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# Neutrality in Ireland: The War on Terror, the Use of Shannon Airport and the Irish Anti-War Movement

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NEUTRALITY IN IRELAND:  
THE WAR ON TERROR,  
THE USE OF SHANNON AIRPORT AND THE  
IRISH ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT



BY MARGARET HAVEMANN  
SIT IRELAND, SPRING 2006  
ANDY STOREY, LECTURER, UCD  
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## INTRODUCTION

In 2001, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, Ireland's Taoiseach Bertie Ahern flew to America to offer President George W. Bush the unlimited use of Shannon Airport in an invasion of Afghanistan. Since then, Ireland has played the role of controversial accomplice in America's War on Terror. Each year hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops land in Shannon to fill up on beer and craic while their planes fill up on fuel and supplies. And each year, new accusations surface of CIA rendition flights passing through Ireland on their way to torture camps scattered around Europe.

With the Celtic Tiger still thriving, this small island is changing more rapidly than anyone could have predicted. With the economic prosperity, however, has come the responsibility of playing a more prominent role in world affairs. No longer is the population flowing out of Ireland like water; no longer is Ireland isolated and detached from the world; and no longer is it easy for Ireland to claim neutrality in the face of conflict. In fact, one must ask the question, has Ireland ever really *been* a neutral country? The term "neutrality" masks quite a complicated and multifaceted concept, one that is ambiguous to some and essential to others. With the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have sprung passionate peace activists, many of whom have different motivations for protesting the use of Shannon Airport, despite being on the same team.

This paper will explore Ireland's political parties and the rationale behind their support of — or opposition to — allowing U.S. planes through Shannon. It will examine the American

perspective on the situation and on Irish-American relations in general, in part through the lens of the U.S. Embassy in Dublin. It will trace the concept of neutrality since the establishment of the Irish Free State, and will look at the significance of the concept today, in the face of war. It will study the careers and motivations of a few anti-war activists and organizations. And finally, it will attempt to determine the effectiveness of the anti-war movement in Ireland.

My Independent Study Project has its roots in my childhood. I grew up in a house full of journalists; I went to school at an international school in the American capital, Washington DC. I have been interested in politics since I can remember, and yet my approach to government has always been somewhat critical. Ten years from now, I imagine myself working within the government system, albeit working to *change* it. I knew when coming to Ireland that I wanted to explore my feelings about America politics through my project; I believe it is an invaluable opportunity to be able to study my own political system from the perspective of another country, one with significant ties to the States.

These four months have forced me to look at America differently than I have before. Interestingly, though, talking to activists who strongly oppose America's actions in Afghanistan and Iraq did not make me more ashamed of my administration, as one would expect. In truth, I believe I came to Ireland with as low an opinion of the U.S. as was possible. I found it difficult to start a conversation with an Irish person without first waiving a disclaimer: "I disapprove of my country's government!" But speaking with well educated, balanced activists and hearing from politicians intent on remaining in America's good graces reminded me of all that I have to be proud of in my home country, the current

administration notwithstanding. I have gone through an interesting personal journey in the past four weeks, one that has led me from resenting my roots to respecting the U.S.'s past actions in the world; from blind criticism of my own government to intelligent questioning of its policies; from complete ignorance of Irish politics to an understanding of its mechanisms.

My project topic has also gone through somewhat of a roller coaster ride. I began this process imagining I would spend three weeks working as an intern in one of Ireland's political party offices. That way, I would get an inside look into Irish politics as well as into that party's take on the War on Terror, the use of Shannon Airport and the influence of America. The project took a natural detour when, after weeks of trying to make contact with political parties without success, I shifted my focus more to the anti-war movement. This was an easy diversion, though, because from the very first days of my project I found door after door open to me when attempting to contact activists. Almost organically, questions started to arise from the interviews and research: How important is neutrality to the Irish people? What does that term actually mean? What are the motivations behind politicians' support of or opposition to the use of Shannon Airport? How effective is a peace movement that blindly condemns everything it sees as imperialistic, capitalistic, and perhaps even American? And *is that* the prevalent strategy of activism in Ireland?

Fine Gael was, in the end, the only political party that I was able to meet with. Rather than taking this as a personal affront, I tried to extract some meaning from it. Perhaps the politicians were simply too busy to return my calls and e-mails. It was, after all, Easter break for some of the project period. Or perhaps talking to a student for her class project was low

on a politician's list of priorities. In America, it would take an act of god — or maybe just some really good connections — to get face-to-face time with a member of Congress. From my experiences in Northern Ireland's Stormont, though, I suppose I was expecting — quite unfairly, I realize — a Daíl filled with politicians whose only job was to run a country one *fiftieth* the size of America with nothing better to do than talk to curious students. In reality, though, politicians' time is very valuable, and I was lucky to speak to any at all. Also, my approach might have been rather off-putting. My e-mail and phone messages always mentioned the Iraq war and Shannon Airport — I did not want to mislead my potential interviewees. With such a controversial topic of conversation as that, it is no wonder that parties declined to meet with me. It did surprise me, though, that the more left-wing parties did not jump at my offer as another opportunity to voice their opinions. The Socialist Workers Party, the Greens and to some extent the Labour Party are very vocal in their opposition, so their lack of response to my requests can only be explained by one of the other excuses.

My passion for politics means that it is impossible for me to feel passively about any political issue, especially one as significant and destructive as the War on Terror. That is not to say that I am unable to look at issues with an open mind. That my opinion towards the anti-war movement changed throughout this project is proof, I think, that I approached this project ready to consider alternative points of views to my own. That does not change the fact, however, that I began and ended this project with a bias. I am strongly anti-war and even more strongly anti-Bush administration. I disagree with the invasion of Iraq and how the war was conducted, and so automatically I am skeptical of any country playing a complicit role in the ongoing situation. This bias was made very clear during my first interview with Michael

McClellan from the U.S. Embassy, during which I was so worried about revealing my prejudice against his boss, President Bush, and the war in Iraq that I shied away from any opportunity to engage in an interactive conversation. There is a delicate balance to be struck by the interviewer: a balance between carrying on an interesting yet challenging dialogue and scaring the interviewee away from revealing his true opinion.

I faced a different obstacle when interviewing the representatives from the anti-war movement. Because of my bias, I automatically felt a likeness towards the activists; I had to be very aware of becoming a convert. I had to avoid feeling so comfortable with them that I failed to look at their activism objectively, failed to see the faults. I do think I was able to avoid this; again, the fact that at some points during the project period I became disenchanted with the anti-war movement shows that I was, indeed, looking at both sides through clear lenses.

