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# IRA tried to block probe

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SHIBON June 29 2008

The IRA attempted to block the Robert McCartney murder investigation by sending bogus witnesses to make false statements to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Senior security sources say that accounts which conflicted with the actual true version of events were given by people who came forward after Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams told republicans to assist the police investigation in 2005.

But the accounts were Provo disinformation designed to throw

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"People were sent to the investigation team to give accounts which differed from the truth and there is good reason to believe this was a deliberate ploy to protect some people who were heavily involved in the attacks on Robert McCartney and Brendan Devine," one security source said.

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"One or two people who came to the police were cranks who knew nothing about the murder or events inside Magennis's Bar, just wannabes who wanted attention. They were easily weeded out as it was clear that they knew nothing about the murder.

"The greater problem was with those who were sent to deliberately derail the murder inquiry and lay false trails away from the killer and the other attackers in Market Street. That was carefully calculated," the source said.

Robert McCartney's sister Catherine said on Friday that she still believed that both the IRA and Sinn Fein conspired to obstruct the PSNI investigation and prevent the killers being brought to justice.

The steak knife used in the fatal attack on Mr McCartney was never found by police and may have been deliberately cut up into small pieces with a grinder and thrown into the nearby River Lagan.

And detectives never established whether one knife was used to stab Mr Devine and a separate one used to murder Mr McCartney.

"The murder team wasn't able to establish if there was one knife or two used in the attacks," one legal source said.

"It wasn't possible to establish if the knife used to stab Devine in Market Street was passed onto another person to inflict the fatal stab wound on Robert McCartney. That may never be known".

After the murder, when the pressure mounted on Sinn Fein and the IRA to disown the killers of the 33-year-old father of two, hand them over to police and provide evidence, the IRA in the Markets area was riven with disagreement.

"They all fell out, it's as simple as that," one intelligence source said.

"They argued among themselves in the Markets about who should carry the can and the rest of the organisation came down on them like a ton of bricks because of the storm created in the media over the murder.

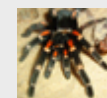
"Some of those involved were considered expendable but there was still no great flow of information from within the IRA. Their support for the rule of law was limited to telling some witnesses to make fuller statements to police but, in overall terms, the IRA didn't assist the PSNI investigation. As the judge pointed out, they possibly tainted the evidence," the source said.

Despite the testimony of Witness C and her identification of Terry Davison as the man she saw attacking Mr McCartney at Cromac Street, Mr Justice Gillen said that inaccuracies in her description of the assailant and the absence of supporting evidence meant that he couldn't safely proceed to convict Mr Davison on the murder charge.

He said she was a transparently honest and brave witness but he needed independent additional evidence to confirm her identification of Mr Davison as the man she saw attacking Mr McCartney. And he said that in the course of her evidence she never actually said she saw a knife in the hand of the man she saw making swiping actions towards Mr McCartney.

He said that supporting testimony couldn't have come from Mr Devine and Ed Gowdy because their evidence had been fundamentally flawed and they may have been "steered" to name the defendants by the IRA.

Other credible witnesses who had important information about the incident declined to go to court to give evidence because of fears for their safety, given the IRA's involvement in the murder.



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