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'Killer was controlled by cops'

North Belfast News

By Ciarán Barnes

27/04/2007

The family of a young Shankill Road loyalist murdered by the UDA have had their first meeting with the Police Ombudsman.

Barbara and Kenny McCullough spoke with Nuala O'Loan for close to an hour, putting forward the case that the paramilitary gang that shot dead Alan McCullough in May 2003 was controlled by Special Branch.

At the beginning of the year senior UDA figure Mo Courtney pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of the 21-year-old. He was sentenced to eight years in prison and will be free in just three years because of time served on remand.

The McCullough family are convinced that Courtney, who has been questioned about the 1989 UDA murder of Pat Finucane, is a tout. They also believe that his Special Branch handlers covered up his role in a series of serious crimes over a 15-year period in order to protect their source. "Our meeting with Nuala O'Loan went very well," said Kenny McCullough. "She is now investigating our belief that Mo Courtney has been working as an informant for years and that he was paid and protected by Special Branch."

The McCullough family are convinced Courtney was offered a deal – plead guilty to manslaughter in return for a light sentence.

Last November the UDA man was sensationally acquitted of the McCullough murder. However, after an outcry by the family a retrial was ordered. Days before the beginning of the retrial Courtney pleaded guilty to manslaughter. "He was told that if he pleaded guilty he would only get eight years," added Kenny.

"Because of time served on remand he will be out within three."

The McCulloughs compare Courtney to UVF super-spy Mark Haddock, whose role in 15 murders was covered up by his Special Branch handlers. "He's been involved in loads of stuff over the last 15 years which the Branch have covered up, he is just like Haddock," said Kenny. "Alan's murder is just the tip of the iceberg. Courtney is up to his neck in paramilitary crime."

A spokesman for the Police Ombudsman confirmed she had met the McCullough family and had initiated an investigation into the murder of Alan McCullough.

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