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Eirigi called on to condemn murder

BY Staff Reporter

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A leading Co Armagh republican was challenged last night to publicly condemn the murder of PSNI officer Stephen Carroll.



Former IRA prisoner Colin Duffy has acted as a spokesman for the Eirigi group, which has been a vocal opponent of Sinn Fein's support for policing since being set up in 2006.

Another prominent member is Breandan Mac Cionnaith, a former Sinn Fein councillor in Portadown and a spokesman for Garvaghy Road residents in the Drumcree dispute.

In August last year police came under gun, blast and petrol-bomb attacks during two days of rioting in the Drumbeg area of Lurgan, near the scene of Monday night's fatal shooting.

Mr Duffy was criticised by politicians after claiming that the attacks on police officers were a "symptom" of nationalists' refusal to

accept the PSNI.

CHALLENGED: Colin Duffy, left, and

Breandan Mac Cionnaith, right, at an Eirigi

The 41-year-old, who was acquitted on appeal of the murder of a UDR man and who had two other murder charges dropped, said the attacks had been caused by alleged PSNI assaults on nationalist residents.

"The resistance that followed was a symptom of the fact that people are not prepared to accept the British occupation in Ireland in the shape of the PSNI/RUC," he said.

He said Eirigi had no connections to any paramilitary group.

"We are not linked to any group," he said.

"We're a purely political organisation.

"The only threat we pose is to the British occupation of Ireland.

"While that British occupation continues there will always be people willing to resist."

He said nationalists would never accept the legitimacy of the PSNI.

"Certain political parties claim that they're making the PSNI accountable by taking up places on the Policing Board but people on the ground will never accept them," he said.

"There are still 5,000 British troops here while MI5 is building its headquarters at Palace Barracks."

In 2007 Mr Mac Cionnaith resigned from Sinn Fein over its decision to support the PSNI.

Traditional Unionist Voice leader Jim Allister MEP last night challenged the Eirigi spokesmen to condemn the

policeman's murder.

"They're the people who have agitated and encouraged hatred against the PSNI in the Craigavon area so the public has a right to know now what these individuals think of this dastardly murder," he said.

"The public has a right to know what direction this Eirigi group is attempting to take the community in.

"If they do not condemn this murder then the public has a right to know why not."

No-one from Eirigi was available for comment last night.

Although the group has publicly opposed Sinn Fein's policing strategy and has republican ex-prisoners among its membership, the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) has said that Eirigi is not known to have links to any paramilitary grouping.

In recent years both the Continuity IRA and Real IRA have been active in the greater Craigavon area.

Last month it was revealed that police had used special stop and search powers on 159 occasions in three months in an attempt to

disrupt dissident republican activity.

In October last year dissidents were blamed for a gun attack on police near the Drumbeg area close to the scene of this week's murder.

In October 2007 police recovered a shotgun, ammunition and a bomb in the area.

In August 2007 a 400lb bomb was recovered near Drumbeg.

In January 2007 the IMC blamed the Real IRA for a mortar attack on a police station in Craigavon.

In August 2005 dissidents were blamed for an attempted bomb attack on Lurgan police station.

In March 2004 dissidents were blamed for death threats against six Catholic members of the district policing board.

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