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Local & National

Ombudsman set to probe UVF boss on alleged deals

Startling claim by victim's dad

Thursday, May 24, 2007

By Chris Thornton

Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan has been asked to investigate a UVF boss who was allegedly given lucrative deals to carry out work for the police and Army.

The father of a teenager butchered by the terror chief's gang has made a complaint to Mrs O'Loan's office, alleging that the UVF leader was awarded contracts because he was an agent.

Mrs O'Loan's officials are currently considering whether they can pursue the complaint, since it involves civilians who vet contracts on behalf of the security forces.

The complaint has been made by Paul McIlwaine, whose son David was stabbed repeatedly along with another Portadown teenager, Andrew Robb, in February 2000.

The Ombudsman is already investigating aspects of the case touching on whether the Co Armagh UVF boss was working as an informer when the murders took place.

The man, who has never appeared before the courts in connection with the murders, was identified as the owner of an apparent hit list by a witness in the case.

But police destroyed the list - saying bullet marks next to Catholic names were made by a child.

Mr McIlwaine alleges the agent was rewarded with high-paying contracts from the security forces and allowed to carry a personal protection weapon.

"I don't believe that paramilitaries of any kind should be given preferential treatment as regards tenders and contracts," he said.

"If the shoe had been on the other foot - and a republican was being paid to work on security force bases - there would have been uproar."

Mr McIlwaine added: "My understanding is that tenders ... are awarded by a civilian organisation.

"A vetting procedure is requested by the police but I'm told it is carried out by the civilian body as well.

"I'm particularly concerned about that, because I believe he would have been working on security force bases even after the murder, possibly as a sub-contractor to another firm with loyalist connections."

The grieving father has also written to the PSNI to determine who was responsible for awarding contracts.

"I understand fully the procedures of the Police Ombudsman and why they are not allowed to look at civilian organisations. I'm looking at different avenues to get appropriate answers."

Mr McIlwaine has already lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman about long delays in using forensic evidence in the murder of his son and Andrew Robb.

Two men are currently awaiting trial for the murders, which took place outside Tandragee.

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