In terms of research, the discovery that I found most interesting was the vast difference between people's motivations to either support or oppose the use of Shannon Airport. At my advisor's — Andy Storey — advice, I explored the question of *why*. Why does Fine Gael not stand up against the use of Shannon Airport? It isn't because of a moral desire to aid in the War on Terror; it is to remain in good standing the America. Why do activists spend so much of their time protesting at Shannon, often with no results? In some cases, it is just what Fine Gael was *not* concerned with: the human rights of Iraqi civilians. In other cases, though, there is an engrained need to protect Ireland's neutrality. The answers to the question of what drives them to support what they do varied immensely from interviewee to interviewee. That variety itself makes me wonder how political parties are able to work



together, how the anti-war movement remains cohesive, and most importantly, how the government continues to accurately represent its constituency.

## METHODOLOGY

### DAILY LOG AND INTERVIEWS

The first of the week devoted to my project coincided with the Easter vacation. Because government workers had that time off, it made sense to begin my research by focusing on the other side of the equation: the grassroots, non-governmental organizations based in Ireland. The week also gave me the opportunity to do some background research on the political system of the Republic of Ireland, so if I did eventually meet with members of political parties, I would have some basis on which to ask questions.

This is all, I might add, after my initial interview with Michael McClellan from the United States Embassy. Mr. McClellan, the Counselor for Public Diplomacy from Louisiana, gave me a half-an-hour's worth of interesting material, which allowed me to shape how I approached both the non-governmental groups and the political parties. For example, Mr. McClellan stated that he didn't believe that most Irish people "care too much about Shannon Airport."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he believes there is only a small group of protestors who simply need something off of which to feed, and who find their fuel protesting against the situation in Iraq and the use of Shannon Airport. This interview was important in another sense, too: it reminded me — rather dramatically — that a person's view must be taken as just that and nothing more. Mr. McClellan had a unique personality and a very biased perspective on both the Irish-American relationship and the situation in Iraq (I say "situation" because, as he assured me more than once, America is not "at war" with Iraq; the Americans are there

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<sup>1</sup> McClellan, Michael. Personal Interview, 10 April 2006.

because the Iraqi's want them there). I must remain aware of the fact that just as I cannot take Mr. McClellan to be a representative of all Americans or indeed of all Embassy workers, I cannot take other interviewees' opinions to be anything other than their own.

I began the first week by extensively researching the political workings of the Dail, examining each party to get a general idea of where it stands on the political spectrum. While it was my first instinct to place each party next to the Democrats, Republicans or Greens in the American system, I quickly realized that with a multiparty system such as Ireland's, things are far too complicated for that. I attempted to find contacts within each party (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Green Party, Sinn Féin, the Progressive Democrats, Labour and the Socialist Workers Party) though as I have mentioned, this was difficult as it was Easter break. (It didn't help, either, that both e-mail addresses listed on the SWP's website were invalid.)

Immediately I noticed a hurdle: it was difficult to find any public statement or document from the mainstream parties concerning the war in Iraq or the use of Shannon Airport. Of course, some parties were extremely vocal: the SWP, the Greens and the Labour Party have all made a point to address the two issues on many occasions (it goes without saying that all three of those parties are resolutely against the war in Iraq and the use of Shannon as a stopover point for American troops). Since Ireland is considered neutral (in some people's definition of the word), political parties — especially those in power — are going to be wary of speaking on a subject that seriously brings into question Ireland's neutrality. If I ever did get to speak to political parties, I realized, I would have to ask the right questions if I was going to get a substantive answer.

Finding non-governmental groups opposed to the use of Shannon Airport and the war in Iraq was easy, and that in itself told me something: Despite what Mr. McClellan from the U.S. Embassy thought, there are many people in Ireland who are so concerned with the direction that their country is headed that they are willing to actively fight for what they believe in. *Na Cosantoiri Siochana*, The Peace Network, was the first group I came across on the website indymedia.ie, a veritable hub for activists. The Think Tank for Action on Social Change, one of Ireland's only think tanks, was another group that I came across. The Catholic Worker's Group is currently embroiled in a series of court trials: its approach to protesting the rendition flights at Shannon Airport involved disarming and defacing an American military plane on its stop in Ireland. The Peace and Neutrality Alliance is campaigning against the use of Shannon Airport as a stopover point. And Action from Ireland has been at the forefront of anti-war and anti-stopover flights for some time now. I contacted Joe Murray, the Afri Coordinator, who gladly scheduled me for an interview on Thursday 20 April.

The interview with Mr. Murray turned out to be a great boon to my research: he gave me the contact information for a number of activists who he said would be more than happy to talk to me, especially if I told them he had sent me. I was very impressed by Mr. Murray. He was well spoken rational, and yet modest, a quality that I realized was something to note after searching for his name on the internet and reading about his many accomplishments. He stressed the importance of Irish neutrality, and claimed it as the main driving force behind his activism. He kept in touch with me throughout the month, sending me occasional articles and even a book to help with my research. In Mr. Murray I seemed to hit a node in the

network of peace activists, and from him, everything seemed to fall into place. My blind e-mail request to Mr. Murray was the only that I had to write during this project; all of my other contacts were references made through personal connections. It all seemed to branch away from Mr. Murray, who seemed eager to have me meet with some of the most interesting activists in Ireland.

Next, I traveled to the University College Dublin to meet with Andy Storey, my advisor and a professor at the Developmental Studies Centre at UCD. This meeting was informal — over a cup of coffee — and more conversational than either of my previous interviews. The atmosphere of a student cafeteria was not at all conducive to a tape recorder, so I had to rely on my ears and my notes. Talking with Mr. Storey moved me to look at my project from a different angle than I had been. He encouraged me to question the term “neutrality” and its vagueness; up to then I had taken it for granted that neutrality was a well established, internationally recognized term. It tapped into my linguistics background to realize that a word as simple as neutrality can mask a very complicated set of concepts. Mr. Storey also helped me to prepare for how I was going to approach politicians. He was very interested in the question of *why*. I had been worried that if I managed to reach a politician, it would be hard to get anything other than a scripted response from him. Mr. Storey advised me to ask them to rank, in order of importance, their reasons for supporting the use of Shannon Airport.

