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Monday, March 9, 2009

## McGuinness stands by criticism of Orde's decision to deploy British special forces



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DAN KEENAN

**SINN FÉIN REACTION:** DEPUTY FIRST Minister Martin McGuinness said he stood by Sinn Féin criticism of the decision last week to redeploy specialist army intelligence personnel in Northern Ireland.

Speaking to *The Irish Times* yesterday, he said: "Bringing more British soldiers back into the situation in the North of Ireland is something that we have to be concerned about."

Referring to the "broad nationalist and republican community" he added: "Many of our people have suffered at the hands of what was called special forces over a period of 25 years."

"Within the perception of the vast majority of nationalists and republicans will be huge question marks and concerns.

"People will view the activities of those groups with as much suspicion and disdain as they do that group which was responsible for the killing of two people in Antrim."

Mr McGuinness has postponed his departure and that of First Minister Peter Robinson for a trip to the US until tomorrow and will take his seat in the Assembly today when the main party leaders, including Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams, will make formal statements on the Antrim killings.

"In the city where I come from, three citizens were also killed by groups such as this over a 12-month period.

"We have always known there was going to be a challenge from people who are hostile to the peace process and have their own agendas."

He said he and others had to continue to build a "policing service which can take account of these individuals who are determined to bring the peace process down".

Mr McGuinness called on Sir Hugh Orde to ensure that dissident republicans do not get their way.

"The bringing in of extra [British army] support . . . against a backdrop of masked SAS people, against a backdrop of people lying in ditches with weapons sends all of the wrong messages to a community that believes we were moving away from all of that. It's like a step back in time."

The people who killed the British soldiers in Antrim, like the decision to call in army specialist officers, represented a "step back in time" he added.

"Each of them is a big mistake."

Mr McGuinness commended Sir Hugh's "good reputation" and praised him in his efforts to uncover collusion between loyalist killers and the former RUC. However, he repeated that the chief constable had made an error in requesting British army specialists.

He said he had a duty and a responsibility to defend and to build the peace process to call on everyone to support the police service and to "make politics work".

The relations between Sinn Féin and the DUP, as well as the personal working relationship between First Minister and Deputy First Minister were "robust", he said.

"I believe he [Mr Robinson] is under no doubt whatsoever about my commitment to the success of the peace process.

"The institutions cannot be destroyed or broken by dissident groups."

The efforts of dissidents were "futile", he said, adding that "unrepresentative groupings within our community upset an agenda which is clearly in the interests of the people that we represent."

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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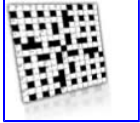
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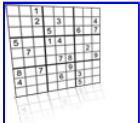
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