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Dissidents planned a renewed campaign spy tells Omagh trial

By Staff reporter

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Dissident republicans discussed parachuting equipment into Ireland for a renewed terror campaign, the Omagh bomb civil action heard yesterday.

FBI spy David Rupert also claimed they went back to war after the atrocity by pledging ferocious strikes on the authorities in London and Dublin.

The allegations from Rupert, whose testimony helped convict Real IRA leader Michael McKevitt, were contained in a dossier of statements and emails to handlers which were read out at the multi-million pound compensation case at the High Court in Belfast.

In one, nearly two years after the August 1998 attack on Omagh, he says the men whose ranks he infiltrated during years of trips to Ireland had gone back on the offensive.

“They are definitely back to war,” reported Rupert, who is on a witness protection programme and will not be attending the landmark action.

In an apparent reference to McKevitt, the agent continued: “He said it would take more and more daring attacks to get the Brits to capitulate.”

An equally ruthless approach was allegedly adopted towards the Irish government, with the intention to “strike back and hurt them” if they attempted to undermine their plans, the court heard.

Another extract from Rupert in June 2000 claimed: “It’s their view that if a Garda officer does harm to them they will surgically whack him.”

His correspondence was read out by Brett Lockhart QC, for victims’ families suing McKevitt, Liam Campbell, Seamus McKenna, Colm Murphy and Seamus Daly.

All five deny responsibility for the worst single outrage during the

Troubles.

Rupert also alleged he was privy to discussions on various methods for smuggling in shipments.

These ranged from using lead-lined photographic envelopes to routes

involving Danish-owned Greenland, the court heard.

It was also claimed that one dissident associate talked about parachuting supplies into Ireland to avoid customs.

But dismissing the idea, Rupert said: “I told him you would have to fly so low to avoid radar that it would be virtually suicide.”

Another meeting he reported on centred on how the paramilitaries planned to strengthen their weaponry.

Rupert alleged he learned they had already stolen 100 AK-47 assault rifles and two rocket launchers.

“The only arms requests was for shorts because they needed them for assassinations and bank jobs,” he

claimed.

Meanwhile, the court was also informed of possible legal attempts to gain intelligence material following disclosures in a recently aired television documentary.

Even though British prime minister Gordon Brown has announced a review following revelations that the GCHQ surveillance agency was monitoring Real IRA phone conversations as the bomb was being transported to Omagh, the victims' families insist its three-month timetable will be too late for their civil action.


Their senior counsel, Lord Brennan QC, confirmed to Mr Justice Morgan that they were considering whether to seek subpoenas or other applications following the BBC Panorama programme.

Mr Justice Morgan replied: "I was aware of some publicity in relation to this, but obviously I have not watched the programme."

The trial was adjourned until today.

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