The next few days I spent researching things that had come up during interviews that I wasn't familiar with. For example, I had heard many references to NATO's Partnership for Peace group, an organization I was unfamiliar with. I spent some time researching various

groups and old conventions, all while attempting to contact the political parties to schedule an interview.

In fact, reaching the political parties was a lot more challenging than I had expected. My e-mails went unanswered and my phone calls went unreturned. This was quite a surprise, since my original project had me spending *all* my time with political parties. Instead, it seemed I was met with a brick wall at every turn. This did allow me to focus more attention on the anti-war movement, which was turning out to lead to fascinating roads.

On Wednesday 3 May, I met with Edward Horgan in his office at SPIRASI, Center for Care of Survivors of Torture. Mr. Horgan's name had been mentioned to me by Joe Murray from AfrI; he had just recently gone before the European Parliament to formally challenge Ireland's complicit role in the war in Iraq. Before meeting him, I researched his presentation to Parliament as well as some articles on indymedia.ie that mention him. For the interview, I felt I was well prepared with questions for the renowned Mr. Horgan. What makes him so remarkable is his past: for twenty years, he was in the Irish Defense Forces, stationed everywhere from Cyprus to Zimbabwe. For some, Mr. Horgan said, going from the military to being a prominent peace activist is somewhat of a contradiction. I myself asked if his experiences abroad are what turned him against the military. In fact, he said, it is the opposite. "I enjoyed my military career, because fortunately it was all peace-orientated. I have deep objections to war, and I think the military should be used in peacekeeping capacities only."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Horgan, Edward. Personal Interview, 3 May 2006.

What also struck me about the interview with Mr. Horgan was the vast difference of importance placed on the concept of neutrality by Mr. Murray and him. While Ireland's neutrality is key to Mr. Murray's anti-war stance, neutrality for Mr. Horgan is just a means to an end: the end of unjust killing around the world. Neutrality in and of itself, then, was not high up in his mind. What impressed me about Mr. Horgan was his overall approach to activism. While he is a member of some anti-war organizations like PANA and *Na Cosantoiri Siobhana*, he feels he is most active as an individual citizen. He took the Irish government to court on his own; he stood in front of the European Parliament on his own. He is a refreshing reminder of the benefits of a democracy: as a private citizen, his rights allow him to challenge his government in a very meaningful way.

After speaking to Mr. Horgan, I spent some time reflecting on "activism" and all that it entails: the marches, the protests, the challenges, the complaints. In speaking to the wide range of prominent peace activists that I had over the past few weeks, I had found myself going through some sort of mental transformation. I think of myself as an activist on a small scale — I go to demonstrations, I pester my representatives — and yet I realized it is quite easy to bring one's activism to an extreme that becomes entirely counterproductive. Yes, it is important to have people questioning the government; but when does that questioning become so aggressive and so predictable that it loses all credibility in the eyes of those in power, those you are trying to reform? Just in traveling in the group I was this month, I was beginning to wonder if some peace activists simply *need* something to complain about, and will find something to challenge in *any* figure of authority, no matter how perfect he may be. Certainly there is a quota of extremist nut cases in every group — but does activism come with more than its fair share? This is a question the Deirdre Clancy asked rhetorically in my

interview with her. I spoke to no interviewees who fit this description; in fact, my most recent interview had been with Joe Murray, who impressed me with his down-to-earth approach to activism. My reflection was the result of feeling more intensely involved with the world of an anti-war movement than I ever had before. In sharp contrast to my type of activism, the people who I had been studying had, in many cases, dedicated their *lives* to their cause, and made great sacrifices. This brought the concept of activism to a whole different level, and it led me to wonder if activism, in the way that the Irish anti-war movement practiced it, was effectively worth it. I began to question what *are* the most effective ways to challenge one's government.

And so with those thoughts running through my head, I found myself sitting next to Jim O'Keefe, Minister for Defense in the Fine Gael Party, on a black leather couch in Leinster House. With my attempts at contacting politicians failing miserably, Aeveen helped me by calling a personal connection, Mr. O'Keefe. She tells me he was rather hesitant to meet with me — I learned afterwards this was because he was extremely busy with his party's *Árd Fheis* — but he called me the next morning and said he had a gap in his schedule. I regret to say that my lack of faith in the availability of Irish politicians caused me to be far less prepared than I should have been. In fact, it was only after Mr. O'Keefe called me that I jotted down some questions on my walk over to the *Dáil*. Thankfully, the past few weeks have subconsciously engrained in my mind such a fluency of my topic that I was able to have a smooth conversation with Mr. O'Keefe.

His time was valuable, so I limited my questions to those I thought were the most pressing, and those that would beg the most interesting answers. I should add that Mr. O'Keefe's



incredible West Cork accent, while new and exciting for me, meant that some of his comments were lost to my untrained American ears. The atmosphere of the Daíl's intimate dining room was not conducive to my little tape recorder, so I listened and took notes to the best of my ability. I asked first what Fine Gael's position was on the use of Shannon Airport. Rather tellingly, I thought, Mr. O'Keefe's first comment of the interview was how important a good relationship with the U.S. is to Ireland. He brushed off as insignificance the issue of troops going through Shannon, and claimed that the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice's pledge that rendition flights were not taking place was all that the Irish government needed in terms of assurance. As a final comment, Mr. O'Keefe touched on a "wariness"<sup>1</sup> that his party has towards "Bush and co."<sup>2</sup> This would have been an interesting path to follow — even if only to see how much he was willing to speak out against the American president — but his time was up, and so the interview ended. However, my time at the Daíl was not over yet. Mr. O'Keefe walked me to the main building of Leinster House where I was given a private tour by a very knowledgeable guard. (See appendix C.)

On Saturday 6 May, I met with Deirdre Clancy, one of the five activists arrested for defacing a U.S. plane at Shannon Airport three and a half years ago. Speaking to Ms. Clancy on the phone and then seeing her in person, I would never have imagined her to be the type to ruffle any feathers. She is soft spoken and petite, with big curious eyes and long brown hair in a simple ponytail. The 45 minutes I spent listening to her story were invaluable; they gave me a look into the personal side of activism that I really hadn't gotten a chance to see in any of my other interviews. Also worth mentioning is that Ms. Clancy is the only woman I have interviewed for my project. She also may be the closest to my age, though I have a feeling

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<sup>1</sup> O'Keefe, Jim. Personal Interview, 4 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

that her youthful looks are deceptive, judging from her accomplished life. Immediately upon meeting her in Eason's Coffee Shop, I felt an affinity that I hadn't felt towards anyone else in the past three weeks. It surprised me that something as basic as gender could instantaneously create a rapport between two people. Immediately I felt more connected and therefore more at ease with Ms. Clancy. It was almost as if I wasn't feeling as judged as I had when interviewing older men. I felt close to Ms. Clancy's level, and it is clear from the interview's transcript that the conversation flowed more smoothly because of it.

