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Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Public must help in hunt for killers, say leaders



First Minister Peter Robinson, Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness at a press conference at Stormont Castle yesterday in response to the murder of PSNI Constable Stephen Carroll. Photograph: Arthur Allison/Pacemaker

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NEIL CARNDUFF and GERRY MORIARTY

DEPUTY FIRST Minister Martin McGuinness yesterday joined First Minister Peter Robinson in pledging his “whole-hearted support” to the PSNI in the face of escalating dissident republican violence in the North.

Mr McGuinness called on all members of the community to give any information they may have on “these traitors to the island of Ireland” to the police. He made his address alongside Mr Robinson and Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde at Stormont Castle. It came hours after the Continuity IRA murder of Constable Stephen Carroll in Craigavon, Co Armagh, had taken the death toll in the North to three in as many days.

The First Minister said: “This is a battle of wills between the political class and the evil gunmen – the political class will win.” He expressed his satisfaction with the unity shown by all members at Stormont after the murders of two soldiers in Antrim and of Constable Carroll in Craigavon.

“I am glad that every party in the Assembly is solidly in support of the chief constable. That’s the kind of unity that can defeat anybody,” he said. This solidarity was also

widespread among the people of the North, the DUP leader added. "It is a united community, supporting the full rigour of law and the due process of law."

Mr McGuinness said: "I want to join with Peter. We need to pledge our support to Hugh Orde, to the police services North and South, in their work of combating the activities of these groups." He stressed that the people of the North could empower politicians by actively working with the security services.

"The people are a very powerful aspect of all of this," Mr McGuinness said. "We are asking people out there in the community to come forward, to a man and a woman, supporting the work we are engaged in."

Mr McGuinness said he was personally leading by example. He said: "If I call on our people to weigh in behind the police services North and South in the apprehension of these people, I make it clear that I too have a duty and a responsibility, if I know where individuals responsible for these activities are, to do as much as I can."

He continued: "I don't know who was involved in the shootings in Antrim, I don't know who was involved in the shooting on Monday night. The responsibility for investigating that lies with the chief constable, and I am totally and absolutely obliged to give him my whole-hearted support."

"These people are traitors to the island of Ireland, they have betrayed the political desire, hopes and aspirations of all the people who live on this island and they don't deserve to be supported by anyone," he concluded.

The chief constable echoed the Ministers' appeal for help from the community, asking people to "step forward, be brave and tell us what they know". He described the groups behind the attacks as "small, disenfranchised and rather ridiculous, but dangerous", and their campaign as "futile".

Sir Hugh indicated that the PSNI's co-operation with An Garda Síochána and the Irish and British governments was sufficient to deal with the dissident threat. "I have no intention to ask the army for routine military support – it is not necessary and it doesn't work. My organisation delivers policing and it will continue absolutely to do so," he said.

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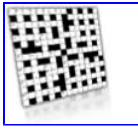
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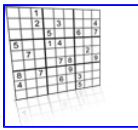
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