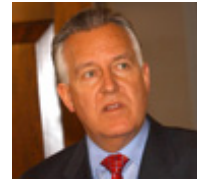


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MEDIA CENTRE

Monday 22 January 2007

Statement by Peter Hain on Police Ombudsman's report



The Police Ombudsman has today shone a light on a dark and murky period in the history of Northern Ireland.

I want to thank Nuala O'Loan and all her team for the painstaking work that has gone into producing today's report.

I know that it has not been an easy task.

The Police Ombudsman's report finds that the investigation into the brutal murder of Raymond McCord Jnr in 1997 was fundamentally compromised because of the corrupting relationship between elements of the then RUC Special Branch and informants within the UVF in North Belfast.

The Report also calls for a thorough reinvestigation of extremely serious crimes, including murder, in which informants may have been involved.

There can be no hiding from the findings of this comprehensive and thorough report and as I anticipated, it will make for extremely uncomfortable reading.

Let me make the Government's response perfectly clear.

The serious failings that have been exposed within parts of the RUC Special Branch at the time of the murder of Raymond McCord Jnr and for a period thereafter cannot be justified and no one should attempt to justify them.

They should never have happened.

Those involved – a small number of officers – failed in their fundamental duty to protect the community.

That was in marked and stark contrast to the thousands of courageous RUC men and women who behaved throughout the most dangerous and difficult times with professionalism and integrity.

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Obstacles to devolution have been removed: Hain

Wednesday 7 February 2007
Hanson reinforces devolution deadline



I welcome the open and honest response to the report by the Chief Constable.

Anyone who has watched the way Sir Hugh Orde has lead the PSNI will have expected no less.

As the Report acknowledges, policing in Northern Ireland has changed radically since the Patten reforms were implemented and new robust systems are in place to ensure that the failures of the past will not and cannot be repeated.

The Ombudsman's report strengthens and reinforces these.

Hugh Orde has accepted in full the recommendations where they relate to the PSNI.

Indeed many have already been implemented

The failings set out in this report, serious as they were, lie in the past and should not cloud our view of policing today where there has been a fundamental reform of police intelligence gathering and new arrangements established for the sharing of information across the PSNI.

It was Raymond McCord Snr's campaign for truth and justice that was the genesis of this report and I hope that it will hasten the day when the killers of his son and the other victims will face the courts.

I have heard calls for the setting up of a public inquiry to look into these terrible events.

There is nothing at all to suggest that such an inquiry will uncover any new or additional evidence that has not already been unearthed by the Police Ombudsman during the painstaking investigation conducted over the past three years.

I know that this is a view shared by Nuala O'Loan.

And of course the work of the HET is ongoing.

One of the immense challenges for the future is how to address the dreadful legacy of a poisonous past.

It will not be easy.

Later this week I will receive Bertha McDougall's report which will prepare the ground for Northern Ireland's first permanent Victim's Commissioner.

It could not be more timely.

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