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Local & National

Omagh bombing verdict may take weeks

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

By Jonathan McCambridge

The prosecution and defence were today expected to give their final statements in the Omagh bomb trial.

However, despite the end of the biggest mass murder trial in British legal history, Mr Justice Weir is not expected to deliver his verdict for several weeks.

Sean Hoey (37), from Molly Road, Jonesborough, denies 56 charges, including 29 counts of murder arising from the no-warning 1998 Omagh bomb.

The trial has heard from hundreds of witnesses, including officers who served in Omagh. Much of the evidence has centred around low copy number DNA testing which the prosecution believe links Hoey with a spate of dissident republican explosions.

Two charges against Hoey, connected to a separate 1998 car bombing and explosives find, have already been dropped after the prosecution accepted there was no case to answer. Yesterday the trial heard that the Omagh atrocity was "carried out jointly by the CIRA and RIRA".

The information from an FBI spy also identified more than a 100 people connected with both dissident republican groups, but Sean Hoey was not one of them.

The intelligence was contained in an 11-point set of "agreed evidence". Reading from the document, defence QC Orlando Pownall outlined how FBI spy David Rupert was recruited by the terrorists, "as a supporter - and as such he met a number of persons considered to be the organisers and leaders of the groups".

The lawyer indicated that between 1997 and 2000, Rupert regularly reported back to the FBI who shared the intelligence with the British Security Services.

In particular Rupert referred to three individuals identified only as G1, G2, and G3, one of whom, "possibly being G2 is suspected by police of involvement in the Omagh and Newry Courthouse bombs".

"The information suggests that the defendant is not G1, G2, or G3", read the document, which also clearly indicated that Hoey was never identified by Rupert in any of over 2,000 pages of emails to his FBI handlers.

Mr Pownall also read to the court that, "the defendant has never been named or identified or described, to the knowledge of the FBI or BSS, in any of the information supplied by Rupert, as having been involved with the said illegal republican groups or associated with them in any way."

He said: "The material and information emanating from Rupert is believed to be accurate and reliable. In August 1999 information was provided by Rupert by person intimately involved with the said illegal republican organisations, which disclosed that the Omagh bomb incident was carried out jointly by the CIRA (Continuity IRA) and RIRA (Real IRA)".

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