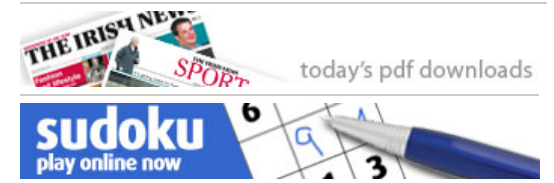


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McKeivitt aimed to outshadow Omagh bombing says FBI spy

By Staff reporter

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Convicted Real IRA leader Michael McKeivitt wanted to launch a new dissident offensive with a first strike that would overshadow the 1998 Omagh bombing, the High Court heard yesterday.

He was also allegedly plotting a future in 'cyberterrorism' and had recruited a former member of the French Foreign Legion who would be perfect for assassinating a high-profile target such as Britain's former prime

NEWS: McKeivitt aimed to outshadow Omagh bombing says FBI spy

Trucking boss turned FBI spy David Rupert made the claims in statements to the civil trial of Mr McKeivitt and four other men being sued by relatives of some of those killed in Omagh.

Mr Rupert, who infiltrated republican groups in Ireland during the 1990s, has not attended the hearings in Belfast amid fears for his safety.

However, the court heard detailed accounts of his alleged meetings with Mr McKeivitt, who was convicted of directing terrorism in 2003 after the US businessman testified against him.

Mr Rupert said the pair had been introduced in a Co Monaghan hotel in August 1999, one year after the Omagh bombing.

Brett Lockhart QC, representing the families, read out a statement in which Mr Rupert said it had been apparent immediately that Mr McKeivitt was in charge.

Mr McKeivitt allegedly re-vealed to Mr Rupert over the course of several encounters that he had been the Provisional IRA's quartermaster before leaving the group.

At one stage he told of a previous plan to kidnap four British lords and their sons and hold them in forced starvation at the time of the 1981 hunger strikes, it was claimed.

Mr Rupert alleged Mr McKeivitt had disclosed his personal involvement in an arms deal with Libya during the 1980s when three boat loads of weapons were smuggled into Ireland.

"He told me had full control of all the arms dumps held by the Provisional IRA and the leadership at that time did not know where they were," the agent said.

But the court was told that Mr McKeivitt had allegedly emphasised during their meetings how he was now looking to take his campaign in new directions, with funding from US sympathisers a key objective.

It was claimed that he wanted to unify dissident factions behind the Oglaiigh na hEireann (Irish Republican Army) banner and spoke of how Omagh had been a joint operation between the Real IRA, which built the bomb, and the Continuity IRA, which fixed the target.

A ceasefire called in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing was a purely tactical move to allow them time to regroup and reorganise, the court heard.

Mr Rupert said he had been told that Mr McKeivitt headed the chain of command and referred to the grouping as "my army".

Liam Campbell, another of the men being sued, was allegedly Mr McKeivitt's number two and was said to have been a former Provisional IRA chief in south Armagh before being court-martialled by the organisation.

With Mr McKeivitt allegedly saying he was looking for material to use in so-called barrack busters, Mr Rupert said: "He said he wanted Oglaiigh na hEireann's first hit to overshadow Omagh."

Examples of what the first strike might target included British troops or the financial district in London, the court heard.

"He spoke of a future in cyberterrorism rather than car bombs," Mr Rupert said.

Hits outside Ireland were allegedly the priority and Mr Rupert said Mr McKeivitt had motioned towards England as he said this.

"He told me he wanted to take the war to the heartland of London to exact a huge financial toll," Mr Rupert said.

However, Mr McKeivitt still wanted to target those who took their seats in the new Stormont assembly and police officers too, it was claimed.

It was alleged that during one meeting he had disclosed having two men already in place in the United States.

"One was a former French Foreign Legionnaire. He said if they were to assassinate someone like Tony Blair he would do the job," Mr Rupert said.

Mr Rupert told how he had been approached by the FBI following several trips to Ireland, eventually being offered a contract to provide information on known republicans.

He said he had also agreed to assist the British security services and the Garda Siochana.

Mr Rupert claimed to have met three of those named in the compensation claim – Mr McKeivitt, Mr Campbell and Colm Murphy.

Despite being shown photographs of the other two, Seamus Daly and Seamus McKenna, Mr Rupert said he did not recognise them.

He said at no stage was he involved in anything illegal.

Mr Rupert said his motivation had been purely to prevent people being killed.

"I did not want to see innocent people losing their lives," he said.


"I was horrified when I saw what had happened at Omagh after the bomb went off and I knew I was doing the

right thing.”

The trial continues.

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