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## Tensions between loyalists grow as wreaths defaced

(Allison Morris, [Irish News](#))

Tensions are growing between rival factions of a loyalist paramilitary group after wreaths placed at a commemoration event for murdered UDA 'brigadier' John 'Grugg' Gregg were defaced.

The rift between members of the mainstream UDA and the breakaway south east Antrim brigade has been growing of late, with fears that it could end in bloodshed.

Members of the exiled north Belfast faction headed up by Westland loyalist Alan McClean had recently returned to Northern Ireland and been living under the protection of the breakaway gang.

A number of attacks on the homes of mainstream UDA members and threatening graffiti had added to tensions in the area.

However, it was the actions of several members of the leadership of the south east Antrim brigade at a commemoration in Carnmoney cemetery for murdered loyalist leader John Gregg that members of the UDA say will bring the matter "to a head".

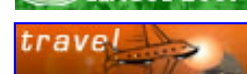
Gregg was gunned down by rival loyalists, believed to be affiliated to former C company boss Johnny Adair, on February 1 2006.

Floral tributes were sent to the commemoration by members of the UDA and the Ulster Political Research Group from all over Northern Ireland.

But there was an angry exchange of words as leading members of the south east Antrim brigade removed some floral tributes and defaced cards sent from other loyalist factions.

"There are times to put differences aside and this was one of those occasions. There was a lot of anger that cards and wreaths sent to the grave in good faith were tampered with," a UDA figure present at the event said.

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"It was the last straw really – we were tricked into going along with this split and now more and more people are questioning the motives behind it. There's a lot of anger."

The IMC report this week noted that members of the UDA leadership had been making moves away from criminality with mixed success. It said that the "expulsion of some north Belfast members and the subsequent avoidance of bloodshed were important".

But it said that racist attacks and drug dealing were still evident in areas of Antrim and Newtownabby, areas under the control of the south east Antrim UDA.

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