Ms. Clancy is an amazing woman, and whatever doubts I was having about the effectiveness and legitimacy of protesters were at least temporarily eclipsed by her well-spoken and honest view of her role as a law-breaking peace activist. She shared with me the genesis of her activism and the sacrifices she has consciously made for what she believes in. She, more than anyone I had spoken with, was able to convince me that her main concern was with the people of Iraq, not with the image of Ireland. She answered my questions honestly and in great detail, exhibiting the vast amount of knowledge she has in the subjects that concern her most in life. When she spoke of the current situation of the court case against her and four other members of the Catholic Workers Group, she was brave and yet truthful about how it was beginning to wear on her. I learned a great deal from Ms. Clancy, and perhaps more importantly, she rekindled my confidence in the anti-war movement.

## LITERATURE AND SOURCES

My sources ranged from textbooks on Irish politics to pamphlets from the Socialist Workers Party to newspaper articles from the *Irish Independent*. My initial research was conducted mainly on the Internet, searching the websites of various anti-war websites,

particularly indymedia.ie, which came recommended by some of my interviewees. Also useful online was the archives of political statements and press releases on the various party websites. It was harder to find documents relating to the situation in Iraq or at Shannon Airport on the sites of the more mainstream parties, but I was able to find both opinions and facts on the websites of the SWP, the Labour Party and the Greens.

At first, I had some difficulties finding books to complement the project; it was hard to find texts current enough that they touched on the topic of the Iraq war. It was useful, though, to skim books on Irish politics to get an idea of how the system works and how it is different from the States' (this endeavor to understand the Irish system was helped dramatically by my tour of the Dail). Once I began talking to peace activists, some had very good suggestions for books I should look at. Mr. Murray sent me a photocopy of an *Irish Independent* article he had mentioned during his interview, as well as a book on Ireland's role in a changing Europe. That book, by John Maguire, touched on NATO and other military alliances as they pertain to Ireland, and had a section devoted to neutrality.

Most importantly, though, I used newspaper articles as a resource. These gave me up-to-date accounts of the situation at Shannon Airport, while at the same time mentioning enough history surrounding the issue that I was then able to search elsewhere for my more in-depth research. (For example, if an article would mention in passing that some politicians claim there is a predecessor for the stopover flights in Vietnam, I would then take that information and do my own research into Ireland's involvement in the Vietnam War.) The *Irish Independent* was the most common newspaper that I referred to, simply because it seemed to

cover the situation more regularly than any of the other papers. I made sure to make a mental note of any bias, although in the articles that I used, I noticed none.

I also made use of official documents available on the web and at libraries: for example, the 1907 Hague Convention, which is vital to the issue of neutrality, was, in part, available online. Reading the Irish Constitution was also useful. The U.S. Embassy had an archive of all Ambassador Kenny's speeches, which I made great use of.

When writing up my paper, I found that I was presented with opposite challenge than I had been expecting: rather than have too little information to fill forty pages, I found that I had so much information that I had to leave some out. The organization was also somewhat difficult; because of how my project has changed over the weeks, I have compiled information on aspects connecting to neutrality, the war in Iraq and the anti-war movement, not all of which fit together neatly. In deciding how to format the paper, I chose to break it up into labeled sections, so that readers could more clearly follow my train of thought. It is my hope that the many links that I have made between each of the aspects of my research will make themselves seen in the way I have laid out my project. I also struggled to find the right tone. Because of my background in creative writing, it is easy for me to fall into a very casual way of expressing myself. For this paper, though, I made an effort to stay formal, while retaining a certain sense of my personal style. It was a delicate balance between making the paper too much my own creation, and making it so dry that readers were left parched at the end of the many pages.

## RESEARCH

### THE HISTORY AND AMBIGUITY OF IRISH NEUTRALITY

For many people born and raised in Ireland, neutrality is part of the foundation of the Republic. Deirdre Clancy from the Catholic Workers Group was taught in primary school to cherish Ireland's independence from world conflict, to see it as a positive step towards peace.<sup>1</sup> When Eamonn DeValera made the decision to stay out of World War II, Ireland was set on a path of impartiality in the face of international clashes,<sup>2</sup> despite the fact that an official stance of neutrality is nowhere to be found in the Irish constitution. In fact, when Edward Horgan sued the Irish government last year for breaching the constitution by allowing Shannon Airport to be used for war purposes, the judge found no violation of the constitution, simply because the concept of neutrality is ambiguous in the Bunreacht na hÉireann. And yet still, for so many people, Irish neutrality — with whatever definition of the term they choose to use — is crucial to their sense of patriotism.

That same judge who ruled in Mr. Horgan's trial also determined that Ireland *is* bound by its public declaration of compliance with the 1907 Hague Convention Respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Cases of War on Land. According to the terms of neutrality clearly laid out in that convention, an Irish judge warned that the Irish government, with its actions in Shannon, is in clear breach of the international laws that they agreed to uphold.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, Joe. Personal Interview, 20 April 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Horgan, Edward, Mary Kelly, Tim Hourigan and Deirdre Morgan. "Submission to Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs." 20 December 2005.

Ireland has had a particular role to play in world affairs, according to Joe Murray of Action from Ireland. Because of Ireland's history of neutrality, it is perceived as playing a positive role in peace-building overseas. "Ireland was very unique because when we helped abroad, we weren't seen as being part of an aggressive force. We were truly there to help, with no strings attached."<sup>1</sup> Author John Maguire writes that Ireland "was regarded as one of the few countries that could be genuinely honest brokers in crisis situations. This gave us a role unavailable to more powerful countries, who were immediately seen as interested players in the situation."<sup>2</sup> And so for Mr. Murray and many other anti-war activists there is nothing more important than whether Ireland is a neutral peacekeeper or an aggressor. And yet Andy Storey, a professor at University College Dublin and an activist, is highly skeptical of the notion of neutrality. It is a vague concept that allows politicians to choose an angle that fits their current policies. For example, by casting neutrality as a purely defensive concept, a government would be allowed to undertake offensive actions without violating the precious stance.

