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Over ten years of cover-ups left nineteen people dead

RUC's Special Branch gave Mount Vernon UVF a licence to kill

North Belfast News

By Ciaran Barnes

19/01/2007

17 January 1993, Sharon McKenna:

Two former policemen claim Mark Haddock told them he shot Shraon McKenna dead at the house of an elderly Protestant friend on the Shore Road.

Jonty Brown and Trevor McIlwrath claim Special Branch blocked attempts by them to charge the UVF men involved despite the detectives having the confession.

24 February 1994, Sean McParland:

Murdered by a UVF Special Branch agent from Newtownabbey nicknamed the Beast. The paramilitary is the current boss of the organisation in Southeast Antrim.

No one has been charged with the killing.

17 May 1994, Eamon Fox and Gary Convie: The Catholic builders were allegedly shot dead by Haddock as they worked on a building site in Tiger's Bay. Despite admitting to Special Branch handlers that he was involved Haddock was never charged.

17 June 1994, Cecil Dougherty and William Corrigan: The Protestant builders were shot dead in a hut on a construction site in Rathcoole. They were mistaken for Catholics.

The killing was carried out by a paramilitary who was trying to wrest control of the Southeast Antrim UVF from Haddock, shooting the men while his boss was on holiday. He was given a bad beating when it was discovered the men were Protestants.

Special Branch had prior knowledge of the attack but did nothing to prevent it taking place.

18 June 1994, Adrian Rogan, Malcolm Jenkinson, Barney Greene, Daniel McCreanor, Patrick O'Hare, Eamon Byrne:

The six men were killed in the UVF massacre at the Heights Bar Loughinisland on the evening Ireland beat Italy in a World Cup game. The car used in the murders was provided by a Catholic Mount Vernon UVF

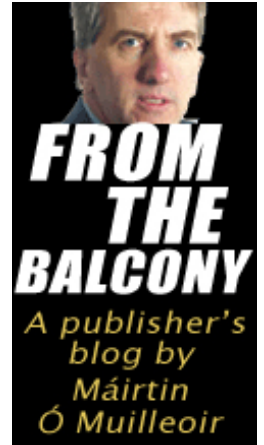
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informant code-named Mechanic. Within three months of the murder Mechanic told his handlers that he provided the vehicle but was never charged.

21 March 1996, Tommy Sheppard: The North Antrim UVF man was working as a police informant when he was shot dead in a bar in Ballymena. Haddock was a close friend of Sheppard's, staying on occasion at a house he owned on the North Antrim coast. He boasted to handlers that he carried out the killing.

24 March 1997, Rev David Templeton: The Presbyterian minister died two months after being attacked in his North Belfast home by a UVF gang. They targeted Rev Templeton after he was found in possession of pornography while passing through Belfast International Airport. The clergyman named his attackers, including Haddock, to doctors who treated his injuries. The names were passed on to the RUC, however the gang was never charged.

19 May 1997, William Harbinson: The North Belfast man was found handcuffed and beaten to death in the Mount Vernon estate. Haddock and the Beast were allegedly among the killers. They attacked him for allegedly hitting a woman. No one was charged.

9 May 1997, Raymond McCord Jnr: The RAF man was beaten to death in a Newtownabbey quarry. Haddock feared the 22-year-old was going to tell the UVF leadership about how he was raking in thousands of pounds from the sale of drugs. McCord had been a UVF member for a short time and was used by Haddock to ferry money and drugs around.

28 October 2000, David Greer: The UDA man was shot by the Mount Vernon UVF gang during a feud between the organisations. They targeted him as he made his way home through Tiger's Bay late at night. At least two informants were involved in the shooting.

31 October 2000, Tommy English: The top UDA man was shot dead in his Tiger's Bay home by the Mount Vernon UVF during a feud between the organisations. Two Special Branch agents who set up Raymond McCord Jnr for murder were the gunmen.

John Allen - 8 November 2003: The Ballyclare man was the best friend of Trevor Gowdy, who was beaten by a loyalist gang in Newtownabbey December 2002.

Allen was a star witness in the case against men who were charged in connection with the attack. Gowdy phoned Allen for help after the men locked him in the boot of a car which was later set on fire. However, Allen was shot dead before the case went to court.

