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The family of missing IRA murder victim Danny McIlhone were last night finally able to begin preparations for him to be laid to rest —27 years after he was killed.

His loved ones said they are “now at peace” and have started plans for a Christian burial after human remains found in the Republic were yesterday confirmed as the teenager from west Belfast.

The 19-year-old — one of the so-called Disappeared who were abducted, murdered and secretly buried during the Troubles in 1981—will be laid to rest with his mother and father.

DNA testing was carried out after the remains were dug up from a remote hillside in Co Wicklow, in the Republic.

The IRA claimed he was being questioned about stealing weapons from an arms dump in 1981 when he was killed in a struggle with a gunman

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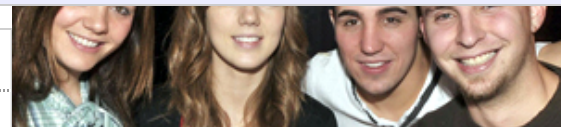
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who was guarding him.

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His family said they were relieved that their 27-year wait had finally come to a close.

"We, as a family, are now at peace and now have the opportunity to give our brother Danny a Christian burial and to lay him to rest with our beloved mother and father," they said in a statement.

"While we have now found peace our thoughts and prayers remain with and will always be with the families whose anguish and loss continues."

The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains (ICLVR), set up by the Irish and British governments to find the Disappeared, was passed information that his body was buried at Ballynultagh, near the village of Lacken in the Wicklow Mountains.

In 1999, almost two decades after Mr McIlhone vanished, the IRA admitted he had been shot in 1981. But the 11 weeks of searches at the forest-surrounded bogland close to Blessington Lakes in 1999 and 2000, proved fruitless. However last month, on November 10, investigators using new techniques made a breakthrough.

The McIlhone family will now work with the coroner to have the remains returned to them.

Northern Ireland Troubles



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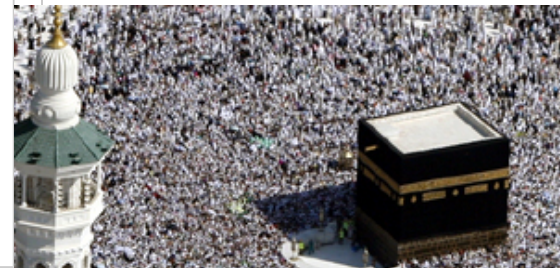
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