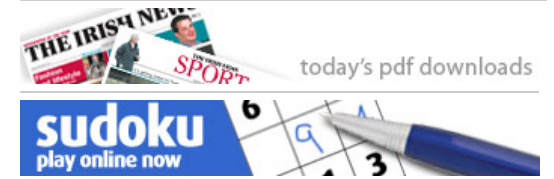


Most PopularMost Emailed

BreakingSportBusinessWorldGossip



Choose a date:



NEWS >

Judge to rule on Omagh claims case

By Staff reporter

12/02/2008

A JUDGE is expected to announce within days whether he will cross the border to hear evidence from gardai in the multi-million-pound Omagh bomb compensation case.

Mr Justice Morgan confirmed at the High Court in Belfast that he will make a declaration on Friday on how the officers' testimonies can be taken.

If he decides to go to Dublin, where he has no jurisdiction to preside, it is believed he would operate on commission, with full agreement of the Irish authorities.

Senior counsel for relatives of those killed in the atrocity also told a hearing yesterday that no statements from

gardai were available to be disclosed to the court.

The civil action against five men suspected of leading the paramilitary organisation behind the August 1998 attack which claimed 29 lives, including a woman pregnant with twins, is due to begin in April.

At the procedural hearing legal arguments also focused on David Rupert, an American trucking company boss turned FBI spy whose

evidence at the Special Criminal Court in Dublin helped convict Michael McKeivitt (56) on a charge of directing terrorism.

McKeivitt, Seamus Daly, Liam Campbell, Colm Murphy and Seamus McKenna are being sued for £14 million by the families of some of those killed at Omagh.

Lord Brennan, the London QC heading the legal team representing those bringing the compensation claim, had raised the prospect of taking evidence from gardai at an earlier hearing, saying it was necessary to corroborate what Rupert had disclosed about McKeivitt.

But major doubts surround whether the mole, now living in

hiding under a witness protection programme after infiltrating the Real IRA, will testify at the compensation case.

A lawyer for McKeivitt told the High Court: "Given the fundamental nature to the plaintiffs case of the evidence of Mr Rupert, if... there's no prospect of that evidence being admitted to trial that would certainly render quite a large part of the proposed evidence of the gardai redundant."

After making clear his intention to make a ruling later this week, Mr Justice Morgan also told counsel for the defendants that any arrangements for video-link facilities should be confirmed by the end of the month.