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Duffy to maintain innocence

By Victoria O'Hara
Saturday, 28 March 2009

The tip of a latex glove containing the DNA of prominent republican Colin Duffy was found in the getaway car used by the Real IRA to gun down two British soldiers in Antrim, a court has heard.

Amid a huge security presence the 41-year old appeared in Larne Magistrates' Court yesterday and was charged with two counts of murder.

He was also charged with five counts of attempted murder and one count of possession of a firearm and ammunition with intent to endanger life.

High-level security was also in place outside the court and on roads throughout the seaside town.

A packed public gallery filled with supporters watched as Duffy, from Lurgan, Co Armagh, dressed in a black jumper and jeans, walked into the dock handcuffed.

Sappers Mark Quinsey (23) of Birmingham, and Patrick Azimkar (21) of London, were killed as they collected pizzas from outside Antrim's Massereene Barracks on Saturday March 7.

Detective Chief Inspector Jeffrey Smyth told Magistrate Robert Alcorn that he could link Duffy to all the charges, saying that a tip of a glove was found in the footwell of the car that was used in the shooting.

He said: "This is not trace elements — this is a full DNA profile. "It was inside a latex glove found on the floor of the Vauxhall Cavalier."

He conceded later that only the tip of the glove had been found.

Mr Smyth said the DNA profile was the only forensic evidence which has so far connected Duffy to the shootings but added: "There are over 1,000 exhibits in this case."

He said exhibits were being examined in Northern Ireland and in England but other results had so far come back negative.

Det Chief Insp Smyth said that police were relying on three facts in the case, which included forensic evidence, CCTV footage and witness evidence.

He said the PSNI would be opposing an application for bail due to a number of reasons including the risk of absconding.

However defence Barrister Mark Mulholland said Mr Duffy would not be at risk.

He added that bail should be granted on the grounds that Mr Smyth had not given sufficient basis for it to be denied and remand in custody would be a contravention of Duffy's human rights.



Colin Duffy is accused of murdering sappers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar

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Mr Alcorn denied the application for bail and the accused was placed in custody until April 21 when he will appear at Antrim Magistrates court via videolink.

As Duffy was led away handcuffed cheers and claps of support were given by supporters which included his wife.

Speaking outside court Paddy Vernon, Mr Duffy's solicitor, said his client still maintains his innocence and will be applying for bail on Monday.

Charged, then taken away

Victoria O'Hara was in court as prominent republican Colin Duffy was charged

Looking tired and emotionless, Colin Duffy was slowly led into the dock at Larne Magistrate's Court. Dressed in a black jumper and jeans Duffy held on to a brown coat as he acknowledged the public gallery packed with supporters, then fixed his gaze straight ahead.

Surrounded by police inside and outside the courtroom the 41-year-old, from Lurgan, spoke only when asked if he was Colin Duffy.

He replied quietly: "I am".

And after all charges were read out—including two murder charges, five attempted murders and possession of a firearm and ammunition with intent to endanger life—and asked if he understood them he nodded, "Yes".

Duffy still remained expressionless when a police officer told the court that a fingertip of a glove was found with his DNA profile on it in the getaway vehicle.

When District Judge Robert Alcorn refused the application and remanded him in custody Duffy calmly rose from his seat.

A number of sighs could be heard from the public gallery but raising his hands while still in cuffs the defendant gave a wave to his supporters. Cheers and applause erupted.

The cheers continued outside while the defendant was driven away in a blacked out car.

Minor scuffles between a crowd who had gathered outside and some supporters of the republican broke out. Police quelled the trouble and within minutes the tension had diminished.

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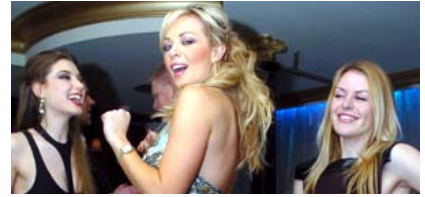
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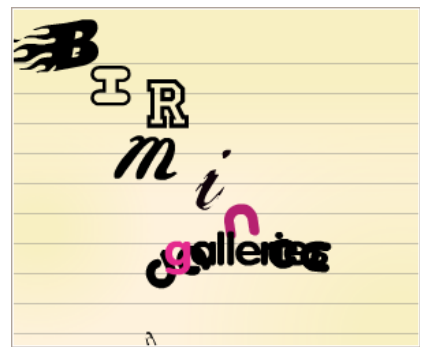
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