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PSNI quiz nine over dissident murders

Monday, 16 March 2009

Police are today questioning nine people - including two high profile republicans - over the murders of two soldiers and a police officer in Northern Ireland.

Detectives also continue to examine a gun and ammunition seized by police in one of a series of dramatic raids staged on Saturday.

Officers are tracking the dissident republicans who shot dead two soldiers at Massereene barracks in Antrim and killed a police constable in Craigavon, Co Armagh.

Police were attacked by masked youths in the Craigavon area on Saturday after they arrested high-profile republican Colin Duffy, 41, at his home in Lurgan over the murder of the two soldiers.

A police officer was injured when he was struck on the shoulder with a brick. There were also disturbances last night when youths set fire to two cars near the front of the nationalist Drumbeg estate.

Also among those arrested was 32-year-old Declan McGlinchey, son of notorious republican paramilitary leader Dominic McGlinchey who before his death was dubbed the most wanted man in Ireland.

The recent murders of security force members were carried out by the Continuity IRA and the Real IRA dissident republican groups, who oppose the peace process.

Detectives are now questioning five 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 last Monday night.

Police carrying out searches in Craigavon on Saturday in connection with Constable Carroll's murder also uncovered a gun and ammunition.

Detectives were last night granted a five day extension to continue questioning a 21-year-old man arrested on Friday over the killing.

A further three men were arrested on Saturday morning by police probing the murders of soldiers Mark Quinsey, 23, from Birmingham, and Patrick Azimkar, 21, from London, who were gunned down by the Real IRA as they collected pizzas at the gates of the Massereene Barracks in Antrim on the night of Saturday March 7.

Detectives investigating the attack, where a further two soldiers and two pizza delivery men were injured, also arrested a man in Antrim on Saturday evening.

Duffy was one of the three men seized in Saturday's first wave of early morning arrests.

The well known republican, together with McGlinchey, and a 21-year-old man were taken to Antrim police station for questioning by officers who swooped on addresses in Lurgan and in Bellaghy, Co Londonderry.

Duffy is a former IRA prisoner who broke away from mainstream republicanism and criticised Sinn Fein's decision to back the new Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

He came to prominence in the 1990s after being acquitted of the IRA murder of a soldier when



PSNI Officers came under attack from stonethrowers in Lurgan on Saturday afternoon March 14 2009

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it emerged a key witness was a loyalist paramilitary.

He was later arrested over the IRA murder of two Royal Ulster Constabulary officers Roland John Graham and David Andrew Johnston gunned down in 1997 as they walked the beat in Lurgan.

The case against Duffy collapsed amid huge controversy.

His solicitor, Rosemary Nelson, received threats and was later 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 and yesterday marked the 10th anniversary of her murder.

McGlinchey's father, Dominic, was a notorious republican gunman known as 'Mad Dog' who boasted of personally killing 30 people.

He was a member of the IRA, but later joined the smaller INLA grouping which he eventually led before he was shot dead in Drogheda, Co Louth in 1994.

Earlier, in 1987 Declan McGlinchey was present when his mother, Mary, was shot dead in her home. Security forces linked her death to a republican feud.

In 2006 McGlinchey was brought before the courts on a charge of possession of explosives, which he denied. The forensic evidence in the case was subsequently challenged.

Detectives are examining CCTV footage from around Massereene barracks and also what is believed to be the gunmen's getaway car which was found abandoned seven miles from the scene of the murders.

The green Vauxhall Cavalier, registration TDZ 7309, had been bought two weeks earlier.

It is understood the gunmen had tried to burn the car, but it had not ignited.

The claim has led to speculation that the vehicle's discovery may have provided police with opportunities to obtain forensic evidence.

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.

Duffy is a member of the republican protest group Eirigi, which has not supported the new police service, but which claims 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.

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