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## More gardaí to testify at Omagh trial

More than a dozen extra gardaí are to be called to give evidence at the Omagh bomb civil case, it emerged today.

Already 23 gardaí are to be witnesses at the request of the legal team acting for six Omagh families against five men they believe responsible for the 1998 atrocity, in which 29 people were slaughtered and hundreds more injured.

The case is due to move from the High Court in Belfast to the Supreme Court in Dublin to enable the Garda officers to give their evidence.

The families' lawyers, led By Lord Daniel Brennan QC, are now asking Mr Justice Morgan to arrange with the Irish authorities for up to 40 officers to be called.

The case is due to make its unprecedented move across the border on May 12th and is expected to be heard in Dublin for more than a week of the eight weeks it is set to take.

The families are seeking some £14 million in compensation from the Real IRA who claimed responsibility for the bombing and five men they say were the prime movers.

The civil action has been taken following the failure of the authorities in Northern Ireland to bring anyone to justice for the slaughter.

The five men, alleged Real IRA leader Michael McKeivitt and number two Liam Campbell, together with Colm Murphy, Seamus McKenna and Seamus Daly, all deny responsibility.

None have attended court, two are in prison in the Irish Republic for terrorist offences unrelated to Omagh, and Campbell alone has ignored the case and not instructed lawyers.

On day three of the unprecedented action - the first time alleged terrorists have been sued by their victims - a bomb expert tied the Omagh bomb in with a series of other bombs in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

In total, 28 devices had identical timers with the same lengthy numeric code which tied them to a batch manufactured in the same French factory at the same time.

Using a detailed and complicated wall chart Denis McAuley - the lead scientist at Forensic Science Northern Ireland - explained to Mr Justice Morgan how the timers were identical.

He said they were normally used in such harmless domestic equipment as cookers, heaters and barbecues.

In 1998 alone the same Coupetans timers were were used in 12 devices in Northern Ireland, two in the Republic and one in England.

Between 2000 and 2004 another ten timers with the same code were used in all three jurisdictions , he said.

The Omagh bomb was what the authorities described as a Mark 19, which had first appeared in January 1998, and which was used in Northern Ireland on 15 occasions including Omagh that year, he said.

He estimated the Omagh bomb contained between 150 and 200 kilograms of improvised explosives attached to a timer power unit and a booster charge of semtex high explosive.

Mr McAuley said when he visited Omagh after the blast he found a crater blasted into the roadway three

metres across and 80 centimetres deep.

“That indicates that a powerful explosion had occurred involving quite a large charge of high explosives,” he said.

The explosion would have caused blast, thermal and fragmentation injuries, he said.

“The blast effects within the confines of a street such as Market Street, Omagh, would be very substantial. An extreme increase in air pressure is really devastating to anybody or building in the confined space.

“The greatest damage from blast is to internal organs, lungs, the blast will compress the chest cavity and cause serious damage to the lungs and then when the chest is released when the blast recedes that can cause more damage,” he said.

He said the thermal effects of the bomb fireball would cause very serious burn injuries to anyone in the vicinity as temperatures rocketed to “well in excess of 1,000 degrees centigrade”.

Shrapnel from the the tube holding the booster charge had been recovered 180 metres away from the explosion site, he said and fragmented parts of the car were hurled over 300 metres, he revealed.

**PA**

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