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Family adamant suspect was not involved in attack

By Diana Rusk

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TARGET: A petrol bomb lands at a police Land Rover during rioting in Lurgan following the arrest on Saturday of leading republican Colin Duffy

THE brother of a former IRA prisoner being questioned by police about the murder of two British army soldiers has claimed he has been “demonised” by politicians and the media.

Colin Duffy’s brother, Paul, last night insisted the prominent republican was innocent of the murders and that he is not a member of any paramilitary organisation.

He also said the 41-year-old had received death threats by loyalists following the killings of British soldiers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar and PSNI Constable Stephen Carroll last week.

The Lurgan republican is one of four people being held by detectives in connection with the Masserene barracks murders that also left two other soldiers and two pizza delivery men seriously injured.

His older brother said the family were “adamant” that he did not carry out the attacks.

“In the week leading up to his arrest Colin was demonised by politicians and some sections of the media,” he said.

“His concern is that his name had been bandied about and this has directly led to this arrest.

“Colin is a republican and he is not ashamed of that but he is definitely not a member of the Real IRA or the Continuity IRA.

“If he was here today he would tell you that. The family is adamant that he did not carry out the attacks.”

Mr Duffy has three times faced murder charges for the deaths of police officers.

In the 1990s he was jailed for life for the murder of one RUC officer but was later acquitted. He was also charged with the murder of two others but the charges were dropped.

His brother claimed that he was arrested over the weekend because of comments he made last year saying that attacks on the police were a symptom of nationalists refusing to accept the PSNI.

“Colin was a member of (republican protest group) eirigi – he stood up and saw the brutality and spoke out for the community,” he said.

“What has happened since is that politicians have been referring back to that incident and linking him to these attacks.

“On Tuesday morning the PSNI called to the door with a death threat and said it was from loyalists.

“Given his history of arrests and detention, he is very concerned and the family are very concerned that this is going to steamroll right through to a trial without any evidence.”

His brother defended his refusal following the murders to make a public statement about the atrocities.

“Colin did not speak publicly about the attacks during the week because he is not a member of the Continuity IRA or the Real IRA so he did not feel the need to explain himself.

“His view was that it should be left to the people who did this to explain themselves.”

He said Mr Duffy’s partner, Martine, and their two youngest children, Fiontan (5) and Oisín (6), were left traumatised by the raid on their home off the Antrim Road early on Saturday.

“Martine is finding it very hard to cope. The nature of the arrest was traumatic,” he said.

“The doors were being beaten down despite Martine trying to find the key to open the door and the two wee boys were left traumatised.”

During the arrest-and-search operation, police cars and jeeps were attacked by youths hurling bricks, bottles and stones.

Mr Duffy said the family had tried to calm down youths in the area.

“At the end of the day, young ones are engaging in stone throwing because when the PSNI/RUC comes into this area, the young ones feel they are not acceptable,” he said.

The family took measures to try to tell them to calm down. At the end of the day it was serving no purpose.

The family told them it was counter-productive."

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