



[HOME](#)

[History](#)

[NewsoftheIrish](#)

[Book Reviews  
& Book Forum](#)

[Search / Archive](#)

[Back to 10/96](#)

[Papers](#)

[Reference](#)

[About](#)

[Contact](#)

## Deaths remain shrouded in controversy

([Irish News](#))

The circumstances surrounding the RUC killings of six unarmed men in Co Armagh in late 1982 remain shrouded in controversy 25 years after their deaths.

On November 11 1982 a specialist police unit shot dead IRA men Sean Burns, Eugene Toman and Gervaise McKerr in a car close to Lurgan.

More than 109 bullets were fired into their car.

Two weeks later 17-year-old teenager Michael Tighe was shot dead by the same RUC unit at a hay shed outside Craigavon.

IRA explosives had been hidden in the shed but Mr Tighe was not a member of any paramilitary organisation.

A secret MI5 recording of the killing disappeared.

On December 12 the same RUC unit opened fire on a car containing INLA men Roddy Carroll and Seamus Grew outside Armagh city.

It later emerged that the unit had been ordered to lie about the killings during subsequent murder trials.

As a result Greater Manchester deputy chief constable John Stalker was asked to investigate the deaths.

However, he was suspended from duty shortly before he was due to deliver a damning report.

He was later cleared off all charges but never returned to Northern Ireland.

West Yorkshire deputy chief constable Colin Sampson took over the 'shoot to kill' investigation but neither officer's report was ever published.

In the following 25 years the inquests of the six men were repeatedly tied up in protracted legal wrangling.

In 1994 coroner John Leckey abandoned them after then chief

This article appears thanks to the *Irish News*. Subscribe to the [Irish News](#)



constable Sir Hugh Annesley refused to allow him access to the Stalker/Sampson reports.

However, a series of legal victories won by the dead men's families in recent years led Mr Leckey to unexpectedly reopen the inquests earlier this summer.

After 13 years Northern Ireland's most senior coroner will finally be given access to the files.

But after 25 years waiting, the 'shoot to kill' families remain to be convinced if the latest development shed any more light on the death of their loved ones.

December 6, 2007

---

This article appeared first in the December 5, 2007 edition of the [Irish News](#).

**For  
more  
about  
the new  
Belfast  
store**

**CLICK HERE**



Home is the most  
important place  
in the world.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

[About](#)

[Home](#)

[History](#)

[NewsoftheIrish](#)

[Books](#)

[Bookstore](#)

[Contact](#)