



CONSULATE OF IRELAND

MARSOVIN,
The Winery,
Marsa PLA C1
Malta

Fax Cover Sheet

*Diarrh Ky
15/12/95*

DATE: December 15, 1995 TIME: 10 26 AM
TO: [Foreign Affairs] PHONE: [00353-1-2851675]
FAX: [00353-1-6686518]
FROM: [Irish Consulate] PHONE: 00356-824918]
FAX: [00356-826548]

Number of pages including cover sheet: [Type number of pages here]

Message

Yours sincerely,

Secretary

Hon. Consul for Ireland

Search for missing plane called off

Search for the single-engine light plane which went missing on a flight between Malta and Tunisia was officially called off on Friday after six days, the Department of Information said.

Another search for the six missing men, including three Maltese, was carried out last Sunday but it also proved unsuccessful.

A lengthy DOI statement mentions three incidents which can shed a light on what happened to the plane.

On the day it was reported missing, an Excelair plane involved in the search said it had seen what looked like an upturned life-raft. The object was never seen again.

The next day the Maltese authorities received a message from the Tunisian authorities saying that the ship Supply Asperay had received a distress call at 4.41 a.m., the day of the incident.

An intensive search was unsuccessfully carried out in the area indicated.

That Monday, the Rescue Coordination Committee in Malta was also informed that around 4 p.m. the Coast Guard in Djerba had received a message from a ship saying it had spotted a red and white dinghy with six people on board calling for help.

The Malta Centre pressed the Tunisian authorities for more information only to be told a few minutes later that the Confilut had "cancelled" its previous report.

The Piper Lance light aircraft, on its way from Djerba to Malta, vanished about 300 miles south west of Malta during a storm.

The last official message from the aircraft was received by Tunisian air traffic controllers at around 6.11 a.m. on Sunday when everything appeared normal.

But the plane never made contact with Maltese air traffic controllers and the alarm was raised.

The Maltese on board were pilot Carmel Bartolo, Philip Farrugia and Matthew Aquilina. The other passengers were Briton Mike Williams, Irishman Desmond Boomer and Tadewas Corny from Poland.

The DOI said the Armed Forces Operations Centre organised the search operation with the Transport Ministry, the Civil Aviation Department and the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

The first phase of the search covered the area where the plane was believed to have been lost. The Libyan authorities were informed of the incident and Tunisia was asked to help search its flight information region.

Twin-engine Excelair private planes left Luqa to search for the missing plane the morning the

report was received.

Also joining the search were two helicopters from the Italian Military Mission, a US Navy P3 Orion from Naples and private aircraft.

The next day 11 planes, both military and civilian, were involved in the search. The search covered areas in both the Tunisian and Libyan flight information regions. Both Libyan and Tunisian planes were asked to join in.

An Italian Navy ship and a UK ship belonging to British Gas also joined the search.

The search continued without success on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday when it was officially called off.

No search was carried out on Saturday but on Sunday one of the Excelair planes with two AFM personnel on board unsuccessfully searched between Malta and Djerba.

The Times

Wed. 13th Dec. 1995

Copy sent to Mr. Boomer + Embassy

Rome

N. Ryan
15/12/95