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WEDNESDAY
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McGuinness speaks on Nairac case

People with information about the whereabouts of the body of an undercover SAS captain believed to have been killed and secretly buried by the IRA should pass that on, Martin McGuinness said today.

The Stormont Deputy First Minister also called for information to be passed on about other people who vanished during the Troubles after a television programme broadcast in Northern Ireland last night carried an interview with a man who claimed to have been involved in the killing of Captain Robert Nairac.

The Sinn Fein MP told the Assembly`s Committee of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister: "In relation to last night`s Spotlight programme, I didn`t actually see the programme but I am told - and I do not know if this is accurate or not - two people on the programme who indicated they had some involvement in the killing of Captain Nairac.

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- 14:30 FAIR in Dublin rally bid
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- 11:36 Blair holds final Cabinet meeting
- 10:39 13 killed in Iraqi explosion
- 10:16 Family escape hostage ordeal
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- 09:26 Six injured in Co Clare crash
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- 08:18 Rail disruption in Dublin
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"I don't know who these people are. I do not know if they are bona fide people who were actually there. I do not know if they were Walter Mittys. I do not know whether or not there is any validity to the case that was actually made by them on the programme.

"Obviously the most vexed aspect in all of this in relation to Captain Nairac and other missing people is the need to ensure that the bodies are returned to the families.

"Whether it is Captain Nairac or anybody else, if people have information, then they should bring that information forward. We would be very vociferous in terms of advocating to people that there is a duty and a responsibility - particularly in the context of the enormous political breakthroughs that there have been during the course of recent times.

"If there are people out there hurting - and clearly there are families out there hurting as a result of not having bodies returned to them - then all of us in the political process, that means us and everybody else who may not be involved in the political process and may even be detached from it but who have information about these matters, should bring that information forward as a matter of urgency."

Captain Nairac disappeared on May 15 1977 in the border country of south Armagh and north Louth after visiting a bar in Forkhill.

Last night's Spotlight programme carried an interview with a 64-year-old man now living in the United States who claimed to be part of the gang which abducted the undercover soldier and shot him dead.

In October 2003, the IRA apologised for the grief suffered by the families of the disappeared in Northern Ireland.

However, despite receiving information from the Provisionals, the Commission for the Recovery of Victims' Remains has located only some of the bodies of the disappeared.

In 1999, investigators recovered the bodies of Eamon Molloy from north Belfast in a coffin in a Co Louth graveyard, and John McClory and Brian McKinney from west Belfast, whose remains were found after weeks of digging in a bog in Co Monaghan.



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Four years later the body of 37-year-old mother of 10 Jean McConville was discovered by a member of the public on Shelling Hill beach in Co Louth after a series of extensive and unsuccessful digging operations there.

She was abducted and murdered by the IRA after she went to the aid of a British soldier wounded outside her front door in 1974.

The body of 17-year-old Columba McVeigh from Donaghmore in Co Tyrone, who was kidnapped in 1975, has not been recovered despite searches in Co Monaghan.

The commission has also carried out digs for the bodies of Danny McIlhone from Belfast at Ballynultagh in Co Wicklow, Kevin McKee and Seamus Wright, also from Belfast, in Coghallstown near Navan in Co Meath and Brendan Megraw, from Belfast, at Oristown near Kells in Co Meath.

The IRA has not claimed responsibility for the disappearance of Co Armagh men Charlie Armstrong and Gerard Evans and virtually no information has been forthcoming about Captain Nairac`s burial site.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has appealed for people to help locate the bodies and for information about the whereabouts of Mr Armstrong and Mr Evans.

Last November, the Rev Ian Paisley met Columba McVeigh`s mother Vera in a bid to help her find her son`s remains.

Mrs McVeigh died last month at the age of 82 without having her wish fulfilled.

The issue of Captain Nairac`s remains was raised during a joint appearance by Mr McGuinness and First Minister Ian Paisley before their Assembly scrutiny committee by Ulster Unionist MLA Tom Elliott after both leaders announced plans to appoint a victims commissioner before the Assembly rose in July.

The Fermanagh and South Tyrone MLA told Mr Paisley and Mr McGuinness he was concerned some of the recommendations from the interim victims commissioner in Northern Ireland Bertha McDougall would be lost in the process of appointing a new commissioner.

He added: "I suppose in light of last night`s Spotlight programme I am concerned and wondering if the First and Deputy First Minister would believe it would be helpful if there was a public openness for many people affected by the conflict - the same as Mr (Terry) McCormick last night on the TV programme?"

Mr Paisley said he agreed with the Ulster Unionist MLA`s comments.

He said the recommendations of Mrs McDougall made in January were very important.

"I think the hard work she did under very difficult circumstances, we are all indebted to her," the DUP leader said.

"I think there can be movement on those. The difficulty is unfortunately there was not devolved government here when the picking of people for this post was advertised and took place.

"All I can say, we have got to wait and see about the appointment. We hope to have an appointment. It will not be our fault if we do not have an appointment before our adjournment."

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FILM: SHREK THE THIRD

DIRECTORS: Chris Miller, Raman Hui.

VOICES OF: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, Justin Timberlake.

DETAILS: US / 92mins (G)

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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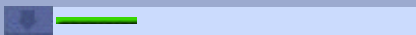
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