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Monday, February 18 2008

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Republican rivalries in the North turn bloody

powered

'Informer' murdered by dissidents seeking to undermine Sinn Fein

by



By **SEAN CUSACK**

Sunday February 17 2008

Dissident republicans, whose main aim is to undermine Sinn Fein's position in the North, carried out the murder of a Co Tyrone man whose body was left outside a Catholic church near Castlefin in Co Donegal, according to security sources.

The group, which calls itself itself Oglagh na hEireann -- a title used by both the Real and Continuity IRA groups -- abducted, then murdered Andrew Burns, 27, because they believed he was a police informant.

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The PSNI has had significant successes against dissident republicans in the Strabane area, where Mr Burns had lived in recent years, arresting and charging more than 20 people with dissident republican-related offences.

During that same period of time there have been a series of thwarted or ineffective bomb and gun attacks in the region. This is a clear indication, according to local sources, that the security forces have successfully infiltrated the dissident republican organisations.

Security sources also said the group most likely to have carried out Tuesday night's execution-style murder is the Real IRA, which has a significant presence around Strabane, Derry and north Donegal areas.

The dissident group, however, issued a statement along with a recognised password denying responsibility for the shooting.

An unidentified caller then claimed a group called the Republican Defence Army had carried out the killing. Gardai believe this is a cover-name being used by the dissident republicans -- a tactic used many times in the past by the IRA and other groups in the North.

The same dissident group is believed to have carried out the shooting of a middle-aged man in Donegal last month.

Four masked men, armed with handguns and cudgels, beat and shot the victim in both legs at his home near St Johnston. Local dissident figures are also chief suspects for the murder of Denis Donaldson, the former aide to Gerry Adams, who was shot dead at his holiday home in Donegal two years ago.

It is believed dissident republicans are intent on stepping up operations in the North this year. A statement by them, which was issued last month, said it was their intention to mount more attacks on the security forces.

The Real IRA, the group responsible for planning and carrying out the Omagh bombings in 1998, may now be planning to amalgamate with sections of the Continuity IRA, the republican group which was formed in 1986 after the Ruari O Bradaigh-led faction walked out of Sinn Fein to form the Republican Sinn Fein party.

But the organisation has been prone to infiltration and disruption by the Garda, the PSNI and the British Secret Intelligence Service, better known as MI5, which has recently taken over responsibility for anti-terrorism work in the North.

Gardai have also had significant successes against the Continuity IRA.

However, gardai believe, the Continuity group still holds onto its long-term plan of violent revolution -- even though it has had difficulty in attracting figures with the experience or the ability to conduct terrorist operations.

Its leadership in the Republic is understood to be based mainly in Munster around Limerick and it is believed their "officer commanding" is a man aged over 60 who left the Provisional IRA at around the same time that Republican Sinn Fein split from Sinn Fein.

- JIM CUSACK

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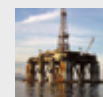
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