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### News

## Dissident victim's claim over cops tout approach

Sunday, February 17, 2008

By Stephen Breen

The renegade republican who was blasted to death last week once accused cops of trying to recruit him as an informer.

Andrew Burns from Strabane, who was murdered in the grounds of Donnyloop Parish Church in Co Donegal last Tuesday, went public in 2006 to claim Special Branch had spent months in an effort to recruit him as an agent.

Although the 27-year-old's former comrades in the RIRA initially accepted his denials, he came under suspicion after the security forces scored a number of successes against dissidents in Strabane.

Burns, who was once shot in a so-called 'punishment' attack, later left the RIRA to join the small breakaway faction, Oghlaigh na hEireann.

It was initially believed Burns was killed because dissident chiefs suspected he had supplied information to the security forces.

But another source claimed he was targeted because he was suspected of working with criminal gangs linked to loyalists.

Said the source: "Everyone is saying that Burns was executed because he was an informer but there's more to it than that. If he was an informer it would have sanctioned his death warrant, but he was coming under suspicion for a whole range of other things.

"The word was that he was keeping money from robberies for himself but he was also running about with criminal gangs who dealt with loyalists.

" He had been around the dissidents for quite some time and there's a few other boys who are running scared because they now know what this group is capable of.

"They appear to have access to a fair amount of weapons and they are quite ruthless and dangerous."

Tensions are running high in the area and fears are growing that more suspected informers could be targeted.

Burns was taken from the vicinity of his Upper Main Street flat in Strabane by an armed gang.

It's understood he was interrogated for an hour before he was shot dead.

Although he managed to wave down a passing car, he later lost his fight for life.

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