



REUTERS

London Thames torso was victim of ritual killing

By Gideon Long

LONDON, Sept 21 (Reuters) - British police laid a wreath in London's River Thames on Saturday in memory of a young boy whose torso was pulled from its murky waters exactly one year ago.

Officers sailed down the river in a small blue patrol boat and placed the wreath of yellow roses in the water in the shadow of the city's famous Tower Bridge.

About 40 officers and pathologists involved with the hunt for the boy's killers watched from the bankside.

The body of Adam - the name police have given the mystery boy - was spotted in the river by a passer-by on the bridge on September 21 last year.

When it was recovered, police found its head, arms and legs had been hacked off and the torso was clad only in a pair of orange shorts.

The search for Adam's killers led detectives to Scotland, New York, the Netherlands, Germany and South Africa - where they explored a possible link to muti, a local practice which involved removing body parts for use in making medicine.

But since then, the focus has switched and Adam is now believed to have been the victim of a West African ritual killing.

"It was clear to me that from a cultural perspective we weren't looking at South Africa, we were looking at West Africa," said Richard Hoskins, lecturer

in religion and anthropology at Bath University, who has been advising detectives.

Hoskins said Adam was held either horizontally or upside down and the blood drained out of his body.

"The incision was very low on the neck, the top vertebra of the spine was removed and the whole operation was carried out extremely meticulously and with a very sharp knife," he added.

Police have offered a 50,000 pound (\$75,000) reward for information leading to the arrest of Adam's killers.

Detective Inspector Will O'Reilly, who is leading the enquiry, told Reuters: "He was fed a potion or concoction some 24 or 48 hours before his death and was almost prepared for what then happened. He would have been aware of what was going to happen to him."

"This is only the second unsolved child murder in London in 12 years, and there's a great determination to bring the killers to justice."

Officers went to Glasgow, where they detained a West African woman who they believe was involved in rituals.

She was released without charge but police say she is still part of their investigations.

Police also went to Germany, where Adam's orange shorts were sold, and to South Africa, where muti killings and rituals are relatively common. Officers are awaiting Portugal's permission to travel to Lisbon to interview an African serving a seven-year jail sentence for his part in child-trafficking.

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