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News

Cash and gun row led to murders

Sunday, March 18, 2007

By Stephen Breen

A bitter row over stolen cash and missing weapons led to last week's brutal killings of two renegade republican pals in Belfast.

A senior security source told Sunday Life west Belfast taxi-driver Ed Burns and north Belfast man Joe Jones were murdered by an ex-Continuity IRA man and a senior CIRA member because Jones had refused to hand over £30,000 and reveal the location of a dissident arms dump.

Father-of-five Burns' association with Jones is believed to have sealed his fate.

We also understand cops removed a washing machine from Ardoyne last week as part of their probe.

Tensions have been high in the republican terror group and it's now feared pals of the dead men will seek revenge.

Said the source: "The two murder suspects shot Ed because they knew he was close to Joe Jones. Once they finished with Ed they went looking for Jones in Ardoyne.

"Joe was the hardliner and had moved away from the CIRA, but when he wouldn't tell that group about the arms dumps or the money they decided to kill him.

"Nobody in Ardoyne can believe this has happened and they think the two suspects are nothing more than blood-thirsty criminals. Local people are disgusted.

"The Provos are keeping well clear of it, but are telling people to go to the police if they have any information.

"The CIRA leadership in Dublin is now trying to stop more shootings."

Burns was found in the Bog Meadows area of west Belfast with a gunshot wound to the head in the early hours of last Monday morning.

The battered body of father-of-three Jone was discovered just a few hours later, in the Ardoyne area.

A third man, Damian O'Neill, who was with Ed Burns when he was shot, is still being treated at the Royal Victoria Hospital for a gunshot wound to the chest.

It's understood Mr O'Neill's life was saved because the killer's gun jammed after he had been shot.

The brutal killings have sent shockwaves through the republican stronghold.

Although Jones had split from the CIRA in recent weeks to form his own republican faction, his killing was not believed to be sanctioned by the Continuity IRA leadership.

Jones is also believed to have links with the INLA, who this week denied any involvement in the killings.

The two suspects in the murder, whose relatives had links to the Provos during the Troubles, have now fled to Dublin.

Other members of the CIRA have been keeping a low profile in Arodyne since the killings.

One of the suspects is believed to originate from west Belfast.

But it's believed the CIRA leadership in Dublin has refused to provide protection for the two men.

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