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£16 million bill for Omagh investigation

Detectives ran up a massive bill of £16 million as they scoured the world for the expertise they hoped would nail the Omagh bombers.

£16 million bill

Nasa scientists, FBI specialists and European manufacturers were all contacted to try to get evidence that would secure convictions. At one stage the investigation team travelled to America to speak to David Rupert, the trucking boss who infiltrated the Real IRA and helped take down its leader, Michael McKevitt. With Rupert living under a witness protection scheme since testifying against the terrorist mastermind at a trial in Dublin, police refused to reveal the location of their rendezvous. But Detective Chief Superintendent Norman Baxter confirmed the spy was interviewed.

US space programme experts were also called in as the inquiry attempted to sharpen CCTV stills of the bomb car taken as it made its way to Omagh. Mr Baxter said: "We used Nasa scientists to try to digitally enhance these photos, but that failed because of the glare."

Undaunted, other images of potential suspects crossing the Irish border on August 15 1998, the day of the attack, were sent to the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia.

Once police had painstakingly amassed a body of forensic evidence, they requested consultations with specially-trained scientists in New York, Toronto, Canada and Switzerland.

"They formed an international peer review panel to check the processes and to suggest new lines of inquiry," said Mr Baxter.

"They suggested new lines of inquiry, brought ideas and different types of scientific work."

About £1 million was spent on forensics during the investigation, police

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disclosed.

This was added to staff costs which ran to around £15 million.

The investigative trail also took detectives to Belgium.

They made the trip after discovering the plastic casing for mortars found at Altmore Forest near Dungannon, Co Tyrone, in April 2001 had been manufactured there.


"We were able to prove that the Altmore device was made after the Omagh explosion because of the date stamped inside the electrical generator box," Mr Baxter said.


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