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 3. [Sport](#)
 4. [Business](#)
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Thursday, May 1, 2008

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[Next Day](#) 

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Report prompts calls over IRA army council

[Eoin Burke-Kennedy and Charlie Taylor](#)

The Independent Monitoring Commission's conclusion that members of the IRA were involved in the brutal killing of a man on a remote Border farm last October has prompted renewed calls for the group's army council to be dismantled.

Both the SDLP and the Democratic Unionist Party today called for the existing structures of the IRA to be disbanded after an IMC report concluded that while the IRA leadership did not sanction the murder of Paul Quinn from Cullyhanna in south Armagh, its members were involved.

The IMC presented its 18th report, which deals with Mr Quinn's murder and other paramilitary issues, to the British and Irish governments on Tuesday.

"The killing was clearly contrary to the instructions and strategy of the leadership of PIRA. It was also contrary to the interests of PIRA and to those of Sinn Féin. We are aware of no evidence linking the leadership of PIRA to the incident," the report said.

"We do not attribute the killing to PIRA. This is for several reasons: the local and personal nature of its roots; the absence of indications either of organisational sanction or that it was in the interests of PIRA; and because it was contrary to the declared policy which PIRA has been following for over two years," it added.

While the IMC's report argues against claims that the IRA leadership sanctioned the murder of Mr Quinn, it states that current and former members of the IRA from the south Armagh area were involved in the beating to death of Mr Quinn in farm buildings in Co Monaghan after he was lured over the Border.

This finding contradicts the assertion by Sinn Féin leaders such as Gerry Adams and Newry and Armagh MP and Northern Executive Minister Conor Murphy that the IRA was not involved.

SDLP Assembly member Dominic Bradley said the report's conclusions were not radically different from what the Quinn family and others had claimed about the murder.

"None of us locally, including the Quinn family, have ever said or claimed that the murder of Paul Quinn was ordered and sanctioned from on high within the Provisional IRA," the Newry and Armagh MLA said.

"What we have said in the past and what the family has said is that local members of the IRA were involved in his murder. I think this report clearly includes that and it also points up the fact that local members of the IRA and their associates were able to access local paramilitary structures within south Armagh in order to commission this murder.

"That underlines the need for those structures to be dismantled to help ensure no other young man falls victim to them," he said.

Democratic Unionist MP Gregory Campbell said the IMC's findings underlined the need for the IRA Army Council to disband.

"The IMC concludes that the PIRA was not organisationally involved but the only conclusive way for the Republican Movement to disassociate itself from such activities is to completely stand down the organisation by disbanding the PIRA Army Council," the East Derry MP said.

"Where the PIRA is not active there is no need for the continued existence of such a structure. Its existence remains a negative influence in communities such as South Armagh.

The IMC's report said: "A number of people were involved in the incident although they did not all necessarily play a part in the actual killing. Amongst those involved were people who had in various ways been associated with the PIRA at a local level, including as members of the organisation

"We recognise that the involvement of local members or former members or associates of the organisation in the way we have described is bound to raise questions about the level of control exercised by the leadership of PIRA. The PIRA leadership has had some difficulties in the past in exercising authority in South Armagh. Looking more widely in Ireland North and South we do not find evidence to suggest that this recent rejection of instructions is a general problem," the report said.

Both London and Dublin will be relieved that the IMC does not implicate the IRA leadership in Mr Quinn's killing.

Any such IMC indictment of the IRA leadership could have had catastrophic consequences for the powersharing Stormont administration. Senior DUP politicians had indicated that if Mr Quinn's murder was ordered or sanctioned at IRA army council or leadership level then it was likely to collapse the DUP-Sinn Féin dominated Northern Executive.

Nonetheless, the IMC's findings that IRA members were involved in Mr Quinn's murder is expected to cause an unpredictable degree of political turbulence.

The IMC report is also likely to trigger further calls for all IRA structures, including its army council, to be dismantled.

It is expected that Unionists will use the report to justify their refusal to contemplate at this stage the transfer of policing and justice powers to the Northern Executive.

The report is also likely to put further pressure on Sinn Féin president Mr Adams and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness to shift from the party's position that the murder of Mr Quinn was carried out by "criminals" and not by the IRA.

The IMC have conceded that IRA men killed Paul Quinn and that makes it an IRA murder. No ifs, buts or maybes - Dissident Unionist MEP Jim Allister

Dissident Unionist MEP Jim Allister dismissed the IMC's findings into the Quinn murder.

"This morning's Independent Monitoring Commission's report amounts to a total whitewash designed to let the IRA's political wing and their partners in the DUP off the hook. It is preposterous to argue that because the murder wasn't supposedly "sanctioned" then it wasn't an IRA killing. No one will find an IRA Army Council Minute sanctioning specific murders," said Mr Allister.

"The report is a complete insult to victims and offers no protection to future victims because it gives terrorists the green light to operate as they like as long as the leadership is supposedly kept in the dark.

"The IMC have conceded that IRA men killed Paul Quinn and that makes it an IRA murder. No if, buts or maybes."

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Brian Lenihan today described the killing of Paul Quinn as a "brutal and cowardly act".

"I know that the Gardaí, in close co-operation with the PSNI, are determined to bring Paul's killers to justice. There is no room on this island for people, whatever their background, who think they can commit such heinous acts with impunity," said Mr Lenihan.

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