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Family claim police are protecting informer killer

By Barry McCaffrey

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quest for truth: Kevin McAlorum's mother, Kathleen Lawlor, and brother Brian McGuinness study papers relating to his murder yesterday. An inquest into the killing was adjourned when the family claimed the person responsible for his death was being shielded by police
PICTURE: Mal McCann

In June 2004 Kevin McAlorum was shot dead as he dropped his son off to school. His family tell Barry McCaffrey they believe his killer is being protected by the PSNI

A west Belfast drug dealer was shot dead by a gangland associate who sought to prevent himself being exposed as a police informer, the dead man's family have claimed.

Kevin McAlorum (31) was shot dead by two gunmen in June 2004 as he dropped his son off at school in Derriaghy on the outskirts of the city.

At the time there was speculation the INLA had carried out the shooting in revenge for Mr McAlorum's alleged part in the 1996 murder of the organisation's leader Gino Gallagher, killed during an internal feud.

An inquest into Mr McAlorum's murder was adjourned yesterday after his family raised concerns that his killer was being protected as a police agent.

However, Detective Superintendent Roy McComb cast doubt over the claims.

"I have seen no such report and as the senior investigative officer I would have been entitled to see all information relevant to this investigation," he said.

"I have no information that can

assist the court in respect of that.

“I am not aware of any document that can suggest that this death may have been prevented.”

Mr McComb said he believed the INLA had killed Mr McAlorum but could not rule out any other criminal involvement.

The dead man's long-term partner, Cathie McWilliams, said he had been taking the sedative diazepam, which may have made him more relaxed about his personal security despite his past criminal associations.

Coroner Brian Sherrard adjourned the inquest to hear evidence from the current investigating officer.

However, Mr McAlorum's family last night insisted that he was murdered by a gangland associate trying to stop himself from being identified as a Special Branch informer.

“We've told the PSNI who killed Kevin and where he is living and working in Dublin and the alias he is living under,” the victim's brother Brian McGuinness said.

“Despite everything that we've told police they've consistently refused to ask the gardai to even arrest or question him.

“We want to know why.”

He said the family had been told by “reliable sources” that the man had been a police informer since 1993.

“He has been openly named in court as having murdered another man but hasn't been questioned about this either,” he said.

“The police ombudsman has confirmed in writing to us that he is regarded as one of the PSNI's main suspects in Kevin's murder.

“But every time we ask the PSNI to have the gardai arrest him we're told that it's all tied up in red tape.

“We find this very hard to believe as there have been a number of high-profile cases in recent years in which people have committed murders in Northern Ireland and been arrested and questioned in the Republic.”

Mr McGuinness also revealed his belief that his brother was killed after police had been tipped off about a major cocaine shipment being brought into Northern Ireland.

“Kevin had been involved in a major cocaine deal with this individual shortly before he was killed,” he said.

“A van was stopped coming into Belfast and the PSNI found five kilos of cocaine.

“It was obvious that someone had touted on it and Kevin believed this guy was the tout.

“We believe this individual killed Kevin to protect himself from being identified as the informer.

“He even phoned me the day after Kevin’s funeral to ask who I thought had killed him.

“I told him I didn’t know but asked him to meet me for a drink.

“It was the last time he tried to

contact me.”

He said the gunmen are thought to have used his brother’s own guns to carry out the killing.

“Kevin got a consignment of pistols shortly before he was killed and we believe that at least one of these guns was used in the murder.”

The dead man’s family say they initially believed the killers would be brought to justice.

“There were so many witnesses and so much potential forensic evidence in the van the killers left behind at the scene,” Mr McGuinness said.

“They left behind a mobile phone and a hat and a petrol bomb they were supposed to use to burn the van.

“Surely there must have been some forensic evidence in that van.

“The police also have a photofit which is said to bear a striking resemblance to the man we identified as the killer.

“When we asked the police why they won’t release the photofit they told us that it was orders from above.

“All we want to know is why this man is not being questioned when he is one of the main suspects.”

Relatives for Justice victims’ group spokesman Mark Thompson backed the dead man’s family’s call.

“Given the substantial allegations that persist in this case that one of the individuals involved in the killing is a police informer, it is only proper there should be full disclosure of police intelligence files to the coroner,” he said.

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