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News

Sinn Fein man is an IRA killer, claim unionists

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Sunday, August 12, 2007

By Chris Anderson

A senior Sinn Fein politician is set to face allegations that he was part of an IRA gang that ambushed and murdered two senior RUC officers, it has been claimed.

Unionist sources claim the leading republican, who is close to Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and party leader Gerry Adams, will be named as one of the killers at the tribunal in the Republic into the murders of Chief Supt Harry Breen and Supt Bob Buchanan 18 years ago.

The Sinn Fein man has a conviction for terrorist offences, committed before he became a leading light in the party and an elected representative.

The two RUC officers were shot dead near the south Armagh village of Jonesboro in 1989 as they returned from a meeting with Garda officers in Dundalk.

Over the years allegations have persisted that a police officer in the Republic tipped off the IRA about their movements.

Two years ago the Irish government set up a Tribunal of Inquiry chaired by Judge Peter Smithwick to investigate the collusion allegations.

However, full public hearings of the Smithwick Tribunal have still to get under way in Dublin.

Last week unionist sources claimed attempts were being made to delay the tribunal indefinitely after it discovered a senior Sinn Fein politician was involved in the murder of the two RUC officers.

"The tribunal knows the identity of the senior Sinn Fein politician involved in the

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Breen and Buchanan killings," said the source.

"In March 1989 he was part of an IRA gang which carried out the murders. The gang was led by a notorious gunman nicknamed 'the Surgeon' and involved other well known IRA gunmen from the south Armagh area.

"The Smithwick Tribunal has a legal and moral obligation to ensure this man is named and accused of these murders.

"He cannot be granted immunity because of his alleged political respectability."

On Friday, the Smithwick Tribunal in Dublin refused to confirm or deny whether or not its investigations had linked a senior Sinn Fein politician to the IRA murder of Harry Breen and Bob Buchanan.

A spokesman said: "The tribunal does not comment on its private investigations.

"The tribunal cannot speculate on the identity of persons who may or may not have been involved in the murder of Chief Superintendent Harry Breen and Superintendent Bob Buchanan as it does not fall within its remit."

Meanwhile, it is understood the Smithwick Tribunal will sit on October 26 to consider one further application for legal representation from an as yet unidentified individual.

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