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McGrath calls for cross-border Omagh inquiry

23 December 2007 By Colm Heatley in Belfast

Independent TD Finian McGrath has called for a cross-border inquiry into the Omagh bombing, following the acquittal of Sean Hoey, the only person ever charged with the bombing.

Hoey was found not guilty of a total of 58 charges, including the Omagh attack, at Belfast High Court last Thursday. He has been held in custody in the North for more than four years.

Lawyers for the 38-year-old electrician have said he may take a civil lawsuit against the father of one of the victims, lawyer Victor Barker, and the prosecuting authorities.

The acquittal of Hoey effectively marks the end of any criminal investigation into the Omagh attack, which killed 31 people, including unborn twins. PSNI chief constable Hugh Orde said on Friday that it was "highly unlikely" anyone would ever be convicted in relation to Omagh.

However, McGrath has called for a full investigation, saying the attack had "disturbing similarities" to the 1974 Dublin/Monaghan bombings, which killed 33 people.

"I will be calling in the strongest possible terms for government support for the inquiry when the Dail reconvenes in the new year," McGrath said.

"It is the belief of many people that the intelligence services are up to their necks with involvement in the Omagh bomb, and it is our duty to ensure that the victims - and indeed the country - get to the truth."

Any public inquiry would be asked to examine why the RUC Special Branch apparently ignored warnings that a Real IRA bomb attack in the North was imminent. There have also been claims by a

Motoring

garda, who says a superior in the force told him they were “going to let one (bomb) through” in the weeks leading up to Omagh.

Agenda

In acquitting Hoey of all the charges against him, trial judge Mr Justice Weir said there had been “deliberate and calculated deception” by the PSNI in the case, and was scathing in his criticism of the police investigation.

Letters

The prosecution case rested almost entirely on forensic evidence obtained from low copy DNA, which it argued showed Hoey had made a number of bombs for the Real IRA, including the one in Omagh.

People In Business

However, the court said the DNA evidence was unreliable. One victim of the bombing told The Sunday Business Post that the acquittal of Hoey was “the right decision”.

Budget Forum

Kevin Skelton, whose wife Philomena died in the August 1998 bomb attack, said that the decision to acquit Hoey was correct.

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“What else could the court have done but acquit Hoey?” said Skelton, who said the evidence in the case was weak.

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“Under those circumstances, what other verdict could have been given, except not guilty?”

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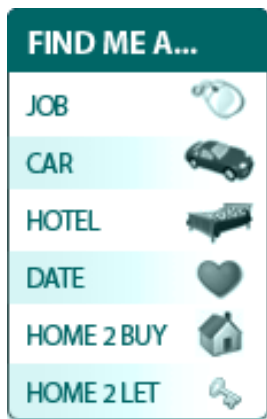
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