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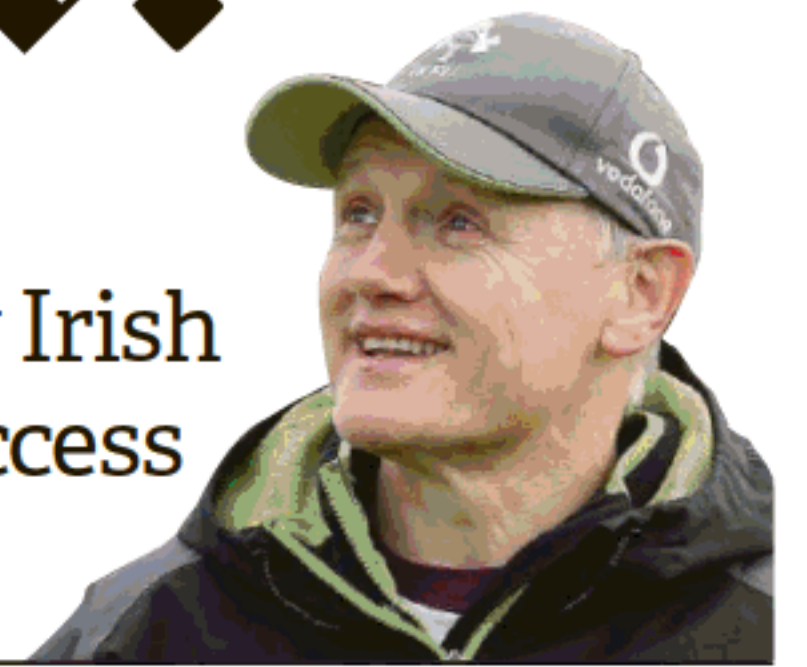
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Feelgood

As good as it gets

Donal Lenihan on why Irish rugby is primed for success

Friday Sport 2-13



Stark ongoing collapse in garda figures

Bodies dropping hand in hand with numbers, say communities

Cormac O'Keeffe and Fiachra Ó Clionailth

The numbers of community gardai have been axed by almost 40% in the last seven years and continue to fall in many divisions.

It includes a stark and ongoing reduction in Dublin's north inner city, despite it bearing the brunt of a murderous campaign by the Kinahan crime cartel.

Community leaders there said "while the figures are dropping, the bodies are dropping". Other busy divisions experiencing significant reductions include Dublin's south inner city, Waterford, Cork North and Cork West, Limerick, and border counties. In Co Donegal, community police numbers have collapsed, from 35 community gardai in 2011 to two in 2017.

Figures released to Sinn Féin Justice spokesman Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire show the number of community gardai fell from 1,112 in 2011 to 691 in 2017. The Cork South-Central TD said the number of community gardai has "fallen off a cliff and, indeed, is still falling", describing it as "scandalous".

The Garda Representative Association (GRA) said the 38% fall in community policing was "very disappointing" and said reversing it should be a priority for Garda management and government.

Marie Metcalfe, co-ordinator of the Dublin North East Inner City Community Policing Forum, said gangland activity was "running the country" and deciding "who lives and who doesn't".

She said the community does not feel safe and that people were like "sitting ducks" waiting for the next outrage to happen.

It comes on the back of the funeral on Wednesday of Derek Coakley Hutch, the fourth member of the Hutch family gunned down by the Kinahan cartel, and the shooting dead of his friend Jason Molyneux in the area on Tuesday night.

Half of the 14 murders linked to the Kinahan-Hutch feud have occurred in the north inner city. Figures show community policing numbers in Dublin North Central fell from 140 in 2011 to 90 in 2017, a drop of 36%.

The figure continued to fall since the feud began in Dublin in early 2016, falling from 121 gardai in 2015 to 110 in 2016 and to 90 in 2017.

"With the feud in the last two years, all we are getting is dropping figures and while the figures are dropping, the bodies are dropping," said Ms Metcalfe, who has been involved in the local community policing forum for the last 18 years.

She said people in the north inner city were feeling "very raw" and "panicky" and that they "don't know what's going to happen next". Ms Metcalfe said she had met many "amazing community gardai" over the 18 years, but said community policing should be a "strong unit" that gardai see the value working in, know is respected internally, and has a career structure.

She said the Mulvey report into the north inner city was a long-term project, and that "a short-term action plan" was urgently required "to make people feel safe".

Dublin's south inner city saw a 70% fall in community gardai since 2011.

"As elected representatives, we know from working with designated community gardai that the difference a good community garda can make to an area and individuals and families is huge," said Mr Ó Laoghaire. "It can be transformative. They also improve public confidence in policing locally."

GRA spokesman John O'Keeffe said: "Frontline members in this jurisdiction are part of the communities they serve — it is only right that their numbers should reflect the important place that such units have in both the discovery and prevention of crime as well as ensuring solid community relations."

Speaking on the murder of Mr Molyneux, Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan said: "My message to the perpetrators and their associates is that there is no hiding place for such activity, there is no place for such brutal heinous murder in our capital city, and every effort will be made by An Garda Síochána to ensure the persons responsible are brought to justice."