For Mr. Horgan, too, neutrality is not foremost in his mind. "The issue of neutrality, strangely enough, is not that important to me."<sup>3</sup> Neutrality for him is primarily a means towards peace, although at the same time neutrality for him is cast in a positive light. He does not agree with the common claim that neutrality is comparable with sitting idly by,

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, Joe. Personal Interview, 20 April 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Maguire, John. *Defending Peace: Ireland's Role in a Changing Europe*. Cork University Press, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Horgan, Edward. Personal Interview, 3 May 2006.

watching crime against humanity take place. Mr. Horgan believes strongly that Ireland *should* intervene to prevent crimes, but should do so in a controlled and lawful way.<sup>1</sup>

Deirdre Clancy is also doubtful that the concept of neutrality has any real worth. While she would like to respect Ireland's tradition of officially staying out of international conflicts, she questions whether Ireland has ever even been a neutral country.<sup>2</sup> Andy Storey points out that besides the current use of Shannon Airport, another recent phenomenon has brought neutrality into question: the Irish involvement in the European Union Battlegroups, which, according to Mr. Storey, completely violates a traditional understanding of neutrality.<sup>3</sup>

Just a few years ago, Ireland joined the Partnership for Peace, an offshoot of NATO established in 1994 to "increase members' ability to undertake peacekeeping humanitarian and other missions."<sup>4</sup> While this sounds as if it would be in keeping with Ireland's peacekeeping tradition, in 1997, the PFP was upgraded "to deliver a capacity for peace enforcement," which blurs the line between peacekeeping and aggression. Even Bertie Ahern, when he was leader of the opposition party in 1998, said that joining the PFP "would be seen as a gratuitous signal that Ireland is moving away from neutrality and towards gradual cooperation with NATO and the Western European Union [the military arm of the EU] in due course."<sup>5</sup> And yet within a couple of years, the Irish government had joined the PFP, brining into question the government's commitment to protecting neutrality.

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<sup>1</sup> Horgan, Edward. Personal Interview, 3 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Storey, Andy. Personal Interview, 24 April, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> From [http://struggle.ws/other/war\\_is\\_peace.html](http://struggle.ws/other/war_is_peace.html)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

With the major challenge to Ireland's neutrality today centering on the use of Shannon, it is helpful to look at that airport's function in previous international crises. The U.S. Ambassador often claims that there is a precedent for today's situation in Shannon Airport in the Vietnam War. Mr. Horgan said that it is quite common to find Ambassador James Kenny, and even the Irish Cabinet of Foreign Affairs, justifying the Iraq war stopover flights by alluding to similar flights during the Vietnam War. And yet according to Mr. Horgan's research in the Cabinet of Foreign Affairs and my own research of government documents, U.S. troops traveling to Vietnam did not stop at Shannon Airport during that war. It is almost one and a half times the distance to travel to Vietnam over the Atlantic Ocean than it is over the Pacific. "The claims that Shannon was used in Vietnam are ludicrous," said Mr. Horgan.<sup>1</sup> It is true that foreign planes carrying forces did pass through Shannon during the 1970s, yet these flights were unarmed, and it was during peacetime. Few could argue that those occasions violated Ireland's neutrality.

However, there is validity to the claims that Shannon Airport was used by U.S. planes during the Gulf War of 1990 and again during the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 (after Mr. Ahern had offered Shannon's use). However at the time of the first Gulf War, the Irish government seemed to know their actions were in direct contravention of Ireland's tradition of neutrality, so they allowed the planes through in a very covert manner; public opinion was thus not tuned into the possibility of a breach of neutrality.<sup>2</sup> "During the last Gulf War in 1990, Shannon had been used by US aircraft for re-fuelling but the practice had not become a major issue in the public mind," reads a Socialist Party document.<sup>3</sup> However, Ambassador

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<sup>1</sup> Horgan, Edward. Personal Interview, 3 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, Joe. Personal Interview, 20 April 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Allen, Kieran. "The Irish Republic, the United States and the Iraq War: A Critical Appraisal."



Kenny claims that “Even during the Vietnam War, when the United States clearly was at war with another country, Ireland was able to allow U.S. troops to transit Shannon Airport without violating its neutrality if we follow the terms of the 1907 Hague Convention.”<sup>1</sup> Again this brings up issues of the vagueness of the term neutrality. The Ambassador is able to claim that a situation at Shannon Airport apparently more egregious than today’s doesn’t violate the Hague Convention, and yet anti-war activists use quotations from that convention quite frequently to argue their case that the Irish complicity in the Iraq war is violating neutrality.

## IRISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR ON TERROR

In 2001 Bertie Ahern, in a show of support for America, offered the use of Shannon Airport in the invasion of the invasion of Afghanistan. For Mr. Murray, this was like “handing our neutrality to America on a platter.”<sup>2</sup> Since then, the Irish involvement in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars can be traced by the movement of troops through Shannon. In 2005, some 330,000 U.S. soldiers passed through the airport; that same year it is estimated that 37 million Euros were generated by the foreign troops for Shannon Airport and County Clare.<sup>3</sup> However, Ms. Clancy knows of a study conducted by peace activist Tim Hourigan that claims that the amount generated by the U.S. troops is in fact far less than most people suspect.<sup>4</sup> And Mr. Horgan adds, “A considerable amount of additional public money has been expended towards the security of U.S. military use of Shannon Airport.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kenny, James C. “Ambassador of America Faces Major Issues Over Limerick and Airport.”

<sup>2</sup> Murray, Joe. Personal Interview, 20 April 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Chrisafis, Angelique. “Concerns Grow in Ireland Over Use of Shannon Airport as US Military Stopover.”

<sup>4</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Horgan, Edward, Mary Kelly, Tim Hourigan and Deirdre Morgan. “Submission to Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs.” 20 December 2005.

The Irish government is bound by the Air Navigation Foreign Military Aircraft Order of 1952, which states that no “foreign military aircraft shall fly over or land in the State save on the express invitation or with the express permission of the Minister” of Foreign Affairs.<sup>1</sup> In November of 2002, when the Minister, Mr. Cowen, was asked about the situation at Shannon Airport, he said, “Permission for landings and over flights is normally granted to foreign military aircraft on the basis that the aircraft is unarmed, does not carry arms ammunition or explosives and does not form part of a military exercise or operation.”<sup>2</sup> However, it is now a well-established fact that U.S. troops on their way to fight in Iraq have been passing through Ireland. “Our soldiers enjoy passing over Ireland and stopping into Shannon as the food is good, the pub is nice, the souvenirs are great to take home to their kids, and everyone speaks English,” said Ambassador Kenny in April 2006.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, something has changed in the justification behind the government’s allowance of U.S. flights at Shannon Airport since they open Ireland’s doors to troops.

