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Republican gang believed responsible for Donegal murder

17 February 2008 By Colm Heatley in Belfast

The man murdered in Co Donegal last week had been shot by a republican gang in 2006, a year after he told a newspaper that the PSNI had tried to recruit him as an informer.

Andrew Burns, 27, was abducted in Strabane, Co Tyrone, last Tuesday evening, and his body was found in Castlefin in Co Donegal with gunshot wounds.

Gardai investigating the murder travelled to the North and have said that they are investigating the possibility of dissident republican involvement.

The murder has been condemned by all the political parties in the North. Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Fein deputy first minister in the North, described the murder as a "despicable" act and said the group behind the murder was "a criminal gang who have no regard for the government, for law and order".

McGuinness called on the republican splinter group that is believed to be responsible for the murder to disband. Burns, a painter and decorator, with links to dissident republicans, had recently aligned himself with a group calling itself Óglaigh na hÉireann.

Óglaigh na hÉireann is one of four dissident groups in the west Tyrone/south Derry area. Last month, one of the groups, the Republican Defence Army, shot a man in Co Donegal for alleged "anti-social activity", and later vowed to carry out further attacks.

The place where Burns's body was dumped has been used by dissident republicans in the past, and victims of so-called 'tiger' robberies have been ordered to drop cash there.

Motoring

The dissident republicans have had most success in recruiting new members in the border areas, and have taken part in robberies and kidnappings, rather than attacks on the security forces.

Agenda

However, sources in Strabane said dissident republicans in the area were in disarray, with internal feuding and fears that their groups had been infiltrated by informers.

Letters

They suggested that Burns - who was described by people who knew him as "easily led" - had been the victim of a dispute among the dissidents.

People In Business

There is growing concern that dissident republican gangs are becoming increasingly active and are becoming more heavily involved in crime.

Budget Forum

The murder of Paul Quinn, a 21-year-old from south Armagh, who was killed in Co Monaghan last October, has been blamed on elements of the IRA in the area.

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Two weeks ago, dissident leaders met in Burnfoot, Co Donegal, to discuss ways of cooperating with each other.

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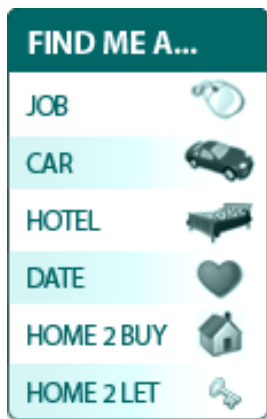
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