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## Mother's pain as questions over son's murder remain

By Marie Louise McCrory West Belfast Correspondent

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A MOTHER whose teenage son was shot dead by loyalists 15 years ago has criticised detectives reinvestigating the murder, claiming new evidence uncovered almost three years ago had still not been followed up.



Damien Walsh confronted senior police officers at a meeting of the Lisburn District Policing Partnership this week demanding to know why no one had been arrested, questioned or charged.

The west Belfast mother-of-five said she has always believed there was an element of RUC collusion involved in her 17-year-old son Damien's murder and the Police Ombudsman is carrying out an investigation.

A report is expected to be released within the next three months.

Damien was shot a number of times in the back when two gunmen entered a coal yard at the Dairy Farm shopping complex on the Stewartstown Road where he was working on March 25 1993.

#### A second man was shot in the legs.

deceased: Damien Walsh (17) died 15 years

ago when he was shot in the back by Following Damien's murder there were claims of police collusion.

loyalists at the Dairy Farm shopping complex

The car used in the murder was taken at gunpoint from a pensioner on the Shankill Road. He immediately phoned police to report the hijacking.

However, officers only acted on this information 30 minutes later, by which time a checkpoint on the Stewartstown Road in position for most of the day had been removed.

After the murder it was revealed that the RUC had an informer who had notified the force about bomb-making material in the same complex and had surveillance cameras fixed on the front and rear of the Dairy Farm.

Bomb-making material belonging to the IRA was found close to the coal yard by officers at the scene.

It was later alleged that British soldiers involved in the surveillance had watched the killers enter the yard but did nothing to stop the murder.

Mrs Walsh said she believed her son would still be alive if they had intervened.

"Every time I ask the historical Enquiries Team about the case they tell me it is at the 'review stage'," Mrs Walsh said.

"In 2006 we were told that new evidence had been found. The HET fast-tracked the investigation because of this but two-and-a-half years later no-one has been arrested.

"We were hopeful this evidence could be used to secure a conviction.

"It is frustrating."

The Poleglass mother said the security forces must "come clean on what they did".

"My son was an innocent child. He was not a paramilitary and I will always have that sense of loss," she said.

"For the sake of peace, the police need to admit what went on and reveal the circumstances surrounding the death of my son."

A HET spokeswoman said work on the case was "ongoing".

"The HET do not comment on the specific details of cases in public but have been in regular contact with Mrs Walsh to keep her updated," she said.


"The HET are working through reviews of 3,268 deaths which occurred between 1,969 and 1998."

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