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## Ex-confidential files from 1993 show state feared 'trip and fall' compensation would fund IRA

4-5 minutes



Archive picture of Donna Maguire

State officials had feared that any cash given to Donna Maguire would end up in the pockets of the IRA, as she pursued a claim that she had fallen and injured herself at a cattle mart.

Documents relating to the case have just been put online for the general public to view by the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) wing of Ulster University.

CAIN is a sprawling website containing a wealth of information about the Troubles like speeches, murals, and a list of the dead.

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It was threatened with cuts a couple of years ago, but was given a reprieve in February allowing work on it to continue – and now it

has unveiled a stack of Troubles documents from 1993 and 1994 (declassified in around 2018).

They begin with a missive from “J Murray, permanent secretary” which states: “In July 1985 the Department of the Environment received a claim for damages on behalf of Miss Maguire.

“She alleged that she injured both her ankles when she tripped on the uneven footpath surface outside Newry Cattle Market.

“The claim has not been resolved because the Department has so far refused to settle out of court, and because Miss Maguire spent much of the last three years in jail.

“She was acquitted in Dublin on charges of possession of explosives in 1990, acquitted in the Netherlands on murder charges the following year, and is now facing a murder charge in Germany.”

It goes on to state the claim at the time was worth £7,500.

Maguire had wanted a team to be flown out to Germany to hear details of her trip claim, and the document adds that since she was entitled to legal aid “the potential high costs are no deterrent to her; even if the department wins the case it will still be responsible for its own costs”.

It adds “the odds are probably in favour of her winning,” despite doubts about the truth of her claim.

The written response from DJ Watkins of the Northern Ireland Office said that whilst she had not at that time been convicted of terrorism, “given Miss Maguire’s strongly suspected connections, there is the quite clear risk that she stands to gain a significant sum of money which could go to support terrorism”.

He set out the rationale for fighting the case in court, warning about adverse publicity if the government conceded in the face of what many would see as “a prima facie spurious claim by a terrorist” – but said ultimately it was for politicians to take a decision.

In 1995, Maguire was convicted of attempted murder in relation to the IRA bomb attack in Germany.

She was also awarded £13,500 for her fall.

**More from this reporter:**

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**A message from the Editor:**

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Alistair Bushe

Editor