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SUNDAY WORLD

THE PEOPLE'S PAPER



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PATRICK O'CONNELL



EXCLUSIVE

‘CONFESS WHAT YOU DID TO MY BABY’



GRIEF:
Bridget
O'Donoghue
tends to the
grave of her
two-year-old
daughter,
Santina
Cawley (left)



- Mum of murdered Santina (2) urges killer to admit horror crime
- Bridget cradled her 'broken' little girl as they turned off life-support

FULL HEARTBREAKING INTERVIEW SEE PAGES 10&11

NIGHTMARE: MUM REVEALS FULL



HEARTBREAK: Bridget at little Santina's grave yesterday

PURE EVIL

Mother of tragic Santina recalls her 'loving and happy' girl and urges child's killer to confess

Tells how she held her little 'broken' baby in her arms as they switched off life support machine

Criticises TUSLA for taking her baby away from her after tot broke a bone in an accident

THE devastated mother of murdered two-year-old Santina Cawley today directly calls on her little girl's killer: "Confess what you did to my baby."

In a heartbreaking interview with the *Sunday World*, Sabrina's mum Bridget O'Donoghue tells how she cradled the little girl in her arms on the morning of her murder as doctors switched off the respirator keeping her alive.

Tears streaming from her eyes, Bridget also reveals the full horror of the injuries sustained by the "loving and happy" little Santina, whose cruel death her mum today describes as "pure evil".

"How could you kill my baby that way?" she asked.

"Her little body was broken. She has bruises going all the way down from her neck to her feet.

"Her beautiful little white teeth were broken when I held her in my arms. I was cradling her as they turned off the machine, I could feel the broken bones in the back of her head. All I could think was my beautiful little baby had been kicked around like a football.

"My poor Santina, she was always



DEVASTATED: Mum Bridget tells our man she wants justice for girl

EXCLUSIVE
BY PATRICK O'CONNELL

so happy and she never complained. And now she's here in a grave. Santina was an angel. Come forward and admit what you did to her. You took my baby's life... at least give her the justice she deserves."

Bridget broke down as she revealed her anger that Tusla had removed Santina from her care three months ago after the toddler broke her femur when she fell down some steps in her grandmother's apartment.

"She fell down three steps in the apartment and when she got back up I could see she wasn't walking

right, so I took her to the hospital," Bridget said.

"I begged them not to take her from me, but they said they'd made up their mind and there was nothing I could do.

ANGRY

"Her leg was in a cast and, because I've the four other children, they gave her to her father to look after while she was recovering.

"I'm so angry about that right now - if they hadn't taken her from me she'd still be here."



ANGUISH: Santina's father Michael at her funeral Mass yesterday

Little Santina was discovered by her father Michael lying unconscious and having suffered multiple bone fractures, cuts and bruises, at an apartment in the Elderwood Park complex off Boreenmanna Road in Cork at 4.50am on Friday of last week.

Gardaí investigating Santina's death arrested a woman on Monday and she was conveyed to Gurrabraher Garda Station for questioning. The *Sunday World* understands the woman has denied causing the injuries to Santina.

Tot Santina was laid to rest following her funeral Mass at the North Cathedral in the city on Friday.

Visiting her daughter's grave yesterday, heartbroken Bridget

said more than anything she wants justice for her baby.

"I can't sleep, I can't eat, not knowing what was done to her," she said.

"I'm getting weaker every day, but until Santina has justice... I'm haunted by the not knowing.

"There are more than 40 gardaí working on Santina's case. They've told us this is a priority.

"And I believe they will get the person who did this, but they need to have everything perfect for when they charge them."

HOSPITAL

Recalling the moment the nightmare of her daughter's death began for her, Bridget told how gardaí came to her door at 7am on the Friday morning of the killing.

"The garda said: 'It's Santina, she's in hospital, you need to go there now.' "I put my hands to my face and said: 'Tell me she's not dead.'

"But the garda said I needed to speak with the doctors.

"Michael, my little 10-year-old came with me, and when we got to the hospital the doctors were waiting for us. There were five or six doctors waiting in a private room where they took me and told me that Santina was dead... only the machine was breathing for her.

"When they brought me in to her,

HORROR OF HER GIRL'S INJURIES



HEARTACHE:
Mum Bridget at
the graveside of
her tragic little girl
Santina

GRIEF:
Bridget
tends to
the grave
and (below)
Santina

she was freezing. They'd checked her heart, but they said her heart was gone.

