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Last Updated: 22/05/2008 15:19

Man charged over Nairac killing

A 57-year-old man charged in connection with the disappearance of a British soldier in Co Armagh over 30 years ago has been freed on bail.

Kevin Crilly (57) appeared in Newry Magistrates' Court today charged kidnapping and falsely imprisoning Captain Robert Nairac on May 14th, 1977.

However, the court heard he admits being in the Three Steps Inn in Dromintee, South Armagh, on the night Capt Nairac was abducted.

Police told the court hairs from Capt Nairac were discovered in the family car of defendant. Detective Sergeant Colin Brown said: "The person he conveyed to a field has been convicted of carrying out the murder in that field."

He added: "We can link him to that vehicle, that is the vehicle that Captain Nairac was abducted and imprisoned in."

The controversial British army intelligence officer, who allegedly colluded with loyalist paramilitaries in the killing of republicans, was interrogated and beaten both at the scene of his abduction and later across the Border at Ravensdale, where he was shot.

His body was never recovered. Six men have been convicted for their part in the killing, three of them for murder.

The court heard murderer Mr Crilly admitted driving to the killing field was Liam Townson, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison by a Dublin court.

Mr Crilly, unemployed, from Lower Foughill Road, Jonesborough, South Armagh returned to Ireland in 2004 after spending 27 years in the US. He contacted the PSNI's Historical Enquiries Team which is investigating more than 3,000 unsolved murders during the conflict.

His solicitor, John Kearney, told the court that under the early release provisions for paramilitary prisoners agreed following the Belfast Agreement, his client could serve just two years in prison. He said Mr Crilly denied any involvement in the attack but admitted his presence in the area.

Mr Brown said there was strong forensic evidence but admitted under cross-examination that the accused had not said he was in his family car on the night of the kidnapping.

Mr Crilly was released on bail to reappear in the same court on July 17th.

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