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# High-profile republican arrested over soldiers' killings

Saturday, 14 March 2009

One of the three men arrested by police probing the murder of two soldiers in Northern Ireland is the high profile republican Colin Duffy.

The 41-year-old former IRA prisoner had broken away from mainstream republicans and is part of a protest group that criticised Sinn Fein's decision to back the new Police Service of Northern Ireland.

He came to prominence in the 1990s after he was acquitted of the murder of a soldier when it emerged a key witness against him was a loyalist paramilitary, but was later arrested over the subsequent murder of two police constables through the case collapsed.

His solicitor, Rosemary Nelson, received threats after representing him in court and she was murdered in a loyalist car bomb attack at her Lurgan home in 1999.

Her death is now the subject of a high profile public inquiry.

Police teams in forensic suits were today searching Duffy's house in a private estate in Lurgan, Co Armagh.

Two other men aged 21 and 32 were arrested today after police raids in Lurgan and Bellaghy, Co Londonderry.

The three men were arrested by police probing the murder of two soldiers gunned down by the dissident republican Real IRA as they collected pizzas at the gates of Massareene barracks in Antrim last Saturday night.

Official sources, as well as republicans in the Lurgan area, today said Duffy was among the men arrested.

Two soldiers, Patrick Azimkar, 21, and Mark Quinsey, 23, were killed in the Real IRA ambush hours before they were to fly to Afghanistan.

A further two other soldiers were injured and two pizza delivery men were also wounded in the attack.

A prayer service organised by the Antrim Borough Council and local clergy will be held today at 5pm near the murder scene.

Detectives are examining CCTV footage from the area of the barracks and they also found what is believed to be the gunmen's getaway car seven miles from the scene of the murders.

The green Vauxhall Cavalier TDZ 7309 was found in Randalstown, Co Antrim, and had been bought two weeks earlier.

It is understood the gunmen had tried to burn the car out, but it



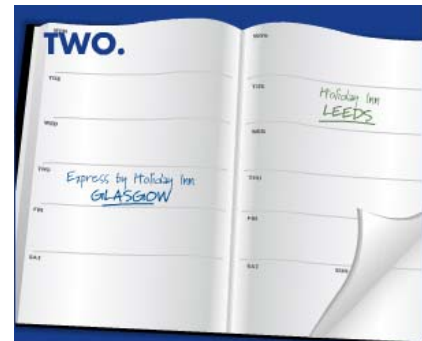
Mark Quinsey, one of the two soldiers killed in the attack at Massareene Barracks

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had not ignited.

The two young soldiers were the first to be murdered in Northern Ireland in 12 years. Lance Bombardier Stephen Restorick was killed by an IRA sniper in 1997.

Police are also questioning three people over the murder of police constable Stephen Carroll, 48, who was killed by gunmen from the Continuity IRA in an attack launched in Craigavon, Co Armagh on Monday night.

His funeral yesterday was attended by senior officers, politicians and leaders from across the community.

The Continuity IRA and the Real IRA are dissident republican groups that broke away from mainstream republicanism in opposition to the peace process.

They reject the decision of the mainstream IRA to end violence, decommission weapons and follow purely peaceful means to pursue republican political goals.

Colin Duffy is a member of the republican protest group Eirigi, which has not supported the new police service, but which insists it is a peaceful pressure group.

He attracted criticism last year when serious rioting in the Lurgan area led to attacks on police, which he failed to condemn.

After police came under gun and petrol-bomb attack during two days of rioting, he said the episodes were a symptom of a section of the nationalist community refusing to accept the PSNI.

But in the wake of the murder of the soldiers in Antrim and of Constable Carroll in the Lurgan/Craigavon area, Duffy and the Eirigi group were challenged to condemn the killings.

Eirigi, which is Irish for 'rise up', released a statement in response to the pressure insisting it did not support violent groups.

Earlier this week it said: "Eirigi is an open, independent, democratic political party which is not aligned to, or supportive of, any armed organisation."

It added: "While supporting the right of any people to defend themselves from imperial aggression, Eirigi does not believe that the conditions exist at this time for a successful armed struggle against the British occupation.

"As can be seen from the recent attacks on Britain's armed forces it is clear that not all republicans agree on how the British occupation should be resisted at this time.

"Those who carried out those attacks are best placed to explain their own rationale."

The Eirigi group includes Breandan Mac Cionnaith, who was unavailable for comment today, but who came to prominence in the 1990s as the leader of the nationalist Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition that opposed Orange Order parades through the Catholic enclave in Portadown, Co Armagh.

He resigned from Sinn Fein in protest over its decision to back the new police service, but has in the past said Eirigi is a peaceful political group.

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An advertisement for an Orange mobile phone. It features a Nokia N85 phone on the left with the Orange logo on the screen. To the right, text reads "with a Nokia N85 Black exclusive to Orange". Below the phone, there are several small, colorful cartoon figures holding signs. The Orange logo is in the bottom right corner.

A vertical banner featuring the Orange logo at the top and the "pay monthly" logo below it. The background is dark with a gradient.

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