"There was a blanket over her, but they asked me if I wanted to hold her.

"I said: 'Of course, I want to hold my baby.' And when I lifted her, the blanket fell away and that's when I saw the bruises.

"The bruises were everywhere, all up and down her legs, her chest, all the way up to her neck.

"And then Michael said: 'Mommy, look at her teeth.' Santina had the most lovely white little teeth, but they were all pushed back and chipped.

"We had to close her mouth in the coffin and put a polo neck inside her lovely pink flowery dress to cover the bruises on her neck.

"When I picked her up and was rocking her, I could feel the damage

at the back of her head. It was dinged in and there was all blood around her mouth and her ears were black and blue. The child had been brutally and badly beaten.

"The doctors said they couldn't tell me what happened to her so I just cradled her.

"I rocked her back and forth and kept whispering: 'I'm here baby, wake up, wake up for mommy.'

SORRY

"I'm sorry baby, I'm sorry I wasn't there for you. It's not my fault, it's not my fault... if you were with me, you'd still be alive.

"I can't explain how someone would do this to my baby. I had such plans for her."

Bridget said she had seen little

Santina five days before the murder, on the Sunday, and the little girl was full of happiness and life.

"She didn't have a mark on her. She was perfect," she said.

After Bridget gave her daughter a final heartbreaking kiss goodbye in the hospital, she was informed by the medical staff that the little girl's body needed to be removed to undergo a post-mortem investigation.

Bridget said the one chink of light in the darkest of weeks imaginable came when she heard on Monday that gardai had arrested a woman in connection with the murder.

"I thought: 'Thank God, they've got someone.' So, when they released her without charge, that was so hard because it meant we knew nothing all over again. That broke my heart.

"I don't have the words to describe

the person who did this to my daughter... monster... evil... I can't describe what kind of person would kill a baby like that... you'd have to be an evil, evil person."

Bridget said when Santina was placed in the coffin, she was surrounded by the teddy bears that had meant so much to her in her life.

ANGEL

"We buried her with her Barney bear, a unicorn, a truck and her Peppa pig.

"Santina was an angel - I didn't want her to be alone."

Anyone with information relevant to the case is asked to contact gardai at Anglesea Street station on 021 4522000 or the Garda Confidential Line on 1800 666 111.

"I can't describe what kind of person would kill a baby like that... you would have to be evil"

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2019 €2.60

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INVESTIGATION



IRELAND'S INSURANCE NIGHTMARES

SIX-PAGE-SPECIAL - STARTS ON PAGE 22

EXCLUSIVE
Housing racket suspect jailed...



SEE PAGES 10&11

STING IN THE TAYL'



SEE SPORT
Katie becomes two-weight World Champ

PATRICK O'CONNELL  EXCLUSIVE

ISIS BRIDE ON HER WAY HOME



HOMEWARD BOUND:
ISIS bride
Lisa Smith

- Irish Army Rangers launched secret mission last week
- Special Ops Unit makes contact with ex-soldier Lisa
- Mum & daughter due back in days from war-torn region

FULL STORY SEE PAGES 4&5

WORLD EXCLUSIVE: IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

ISIS BRIDES

SECRET

RESCUE
MISSIONSPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIT DEPLOYED
TO BRING HOME MUM AND BABY GIRL

UNDER GUARD:
Lisa Smith and
her child are being
held in a Syrian
safe house

THE Irish Defence Forces have launched a top secret mission to help bring ISIL bride Lisa Smith and her two-year-old daughter Rakeya back to Ireland.

The *Sunday World* can reveal military personnel, including members of the Irish Army Ranger Wing, were deployed to a location near the border between Turkey and Syria last weekend with the goal of repatriating Smith.

Sources said local operatives in Syria may be used to bring 38-year-old Smith, a former member of the Irish Defence Forces herself, and Rakeya, to an agreed location where they will be met by

EXCLUSIVE
BY PATRICK O'CONNELL



Irish personnel and brought home. Details of the mission have been deliberately kept low key for security reasons.

But the Department of Foreign Affairs is understood to have recently issued the ISIL bride and Rakeya with emergency travel documents ahead of the operation being approved.

WELFARE

It's understood contact has been established with Smith in recent days and, as of yesterday, the team were awaiting the completion of last-minute paperwork before flying home.

