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Military divers join the search for Martin
Family welcome extra assistance

By Debra Douglas

06 February 2006

DIVERS were today expected to carry out searches of the River Lagan for missing Co Down man Martin Kelly.

The 21-year-old, from Holywood, has not been seen since leaving Pat's Bar in the docks area of Belfast on New Year's Day and today, Ministry of Defence divers, under the direction of the PSNI's dive team leader, will carry out searches in the docks area.

The divers are expected to search in an area 300 meters either side of railings where CCTV footage shows a person standing in the area where Martin was last seen.

A police spokesman confirmed a side-scan sonar would be used during the searches as well as other hi-tech equipment.

Both the PSNI and the Harbour Police will have boats out on the water.

In recent weeks, the Kelly family have been critical of the police response to Martin's disappearance but have welcomed today's searches.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, Martin's heartbroken mother Karen said: "They have said that as long as there isn't another tragedy like Ardglass the divers could be there for two to three weeks," she said.

"We are very pleased with that and have to thank them - it's fantastic.

"I hope that our Martin isn't lying there in the sea.

"I think about that every day. All I want is Martin home - if they find him there we will bury him but I'm still hoping he will pick up the phone and say he is okay."

Some of the divers involved in searching for missing fisherman Connor Bogues also offered to help with searches but Mrs Kelly said that as the conditions are dangerous, the Harbour Master has requested that only the Army divers go in.

Last Thursday, Martin's distraught family and friends launched a website in the hope it will jog someone's memory.

They handed out leaflets and posters containing the new website address at Belfast City Hall.

Friend Joe McCormick said that although the website is simple at this stage, it will be elaborated on depending on how long the situation continues.

Leaflets have also been distributed outside the Odyssey Arena and last Sunday family and friends released 100 yellow balloons as a symbolic gesture of hope before taking part in a search of the Docklands and surrounding areas.

The web address is: www.ourmartykelly.com

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