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The UVF conducted an internal investigation into the murders of two Portadown teenagers around the same time the double slaying featured on the BBC's Crimewatch programme, a court heard yesterday.

Details of the alleged investigation emerged during Crown witness Mark Burcombe's fifth day in the witness box at Belfast Crown Court.

Mr Burcombe (28) is giving evidence against former friend Steven Leslie Brown, also known as Steven Leslie Revels, who denies murdering Andrew Robb and David McIlwaine.

Andrew (19) and 18-year old David were lured from a house in Tandragee to an isolated country road on the outskirts of the town where they were stabbed to death in the early hours of February 19, 2000.

Mr Burcombe has already told the trial he was present when Andrew and David were murdered but denies involvement.

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He told the hearing that prior to talking to the PSNI about the murders in November 2005, he sought advice from a community worker and "Christian man" from Portadown who had contact with loyalist paramilitaries.

Mr Burcombe told the court: "I wanted to know if I gave information to the police would my family be attacked."

The witness said he learned through this community worker that the UVF had launched an internal investigation and named a senior UVF man based on Belfast's Shankill Road as heading the investigation.

Mr Burcombe said the community worker also tried to facilitate what he believed was going to be a meeting between himself, Andrew's mother Anne Robb, David's father Paul McIlwaine, a CID man, a pastor and a UVF man. He said the meeting was due to take place in a church in Portadown but did not occur.

Mr Burcombe was initially charged with the double killing but pleaded guilty to a lesser charge, turned Queen's evidence and is now giving evidence against former co-accused Brown (28).

At hearing.

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