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Lawyers try to discredit FBI spy who helped jail McKeivitt

By Staff Reporter

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American spy David Rupert knowingly committed tax fraud by not declaring payments from the British secret services, the Omagh bomb civil action heard yesterday.

Lawyers for jailed Real IRA leader Michael McKeivitt scrutinised Mr Rupert's financial affairs as part of their attempt to destroy his credibility at the landmark case being brought by victims' relatives.

The US trucking company boss, who was first recruited by the FBI to infiltrate dissident republican ranks, played a key role in securing McKeivitt's conviction in the Republic for directing terrorism.

He went into the witness box to testify against McKeivitt during a high-profile trial in Dublin in 2003.

But Michael O'Higgins SC, for McKeivitt, disputed claims by Mr Rupert that he lacked memory over his tax affairs.

Mr O'Higgins told the High Court in Belfast: "I will be inviting the court to infer his lack of recall is not genuine.

"More importantly that the testimony he gave to that effect was known by him not to be true."

McKeivitt is being sued along with Liam Campbell, Seamus McKenna, Colm Murphy and Seamus Daly by the families of some of those killed in the August 1998 Real IRA atrocity. All five men deny responsibility for the Omagh bombing.

According to Mr O'Higgins – who has already linked Mr Rupert to alleged money laundering rackets and former dictators in Panama and Chile – the spy did not declare payments from the British secret services as income.

"Such returns as he did make listed them as expenses and [he] listed them knowing that was a lie," he said.

He told the court there was further deceit and a concerted effort in negotiating the terms of giving evidence so that British secret services payments would not be subject to income tax.

Mr O'Higgins said Mr Rupert's contract started out at \$2,500 (£1,800) a month before rising to \$4,500 (£3,300) and then \$7,500 (£5,400).

"Ultimately, the third increase, when he ceased coming to Ireland but purely returned for the purpose of giving evidence, [was] \$12,500 (£9,100) a month plus expenses," he said.

The trial continues.

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