In November 2006 leading Mount Vernon loyalist Mark Haddock was sentenced to ten years in jail for attacking Gowdy and setting fire to his car.

What sparked the probe?

Three years ago York Road man Raymond McCord Snr walked into the city centre office of Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan. He asked her to investigate whether Special Branch officers covered up the 1997 UVF murder of his son, Raymond Jnr, to protect informants in the gang. Mr McCord's claim, later backed up by retired RUC detectives Jonty Brown and Trevor McIlwrath, sparked what would become the ombudsman's biggest ever probe.

The McCord family's problems with the UVF began when they moved to the Mount Vernon estate in 1996 after being forced out of their Rathcoole home

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Seeking protection, Raymond Jnr, joined the UVF. The unit's leader, the Special Branch agent Haddock, used him to ferry drugs around.

When Haddock was jailed in the summer of 1997 Raymond Jnr was summoned to a meeting of UVF leaders on the Shankill Road. They wanted to know how much cash Haddock was raking in from the sale of ecstasy and cannabis.

Haddock feared Raymond Jnr was going to reveal all.

Three UVF men called to the 22-year-old's Mount Vernon home and took him to a quarry in Newtownabbey where he was beaten to death.

Raymond Jnr knew they were coming. His best friend, the Special Branch agent Judas, had told him so. But he also told him that he was only going to receive a punishment shooting.

Naively, Raymond Jnr believed his UVF pal. He even went as far as to change into old clothes, so as not to damage his new jeans. The beating he received at the hands of the UVF was so severe that the coffin lid had to remain closed during his wake.

His campaigning father, Raymond McCord Snr, is hopeful the ombudsman's report into his son's death will result in charges being brought against those involved. "I want to see the cops who covered for their informants charged as well as them men who murdered my son," he said.

"They are every bit as guilty as the scumbags who beat young Raymond with breeze-blocks." Mr McCord has met with every political party on the island of Ireland to highlight his son's case.

His biggest breakthrough came in October 2005 when Irish Labour leader Pat Rabbitte used parliamentary privilege to name in the Dáil those allegedly involved in Raymond Jnr's murder.

Mr Rabbitte said: "The UVF murdered Raymond McCord because he had been summoned by John 'Bunter' Graham, the officer commanding the UVF on the Shankill Road, to account for his role in ferrying drugs for Mark Haddock.

"He was murdered to prevent Graham finding out about Haddock's unsanctioned drugs operations. At least two members of the gang who carried out the murder were Special Branch informers. They were Mark Haddock, who ordered the murder, and John Bond, who was present when Raymond McCord was murdered." Mr Rabbitte said he had information Haddock had been involved in eight murders since his recruitment as a Special Branch informer.

He said the murders are Sharon McKenna, Gary Convie, Eamon Fox, Rev David Templeton, Billy Harbinson, Tommy English, David Greer and Raymond McCord Junior.

"The central allegation is that Haddock was not charged with any crime because he was an informer who had to be protected," added Mr Rabbitte. "He was able to act with impunity, while the police effectively colluded in his crimes."

Ombudsman also examined several attempted murders

Aside from the murder of more than a dozen people by informants within the Mount Vernon UVF, the Police Ombudsman investigation looks at a number of other incidents.

These include attempts to murder Bawnmore cab driver John Flynn, an attempt to blow up a Sinn Féin office in Monaghan, the release of a convicted UVF killer from police questioning and a death threat issued against campaigning father Raymond McCord.

John Flynn: The UVF tried to kill the Bawnmore man outside Whiteabbey Hospital in 1990. Mr Flynn had gone there to pick up a cab fare only to discover a gunman waiting on him.

The gunman is believed to have been Special Branch agent Mark Haddock. Mr Flynn wrestled with the gunman and managed to get the gun from him. The UVF informant escaped in a waiting car.

Mr Flynn handed the weapon over to the RUC. He gave a detailed description of the gunman as well as handing over a jumper he was wearing that was covered in his attacker's blood.

Despite this wealth of forensic evidence the gunman was never charged. The following year the UVF put a booby trap bomb under Mr Flynn's car

outside a house in Bawnmore. Moments later the loyalist gang were stopped in a car by the RUC.

They were taken to Newtownabbey RUC station, but were not charged. Among the gang was a Special Branch agent known as the Beast. He went on to murder Catholic Sean McParland in Skegoniel in 1994.

