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Last Updated: 19/11/2007 15:25

PSNI stumped by murder of top loyalist

The police investigation into the murder of loyalist terror boss Jim Gray has come to a dead end, it was revealed today.

The flamboyant former brigadier of the UDA's east Belfast brigade had been warned by police he was under threat shortly before he was gunned down outside his father's home in October 2005, the inquest was told.

Gray, known as Doris Day for his colourful sense of fashion was on bail facing money laundering charges when he was killed.

Seven months before the murder he was thrown out of the UDA and there was intense speculation he was silenced by former associates to prevent him revealing the inner workings of the paramilitary

organisation at his trial.

Detective Inspector Deborah McMaster told the inquest she believed those responsible for the murder to be members of the UDA. However she said despite a number of arrests no one had been charged.

"The inquiry has more or less come to a dead end," she said.

The inquest heard Gray had been shot twice in the body with a Magnum revolver causing massive internal haemorrhaging.

His father, James, told the inquest he did not know who was responsible for killing his son and that he had been unaware he was under threat.

But when coroner John Leckey asked him if he believed it was paramilitaries he responded: "Nobody else".

The murdered man's sister Elizabeth Gray said: "He was wary about callers to the house, but he didn't say anything about a threat. He didn't want to worry me or scare me."

Mr Leckey said the murder was "carefully planned and ruthlessly executed".

He described the victim as "a very well known and prominent member of the UDA in east Belfast."

Gray was shot dead as associate, Gary Matthews, helped him unload dumbbells from a car in father's driveway. Matthews was arrested at the scene on suspicion of involvement in the murder, but was released without charge.

He was called as a witness but failed to turn up. Mr Leckey called for extra powers for coroners to compel witnesses to attend.

In September, the Assets Recovery Agency successfully secured a High Court order seizing assets of stg £336,000 from Matthews. The agency said the money was profit from drug dealing, money laundering, intimidation, blackmail, false accounting and evasion of liability and revenue tax by Matthews and Gray.

PA

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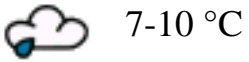
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