The Black Shamrock Campaign was started by the very respected civil rights activist Eamon McCain “to mourn the loss of Irish neutrality and integrity.”<sup>4</sup> It is the tradition for the Irish Taoiseach to hand the American president a bowl of shamrocks on St. Patrick’s Day to signify good diplomatic relationship between the countries. The Black Shamrock Campaign encourages people to wear a pin of a black shamrock “as a sign of protest and opposition to Irish complicity in Bush’s war.”<sup>5</sup> AfrI supports this campaign and praises it as a good way

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<sup>1</sup> Allen, Kieran. “The Irish Republic, the United States and the Iraq War: A Critical Appraisal.”

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Kenny, James C. “Ambassador of America Faces Major Issues Over Limerick and Airport.”

<sup>4</sup> Murray, Joe. Personal Interview, 20 April 2006.

<sup>5</sup> From: [www.blackshamrock.org](http://www.blackshamrock.org)

for the average Irish person, who may not have the time or resources to dedicate to full-on activism, to show his sentiments towards Irish complicity in the war.

There have been allegations that the United States is using Ireland as a stopover point for its CIA rendition flights. According to Ambassador Kenny, “renditions are legal and they are something necessary in the pursuit of the terrorists and war criminals. We have done them — we do not deny that — but they are rare.”<sup>1</sup> According to Ms. Clancy, “there is proof that CIA rendition planes have going through Shannon Airport, but there is no proof that there were prisoners on those planes.”<sup>2</sup> And Ambassador Kenny did add to his comments on rendition flights that America “would never bring detainees through Irish airports or Irish airspace in violation of Ireland’s sovereignty.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, from the perspective of the mainstream Irish politicians, a spoken assurance from America that no prisoners of war are being transported to torture camps through Irish airports is enough.<sup>4</sup> If it were revealed that Ireland was, in fact, playing a role in transporting torture victims, even the most right-wing parties have said that they would put an end to U.S. flights. Yet, because the government does not pursue their right to inspect the planes (choosing instead to respect the trust they have with America) it seems unlikely that facts about the contents of those CIA flights will ever emerge.

## THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THE IRISH SUPPORT OF THE WAR

Jim O’Keefe, TD, from the Fine Gael Party answered my question about his party’s agreement with the use of Shannon Airport by stressing the importance of a good

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<sup>1</sup> Kenny, James C. “Ambassador of America Faces Major Issues Over Limerick and Airport.”

<sup>2</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Kenny, James C. “Ambassador of America Faces Major Issues Over Limerick and Airport.”

<sup>4</sup> O’Keefe, Jim. Personal Interview, 4 May 2006.

relationship between Ireland and the U.S.<sup>1</sup> The complex and close-knit relationship between the two countries lies at the root of many of Ireland's government's policies. America was the first country to recognize Ireland as an independent nation; Eamonn DeValera, the country's first Taoiseach, was an America citizen (a fact that kept him away from the gallows after the 1916 Easter Rising); one-sixth of the American population is of Irish decent; and many people credit American investment for Ireland's Celtic Tiger and the great economic boon of the 1990s. "In Ireland today, there are over 600 American companies. We are therefore responsible for the Celtic Tiger," said Michael McClellan from the U.S. Embassy.<sup>2</sup> Fianna Fáil, among others, has gone so far as to warn that U.S. businesses would pull out of the west if Shannon's doors were closed to the U.S. military, and that this would in turn send the Irish economy into a tailspin.<sup>3</sup>

In what can almost be read as an ultimatum, Ambassador Kenny has stated that "Closing Shannon Airport to U.S. forces will not end the war in Iraq, but it will end the jobs of hundreds of people who rely on that trade to provide for their families."<sup>4</sup> This is an argument that Ms. Clancy understands, but does not agree with. "I see the argument that people in the Shannon region need money to support their families, but it just seems like too high a price to pay for a few extra American dollars."<sup>5</sup>

It is clear that for Fianna Fáil, the primary reason for not opposing the use of Shannon Airport is that keeping good ties with America is extremely important to Ireland's welfare.

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<sup>1</sup> O'Keefe, Jim. Personal Interview, 4 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> McClellan, Michael. Personal Interview, 10 April 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Chrisafis, Angelique. "Concerns Grow in Ireland Over Use of Shannon Airport as US Military Stopover."

<sup>4</sup> Kenny, James C. "Terrorism, Guantanamo, and Shannon Airport."

<sup>5</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

America is the world's largest super power, and its influence over the rest of the world — especially over country as small as Ireland — is immense. There is a very real perception that America could undo Ireland's recent economic success with the snap of a finger, and for some in Ireland, most notably the mainstream political parties, this trumps any moralistic desires to remain neutral. And yet, that two of the mainstream, right-of-center parties are in a coalition government today says something about the electorate in Ireland. Perhaps the average Irish person is more concerned with maintaining his country's sudden prosperity than preserving some obscure concept of neutrality; one would be inclined to believe that based on the current elected government.

And yet just how much of an issue *is* the war and the use of Shannon Airport for voters? According to Mr. Murray, “This Shannon Airport issue will be a big issue next election because parties are realizing how important it is to voters.”<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Murray, “the government led by the Progressive Democrats is very profit-driven, so it fits into their agenda to bow before the alter of Washington.”<sup>2</sup> Mr. Horgan is more skeptical. “There hasn't been a great enough effort to make it an issue,” he said. “There has been a lot of propaganda from the U.S. Ambassador and the Irish Government to ensure that the issue is confused and misrepresented.”<sup>3</sup> That sentiment is echoed to some extent by Mr. O'Keefe from Fine Gael. “This will be a tiny issue in the next election. It will affect one percent of the electorate who will already be anti-American, anti-Globalization, anti-everything.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, Joe. Personal Interview, 20 April 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Horgan, Edward. Personal Interview, 3 May 2006.

<sup>4</sup> O'Keefe, Jim. Personal Interview, 4 May 2006.

