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Sections

- 1. The Irish Times
- 2. Breaking News
- 3. Sport
- 4. Business
- 5. Technology
- 6. Weather
- 7. <u>In Focus</u>
- 8. Blogs
- 9. Archive Search
- 10. Family Notices
 - Editions

Search for

- Jobs
- Homes
- Cars

Services

- Premium Email
- Games
- Dating
- Travel
- Frontpage Sales
- Photosales
- Ancestors
- Irish Times Training
- Mobile
- Reader Offers





- Home
- World |
- Irish
- Sports
- News Quiz



Last Updated: 28/07/2007 10:49

NI police ombudsman cleared of leaking report

The Office of the Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman has been cleared of leaking a confidential report on collusion.

Police had launched an inquiry after receiving a complaint that secret details of Nuala O'Loan's report on collusion into the loyalist murder of Raymond McCord Jnr (22) in north Belfast in 1997 were leaked before publication.

The Retired Police Officers' Association claimed that the Official Secrets Act and the Police Act had been broken.

But in a statement the police said: "The PSNI has completed a thorough investigation and all parties involved have been informed of the outcome of that investigation.

"It would not be appropriate for a police organisation to comment further on the details or outcome."

Mrs O'Loan said she was not surprised by the PSNI's findings. "I had expected this outcome but nevertheless I am very pleased to have received the news that police have found no substance to the allegations," she said.

"The allegations made against me and my staff were very, very serious — I knew that the very small group of staff who had worked on the particular investigation had worked very hard and very closely, and I knew there was no substance to it."

Her report, published in January this year, found evidence of collusion between Royal Ulster Constabulary Special Branch officers and a north Belfast Ulster Volunteer Force group which murdered up to 16 people.

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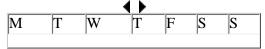
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