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Finding Paul Quinn killers vital to save law and order, say family

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 Sunday January 06 2008

The future of law and order in south Armagh hinges on the Garda's ability to bring charges and gain convictions in the murder of Paul Quinn, the young man beaten to death by the IRA last October, supporters of his family's campaign for justice said yesterday.

It has also been learned that death threats have been made against three supporters of the family by local IRA figures.

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Mr Quinn's family are still demanding that Sinn Fein withdraw its remarks that Paul was killed as part of a feud between criminal gangs involved in fuel smuggling, inferring that he himself was a criminal. So far, Sinn Fein, including its leader Gerry Adams and local MP Conor Murphy, have refused to do so.

Although gardai have interviewed hundreds of people and taken statements there is still not enough evidence to bring charges after two months work by up to 100 detectives and gardai. Senior sources said the investigation will continue at a high level of intensity but need more support from local people. They are aware that in some cases, witnesses have been intimidated by known IRA figures.

It is now understood that the order to abduct Paul Quinn and carry out the savage beating came from a meeting of high level IRA figures in south Armagh in the weeks before his murder. Five or six bosses, all involved in various types of smuggling and criminality, issued the order. It is also believed that the attack was not sanctioned by the IRA's "Army Council" but was an entirely local affair resulting from an altercation between Paul Quinn and one of the local bosses involved in issuing the order that led to the killing.

The operation to track Paul Quinn's movements was led by a senior local IRA figure who was implicated in the murder of Post Office worker Frank Kerr, who was shot dead during an IRA robbery of the sorting office in Newry in November 1994, after the first IRA ceasefire.

This man led a gang of up to 20 which included nine men who carried out the actual beating at a cattle shed belonging to the family of Paul Quinn's friends at Oram in Co Monaghan on October 20 last. According to sources, iron bars were used to break his legs and feet while wooden cudgels with nails or metal spikes were used to beat his torso. The fatal injuries were inflicted to his head also with iron bars. The other members of the gang provided the getaway or "run back" vehicles as well as locations for the men to dispose of their overalls and balaclavas. One was dressed in combat gear.

At least eight of those involved in the planning, direction and actual killing live within a short distance of the Quinn family home in Cullyhanna.

The family's spokesman, former Sinn Fein representative Jim McAllister, yesterday said: "It is widely known and accepted about what happened and who was involved. It is going to have a tremendous impact if this is buried. It could have serious implications for years, even generations to come. It is significant that for the first time young people here are putting their trust in policing and particularly the gardai and are longing for results.

"If the gardai get the results against these people and arrests and convictions for this murder, there will be support for policing in south Armagh, of that there could be no doubt. If they don't get that you can forget about policing for two generations, no matter what Sinn Fein says."

Mr McAllister said the IRA Sinn Fein was actively involved in the cover-up surrounding the murder and that it was engaged in a campaign of blackening Paul Quinn's name.

- *JIM CUSACK*

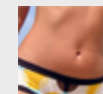
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