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From [The Times](#) December 22, 2007

Sean Hoey may sue father of bombing victim, 12

David Sharrock, Ireland Correspondent

Sean Hoey, who was cleared on Thursday of murdering 29 people at Omagh in August, 1998, and other terrorist charges, may sue the father of a 12-year-old boy who was killed in the Real IRA bombing.

Lawyers for Mr Hoey are also considering taking legal action against the Public Prosecution Service for taking the case against him. Victor Barker, a Surrey solicitor who lost his son, James, in the terrorist attack, told reporters on Thursday that he still wanted to know whether Mr Hoey had played a role in the bombing.

Meanwhile, Sir Hugh Orde, the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, defended his officers against mounting criticism after the acquittal of Mr Hoey.

He insisted that his investigating officers had done their level best with the “imperfect product” passed on to them after the original investigation by the Royal Ulster Constabulary when Sir Ronnie Flanagan was Chief Constable.

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He also admitted that it was “highly unlikely” that anyone would ever be convicted for the bombing, and that there would be no success in the future unless witnesses came forward.

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"People out there know who did this. There is a lot of intelligence but intelligence is not evidence," he said.

Mr Justice Weir, in dismissing the Crown's case against Mr Hoey, an electrician from Jonesborough, South Armagh, criticised the police investigation, which cost an estimated £16 million. The judge said that officers working on the Omagh case were guilty of a "deliberate and calculated deception".

The Chief Constable conceded that the judgment was "a severe criticism of a number of areas". But the position of Sir Ronnie, the Northern Ireland Chief Constable at the time of the bombing, was looking less secure after a Government minister refused to support him over calls for his resignation.

Sir Ronnie is in charge of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, a post he received after overseeing the conversion of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) into the Police Service of Northern Ireland. As the last Chief Constable of the RUC, the former head of its Special Branch was in charge of the province's security and policing at the time when the Real IRA, a splinter group of the Provisional IRA, bombed Omagh.

But yesterday Shaun Woodward, the Northern Ireland Secretary, refused to be drawn on Sir Ronnie's position. When asked if Sir Ronnie still had the confidence of the Government, Mr Woodward told BBC Radio Ulster: "The lessons to be learned from this judgement are far and wide. It is important that we look at this very, very carefully."

However, it is understood that the Home Office is satisfied with Sir Ronnie's position.

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