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Wednesday, 30 July 2008

Six men were being questioned by police on both sides of the Border last night about the savage murder of Paul Quinn last October.

The 21-year-old was battered to death by a gang of up to 10 men after being lured to a shed on a farm near the Co Monaghan village of Oram.

He was subjected to a barrage of blows from iron bars and cudgels and his internal injuries included damage to his brain and lungs, while a catalogue of external wounds included a broken arm and leg.

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A post-mortem examination concluded that Mr Quinn, from Annamar, Cullyhanna, in south Armagh, died from blunt force trauma, as a result of injuries inflicted to almost every part of his body.

The Irish and British governments have received reports from their security advisers indicating that former members of the Provisional IRA, or their associates, were responsible for the murder.

However, the International Monitoring Commission said there was no evidence to indicate that the murder had been sanctioned by the IRA leadership.

After a lengthy investigation on both sides of the Border, six men were arrested in police swoops yesterday morning and all were still in custody last night.

Gardai arrested three men, aged in their 20s and 30s, on the Monaghan side of the Border and brought them for questioning to Monaghan and Carrickmacross stations.

They were detained under section 30 of the Republic's Offences Against the State Act for withholding information about the Quinn murder and can be held without charge for a maximum of three days.

Meanwhile, the PSNI arrested another three suspects, in their 30s and 50s, and brought them to the Antrim serious crime suite.

The PSNI said their operation was carried out at the request of the gardai.

Bags of items, including documentation, were seized by the police.

All six were detained in the Cullville and Cullyhanna areas.

But one of the key suspects for the murder was not arrested in yesterday morning's swoops.

Police on both sides believe that the murder was the result of a row between Mr Quinn and a republican and the son of another republican the weekend before his death.

It is estimated that up to 20 republicans and their associates were involved in the incident, including lookouts and drivers.

Those involved in Mr Quinn's death were said to have worn boiler suits and surgical gloves.

Investigators were told that he had cried for mercy during the beating.

Gardai carried out a detailed forensic examination of the shed but found few clues and concluded that friends of the killers had cleaned up the shed before leaving the scene.

More than 1,200 leads emerged from the cross-Border inquiries and this prompted the then justice minister, Brian Lenihan, to pay tribute to the huge response from the community in the south Armagh area and also the co-operation provided by the PSNI to the gardai in their joint door-to-door inquiries in Cullyhanna and Crossmaglen.

Mr Lenihan met the victim's parents, Stephen and Briege Quinn, to assure them that no effort was being spared to bring the culprits to justice.

Gardai believe they know the identity of those involved, including the names of some senior republicans in the Border area.

Earlier this year, it emerged that a senior Provisional IRA figure was sent to the Border to carry out his own inquiry after the Provisionals became concerned about the possible political fall-out if it was clearly established that associates were directly involved.

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