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Uproar at republican's remarks over murders

By Noel McAdam
 Friday, 27 March 2009

PSNI Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde was today being urged to investigate remarks by Republican Sinn Fein for incitement to hatred.

A DUP delegation lead by First Minister Peter Robinson was also asking about the west Belfast offices of the political wing of Continuity IRA which admitted killing police constable Stephen Carroll.

MLA Jimmy Spratt, who was part of the delegation, said: "We will also be wanting to know what information the police have about these individuals and this organisation."

At a news conference yesterday, the group's publicity director, Richard Walsh, said the Irish people had the right to use "any level of controlled and disciplined force to drive the British out of Ireland."

A police Land Rover parked outside the office watched on as those involved in the Press conference, including former Continuity IRA prisoner Josephine Hayden, left the building afterwards.

Mr Spratt, the former Police Federation spokesman, said today the remarks were "absolutely disgraceful and came as a bit of a shock". He added: "We will be asking the chief constable to investigate these remarks for incitement to hatred. It was also noted that this group, made of individuals we know little or nothing about, appears to have offices in west Belfast."

Ulster Unionist MLA David Burnside said the language used was a "throw back" to the 1970s but warned the group must be taken "very seriously".

"I think it is quite worrying and hope they can be marginalised but, without over-reacting, I think we have to take them very seriously," the South Antrim MLA said.

"I can understand Sinn Fein being worried because this is where Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness cut their teeth, when they split from the official IRA and what we are seeing here is the same transition.

"It needs to be dealt with quite quickly before there is growing support but do we have the necessary infiltration to be able to deal with them?"

At the Press conference Mr Walsh also complained about the length of the detention of suspects at Antrim police station and responded to the Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness's description of those behind the recent killings as "traitors to the people of Ireland" by saying Mr McGuinness and Gerry Adams had been guilty of "severe treachery" and the Provisional IRA were now unionists.

"We have always upheld the rights to the Irish people to use any level of controlled and disciplined force to drive the British out of Ireland. We make no apology for that," he said.

While admitting the deaths of soldiers Patrick Azimkar and Mark Quinsey and constable Stephen Carroll were "regrettable", Mr Walsh said dissident republicans made no apology for "defending" themselves.

"The reality is that when you have occupation within a country there is invariably resistance,

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including armed resistance," he added.

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