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Two charged with murder of journalist

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Wednesday September 17 2008

Chris Anderson

Two men appeared in court yesterday charged with the murder of Sunday World journalist Martin O'Hagan seven years ago.

Neil Hyde (28) from Princeton Avenue, Lurgan, Co Armagh and Nigel William Leckey (43) from Bowens Lane, also in Lurgan, were accused of the killing at Lisburn Magistrates' Court.

Mr Leckey was also charged with possessing ammunition.

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A third defendant, Robin 'Billy' King (42) was charged with attempting to pervert the course of justice by disposing of, or concealing, the getaway car used by Mr O'Hagan's killers.

In court, Mr King was described as a leading member of the Loyalist Volunteer Force in the mid-Ulster area.

A fourth man, Mark Kennedy, (28) was accused of helping to facilitate the disposal or concealment of the getaway car.

Mr Hyde, Mr King and Mr Leckey were remanded in custody after the court heard of concerns over intimidation, absconding or the possibility of other offences being committed.

All three will appear by video link at Craigavon Court on October 10, when Mr Kennedy, granted bail yesterday, will appear in person. All four men deny the charges against them.

Shadowy

Martin O'Hagan (51) was gunned down in 2001 as he and his wife walked home along the Tandragee Road, Lurgan, after a night out in a local bar. His murder was claimed by a shadowy loyalist group, the Red Hand Defenders, a cover name often used by the LVF and UDA.

Mr O'Hagan had built up a reputation as an investigative journalist following the publication of a series of stories about security force collusion and loyalist drug dealing in the mid-Ulster area when he was killed.

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Martin

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