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Saturday, March 14, 2009

## PSNI arrests third man over policeman's killing

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CONOR LALLY and GERRY MORIARTY

A THIRD MAN was arrested yesterday in connection with last Monday night's Continuity IRA murder of PSNI constable Stephen Carroll in Craigavon, Co Antrim

The man in his 30s joined two other men, aged 37 and 17, who are being questioned by detectives about the killing.

The 37-year-old is said to be a republican who originally was aligned with the provisional republican movement – and once served as a Sinn Féin councillor – before switching allegiance to the dissidents some years ago.

The suspect has not been involved with Sinn Féin for a number of years. He has more recently come to the attention of the PSNI for activities linked to dissident republicanism.

He has a conviction for firearms offences following the discovery by the PSNI of the components of a gun and ammunition in a house where he was staying.

The family of the 17-year-old told the Daily Telegraph this week that the youth had an alibi as he was drinking with his girlfriend at the time of the shooting.

Meanwhile, Jackie McDonald, head of the UDA in south Belfast who attended yesterday's funeral of Constable Carroll in Banbridge, said his organisation was "100 per cent behind the peace process" and urged loyalists not to be drawn into any form of counter-violence. "I hope young people don't fall into that trap," he said.

Mr McDonald expressed concern that the weekend's Glasgow Celtic versus Glasgow Rangers game could trigger sectarian trouble at Catholic/Protestant interfaces as had happened in the past. Community leaders must be on the alert to prevent trouble, he said.

Mr McDonald repeated that loyalists and unionists were impressed by the Sinn Féin response in condemning the killings of the two British soldiers in Antrim and of

Constable Carroll in Craigavon. "I think there has been very brave new language by them."

He said the presence at Constable Carroll's funeral of Sinn Féin members MLAs John O'Dowd and Alex Maskey, and Banbridge councillor Dessie Ward, the first time party members have attended the funeral of a murdered officer, was also serving to provide community confidence.

Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern, after attending the funeral, held talks on security with Northern Secretary Shaun Woodward.

Meanwhile Garda Commissioner Fachtna Murphy has met with his most senior officers – Assistant Commissioner Mick McCarthy, the head of crime and security, and Assistant Commissioner Mick Feehan, who is in charge of the Northern region.

The pair will now spearhead an anti-terrorist operation against dissident republicans following the shootings of the past week.

Mr McCarthy will co-ordinate all surveillance operations against known dissident republicans along the Border and in Dublin, Limerick, Tipperary and other places.

Mr Feehan, who has responsibility for policing along the Border, is in charge of a number of overt and covert measures such as increased checkpoints, armed patrols and surveillance on known Continuity IRA and Real IRA personnel in the Garda's Northern region.

While these dissidents will now be subjected to close surveillance, Garda sources said significant dissidents were always being watched.

"There are nearly 50 dissidents in jail in the Republic at the moment, and we have been keeping a close eye on others and regularly bringing them before the Special Criminal Court," said one Garda source.

Gardaí do not believe that either dissident group is capable of a sustained terrorism campaign.

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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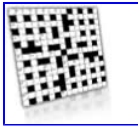
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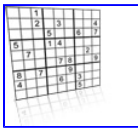
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