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Six held over killings challenge custody

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

Six people being held in connection with the terrorist murders of two soldiers and a police officer have launched a High Court challenge to the extension of their detention period.

Six people being held in connection with the terrorist murders of two soldiers and a police officer have launched a High Court challenge to the extension of their detention period.

One of them, prominent republican Colin Duffy, was present in court yesterday as his lawyers attempted to overturn a decision which allows police to keep them in custody for an extra seven days.

Judges granted anonymity to the other five, who are all seeking an urgent judicial review on the same basis that the move was unlawful and breached their right to liberty under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Four of them, including Duffy, have been questioned about the Real IRA shootings of Sappers Mark Quinsey (23) and Patrick Azminkar (21) outside Massereene Army barracks in Antrim on March 7.

The other two were arrested in connection with the murder of Constable Stephen Carroll (48) by the Continuity IRA in Craigavon two days later.

At the weekend, a County Court Judge granted a request for an extension to their time in custody, brought under the Terrorism Act 2006.

Handcuffed and flanked by police, Duffy (41) smiled up at family and friends in the public gallery after being allowed into the courtroom by the three judges hearing the application.

Earlier, Barry Macdonald QC, for the six applicants, said the reason they were still in custody was because police were waiting the outcome of forensic tests.

The barrister claimed this did not warrant a decision that their continued detention was necessary.

He also argued that the judge failed to consider whether there was a persisting reasonable suspicion over any of the applicants, and that she failed to give reasons for her decision.

Under amendments to the Terrorism Act suspects can be held for a maximum of 28 days before they must be charged or released.

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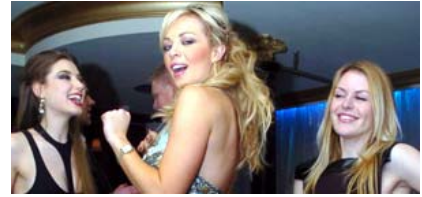
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