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Orde tells DUP no evidence to link IRA with killing

PSNI Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde has told the DUP that at this stage there is no evidence to link the murder of Paul Quinn in Co Monaghan to the IRA, as the Quinn family alleges. **Gerry Moriarty**, **Mark Hennessy** and **Conor Lally** report.

However, senior Garda sources, who spoke to *The Irish Times* last night, said intelligence on Mr Quinn's killing suggested he was murdered by people who have previously been members of the Provisional IRA after he clashed with former members of that organisation.

"We don't have anything to say it was sanctioned, it was more local justice being dished out, but it did involve former members [of the Provisional IRA]," said one senior source.

Gardaí still believe the dead man was killed after he refused to leave his home in Cullyhanna following a fight with a prominent republican there and the son of another republican figure.

They are satisfied Mr Quinn was involved with a gang who were laundering green diesel in Monaghan and smuggling it into the North for sale as regular fuel.

However, sources said no evidence had emerged to link those activities to his murder.

According to DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson, Sir Hugh told him yesterday that, this early in the investigation, the Garda and the PSNI "have not been able to draw the conclusion that has been made by the family that this was the work of the IRA".

This briefing and other senior contacts at Stormont yesterday took place against a DUP warning that if the IRA was behind Mr Quinn's murder it could collapse the Northern Executive and Assembly.

Sir Hugh travelled to Stormont at the DUP's request yesterday evening to brief the party on the current state of the investigation, which is being led by the Garda.

A PSNI spokeswoman confirmed that Sir Hugh met a DUP delegation including First Minister the Rev Ian Paisley. He also was in contact with Sinn Féin Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, she said. She was unable to confirm the details of the DUP meeting

Garda Commissioner Noel Conroy also briefed Mr McGuinness by phone last night. Afterwards a spokesman for the Deputy First Minister said Mr McGuinness was "absolutely certain no republican was involved in this dreadful murder".

In the Dáil, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern said the murder was linked to local criminal activity on the Border and should not threaten the future of the devolved Government. Mr Donaldson said that the feedback from Sir Hugh Orde was that the attack involved "criminality on both sides". "The question is, were they [the killers] members of the IRA, were they acting on behalf of the IRA? And the chief constable is very clear that at this stage the evidence is not there, and that it is early days, and the investigation is continuing."

Earlier yesterday the DUP held what it described as "high-level" contacts with Sinn Féin to discuss the beating to death of 21-year-old Mr Quinn from Cullyhanna, south Armagh, in a barn at a farm close to Castleblayney on Saturday.

Mr Donaldson and junior DUP Minister Ian Paisley jnr warned that if the IRA was implicated in the murder it could have grave implications for the stability of the powersharing Stormont administration.

Emphatic statements yesterday denying "republican" involvement by Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams, Mr McGuinness and the party's MP for Newry and Armagh, Conor Murphy, provided some reassurance for the DUP.

Urging co-operation with the police, Mr Adams said if he had "hard information" he would provide it to the PSNI or gardaí. "There is no republican involvement whatsoever in this man's murder and all of us should be careful that we don't end up playing politics with what is a dreadful, criminal action," he said, adding he believed the murder was linked to "fuel smuggling involving criminals".

Mr Paisley jnr said the DUP would wait for a definitive account from the PSNI and the Garda as to who they believed killed Mr Quinn.

He said of Mr Adams's comments: "The language in all this certainly helps; it helps considerably. This would not have happened a year ago, let alone 10 years ago."

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