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One billboard outside Abbeydorney



Valerie and Raymond Knight, Abbeydorney, Co Kerry, who have erected a sign outside their house warning speeding drivers to stop knocking down their garden wall. Picture: Domnick Walsh

HR chief: Gardaí planned to 'go after' McCabe

Elaine Loughlin and Gerard Cunningham

The head of Garda human resources has said he was told the force planned to "go after" whistleblower Maurice McCabe at the O'Higgins commission of investigation. Giving evidence at the Disclosures Tribunal, John Barrett, executive director of human resources, said he was shocked when a senior colleague revealed the strategy the force planned on using, as he said it "jarred" with the work that was being done to improve Sgt McCabe's workplace environment. His claims came after former Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald spent much of yesterday answering questions before the tribunal. She maintained said she

took the correct approach as justice minister "politically and every other way" in relation to Sgt McCabe and said she was right not to act on an email detailing the legal approach being taken at the O'Higgins commission which she got in May 2015. The Disclosures Tribunal is examining whether unjustified grounds were inappropriately relied upon by the former Garda commissioner Nóirín O'Sullivan to discredit Sgt McCabe at the O'Higgins commission.

Giving evidence yesterday afternoon, Mr Barrett said Cyril Dunne, a senior civil servant in An Garda Síochána, had asked to stay behind after a meeting which he believed took place on May 13, 2015. Speaking about Sgt McCabe, Mr Dunne said "we are going after him in

the commission". A "shocked" Mr Barrett said he had turned to Mr Dunne and said "you must be joking" adding that he may have used an expletive in the sentence. Mr Barrett told the tribunal he had first started assisting Sgt McCabe on workplace issues in February 2015 and a "cottage industry" had sprung up to deal with related problems.

Mr Barrett said he had not understood the full gravity of the comment at the time. "If I had it all over again I would make a very detailed and contemporaneous note of what at the time just seemed odd in relation to the work we had put in since February. At the time it didn't have the significance it had a week or 10 days later," he said.

Tribunal barrister Diarmaid McGuinness said that, in a statement to the tribunal, Mr Dunne denied making the comment to Mr Barrett.

Tribunal chairman, Mr Justice Charleton, asked Mr Barrett how he was able to say he believed the meeting he described took place on May 13, 2015. Mr Barrett said he had gone back over his email and electronic diary entries, and this was the date

that fitted what he recalled. He agreed to produce his emails and electronic diaries to the tribunal. He said he was "genuinely disappointed" that he had not made a more complete note at the time.

Mr Barrett said he had recently spoken with Chief Supt Tony McLoughlin, who had confirmed that Mr Barrett had mentioned the issue to him.

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Schmidt: Players being at rape trial won't affect preparations

Simon Lewis

Irish rugby boss Joe Schmidt has said the presence of captain Rory Best and fellow international Ian Henderson at the rape trial of their team-mates Paddy Jackson and Stuart Olding will not affect preparations for tomorrow's Six Nations opener against France.

Best and Henderson will start for Ireland against France in Paris tomorrow afternoon, but were on a day off on Wednesday when they attended Belfast Crown Court. The alleged victim took the stand on the same day. Jackson, from Oakleigh Park in Belfast, and Olding, from Ardenlee St in the city, deny raping the woman at a house in south Belfast in June 2016.

Asked if the pair had been granted permission to attend, Schmidt said: "I've got no comment on any of that."

When asked for his opinion on the players' attendance at the rape trial, he replied: "We're not in a position to comment on any

of that. It's a legal matter." However, he believes events outside the Ireland camp will not break the protective bubble around his squad. Given the seriousness of the charges, he said: "The bubble stays the same. The size and nature of events may change from week to week, but, you know, again, we don't directly influence those."

"We don't control those circumstances and they won't directly influence what happens on Saturday and the players are very good at just staying focused on what they need to do in the very short term and anything else will be discussed or solved at a later date."

Asked if he was confident Best and Henderson will be able to perform to their best given how they spent their day off, Schmidt replied: "I'm confident in the team. I think the team are ready to perform and you go into every Test match hoping that they will." The case continues.

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Wagner 'a person of interest' in Wood death

Investigators are now calling 87-year-old actor Robert Wagner a "person of interest" in the 1981 death of his wife, Natalie Wood.

Wood drowned off Catalina Island, California, after going missing off her family's yacht.

Mystery has swirled around Wood's death. It was declared an accident but police reopened the case in 2011 to see whether Wagner or anyone else played a role.

Wagner has denied any involvement in her death.



Robert Wagner and Natalie Wood.

World: 9

Trump to allow FBI dossier be published

Catherine Lucey

Over the strong objections of his own Justice Department, US president Donald Trump will clear the way for the publication of a classified memo on the Russia investigation that Republicans say shows improper use of surveillance by the FBI, White House officials said yesterday.

The memo, prepared by Republicans on the House intelligence committee, is said to allege FBI misconduct in its investigation of potential ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 campaign. Trump's Justice Department and Democrats furiously lobbied Trump to stop the release, saying it could harm national security and mislead the public.

A White House official said Congress would probably be informed of the decision today, adding Trump was "OK" with its release. A second White House official said Trump was likely to declassify the congressional memo but the precise method for making it public was still being completed. The officials were not authorized to be quoted about private deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The House intelligence panel voted along party lines on Monday to put it out, giving Trump five days to reject the release under committee rules. But Trump also has the power to declassify the memo himself and either release it or give it to Congress to release. A White House official said the memo would be in "Congress' hands" after Trump declassified it and that there were unlikely to be any redactions.

Trump has said he wants the memo released despite the objections of the FBI and the Justice Department. Senior FBI officials have also made direct appeals to the White House, warning that it could set a dangerous precedent.

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News

A man with a fetish for girls in school uniform used threats of violence and blackmail to sexually assault a 15-year-old schoolgirl over a two-year period. **Page 6**

Life/Style

From batty bats to frightened foxes and from suffering swans to sniggering 10-year-olds, wildlife responders share their most hair-raising rescue tales. **Page 13**