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## Gibraltar three mourned 20 years on

By Allison Morris

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Around 2,000 people braved chilling winds yesterday to mark the 20-year anniversary of the killings on the British colony of Gibraltar and at Milltown in the graveyard where Michael Stone launched his murderous attack 20 years ago this month.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams was joined by relatives of Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Dan McCann, the three IRA members gunned down by the SAS in Gibraltar, at the republican plot in west Belfast cemetery.

Families of the three men murdered by loyalist Michael Stone in the graveyard were also present as were the

family of Kevin McCracken, an IRA man shot dead by the British army in Turf Lodge in west Belfast during the violence of March 1998.

In relation to the Gibraltar killings, later ruled to have been unlawful by the European Court of Human Rights Gerry Adams said: "The volunteers who died were just that, they took a decision and that is one thing that has come across in the discussions that have taken place over the past few days.

"For my part I remember that despite their shock and grief the families made us very welcome."

Ten days after the Gibraltar killings thousands of people gathered in Milltown for the funerals and just as the coffin of one of the IRA members was being lowered into a grave Michael Stone launched a gun and grenade attack that claimed three more lives, injuring 60 others.

John Murray (26), Thomas McErlean (20) and IRA man Caoimhin Mac Bradaigh (30) died in the cemetery attack giving chase to Stone as he tried to make his getaway.

Speaking yesterday the Sinn Fein leader said: "If it wasn't for those young men and the three that died more people would have been killed.

"The courage shown by those unarmed mourners is a huge tribute to them and their families.

"But Michael Stone wasn't just a mindless thug working alone.

"He was working for the British and taxpayer's money was used to fund the operation and to provide him with weapons.

"And it is not acceptable that a British establishment can carry out or use its surrogates to carry out atrocities and then cover them up.

"And we should all support the calls for an independent inquiry into these killings."

Mr Adams also used the event to mark the ongoing instability in the DUP as it moves to elect a new leader to replace Ian Paisley.

"Big questions should be asked of unionism as it sets out to find its way.

"The DUP leadership is in a transition period.

"And as a result of that they are trying to talk tough.

"Female members of Sinn Fein organised an event to remember Mairead Farrell and in the end that event went ahead, but in their haste to block they put a ban on the use of cameras in the assembly building.

"I would say to the DUP that we're used to bans and used to breaking bans."


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