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## Local & National

# Omagh case told of lies about phone call

Thursday, April 17, 2008

By Lesley-Anne Henry

The ex-wife of a suspected Omagh bomber lied to police about a telephone call she received less than an hour after the blast, a detective claimed in court yesterday.

Giving evidence during day seven of a landmark civil action being brought by victims' relatives, John Gilmore, formerly an RUC detective constable, said Catherine McKenna, who was married to the first named defendant Seamus McKenna, had also lied about her whereabouts on August 15, 1998.

Belfast High Court heard how Mrs McKenna, who was arrested as part of an operation involving the RUC and Garda in June 1999, initially agreed that she had received a phone call from her estranged husband on the day of the bombing but then claimed she was in Galway that day.

Mr Gilmore, who interviewed Mrs McKenna at Strand Road RUC station said: " It transpired that she had been telling lies. She hadn't been in Galway on August 15," said Mr Gilmore.

Meanwhile barrister Brian Fee QC, who is representing Mr McKenna, described Catherine McKenna's arrest as unexpected and distressing.

He told the court she was flown by helicopter from her home to Bessbrook, Co Armagh and then driven to Londonderry where she was interviewed 17 times.

Mr Fee said the arrest had caused a "distressing scene" with Mrs McKenna's children "screaming and crying as the helicopter was taking her away".

Mr Fee suggested Mrs McKenna was an extremely frightened and nervous woman who was so scared she was unable to steady her hand to sign her statements.

"It was abundantly clear from the outset of your interviewing of her that she was an extremely suggestible lady. If you said something to her, her natural inclination was to try and agree with it," he said.

Another detective told the court how investigators had analysed more than five million mobile phone calls 'roaming' in Northern Ireland between January and September 1998.

Detective Sergeant Trevor Stevenson, an RUC telephone liaison officer, said from the five million calls, 22 inter-related numbers were identified. These numbers, he claimed, were registered to 18 people living in the Republic and four people residing in Northern Ireland.

Mr Stevenson said police did not have a list of names prior to obtaining the information from various mobile phone companies. But subsequently the "majority" of the 22 were arrested.

The trial continues.

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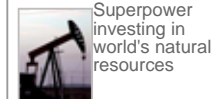
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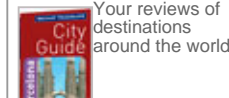
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