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Politics

Quinn murder hunt: two flee to England

Young IRA gang members 'were told to take the blame' for fatal beating

Henry McDonald, Ireland editor
Sunday October 28, 2007
[The Observer](#)

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Two young South Armagh republicans have fled to England fearing they will be 'scapegoated' for the murder of Paul Quinn.

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The Observer has learnt the two were part of the 15-strong gang that killed the 21-year-old during a savage beating at a farm in County Monaghan last weekend. All 15 were members of the Provisional IRA's South Armagh brigade.

'They left in the middle of the week after it became clear they were to take the "rap" for the Quinn murder,' one senior Irish police officer said this weekend. 'They were told they would have to hand themselves over to the gardai.'

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The Garda officer said the men's leader, millionaire smuggler Thomas 'Slab' Murphy, was furious that the so-called punishment beating that went wrong has refocused attention on the IRA leader's smuggling empire on the border. Police officers on both sides of the border do not believe that the gang were under orders to kill their victim.

Quinn was lured to the farmhouse near the border last Saturday after defying repeated local IRA warnings to leave Northern Ireland. Quinn incurred the wrath of the South Armagh Provisionals after getting the better of a senior veteran republican in the area in a fist fight.

The murdered man's body was so badly broken and bruised that another Garda officer described it as 'looking like a lump of jelly'. It is believed most of Quinn's bones were smashed during the assault. 'The two boys told to hand themselves in bolted to Dublin instead and took the boat to England. It's left Slab and Co with a real problem.'

Earlier last week it appeared that the involvement of IRA personnel in the killing would threaten to bring down the power-sharing Executive at Stormont. However, the coalition led by Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists and Sinn Fein looks secure this weekend after DUP deputy



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leader Peter Robinson said he did not believe the Quinn murder was ordered by the IRA's central command despite claims by the Cullyhanna man's family that the Provisionals were involved.

He said: 'I do not believe that there was, on the basis of information that I have, a decision taken at some central command. But it is important to establish whether the IRA as an organisation even locally was involved. We want to wait until the proper investigation is carried out by the gardai and supported by the PSNI. [The murder] is an important issue and it cannot be swept aside.'

The Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and Northern Ireland's Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, have condemned the killing and urged the public to co-operate in police investigations on both sides of the border. The unprecedented call marked another shift in the party's support for policing.

A Garda spokesman said that there have so far been no arrests in connection with the Quinn murder.

Meanwhile, an Ulster Unionist peer vowed last night to name two IRA veterans who, he claimed, gave the order for Paul Quinn to be attacked. Lord Laird said that he would use the Queen's Speech on 6 November to name the two republicans in the House of Lords.

'I am at the point of collecting detailed information on the murder and, if there are not clear signals that justice is being pursued vigorously, I fully intend to put on record in the House of Lords what I know, including naming names,' he said.

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