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Local & National

MP Robinson to testify in Wright probe

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By Chris Thornton

Finance Minister Peter Robinson has been called to testify before the inquiry into Billy Wright's murder.

Mr Robinson, who was delivering final details of his first budget to the Assembly today, is due to appear before the inquiry on the morning of February 6.

The East Belfast MP is being called because he told Parliament in 2003 that he had been sent photocopies of the police file on the LVF leader's murder inside the Maze Prison.

He is also likely to be questioned about a visit he paid to Wright in Maghaberry prison nine months before he was shot dead in the Maze by INLA inmates in December 1997.

After that visit, Mr Robinson and DUP leader Ian Paisley lobbied the Government to get Wright transferred to the Maze, one of the main issues being explored by the inquiry.

The inquiry revealed yesterday that a Special Branch informer is suspected of supplying one of Wright's killers with a gun inside prison.

A prison security file accidentally discovered by the inquiry team included a handwritten note linking the agent to the gun that was smuggled into Wright killer Christopher 'Crip' McWilliams.

The PSNI has admitted the unnamed man - who they say is now dead - was an informer, but they have told the inquiry they can find no records connecting him to the gun.

The inquiry, which is investigating the possibility of collusion in the murder, released a detailed, 75-page statement yesterday listing gaps in the intelligence material they believe the PSNI should have provided.

They said witnesses may be questioned about those gaps when the inquiry resumes full hearings next Monday.






Mr Robinson is due to testify the following week. In 2003, he secured an adjournment debate in Parliament to call for a public inquiry into the murder. He told MPs at the time that "many matters point to persons in authority in the state having accommodated that murder. The case demands answers."

He said the photocopied police file sent to him anonymously raised "very serious questions about how the matter has been dealt with". Mr Robinson said the contents of the file posed "a number of serious questions about the authorities' failure to heed any one of a number of warnings from various prison staff before the murder of Mr. Wright".

He said the file indicated that prison governors and Government Ministers were warned about security fears around the H-Block shared by Wright's LVF, and INLA prisoners.

"They were warned about the danger of an attack and about how the attack would take place and they were even given the names of the prisoners who would be involved," he said.

Mr Robinson was unavailable for comment.

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