Sources said a key concern for Irish authorities in launching the operation is the welfare of Smith's daughter.

"This has been DFA (Department of Foreign Affairs) led and follows months of diplomacy spearheaded by the Irish ambassador Dr Vincent O'Neill in Jordan," a source yesterday confirmed to the *Sunday World*.

"To get to this stage has taken a sustained and ongoing effort by Irish diplomats concluding in the deployment of members Irish Ranger Wing to Turkey's border with Syria.

"They are acting in an oversight capacity and will return home with Lisa Smith and her child at the completion of their mission.

"The hope and expectation now is that they will be returning home safely in the coming days."

The pair have been held in a Syrian rebel safe house in a village on the outskirts of Tel Abyad, a town on the Turkey-Syria border, since they escaped from the Ain Issa detention camp in north east Syria in early October. It is believed the mother and

child walked for several kilometres to get to safety after fleeing the Ain Issa camp.

British national and ISIL recruiter Tooba Gondal, 25, and her two children joined the former member of the Irish Defence Forces in their escape.

The women were picked up by rebel fighters from the Syrian National Army (SNA) before being moved to the safe house.

Yesterday the dangerous nature of the mission was highlighted when a car bomb killed 13 and injured 20 people in the town.

PRISON

One rebel source explained that while the safe house isn't a prison, both women are not permitted to leave.

Nearly 1,000 wives and children of ISIL fighters escaped the Ain Issa

camp after it came under attack from Turkish warplanes.

Turkey launched an invasion along its border with Syria following a decision by US president Donald Trump to pull American troops out of the region.

Smith, a former member of the Irish Air Corps, had been in the detention camp with her daughter for several weeks, having previously been held in the Al-Hawl camp around 220km away.

She had been sharing a tent with the wife and Irish-born child of Isis supporter Alexandr Bekmirzaev, a naturalised Irish citizen who was captured by Kurdish forces earlier this year.

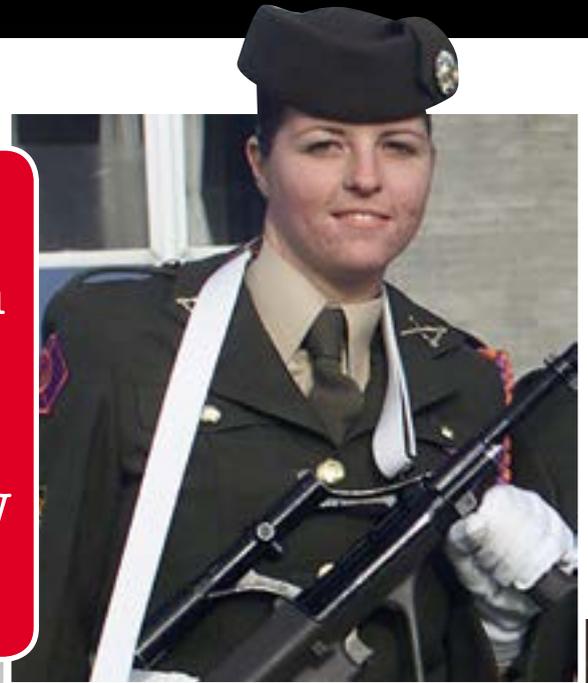
Bekmirzaev is currently under investigation by the Garda National Immigration Bureau as a result of a *Sunday World* investigation that found he had engaged in a sham marriage to achieve Irish citizenship.

FORCES REPATRIATE SMITH AND CHILD



TRAINED:
Lisa Smith served in the Irish Defence Forces

“The hope and expectation now is that they will be returning home safely in coming days”



CARNAGE:
Thousands flee the bombing in Syria



JOURNEY: Lisa Smith, below, and her daughter will be brought from Syria to Ireland

Separately Garda Assistant Commissioner Michael O’Sullivan confirmed Smith is under investigation on suspicion of engaging in terrorist offences while in Syria. “She has said herself that she does not pose a threat, that she does not hold radical views,” he said.

“But like the others that have returned, that has to be part of an assessment.”

Smith moved to Syria, via Tunisia, in 2015 shortly after leaving the Air Corps, where she worked as a flight attendant on the Government jet and as a driver to senior officers.

She also served for a time with the Army as part of the 27th Infantry Battalion.

