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UK**IRA threat to Quinn murder witness**

Police issue a warning to human 'bait' who was present at barn killing

Henry McDonald, Ireland editor

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One of the young men unwittingly used as 'bait' to lure South Armagh man Paul Quinn to his death has been told his life is under threat from the Provisional IRA, it was revealed last night. He was visited at his home last week by PSNI officers who warned him he was in danger.

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The Quinn family's support group has claimed that the IRA in South Armagh killed their son over a dispute with a senior republican and his family. Claims now that the Provisionals are still actively targeting one of the three men who were with Quinn inside the remote barn where he was beaten to death last year could potentially destabilise the political settlement at Stormont.

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Last night Ulster Unionist peer Lord Laird of Artigarvan said that he intended to raise at Westminster this week the Quinns' and other local people's allegations that one of the men used as 'bait' in the Quinn death is under threat from the South Armagh Provisionals.

A number of unionist politicians have warned that, unless Quinn's killers and others involved in the murder of Belfast man Robert McCartney are brought to justice, they will block devolving policing and judicial powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Next month two motions, one in the Stormont Assembly, the other in the Dail, will be put forward calling for full co-operation into the Quinn murder inquiry. Last week it was revealed that the Garda Siochana are following more than 1,000 leads in the case.

The issue of a fresh death threat to a potentially crucial witness in the investigation has raised tensions further in South Armagh. PSNI officers left a written 'security threat form' at the man's home. The Observer understands that the written warning included a reference to him being under threat from the Provisionals. Yesterday the family declined to comment on the PSNI visit.

A police spokesman said that the PSNI did not discuss 'the security of individuals.' However, he refused to confirm or deny that such a visit had taken place last week. The Observer has also learnt that the police advised the family that they had an intelligence source who informed them that he would be killed and later smeared as an informer. The man was with Quinn when he was lured to a small farm in Tullycoora, Co Monaghan, and beaten to death by a gang of masked men on 20 October last year.

Quinn had been involved in a feud with young men from leading IRA families.

Sinn Fein MP and Stormont minister Conor Murphy has continued to insist that local republicans had no hand in the Paul Quinn killing. The MP later infuriated the dead man's parents by claiming their son had died because of a criminal feud among diesel smugglers.

But the Garda, the PSNI and the Irish Foreign Minister, Dermot Ahern, have dismissed the criminal feud theory and say there is no evidence to support the MP's claim.

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