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Wednesday, July 30, 2008

Six arrested in connection with Paul Quinn murder

GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor

SIX MEN were arrested yesterday in separate "targeted" operations by the Garda and PSNI in connection with last October's murder of Paul Quinn from Cullyhanna in south Armagh.

Three of the men were being questioned last night in Monaghan and Carrickmacross Garda stations while the three men arrested in the Cullyhanna area by the PSNI were being questioned at Antrim station.

Well-placed local sources said one of the men arrested by the PSNI was a senior IRA figure in south Armagh, who had served time for IRA offences. They said one of the other men was viewed as a "minor to mid-ranking" republican who had "connections to both Sinn Féin and the IRA".

Sinn Féin has consistently denied that republicans linked to the IRA or Sinn Féin were involved in the murder. So far no one has been charged with Mr Quinn's murder.

Members of the Quinn Support Group in south Armagh welcomed the arrests. Stephen Quinn, father of the murdered Paul Quinn, hoped that future developments in the investigation would lead to convictions of those who had killed his 21-year-old son last October.

The operations were carried out early yesterday morning in the Cullyhanna and Crossmaglen areas of south Armagh and, it is understood, in the general Monaghan area. Gardaí arrested three men aged in their 20s and 30s and detained them under Section 30 of the Offences Against the State Act. A number of local people observed the arrests in south Armagh of two men in their 50s and one man in his 20s.

The PSNI said it was operating in support of the Garda murder investigation. As well as arresting the men the PSNI said it also seized a number of items.

"The aim is to carry out the operation with the minimum amount of disruption to local communities," said a PSNI spokeswoman.

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Mr Quinn was beaten to death in a barn in Co Monaghan by a gang of up to 15 people last October after he reportedly fell foul of republicans in south Armagh.

The Quinn family and support group have consistently claimed that members of the IRA were involved, an allegation rejected by Sinn Féin.

Stephen Quinn said the development would provide the family with a "boost" as it indicated that the Garda and PSNI were progressing with their investigation. "We hope that eventually people will be convicted for the murder of Paul. In the meantime we will continue our campaign to get justice," he added.

Jim McAllister of the Quinn Support Group also hoped the arrests marked progress in the investigation. "We don't in any way see this as the end of the game. We see this as the opening of another avenue of the investigation," he said.

In April the Independent Monitoring Commission found that the IRA organisation did not kill Paul Quinn although "local members or former members" of the republican group were involved in his murder.

The IMC said it was not attributing the "killing to PIRA" (Provisional IRA) for a number of reasons, including the "local and personal nature of the roots" of the murder, the absence of any indication of any organisational sanction for the murder, and because the killing was contrary to the peace process policy the IRA was following for the previous two years.

"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."

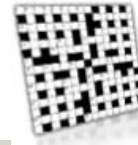
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