TERRORIST

The 2005 Act states that legislation prohibiting membership of domestic terrorist groups such as the IRA also

applies to foreign terrorist groups, even if their crimes do not take place on Irish soil.

The Department of Justice has previously stated that “by its nature and actions, Isis clearly qualifies as a ‘terrorist group’ involved in ‘terrorist activity’ or ‘terrorist-linked activity’, all as defined in section 4 of the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act, 2005, by reference to the EU framework decision on combating terrorism”.

The offence of membership of a terrorist group carries a maximum term of ten years in prison.

Dundalk native Smith has consistently insisted she no longer holds radical views and does not pose a threat.

In March, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said she should be allowed to return to Ireland because it is the “compassionate thing”.

And, in July, Smith’s father Jor-

dy Martin told the *Sunday World* he was hopeful his daughter’s return was imminent.

Speaking at his home in Dundalk, Co Louth, hours after Lisa gave an interview denying she is a danger to the public, Mr Martin said he was worried about her continued detention in Syria.

“What I will say is Lisa wouldn’t hurt a fly and she is no danger to anyone,” he told the *Sunday World*.

“She went over there believing she was going somewhere peaceful, like one of those farms the Quakers have in the States. But what she got was obviously very different.

CRYING

“Of course we’re worried about her – you’ve seen her on the RTE news and she was crying her eyes out and that went right through me.

“All of this has been going on much longer than anyone thought and we hoped she would be home by now.

“I do speak to her on the phone but I know as much as anyone else who has listened to her interviews. There are issues with food and water in that camp and she is stuck out there with a two-year-old child and, obviously, you’d be very worried for her as well. It’s time to bring them home.”

A key consideration in the timing of this week’s bid to repatriate both Smith and her child is the safety of the pair in light of the recent fighting in the area where they are based.



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2019 £1.90

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THE PEOPLE'S PAPER



PATRICK O'CONNELL  EXCLUSIVE

WE FOUND HUGHES

SUNDAY WORLD tracks down convicted smuggler UK cops want to question in connection with the deaths of 39 migrants



FREE: Ronan Hughes in Monaghan



WANTED FOR QUESTIONING: Brothers Chris and Ronan Hughes

FULL STORY SEE PAGES 4&5

It's Girls a cloud..

POP STAR NADINE DROPS INTO THE CELEB JUNGLE

SEE PAGES 2&3



SEE BACK PAGE



Steve's bad DUTCH

THREATS TO CHILD CHARGE COUPLE



SEE PAGES 6&7

MIGRANT DEATHS: IRISH TRUCK BOSS

EXCLUSIVE
BY PATRICK O'CONNELL



THE SUNDAY WORLD has tracked down the convicted smuggler at the centre of a worldwide investigation into the human trafficking ring that cost 39 people their lives.

We confronted Ronan Hughes at a trucking shed near his home in Tyholland, Monaghan, two miles from the border where, until British police secure a European arrest warrant, he cannot be arrested by gardaí.

Asked by the *Sunday World* to explain his company's role in the tragedy that led to the deaths of 39 Vietnamese immigrants, the 40-year-old haulage boss denied his own identity before saying: "Cop yourself on" and that Hughes "would have nothing to say to you."

He also refused to address the claim by police officers in Essex, who are investigating the tragedy, that it was he who leased the lorry container in which 39 migrants died.

Both Hughes and his brother Christopher (34) are wanted by UK police for questioning on suspicion of manslaughter and human trafficking.

WARRANT

When the *Sunday World* went back to Ronan Hughes's home earlier this week, our way was barred by a local man who armed himself with a sledgehammer before quizzing us about our reasons for being in the area.

The homes of both Hughes and his brother Christopher were raided by gardaí last week, less than 24 hours before we tracked Hughes to his shed in Silverstream, Monaghan.

Although the PSNI have powers to arrest the Hughes brothers if they cross the border point on the N12 just 2.4km from Ronan Hughes's home, gardaí are unable to carry out arrests in connection with the death probe in this jurisdiction until UK police obtain European arrest warrants.

A local law enforcement source told how, in the wake of the horrific tragedy unfolding in Essex, both Ronan and Christopher Hughes have carried on life as normal in the border town.

"That's life on the border for you," the source said.

"Both Ronan and Chrissie have been in and out of town and carrying on their business as normal.

"Police in the UK can ask them to turn themselves in until they are blue in the face ... but unless they get a European arrest warrant there is nothing gardaí in Monaghan can do. They're untouchable."

