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McKeivitt had 'established links with Gaddafi and Tamil Tigers'

BY Staff reporter

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MICHAEL McKeivitt had established links with Libya's Colonel Gadd-afi and Tamil Tiger rebel troops as part of his planned new terrorist campaign, it was claimed in the High Court

yesterday.

The convicted Real IRA chief was also confident of securing financial backing from a foreign government,

according to the FBI spy who infiltrated the ranks of dissident republicans.

A statement from David Rupert read out at the Omagh bomb

civil action in Belfast alleged that McKeivitt, one of five men being sued by victims' relatives, confided in him about being smuggled in and out of Ireland on the floor of a lorry used to bring in weapons purchased abroad.

Mr Rupert, who has not attended the trial due to security fears, claimed he was told of plans to

buy military equipment in eastern Europe because it was so cheap.

The undercover agent said that McKeivitt was particularly keen on networking with the Chechen forces.

He also spoke of contacts in Libya, mentioning Gaddafi, and recent links with the Tamil Tiger guerrillas in Sri Lanka, the court heard.

According to Mr Rupert, representatives from the Real IRA-affiliated 32 County Sovereignty Movement were sent to Switzerland at

one stage with instructions to make contact with Palestinians.

McKeivitt was said to be disappointed when the mission failed.

Later, Mr Rupert alleged, McKeivitt told him money was becoming an issue and that an affiliation with another government was needed.

After asking how this could be developed he claimed: "I was amazed the reply was so simple – 'they would come knocking on the door'."

The American trucking boss-turned-spy was a key prosecution witness when McKeivitt was convicted of directing terrorism in 2003 and jailed for 20 years.

Now on a witness protection programme, his testimony and emails to handlers during the years undercover were disclosed to the court by lawyers for the families seeking damages from McKeivitt, Liam Campbell, Seamus McKenna, Colm Murphy and Seamus Daly over the August 1998 Omagh atrocity which claimed 29 lives.

In an email sent after allegedly meeting McKeivitt for the first time in a Co Monaghan hotel, one year after the bombing, Mr Rupert wrote: "Big day. If I was worried about it being too slow when I got here it all changed today."

The agent went on to claim the paramilitary boss, who was said to be trying to unite dissident factions for a

renewed campaign, talked about running training camps and having taken 98 per cent of the rival Continuity IRA's membership.

Their conversation turned to computer hacking, with claims that the organisation had a specially set up department of four people, including one considered the best in Ireland, the court heard.

These were described as so-called lilywhites, kept away from other parts of the organisation, the court heard.

Referring to the Omagh bomb, McKeivitt allegedly described it as a joint RIRA-CIRA operation, with the Continuity responsible for about 80 per cent of it.

The ceasefire announced after the massacre was a purely tactical ploy to get the heat off them, Mr Rupert said he was told.

But it was claimed a renewed offensive was being planned with a first strike, possibly on British troops or London's financial district, which would overshadow Omagh.

Mention was also made of an alleged plan to crack into the capital's traffic light system.

At one stage in his briefings, Mr Rupert said he had been labelled a computer person, money man and philanthropist by the dissidents who saw him as a way of exploiting US support.

He also alleged McKeivitt told him his organisation had taken all the Provisional IRA's weapons procurement, operation and manufacturing expertise.

"The problem was they lacked in the bank robbing capabilities," he said.

"They said they went to the INLA for this but their guys had so many problems with drugs."

Mr Rupert, who claimed he was taken for meetings with McKeivitt

in his Dundalk home, further remarked: "One thing I did notice, he had to use the bathroom every 20-30 minutes. He seemed rather embarrassed about it."

The trial continues.


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