Mr. O’Keefe’s interview seems to me to do a good job of representing the approach of the mainstream political parties. When asked about the flights at Shannon Airport, he simply shrugged it off by saying, “There is no reason to stop the soldiers from coming through.”<sup>1</sup> In his mind, the U.S. military’s use of Shannon is a non-issue. Indeed, Mr. O’Keefe expressed some skepticism of Irish neutrality. “Has Ireland *ever* been neutral?”<sup>2</sup> he asked rhetorically. As far as he is concerned, Ireland is neutral insofar as it has never, and will never join a military alliance. Other than that, he said, Ireland is not neutral.

Fine Gael may be the exception to the rule when it comes to being up front about Irish neutrality. They have publicly stated that one of the first things they would do in government would be to set up legislation that got rid of the impression of Irish neutrality all together. “Even though I wouldn’t vote for them,” Ms. Clancy said, “in some ways I have more respect for them than I do for the other right of center parties in Ireland because they’re honest about their position. Fianna Fáil and the PDs maintain that we are neutral regardless of what’s going on at Shannon.”<sup>3</sup>

Fine Gael was the only party I was able to talk to directly, and that meeting made it clear that their top priority is remaining friendly with America. However, other political parties claim that they are supporting the UN, not the U.S. “Ireland should be proud to support the people of Iraq under UN Security Council Resolution 1546, which calls on member states to support the multinational forces in Iraq, of which the United States is a very proud and

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<sup>1</sup> O’Keefe, Jim. Personal Interview, 4 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

visible part.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. O’Keefe from Fine Gael did mention in passing that his party did not have a policy to support the war, per se, but instead it supports the UN. “As far as we are concerned, it’s the UN that’s making the decisions about the war, and we support the UN.”<sup>2</sup>

From the point of view of the Americans, Ireland is a convenient friend who happens to have an airport that the U.S. can make use of. The Irish lobby in America is huge — in Chicago, Boston and New York, the Irish-American ethnicity is one of the largest — and so American politicians are careful to take Ireland’s interests seriously. Because of a history of friendly relations between the two countries, managing the diplomatic situation is not particularly tricky. As Mr. McClellan from the U.S. Embassy made clear, the job of ambassadorship to Ireland “is like London, but without all the work.”<sup>3</sup> America has, in some ways, earned its respect from the Irish. The U.S. played a key role in the Northern Ireland peace talks that culminated in the Belfast Agreement of 1998. President Clinton took a strong interest in the Irish cause, and both the population and the politicians of the Republic remember that. Politicians often cite the U.S. involvement in the peace process as one major factor in why they value the relationship so strongly. Indeed, Mr. O’Keefe cited Clinton’s interest in the island as being important to him, and added that Bush’s *un*-interest is not going unnoticed by Irish politicians.<sup>4</sup>

The Irish public’s view of America is an interesting dichotomy: on the one hand, they often have links to America that cause them to call it their second home. Ms. Clancy said that

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<sup>1</sup> McClellan, Michael. Personal Interview, 10 April 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> McClellan, Michael. Personal Interview, 10 April 2006.

<sup>4</sup> O’Keefe, Jim. Personal Interview, 4 May 2006.

culturally, she is more American than she is Irish.<sup>1</sup> And yet on the other hand, many native Irish and American-Irish are critical of America's control over this small island, known to some as the 51<sup>st</sup> state. Mr. O'Keefe from Fine Gael revealed quite candidly his party's true feelings towards the Bush administration. "There is a certain unease towards Bush and [Secretary of Defense] Rumsfeld and [Vice President] Cheney in relation to the use of military power and what seems to be a direct disregard of international institutions like the UN."<sup>2</sup> Judging from the fact that Fine Gael has made no moves to stand up to the Bush administration, one must wonder whether America wields a dangerous amount of power over Ireland's politicians.

#### THE SUCCESS OF THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT IN IRELAND

Three and a half years ago, Deirdre Clancy and four other activists crept onto a U.S. military plane and vandalized it. They were charged with criminal damage without lawful excuse, and are awaiting their third trial: the first collapsed due to comments made by the judge that the defendants challenged as being biased, and the second collapsed because the judge — a new one this time — had undisclosed connections to the Bush White House.<sup>3</sup> Ms. Clancy and the other four from the Catholic Workers Group had gone through a month-long period of reflection and examination to ensure that each of them were committing the crime for the right reasons and were fully prepared for the consequences. This was no heat-of-the-moment act. Indeed, Ms. Clancy has no regrets; her action generated lots of press and rallied support around the protests at Shannon Airport. Ms. Clancy was not prepared for the duration of the trial, though, and she suspects that the

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<sup>1</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> McClellan, Michael. Personal Interview, 10 April 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.



gradual wearing down of the defendants is a tactic that the government uses to deal with dissidents.<sup>1</sup>

Ms. Clancy joined the anti-war movement when she stumbled upon the Catholic Workers Group and realized there was a third alternative to the religious, conservative warmongers and the politically liberal religion-haters. She is an editor by trade, but spends much time learning about the issues she is passionate about; she is familiar with the consequences of the Gulf War of 1990, so when America invaded Iraq for the second time, she was ready to take action. What makes Ms. Clancy different from other peace activists is that her main motivation is to stop the killings in Iraq.<sup>2</sup> This rationale is not dissimilar from Mr. Horgan's, who's goal is to end the unjust killing in Iraq, particularly of children.<sup>3</sup> However, it is quite different from those protesters who rest their activism on either the principle of neutrality or to protect Ireland's image as an independent country in the eyes of the rest of the world. (Thought I spoke to no one who claimed those motivations, I have no doubts from my research that they exist.) In that respect, Ms. Clancy is quite admirable. "I just don't think the concept of neutrality is a strong enough hook to hang peace-activism on,"<sup>4</sup> she said. Her main concerns lie with those suffering in the name of war, and she spends much of her time familiarizing herself with facts so that she can present an education case against what she is protesting.

This is a quality that is vital to the success of an anti-war movement, but I found it very hard to come by. Indeed, many of the statements I have read and speeches I have heard have

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<sup>1</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Horgan, Edward. Personal Interview, 3 May 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

promoted *Irish* interests as being at the heart of the motivations, not justice in Iraq. For a movement to gain credibility and succeed, its foundations must be compelling. To protect a country's image or to protect an obscure concept like neutrality — if indeed that is what some activists are fueled by — may not be compelling enough.

