

FROM: C COLLINS
SECURITY POLICY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION
2 JULY 1992

DESK IMMEDIATE

cc PS/Mr Mates (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Feil - B
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Alston - B
Mr Steele - B

mm 180/2

Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Dodds - B
Mr Rickard - B
Mr Brearley - B
Mr McKervill - B

UNDER 238/7

6 JUL 1992

Mr Ledlie

Mr McKervill

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

PIRA MURDERS OF PIRA MEMBERS, 1 JULY 1992

Background

At approximately 2200 hours yesterday evening, a resident of Cullaville Road, Crossmaglen reported having found a body at the end of his lane on the Cullaville Road. The body appeared to be covered by a black bin bag and a milk crate had been placed on top of it. Part of the chest and leg were exposed.

2. At 2225 hours, a local parish priest, in Newtownhamilton, reported finding a body at Henning's Bridge, Cullyhanna and, at 2233 hours, this same body was reported by two motorists who were travelling from Armagh. The body appeared to be naked, lying at the edge of the road, a plastic bag covering the head.

3. At 2245 hours, a local woman reported finding a further body at the junction of Mountain Road and Dhu Burren Road, Lislea. The body is thought to be naked and hooded.

4. PIRA have named the three men as follows:

Aidan Martin Kieran STARRS
Portadown

John Patrick DUIGNAN
Portadown

Gregory James BURNS
Portadown

All three of these men are known to the RUC as PIRA members, and it is believed that all of them have a criminal record.

5. The three bodies have not been officially identified. PIRA have made various claims regarding the three men, alleging that one was connected with MI5, and that the other two were supplying information to Special Branch. PIRA have further stated that there is a link between the three men and the body of the woman (believed to be Margaret Perry, also from Churchill Park, Portadown) found in Sligo on 30 June and who had vanished on 21 June 1990; PIRA have said that they will make a further statement later.

Current position

6. The security forces are currently moving in, slowly, to recover the bodies. A difficult task, given the area and the possibility that the bodies may have been 'booby trapped', or devices concealed near them. A careful investigation into the murders will be undertaken; but it appears likely that they result from an internal, domestic dispute of some kind, possibly in connection with Margaret PERRY, rather than from any terrorist related dispute. The timing may be related to a local newspaper article which appeared some 3 to 4 weeks ago alleging that an unnamed (but physically described) individual had been involved in the disappearance of PERRY. This description may have prompted a PIRA investigation and the description tallies with one of those named as "executed" by PIRA.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

7. attach at Annex A, lines to take which may be useful, either for Ministers, or for the Prime Minister.

(signed)

CHRISTINE COLLINS
SHA Ext 2212

C O N F I D E N T I A L

HJ 17765

LINE TO TAKE

1. The grisly discoveries of the bodies of 3 men in South Armagh last night - and the subsequent admission by PIRA of responsibility - demonstrates yet again the true nature of terrorism.
2. All decent people will condemn this atrocity and must provide the police who have launched a careful investigation with any piece of information which will bring the criminals responsible to justice.
3. Terrorism has nothing to offer; the terrorists and their fellow travellers have again been shown to have complete contempt for human life, and for justice.

[Informers? Links to MI5]

4. It is not practise to discuss such matters; but PIRA's allegations are typical of the way they try to justify their heinous crimes.