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Monday, March 9, 2009

Taoiseach says tiny, evil group will not undermine peace



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HARRY McGEE and MARIE O'HALLORAN

POLITICAL REACTION: TAOISEACH Brian Cowen has strongly condemned the armed attack in Co Antrim on Saturday night in which two soldiers were killed and four others injured .

Describing those who carried out the attack as "evil" and wholly unrepresentative, Mr Cowen said all people in Ireland had hoped that that kind of senseless violence was a thing of the past.

In a statement issued early yesterday, the Taoiseach said he looked forward to seeing those responsible brought quickly to justice. "Violence has been utterly rejected by the people of this island, both North and South.

"A tiny group of evil people cannot and will not undermine the will of the people of Ireland to live in peace together," he added.

He said he had conveyed a message of sympathy to British prime minister Gordon Brown and that the Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin had contacted Northern Secretary Shaun Woodward.

President Mary McAleese expressed her shock and dismay at the attack at Massereene British army base.

She said she condemned the violence in the strongest terms and added that her thoughts and prayers were with the families of those who had been killed and injured.

Fine Gael leader Enda Kenny described the shootings as brutal and mindless.

"This was a vicious and seemingly random attack of a kind that we haven't seen for over a decade on this island," he said.

"We have grown accustomed to a peace that has allowed all communities on the island to look to the future with optimism. This brutal assault last night is a throwback to a period that we all hoped was in our past."

Mr Kenny said he had been concerned for some time about the continued activities of republican dissidents.

Labour Party leader Eamon Gilmore deplored the attack, which he said was carried out by those who want to turn the clock back and see a return of sectarian conflict.

"I hope that the PSNI will get full co-operation," he said. "Democrats, North and South, must work together to put all paramilitary organisations out of business," he added.

A minute's silence was observed at the Green party national conference in Wexford as a mark of respect to the victims of the shooting incident at the British army barracks in Antrim.

Minister for Communications Eamon Ryan expressed "deep-felt condolences" to the families of the victims.

"This is a dangerous and sinister return to a path that we thought we had left behind," he said.

Reacting on behalf of Republican Sinn Féin, its president Ruairí Ó Brádaigh said, while the loss of life was "regrettable" the lessons of history were that as long as there was a British presence in Ireland, it would face resistance.

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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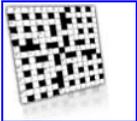
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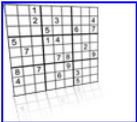
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