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Second man charged over policeman's murder

Wednesday, 25 March 2009

Another man has been charged with the murder of Northern Ireland policeman Stephen Carroll.

The 37-year-old suspect is also accused of possessing a firearm with the intent to endanger life and will appear at Lisburn Magistrates Court today.

Pc Carroll, 48, was shot dead in Craigavon, County Armagh, earlier this month.

The dissident Republican Continuity IRA claimed responsibility for his killing in an effort to endanger the peace process.

A 17-year-old man appeared in court yesterday charged with the murder.

The 17-year-old appeared before Lisburn Magistrates' Court yesterday.

He was armed with an assault rifle and more than 25 bullets on the night of the killing, the court heard.

As well as being charged with possession of the firearm with intent, he was also accused of being a member of the Continuity IRA and collecting information likely to be of use to terrorists.

The teenager, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was remanded in custody to appear by a video link at a court in Craigavon at the start of next month.

Pc Carroll, from Banbridge, Co Down, was shot dead while answering a call from a woman who had a brick thrown through her window.

He was shot in the back of the head as he sat in the driver's seat of an unmarked police car while his colleague approached the house.

His killing came two days after the murder of two soldiers - Sappers Mark Quinsey, 23, from Birmingham, and Patrick Azimkar, 21, from London - outside an army barracks in Antrim.

There was heavy security around the court for yesterday's hearing.

Four other people remain in custody being questioned about the police officer's murder as do four suspects arrested over the murders of the two soldiers.

The youth did not speak during his five-minute appearance in the dock.

The charge sheet read out in court stated that he was in possession of an AK assault rifle and 26 rounds of .762 calibre ammunition.

Police Service of Northern Ireland Detective Inspector John Caldwell told magistrate Rosie Watters that he could link the accused with the charges.



Murdered PSNI officer Stephen Carroll

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Defence solicitor Paddy Moriarty asked the officer how long the youth had been held and how many times he had been interviewed during that period.

Mr Caldwell said the youth had been in custody for 13 days and the number of interviews conducted was in "the late teens".

The solicitor went on to ask if his client had made any admission during these sessions.

The officer replied: "He refused to speak throughout the interviews."

Mr Moriarty said his client would be denying all the charges, but made no application for bail.

The High Court in Belfast is expected to rule later tomorrow on whether six of the eight people still being questioned about the murders of Pc Carroll and the two soldiers can challenge their lengthy detention by police.

Among them is prominent Craigavon republican Colin Duffy.

Last night two men, aged 27 and 31, who had been questioned for a week about the murder of the police officer, were released without charge.

The Continuity IRA claimed they were responsible for the murder of the long-serving policeman.

The Real IRA said they killed the soldiers as they were collecting a pizza from delivery drivers at the gates of Massereene barracks in Antrim.

The lengthy detentions of the suspects has been questioned by Northern Ireland Human Rights Commissioner Monica McWilliams, who said the cells in the PSNI's Serious Crime Suite at Antrim police station were only designed for short stays.

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