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Local & National

Sidekick's split with Adair led to killing of Alan McCullough

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

William 'Mo' Courtney was a man seen often by Johnny Adair's side when he ruled the Lower Shankill with a reign of terror.

Courtney was one of the major figures in Adair's notorious UDA 'C' Company during the 80s and 90s and was said to be the terror chief's second in command.

Indeed it was Courtney who swore a young Adair into the UDA more than 20 years ago.

But tensions which ripped the UDA's west Belfast powerbase apart in 2003, leading to Adair's family and closest associates fleeing Northern Ireland, saw a split between two men who were once so tightly aligned.

The once trusted lieutenant and his chief are said to have fallen out either in a row over a weapons deal with the Continuity IRA or drugs.

It was a split that would set in motion a chain of events that would lead to the killing of Alan McCullough, who was a member of Adair's gang.

Members of Mad Dog's faction fled to England when loyalist feuding intensified following the killing of UDA chief John 'Grug' Gregg.

McCullough was also driven out of Belfast and went to Blackpool with his girlfriend. But after becoming homesick he returned to Northern Ireland in April 2003, believing he was safe from any repercussions.

The 21-year-old was shot and buried in a shallow grave near north Belfast in May 2003.

Once his body was discovered, Courtney was arrested and charged with the murder.

He was acquitted of the murder last year but ordered to stand trial again. Later changing his plea to manslaughter, he said he took the victim to a rendezvous with other unnamed terrorists believing a punishment shooting, possibly a knee capping, might be inflicted on him.

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