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Omagh suspect was 'drowning sorrows' on night of bombing

By Staff reporter

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ONE of the Omagh bombing suspects was allegedly in a pub "drowning his sorrows" on the night of the atrocity, the High Court has heard.

Detectives were told Seamus McKenna had gone on a drinking session in Dundalk, Co Louth, following the dissident republican terrorist attack of August 1998 which killed 29 people, including a woman pregnant with

The claim was made to police by Patrick Morgan, who worked for businessman Colm Murphy – another of the five men being sued by relatives of some of the victims.

Transcripts from his interviews were read out at the multi-million-pound civil action being heard at the High Court in Belfast.

Mr McKenna, Mr Murphy, Michael McKeivitt, Liam Campbell and Seamus Daly all deny responsibility for the August 1998 massacre.

Mr Morgan had been taken in for questioning months after the attack because the investigation team believed a phone he had lent to his boss had been used in the car that drove the bomb to the scene.

The court heard how he had given conflicting accounts of how many people he claimed to have seen on the night of the attack in the Emerald

Bar that Mr Murphy ran in Dundalk.

Brian Fee QC, defending Mr McKenna, said: "Even in

small things like the number of people in the bar, Mr

Morgan gives wildly different estimates.

"At one time he would say there was virtually no-one in it except for Mr Murphy and his crowd. At other times he says maybe 20 people and then 60 people."

Mr Fee also pointed out how Mr Morgan had given different versions of his reply when allegedly teased in the bar about having driven the car with the bomb to Omagh.

During cross-examination of Thomas Dempster, one of the detectives who questioned Mr Morgan, the barrister read out interview notes where it was claimed "McKenna was on the rip".

In the transcript he told police: "I assumed it was something to do with Omagh when he was on the drink, drowning his sorrows."

But when detectives asked if there was anything more to back up such a big assumption he could give nothing else, according to the notes.

Mr Fee said: "He has changed his mind very frequently about who he saw and what he heard.

"That's one of the frustrat-ing things for interviewing officers.

"In relation to his suggestion about Mr McKenna being on the rip, it's pointed out to him, not in your interview but other interviews, that doesn't tell a lot because Mr McKenna was frequently on the rip and took long days off.

"He was a good worker when he was on site but would disappear both before and after the Omagh bomb for days when he decided to take a drink."


Asked if difficulties in getting a consistent account from Mr Morgan was a pattern of police interviews, Mr Dempster said: "It would appear to be from the notes but I don't have any recollection."

The officer also confirmed he was not aware that Mr Morgan later withdrew all versions he had given to police.

The trial was adjourned until Tuesday.

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