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## McCord to quiz prison chiefs about cell search

North Belfast News

By Ciarán Barnes

13/04/2007

A campaigning dad whose son was murdered by the UVF is to meet with prison service chiefs on Friday to find out why the RUC did not search the cell of a suspect in the murder.

Raymond McCord Snr is determined to get answers from Director General Robin Mansfield about the incident at Maghaberry jail on November 14, 1997.

Mr McCord's son, Raymond Jnr, had been battered to death by the UVF five days earlier.

The man suspected of carrying out the vicious breeze block killing – a notorious UVF man from North Belfast – had been out on temporary release at the time.

The RUC had information that this man was involved in the murder and that clothes in his cell might contain vital forensic evidence.

But detectives claim that when they went to the prison to search the cell, prison authorities told them it was a "non-starter" and that it would cause a riot.

In statements to Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan they allege that prison chiefs told them it would take more than 100 men to lock down the loyalist wing while cops searched the suspect's cell.

Because of a lack of manpower and the potential for a major riot, detectives said the prison authorities refused to give clearance for the search.

However, the Prison Service has disputed the RUC's version of events. Wardens working in Maghaberry on November 14, 1997, say detectives did not ask to search the UVF man's cell, and that at no time did they refuse to carry out searches.

Mr McCord Snr knows either the police or prison service is lying, and he is determined to find who is hiding the truth.

"Either way it proves that there was a cover up in my son's murder," he said.

"If the authorities had searched the suspect's cell they might have found vital forensic evidence. This could have led to a prosecution, something which they obviously didn't want.

"I'll be asking Robin Mansfield directly, did prison wardens refuse to search this UVF man's cell? I am expecting a straight answer," added Mr McCord.

The statements from the detectives and prison wardens about the disputed cell search are contained in Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan's report into

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the McCord killing. Ms O'Loan found that Special Branch detectives colluded with paid informants in the Mount Vernon UVF to cover up their role in a dozen murders.

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