

**Statement of Miami Showband families and survivors
in response to the findings of the
Historical Enquiries Team into the murders of
Anthony Geraghty, Brian McCoy and Francis O'Toole**

Keith:

Good morning everybody and thank you all for coming.

We, the families of Tony, Brian and Fran, as well as survivors Stephen and Des, have waited a very long time, over 36 years in fact, to learn the circumstances surrounding the deaths of our loved ones who were shot down so brutally and so callously in the early hours of a summer morning.

The Historical Enquiries Team finds:

- That Tony, Brian and Fran were murdered at a bogus British army checkpoint on the A1 Belfast to Dublin Road near the junction with Buskhill Road, Co. Down at 2 am on Thursday, 31st July 1975;
- The murder was a planned attack, carried out by a UVF gang, which included a number of serving UDR soldiers. Most of them were wearing British army uniforms;
- The presence of two men, acting suspiciously at the Castle Ballroom, Banbridge, suggests that the Miami Showband was being observed;
- The interception point on the A1 beside a UDR shooting-range was pre-selected and a 'spotter' was positioned in a vehicle to drive ahead of the minibus and warn the gang of the band's imminent arrival;
- The original intention of the perpetrators seems to have been, under the guise of a legitimate military road check, to hide a bomb on the minibus. If the original plan had been successful, the band would have continued on their journey south and at some point the device would have exploded, killing them all. The band could then have been portrayed as being killed by a bomb they were transporting while involved in moving explosives for the IRA;
- However, the bomb detonated prematurely while being covertly placed in the minibus by Wesley Somerville and Harris Boyle, killing both of them;
- All the band members survived the blast, although shocked and injured. The loyalist gang then opened fire on the defenceless men, at close range and with automatic weapons. The intention was to kill them all and leave no witnesses. As a consequence, Tony, Brian and Fran were killed, Stephen Travers was seriously wounded and Des McAlea injured;
- The UVF admitted responsibility for the attack;

Des:

- The original RUC investigation led to the arrests of UVF members, including members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Thomas Raymond Crozier was soon

implicated in the murders while other suspects admitted to different sectarian murders and bombings;

- Spectacles found at the scene led to the arrest and charging of James Roderick Shane McDowell. Both McDowell and Crozier were serving members of the UDR at the time of the murders and had used their military uniforms and expertise to facilitate the attack;
- John James Somerville, brother of Wesley, was subsequently arrested in 1980 for other matters. He admitted his involvement in the Miami murders while in custody as well as the murder of Patrick Falls. Mr. Falls was a 49-year-old pharmacist and father of six young children shot dead near Coalisland on November 20th 1974.
- Crozier, McDowell and Somerville were all convicted of the murders of Tony, Brian and Fran and other serious offences. They were all sentenced to life imprisonment. Somerville was also convicted of the attempted murder of Stephen Travers. None of the three was convicted of my attempted murder.

David:

- Since it is believed that at least 10 attackers were involved, this means that five perpetrators were never brought to justice.
- Ballistic reports link six firearms to the attack. These weapons were used in other murders, attempted murders and robberies. (This linkage will be explained more fully shortly)
- The Miami Showband was a hugely popular group, young men who lived for their music and their families.
- They became the victims of a sectarian murder gang, amongst whose members were former and serving military personnel
- Stephen Travers and Des McAlea recall one of the attackers as being more authoritative than the others and that he spoke with a 'posh English accent'. The HET believes that the man with the smart bearing and posh accent was McDowell. Stephen Travers and Des McAlea are both adamant that the man with the posh accent was English. The issue of whether an Englishman was present cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Steve:

- The most alarming HET finding concerns the involvement of Robin Jackson, aka "The Jackal", a notorious UVF member. Jackson was arrested at an early stage in the enquiry, but was released without charge. The HET review found disturbing evidence that Jackson was tipped-off in May 1976 that his fingerprints had been found on a silencer attached to the Luger pistol used in the Miami murders. Jackson claimed that two RUC officers, one a Detective Superintendent, had advised him, in Jackson's words: 'to clear as there was a wee job up the country that he would be done for'.

We are about to provide you with further detail on this HET finding.

- The HET conclusion is: *'To the objective, impartial observer, disturbing questions about collusive and corrupt behaviour are raised. The HET review has found no*

- means to assuage or rebut these concerns and that is a deeply troubling matter.'*
- We believe the only conclusion possible arising from the HET report is that one of the most prolific Loyalist murderers of the conflict was an RUC Special Branch agent and was involved in the Miami Showband attack.

David:

These dreadful murders absolutely tore apart our lives and those of our families. They left two young women without their husbands and four very young children fatherless.

We hope that this report can bring some closure to us and help us to come to terms with our terrible loss. It has been particularly devastating for us to learn that, in all likelihood, one of those involved in the murders of our loved ones was an agent of RUC Special Branch. We intend to pursue this issue with the authorities in the North.

Thank you...