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News

Man in court over Thomas pal assault

Six quizzed on murder released

Monday, October 22, 2007

By Ashleigh Wallace and James Watson

A man questioned over the murder of Thomas Devlin was today appearing in court charged with assaulting one of the teenager's friends.

A PSNI spokeswoman said the charge of grievous bodily harm with intent related to an incident in Somerton Road in north Belfast on August 10, 2005 and the alleged victim was with Thomas when he was stabbed.

The man was appearing before Belfast Magistrates Court this morning.

Thomas was stabbed to death as he walked home along the Somerton Road with friends after buying sweets at a filling station.

When the Catholic schoolboy was nearly home, he was knifed up to five times in the back by two male attackers. One of his friends was also injured.

Six other people who were questioned about the murder over the weekend have now been released pending a report to the PPS.

They included PUP member Billy Hutchinson. His arrest led to weekend protests outside Antrim PSNI station.

Party leader Dawn Purvis welcomed his release, but said that questions still remained.

Hutchinson was released from custody yesterday.

Ms Purvis spoke of her shock and anger at Hutchinson's arrest, saying it was linked to comments he publicly made in relation to the teenager's murder.






The east Belfast Assembly member said: "I'm delighted that Billy has been released but questions still remain over the nature of his arrest and the leaking of that information to the media."

Mr Hutchinson is a former UVF prisoner who played a key role in the organisation's announcement earlier this year that it was standing down.

He also joined a senior UVF delegation in talks with General John de Chastelain, the head of the decommissioning body.

Earlier this year and on the second anniversary of her son's death, Thomas' mother, Penny Holloway, criticised Mr Hutchinson for what she saw as a failing on his part to use his influence in Mount Vernon to persuade people with information on the murder to come forward.

Mr Hutchinson hit back by replying: "I am on record as saying anyone with any information about the murder of Thomas Devlin should give it to the police."

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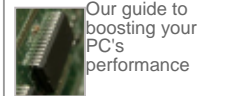
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