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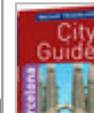
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Tuesday, April 08, 2008

Police officers today relived the horror of the Omagh bombing as they gave evidence in the civil action being taken by victims of the atrocity against the five men they believe responsible for the Real IRA attack.

Four officers took the stand on day two of the multi-million-pound action to recall the day - August 15 1998 - on which 29 people were slaughtered when a car bomb exploded in the heart of the Co Tyrone town on a busy Saturday afternoon.

Their evidence was preceded by three harrowing home videos shot by people caught up in the bombing, which gave those in the courtroom at Belfast High Court an eyewitness view of the horror, death, destruction and injury.

None of the Omagh families were in the court to view the videos, which were played out to a silent courtroom where all eyes were fixed on the images on two large TV screens either side of the judge, Mr Justice Morgan, and projected on the wall above him.

Six Omagh families affected by the bombing have mounted a civil action against those they believe responsible for the bombing following the failure of the authorities to bring anyone to justice.

The five men named in the action are Michael McKeivitt, alleged leader of the Real IRA, the man said to be his number two, Liam Campbell, Colm Murphy, Seamus McKenna and Seamus Daly.

None of the men have attended court - two, McKeivitt and Campbell, prevented by their detention in prison in the Republic for crimes unconnected with the Omagh bombing. All five deny involvement.

Constable Alan Palmer, who had been in the RUC for just a year when the bomb exploded, graphically recalled the horrific scenes he witnessed when the bomb exploded as police were trying to evacuate the town centre.

Warning calls had said the bomb was outside the courthouse at the top of the town and they directed people away from there down the hill towards Market Street - just where the car bomb had in fact been planted some 400m away from where police believed it to be.

Constable Palmer said: "There was carnage. It was a battlefield, it was horrendous.

"There was mayhem, people screaming and running around with body parts."

He added: "I saw a man jump into a hole, where he was trying to dig with his hands to see if there was anyone there."

The constable said there were cars on fire and casualties on fire and he did what he could to tend to the injured.

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