The Beast is the current commander of the Southeast Antrim UVF. Monaghan Sinn Féin office bombing: In 1997 the Mount Vernon UVF attempted to blow up the Sinn Féin office in Monaghan town.

A loyalist gang left a power-gel explosives package at the front door, however it failed to detonate properly.

Three agents were involved in the explosion attempt, including the informants code-named Haddocks and Mechanic. Although Special Branch had prior knowledge of the attack they did nothing to prevent it taking place.

Angus Knell: The Newtownabbey loyalist was convicted in 1976 of murdering Catholic barman Eugene McDonagh.

On his release from jail he became involved with the UVF's political wing, the PUP.

He was part of its talks team in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

In November 1997 Knell was arrested for questioning about the UVF murder of Raymond McCord Jnr. He was taken to Gough barracks but released a short time later. Former Secretary of State Mo Mowlam, who died last year, ordered Knell's release to prevent the PUP withdrawing from the talks.

Raymond McCord death threat: In May 1999 Raymond McCord complained to police that a leading Mount Vernon loyalist had threatened to kill him. A man was arrested and charged, however RUC officers told Mr McCord the following month that the charges had been dropped.

They said the Director of Public Prosecutions had decided there was not enough evidence to proceed.

Mr McCord refused to accept this explanation and after getting in touch with the DPP discovered that the RUC had not sent it any files on the case. He sees this as further proof of how Special Branch officers were protecting informants in the Mount Vernon UVF.

Former cops claim lives could have been saved

"If we had been allowed to charge him after the McKenna murder, who knows how many people might still be alive?"

These are the words of CID detective Trevor McIlwrath, the cop who recruited UVF man Mark Haddock, code-named, Roxy as a teen, and who said he was later prevented by Special Branch from charging him with murder.

Haddock was one of McIlwrath's many informants in the Mount Vernon estate during the late 1980s.

As a young man he had been in trouble with the police for burglary and arson. During questioning for these offences he agreed to provide McIlwrath with information on low-level crime in the fiercely loyalist estate. When Haddock joined the UVF in 1990 control of him passed from CID to Special Branch, which handled all paramilitary agents. But because McIlwrath had known Haddock for a long time he would still meet with the detective to offer bits of information.

The night after the Sharon McKenna murder, 18 January 1993, Haddock spoke to McIlwrath and Brown in a car at Arthur's Bridge, Newtownabbey. They say he told them that the previous night he had murdered Ms McKenna at a house on the Shore Road.

The detectives said they went back to their bosses with the confession. They wanted to arrange further meetings with Haddock to get more information. However, they were told to drop the matter.

Both men are convinced that had they been allowed to pursue Haddock up to a dozen lives could have been saved.

"He was untouchable, totally off-limits," said McIlwrath.

"Here we had a man admitting to a callous sectarian murder and we were not allowed to go after him."

Referring to Haddock and other informants in the Mount Vernon UVF who

were allowed to escape murder charges, Jonty Brown said: "Could we have put the majority of them in jail in 1997, 1998, 1999? Absolutely. "Lives would have been saved time and time again. There appeared to be no will to prosecute certain individuals."

McKenna killing a turning point

January 17, 1993 – that was the date when Mark Haddock, agent Roxy, the Special Branch informer at the heart of the Mount Vernon UVF, went from saving lives to taking lives.

He had been a UVF member for three years but had never committed murder. When a number of UVF operations Haddock was involved in were compromised his paramilitary bosses became suspicious.

Information he provided to his Special Branch handlers led to the arrest of four armed loyalists in Newtownabbey in 1991. One of the men, Colin Caldwell, died in an IRA bomb attack at Crumlin Road prison in November of that year.

Having suspected Roxy as a mole for some time the leaders of the Southeast Antrim UVF summoned him to a house in the Mount Vernon estate.

They then ordered him to do what they believed no informer could – commit murder.

Haddock was handed a shotgun and told to kill Catholic taxi-driver Sharon McKenna at the Shore Road home of an elderly Protestant friend. The UVF had been monitoring the Glengormley woman's movements. The double agent panicked, telling his bosses he wanted to change his clothes first. However, they warned him that he had to carry out the killing immediately. Haddock and a second gunman went to the pensioner's home, found Ms McKenna in the hallway and blasted her with shotguns. She died instantly. The following day an emotional Haddock contacted his old CID handler Trevor McIlwrath. He recruited Roxy as a petty criminal, before the agent was passed to Special Branch when he joined the UVF.

