

# Officers in RUC Special Branch 'ignored killings by loyalist informers'

By Tom Peterkin, Ireland Correspondent

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An explosive report is expected to claim today that police in Northern Ireland ignored murders carried out by loyalist paramilitaries who were being paid as informers.

Senior officers in the former Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Special Branch are understood to be implicated in the report after an inquiry into alleged collusion.

Its publication comes at a critical time in the political process as Sinn Fein leaders attempt to [persuade grassroots republicans finally to support policing](#).

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advertisement Yesterday, Peter Hain, the Northern Ireland Secretary, admitted that the report, by Nuala O'Loan, the police ombudsman, was a "devastating indictment" of policing in the 1990s.

But he said Sinn Fein should not use it as an excuse to avoid taking the step, at a special party conference next week, of recognising the rule of law. "The report makes uncomfortable reading and will do for those in positions of responsibility in the police during the 1990s," Mr Hain said.

"I would hope that republicans in the run-up to their critical meeting would take the advice of Gerry Adams that, if they still have 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."

Mr Hain refused to be drawn on reports that no prosecutions would be taken against police officers in the wake of the three-year inquiry, codenamed Operation Ballast.

Some Unionists have argued that Mrs O'Loan's report seeks to tarnish the reputation of a force that brought Ulster back from the brink of civil war in the face of an IRA terror campaign.

The £1 million investigation is expected to claim that several officers colluded with members of the Ulster Volunteer Force, based in the Mount Vernon area of Belfast.

It is likely to say that Special Branch officers were complicit in protecting UVF agents or informers, even though they knew or suspected that they were involved in up to a dozen murders of Catholics and Protestants over a decade.

A confidential dossier sent to Mr Hain and Sir Hugh Orde, the chief constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, which replaced the RUC, has named several officers and their UVF agents.

It is thought that the officers will remain anonymous in the version of the report to be published today.

Mrs O'Loan's inquiry began after the beating to death in November 1997 of an ex-RAF radar operator, Raymond McCord Jnr, who had been charged with drug smuggling offences.

Since Mr McCord's father, also Raymond, brought the murder to her attention, the investigation has widened to cover a series of killings.

At the centre of the ombudsman's probe is Mark Haddock, a UVF terrorist and Special Branch agent who ran the organisation's Mount Vernon unit in the 1990s.

Haddock, 37, long suspected of being a paid informer, was jailed for 10 years in November for a

hatchet and iron bar attack on a nightclub doorman. Months earlier he survived an assassination attempt by ex-associates desperate to silence him.

Mrs O'Loan's staff have also compiled intelligence on other victims, Tommy English, a loyalist shot during a paramilitary feud in 2000, and David Templeton, a Presbyterian minister, who was beaten to death at his home in 1997.

Yesterday Mr McCord Snr claimed: "The RUC colluded with loyalist paramilitaries in killing not only republicans but also Unionist people."

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