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Last Updated: Monday, August 18, 2008, 14:33

Special Branch involved in assassination, inquest told

A police Special Branch agent was involved in the assassination of a man gunned down by republicans outside a school in Northern Ireland, an inquest heard today.

The June 2004 death of Kevin McAlorum (31) near Belfast could have been avoided, his family claimed.

The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) was blamed after the father-of-two was ambushed in his car outside Oakwood Integrated Primary School in Derrriagh, Co Antrim.

Lawyer Sean Patterson told the adjourned Belfast hearing that the victim's brother, Brian McGuinness, had raised serious concerns with him.

"An intelligence report held by the police shows that this matter was avoidable and it is his understanding that this would show the involvement of an informer he believes to be protected or known by Special Branch," he said.

The hearing was adjourned to allow the matter to be further investigated.

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Detective Superintendent Roy McComb, the former investigating officer, denied any knowledge of the intelligence dossier.

Mr McAlorum, a construction worker from Glenwood Court, Lisburn, suffered at least five bullet wounds to the head and chest after his car was rammed by a white van as it left the school, having dropped off his children.

The assassins jumped out and the driver sprayed the windscreen with shots as terrified onlookers dived for cover.

Parent Patricia Hetherington said: "I immediately took cover behind my sister's car. The shooting went on for about 30 seconds.

"During the shooting I was panicked and scared that they were going to come up to the school and I was shouting at the kids to get down."

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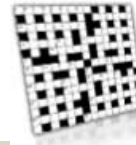
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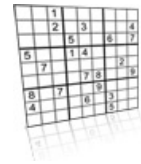
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