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because he was an informer.

In an unprecedented development at the High Court, the watchdog also issued an apology to the family of a murder victim at the centre of its investigation.

The concessions were made to retired Resident Magistrate Tom Travers, whose 23-year-old daughter Mary was killed in 1984.

Lawyers for the Ombudsman accepted that he should not have been identified in the report which was also found to contain a number of factual inaccuracies.

Mr Travers was himself shot and injured in the IRA attack as the family

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Peter Robinson, Middle East visit, 1984

left Mass in south Belfast in 1984. Twenty years later he made a complaint to former Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan, alleging that the RUC colluded with an informer to ensure he escaped prosecution for his part in the shooting.

What are these?

However, Mrs O'Loan rejected his claims in a report published just days before she left office in November 2007. She said no evidence had been found that a suspect named as Man A was shielded from the law.

Although Mr Travers withdrew his complaint nearly 18 months before her findings were published, Mrs O'Loan decided it would be in the public interest to complete her investigation. But the former magistrate, who is now seriously ill, launched legal proceedings on the grounds that his right to confidentiality had been breached through being identified in the report.

He claimed other serious failings included inaccuracies over the forensic evidence, the age of his daughter, and the decision to carry on with the inquiry.

It was further argued that the dossier was then published without giving him enough advance notice.

Frank O'Donoghue QC, for Mr Travers, pointed out that his client withdrew his complaint in May 2006 out of dissatisfaction with the investigation.

The barrister said that Mr Travers' request for the inquiry to be stopped was refused because they were so close to completion.

He was then notified on the morning of publication that it was about to be released.

John Larkin QC, appearing for the Police Ombudsman, told the court there was "profound regret" on his client's part at the distress caused to the Travers family by errors in the report.

After he confirmed that the Ombudsman was prepared to withdraw the report, Mr O'Donoghue emphasised the significance of the case by remarking: "Mr Larkin has never had to make a concession like that in his life." Lawyers for both sides then agreed a memorandum of understanding for the judge, Mr Justice Weatherup, which confirmed that the Police Ombudsman's report is to be completely withdrawn.

The agreement, read out by Mr O'Donoghue, confirmed: "As such it does not have a legal existence or effect." The court was also told: "The statement is withdrawn after due consideration by counsel for the Police Ombudsman of the terms of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, the content of the statement published in November 2007, together with the material factual errors subsequently identified.

"The Ombudsman recognises that Mr Travers is a man of the utmost integrity and honesty in his dealings with the Police Ombudsman's Office.

"The Police Ombudsman apologises to Mr Travers and his family for the publication of his identity within the withdrawn statement and to the press, particularly having regard to the fact that Mr Travers had withdrawn his complaint."

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