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Local & National

Dissident group linked to church yard murder

Thursday, February 14, 2008

By Will Ellison

Republican sources were last night blaming a shadowy dissident group for the murder of Andrew Burns on Tuesday night.

The Republican Defence Army first made itself known two years ago with a 'show of strength' in Doneyloop where Mr Burns' body was found and claimed it was formed "due to the demand from republican families for protection in the fight against anti-social behaviour, criminality and drug pushing in Donegal, Derry, Tyrone and Belfast."

Last month the group claimed responsibility for shooting a man in the legs at Carrickmore near St Johnstown on the Donegal-Londonderry border.

The group also threatened to shoot another man from Strabane if he did not leave the town within 48 hours.

Superintendent Vincent O'Brien of the Gardai Siochana said: "At this point in time nobody has claimed responsibility for the attack and we are keeping an open mind as to the motive and who did it."

A post mortem is being carried out.






It is believed Mr Burns was abducted after his father left him in Strabane to watch a football match in a pub, and was shot dead a short time later outside a Donegal chapel.

The body, which had gunshot wounds to the chest, was found at the border hamlet of Doneyloop at around 7.30pm on Tuesday.

Strabane parish priest Fr Declan Boland, said that the Burns family were devastated.

"The family and the wider community are just numb. You don't expect to have to announce off the altar one of the community has been murdered violently in such a callous manner."

Mr Burns was shot in the leg in July 2005, an attack that was blamed on republicans.

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