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Thursday, November 6, 2008

Policing of parade cost £300,000

GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor

THE COST of policing the republican protests and British army homecoming in Belfast on Sunday was "well in excess of £300,000" (€369,000), according to PSNI chief constable Sir Hugh Orde.

Sir Hugh told the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of the House of Commons yesterday that the day passed off relatively peacefully with just "three or four arrests", although it required a "massive policing effort".

Heavy use of resources was required to prevent violence between republican protesters and loyalist supporters of the homecoming. The cash could have been better used for community policing, Sir Hugh said.

He repeated that dissident republican groups were determined to kill one or more of his officers, and that the threat was linked to the stand-off between Sinn Féin and the DUP. He said co-operation with the Garda, who were "committed" to tackling dissidents, had resulted in the lives of some of his officers being saved.

He said he had intelligence that these groups were using the current deadlock to recruit younger people and to develop capacity.

"They see that Stormont is not operating as it was envisaged to operate. They see the suggestion that by now the devolution of policing and justice should have taken place," he said.

Labour MP Kate Hoey, from Northern Ireland, said Sir Hugh's use of language got her "quite confused". She said he used the terms "the Republic" and "the North". She asked: "Don't you like to use the term Northern Ireland; you haven't used it actually once yet?" He replied, "I am chief constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I use it all the time."

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This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

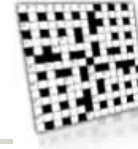
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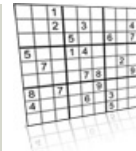
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