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Local & National

Police deny killers got protection

Thursday, January 10, 2008

By Emily Moulton

A senior police officer, who was giving evidence at the inquest of a Co Armagh man who was shot dead outside his home almost seven years ago, has denied police protected his killers.

Robert "Bobby" McGuigan was shot 12 times at point blank range by two gunmen as he sat in his car outside his Liscurran Court flat in Lurgan on February 27, 2001.

No-one has ever been charged with the murder, but it was believed at the time that republican paramilitaries were involved.

During the inquest, Detective Chief Inspector Charles Patterson, who led the initial investigation, denied police were protecting informers after Mr McGuigan's family raised concerns with the Coroner.

The court was told that following the 36-year-old's murder, his family had approached police with information relating to those who might have been involved in his death. However only one arrest was made.

Det Insp Patterson told the inquest police investigated the people, but due to lack of evidence were not able to bring charges.

When asked by Coroner Brian Sherrard if there was any truth in the family's concern that those involved in the murder had "close connections to police", the DCI replied: "No, that is not the case."

The court also heard that a few weeks prior to the murder Mr McGuigan had received a death threat and that he had been the victim of a punishment style shooting two years earlier.

A post-mortem found Mr McGuigan died from multiple gun shot wounds to the chest which killed him almost instantly.

In his summation, Coroner Sherrard expressed his condolences to the family and appealed to anyone with information to come forward.

"Nobody has been brought to justice and it is terrible to think the individuals who are responsible for this are still walking on our streets today," he said.

"I would plead to anyone with information to go to police who are still carrying out and active investigation."

Mr McGuigan's murder has now been referred to the Retrospective Murder Unit which is responsible for unsolved murders committed between 1998 and 2004.

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