Dozens of local people spoken to by the *Sunday World* expressed their horror that members of their community were being tied to the tragedy.

We find convicted smuggler wanted by UK cops over 39 deaths inside Essex truck

'Flash' brothers 'living life' as usual as cops need Euro warrant to quiz them

One local business person told us: "Those boys would want to sort themselves out and go in and speak with the police."

"There are 39 people dead ... 39 families mourning and if those two know nothing about it they should go up [North] and say that to the police."

"It's terrible to see the police putting out mugshots saying they want to talk to them and yet here we are a couple of miles from the border and they're getting on with their lives as if nothing has happened."

Another source told how the BMW driving brothers have lived the high life off the back of their 'extremely successful' trucking businesses in recent years.

"They'd be flash, like," he said "driving BMW x5s and eating out

SUSPICION

Brothers Christopher Hughes, 34, (left) and Ronan Hughes, 40, from Armagh, are wanted by police

regular in the town with their wives. "They certainly weren't trying to hide the fact of how well they were doing."

PRESSURE

But the *Sunday World* understands local reaction to the recent events may have played a part in Hughes and his brother cancelling a

dinner with their wives in a top local restaurant on Saturday night two weeks ago.

"They were booked in for dinner, and the staff wondered whether they'd show up, but it was cancelled over the internet on the Saturday afternoon," a local source explained.

Pressure to turn themselves in has been mounting on the Hughes brothers since Essex Detective

Chief Inspector Daniel Stonten travelled to Belfast earlier this month to call on them to hand themselves in to the PSNI.

"We need you both to come forward and assist this investigation," he said.

Mr Stonten went on to say that although Essex police have been in contact with Ronan Hughes over the phone, a face-to-face encounter between officers and both Hughes brothers was necessary.

Ronan Hughes was jailed for two-and-a-half years at Maidstone Crown Court in Kent in October 2009 for smuggling almost six million cigarettes into the UK.

Despite claims the brothers had fled Monaghan after Essex police published their images and asked them to turn themselves in, both were home when



WANTED: Ronan Hughes out and about at a trucking shed in Monaghan



LOOK HUGH

SNAPPED OUTSIDE HIS OWN BUSINESS



“They’d be flash, like. They certainly weren’t trying to hide the fact of how well they were doing”



BUSINESS AS USUAL: We approached Ronan Hughes (left) at the Hughes brothers’ yard in Monaghan (above) but on a second occasion an unidentified man blocked our path while holding a sledgehammer

armed officers from the Criminal Assets Bureau raided their residences and properties early on Thursday of last week.

Gardai said these raids, although related to smuggling activity, were not directly tied to the investigation into the deaths in Essex,

HIDING

“These lads are not on the run,” one source said later.

“They are not in hiding — they are living their life and operating their jobs as they always have.

“There is no arrest warrant for them here and they were not bothered that gardai were searching their house at all — it was an attitude of ‘if there is something illegal here, find it.’”

Nothing illegal was found at the

properties linked to the Hughes brothers but a number of vehicles were seized, including a Mitsubishi SUV registered to Mo Robinson — the Co Armagh truck driver already charged with 39 counts of manslaughter in Essex.

UK police claim Robinson drove the cab of the truck to the English port of Purfleet, where it collected the trailer unit, which had arrived by ferry from the Zeebrugge port in Belgium.

Also seized during the searches were a 192-registered BMW X5 M Sport, a 2016 BMW X5, a 2014 2.8-litre VW transporter crew cab, financial documents and records and electronic devices as well as sums of €1,400, \$900 (€815) and £600 (€695) in cash.

Gardai said in a statement that a

number of restraining orders relating to accounts in financial institutions had been made by a district court judge under money laundering and terrorist financing legislation.

A number of fresh searches relating to the Hughes brothers’ suspected involvement in smuggling took place in Monaghan and Cavan this week.

One premises visited by CAB on Wednesday is the Hair Lounge in Monaghan town — a hair salon owned and run by Christopher Hughes’s partner, Anita Hughes.

There is no suggestion Ms Hughes has been involved in any wrongdoing whatsoever.

Two separate solicitors’ offices in Cavan town were also visited as were the offices of two accountants.

HORRIFIC: The lorry in which 39 Vietnamese migrants died



ES AT HOME