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Thursday, September 25, 2008

# Man charged with murder of journalist in Lurgan

A 40-year-old man was yesterday charged with the murder of a journalist in Northern Ireland.

Drew Robert King, from Moss Road, Waringstown, Co Down, was charged with the killing of investigative reporter Martin O'Hagan seven years ago.

He is the third man to appear in court accused of the murder this month.

Two other men, one of them Mr King's brother, Robin Andrew, have also been charged with lesser offences related to the killing.

The Sunday World reporter was gunned down outside his home in Lurgan, Co Armagh, in September 2001.

At the time, the Red Hand Commandos, a cover name used by the Loyalist Volunteer Force paramilitary organisation, claimed responsibility for the shooting.

Dressed in a light blue jumper and with short, black hair, Mr King spoke only to confirm his name and that he understood the charge he faced during his appearance at Craigavon Magistrates' Court today.

Det Sgt Michael Hamilton told the court he could connect him with the charge.

The officer said that, when the charge was put to him during police interview, the defendant replied: "Definitely not guilty, I should not be charged with this offence."

Det Sgt Hamilton said Mr King had also claimed he had nothing against Mr O'Hagan and had no reason to harm him.

A defence barrister said the accused had concerns about the credibility and reliability of a witness who has apparently identified Mr King as a suspect.

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He also raised concerns about media coverage of his client before he was charged with the offence.

Mr King was remanded in custody to appear at the same court via video link on October 10th.

During the short hearing, Det Sgt Hamilton said officers were still pursuing one more suspect in relation to the killing.

Last week at Lisburn Magistrates' Court, Neil Hyde (28), from Princeton Avenue in Lurgan, and Nigel William Leckey (43), from Bowens Lane, also Lurgan, were also charged with the murder.

Mr King's brother, Robin Andrew King (43) appeared at the same court sitting charged with perverting the course of justice.

The prosecution claimed he had ordered the destruction or concealment of the car the police believe was involved in the crime.

All three were remanded in custody to appear at Craigavon Magistrates' Court via video link on October 10th.

Another man, Mark Kennedy (28), who is also from Lurgan, was charged with assisting offenders by allegedly destroying the same car.

He was released on bail and is also due to appear at Craigavon on the same date.

All this month's charges follow a major operation by a special police unit tasked to investigate historic killings linked to the Northern Ireland Troubles. - ( PA )

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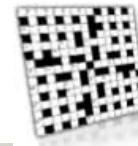
This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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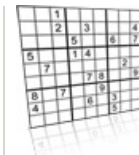
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