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Small, splinter dissident group behind murder

(by Suzanne Breen, Sunday Tribune)

A friend of the Strabane man whose body was found in the grounds of a Co Donegal church has gone on the run in fear of his life, according to dissident republican sources.

While gardai haven't commented on who was responsible for the murder of Andrew Burns (27), a paramilitary group calling itself 'Oglaigh nahEireann' is being blamed in republican circles.

Burns was abducted in Strabane and shot in the grounds of Donnyloop church. Desperate attempts were made to resuscitate him but he died at the scene. No group has admitted responsibility.

Suspicion initially fell on the Real IRA of which Burns was a former member. A Real IRA source told the *Sunday Tribune* it had previously expelled Burns and he had joined a small dissident group, based mainly in East Tyrone, which calls itself 'Oglaigh nahEireann' (ONH).

Dissident sources said senior ONH members had recently visited Strabane claiming they suspected that Burns, and another ONH member in his 20s, were "British agents". The second man has since fled the country, they said.

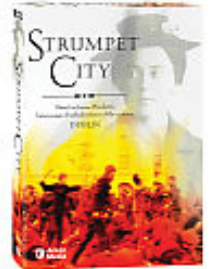
Willie Gallagher of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the INLA's political wing, said: "Andrew Burns was abducted from Strabane town centre at 6.45 pm. His body was found at 7.30 pm, leaving a minimal interrogation period. That seems very strange.

"If someone is suspected of being an agent, republicans want to question him at length – to find out how he was recruited, who his handlers were, where he met them, and what people or operations he compromised. This can't be done in 45 minutes."

Gallagher admitted he "wasn't against the execution of British agents under certain circumstances" but said: "This group gives the impression it summarily executes people without explanation to the republican community. It should explain why Andrew Burns was killed, or else disband."

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Burns, who was shot in a Real IRA punishment attack two years ago, was expelled from that paramilitary group, along with others in Strabane, as part of its "internal reorganisation".

Burns had refused to co-operate with a Real IRA "investigation into alleged criminal activity" by its own members, the Real IRA source said. However, the organisation didn't suspect Burns as a British agent."

February 18, 2007

This article appeared in the February 17, 2007 edition of the [Sunday Tribune](#).

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