Despite this the two still met regularly. In a car parked under Arthur's Bridge, Newtownabbey, Haddock told McIlwrath and his partner Jonty Brown of his role in the McKenna murder. The informant sobbed uncontrollably throughout the meeting. McIlwrath and Brown went back to their RUC bosses to inform them of the confession.

They wanted to arrange further meetings with Haddock to gain more information and to charge him with the McKenna murder.

However, they were told not to pursue the matter. Haddock's remorse soon turned to relief when he realised that his role as an informant prevented him from being charged with the McKenna murder. In his eyes he effectively had a licence to kill. Special Branch had created a monster and Roxy would go on to murder again, safe in the knowledge he was free from prosecution.

Mount Vernon gang riddled with informers

During the mid-1990s the Mount Vernon UVF had a hardcore of 12 members, known locally as the 'Dirty Dozen'.

They were responsible for a series of murders, shootings, beatings and bombings throughout the Shore Road and Newtownabbey areas. They were led by Special Branch agent Mark Haddock and his closest friends. Security sources estimate that at least six members of the Dirty Dozen worked as police informants.

These include Haddock, a man known as the Beast who was once a close pal of his turned bitter rival, and a third UVF figure nicknamed Judas. A fourth tout was code-named Mechanic. Born a Catholic and brought up in the New Lodge he was the most peculiar member of the Mount Vernon unit. It was Mechanic who provided the car used by the UVF in the 1994 Loughinisland massacre in which six people died. The agent fled the North in the summer of 1997 after being unmasked as an informant.

Although living in secret in England he is still in contact with Haddock and is godfather to his daughter who was born a Catholic and is being raised in the South.

Other agents within the Mount Vernon UVF include Big Bozo who was

involved in the murder of Raymond McCord Jnr, and a bespectacled thug who shares a nickname with a famous London gangster.

Only the Beast, Judas and Big Bozo remain members of the UVF.

But sources are predicting their time in the group is at an end with the organisation set to move against them after the publication of the Police Ombudsman's report.

The three have been the subject of an internal investigation for a number of months. The UVF is understood to be waiting to see the findings of the ombudsman investigation before taking action.

Haddock survived murder bid when out on bail for attempted murder

Although the UVF has been on ceasefire since 1994 its Mount Vernon unit has, as recently as last summer, been trying to murder people.

On May 30 former leading North Belfast loyalist Mark Haddock was shot six times by UVF Mount Vernon gunmen in Newtownabbey.

The 37-year-old, who was on bail at the time, miraculously survived the attack.

Two close friends of the victim were charged with his attempted murder.

However, the case against Darren Stuart Moore and Ronald Trevor Bowe collapsed late last year when Haddock withdrew statements he had made to the PSNI.

Haddock and Moore were once best pals and in 2003 they were both charged with attempting to murder nightclub bouncer Trevor Gowdy.

Also charged in connection with the attack were David 'Reggie' Millar, Alexander Thomas Wood, Jason Loughlin and William Loughlin.

When the case finally reached court last year charges against five of the men were dropped, leaving only Haddock in the dock.

He was found guilty of grievous bodily harm and sentenced to ten years in prison.

Because of time already served on remand and the 50 per cent remission rule he will be free in 2008. The Gowdy attack was not Haddock's first brush with the law.

He has more than 50 convictions and has been behind bars on at least five separate occasions since 1992, serving either short sentences or spending time on remand.

In 1997 Haddock, Moore and ten others from the Mount Vernon estate were jailed following an attack on UVF supporters at the Golden Hind bar in Portadown.

They were charged with possession of a firearm, imitation firearms, sledgehammers, cudgels, gloves and inflammable liquid under suspicious circumstances.

The 12 are: Mark Alan Quail, James Dodds, John Patterson Hill, Barry Stockman, Gary Haggarty, Albert Andrew Ferran, David Hugh Miller, Darren Stuart Moore, Mark Haddock, William Logue, Clarke Wallace and Ronald Bowe.

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