their power-sharing plan fails, Martin McGuinness said.

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach hope to persuade the DUP to share power with republicans by March 26.

Mr McGuinness told a crowd of more than 200 in Lurgan that there was no way he would ask young nationalists to sign up to a British police service.

He said: "We have made it clear that in the event of power-sharing not happening the two governments would have to move on to Plan B . . . What is Plan B? It is the unfreezing of the all-Ireland institution body."

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