If one looks at the way that the anti-war movement is seen by mainstream Irish political parties as well as by the Americans, one can see where the movement is failing, and perhaps where most anti-*anything* movements must improve. Take Mr. McClellan's common view: "I don't think the Irish people care too much about Shannon Airport. There is a small group of protesters who are all anti-globalization, anti-capitalism, anti-U.S. who just want to protest against *something*. It keeps them going to use Shannon."<sup>1</sup> His sentiment is shared by his boss, Ambassador Kenny, who said that "although the anti-war activists often show little consistency in the opposite to war, we can generally count on them to be opposed all the time to every U.S. military action, even when approved by the UN, as is the case with Iraq today."<sup>2</sup> The ambassador added that "we often see the same small group of protesters marching against the Bin Tax, gas pipelines in County Mayo, phone masts, anything that has to do with Israel, and other assorted issues."<sup>3</sup> The anti-war movement is often disregarded as an insignificant group of demonstrators with nothing better than their time and who know little about what they are against.

However, if the sample of activists I met with is at all representative, the anti-war movement is replete with people better educated and more well spoken than the average person.

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<sup>1</sup> McClellan, Michael. Personal Interview, 10 April 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Kenny, James C. "Ambassador of America Faces Major Issues Over Limerick and Airport."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Deirdre Clancy said that although the number of protesters has been waning in recent years, “the people who turn up at Shannon are generally people like Tim Hourigan and Ed Horgan who are actually extremely accomplished and well-educated. It’s not like they’re these hobos and cranks with nothing better to do with their time.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. O’Keefe from the Fine Gael Party seemed uncharacteristically charitable towards activists, for a politician. One of his eight daughters, in fact, is active in many of the Shannon protests, so he has somewhat of a personal connection to the movement. But still, he gave credit to those critical of the government, and stressed the importance of having intelligent people criticizing the government.

Like any mass movement, though, the Irish anti-war movement may be in danger of being tainted by a few bad apples: the extremists who challenge everything yet offer no solutions, the misdirected souls who have no knowledge about what it is they are actually protesting but just enjoy the rush. A movement such as this will always come under fire from the larger, more powerful force of the government: “Sometimes I get the impression that some antiwar activists are opposed to ANY war, no matter how just the cause, no matter how heinous the enemy being fought,”<sup>2</sup> said Ambassador Kenny. It is accusations like these that activists must fight against.

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<sup>1</sup> Clancy, Deirdre. Personal Interview, 6 May, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Kenny, James C. “Terrorism, Guantanamo, and Shannon Airport.”

## CONCLUSION

My first week in Ireland, I remember passing by a stand on Grafton Street with a sign-up sheet for people interested in being involved in the protests at Shannon Airport. At that point, I knew that Shannon Airport was where I had had a layover and I knew that the United States was engaged in a war in Iraq. I also *thought* that I knew Ireland was a neutral country — which in my mind simply meant that Ireland had nothing to do with world conflicts, certainly not wars. I was oblivious to the connection between Shannon and the war and it never crossed my mind that this small island nation is unavoidably linked into international affairs, particularly since the Celtic Tiger propelled Ireland to new levels of importance. It was my naïve opinion that Ireland was an isolated world, concerned with its own people and its own land, and nothing else. Upon seeing that sign-up sheet on Grafton Street (and adding my name, I might add), I realized that a look into Ireland's politics and its relationship with the rest of the world, in particular the United States, would be a fascinating voyage for me.

Four weeks ago, I was sure of what my project would look like: I would spend the better part of a month with one specific political party, and write a report on what that time taught me. In comparison to what I have gained from working on what my project turned out to be, my original plan would have been quite bland. I have learned that political parties — mainly the mainstream ones — are hesitant and sometimes unwilling to agree to meet with a student asking questions about a controversial topic. Not one political party responded to my requests, most likely because they knew that they would be faced with questions they either didn't want to answer or are sick and tired of answering at all. I have learned that the

issue of neutrality is not nearly as cut-and-dried as one would imagine. In fact, the ambiguity surrounding that concept is enough to create tension between political parties and even between peace activists who claim to be on the same side. And I have learned that regardless of how often people in power shrug off the anti-war movement as being insignificant and superficial, the movement comprises some impressive figures. I learned something different from each of the personal encounters I had, and those lessons I will carry with me throughout my career as a skeptical politician.

The most interesting development of this project was when I began to question my own approach to politics in my home country. I have always been one to challenge those in power and the structure of government. I had always assumed that I was doing so in an educated and productive manner. But in getting an in-depth look into the anti-war movement in Ireland, I read and heard about activists who, in their hunger to complain and confront, fail to actually improve anything. I am not an anarchist, nor am I a Libertarian in the U.S. sense of the term. I think the world would collapse without democracies, and I admire the good work that the government does. I do think it is important, though, to have a group of people to question those in power, like an additional check on the government. What I have learned is that it is very easy to take that passion to challenge and turn it into blind defiance at every turn. In cases like that, a movement immediately loses all legitimacy and collapses.

This project has spanned many levels: I began by studying Irish political parties and their relationships with each other; I incorporated my own country of America into that by bringing in the War in Iraq and Shannon Airport as my main focus; this naturally led to a

comparison of Irish politics and U.S. politics, as well as a study of activism in Ireland. It was impossible for me *not* to let my own relationships with each of these topics color my research, and so I was led on my own personal journey. This project was four weeks of intensive, immersion-style learning that opened my eyes to aspects of politics that I hadn't considered before. It is a project, though, that will last much longer than just a month. With my eyes now peeled, I will continue to add to this line of research for years — even after the war in Iraq finally ends.

## APPENDIX A

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**Cosantióirí na Síochana:** The Peace Network.

**Partnership for Peace (PfP):** [http://struggle.ws/other/war\\_is\\_peace.html](http://struggle.ws/other/war_is_peace.html)

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

**Person Interviewed:** Michael McClellan, Counselor for Public Diplomacy

**Organization:** United States Embassy

**Address:** 42 Eglin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin

**Date:** Monday 10 April 2006

**Time:** 4:00 p.m.

**Duration of Interview:** 28 minutes

**Michael McClellan:** It's been a hectic day. We are dealing with a story that came out this weekend on helicopters transporting apache helicopters through Ireland to Israel illegally. (He asks me if I read the newspapers.) Of course, these reporters never approach us for *our* side, but that's because the story is more interesting if you twist it the way they do. So today I am preparing our response: I am looking up laws written years ago to see how we can prove that it wasn't illegal. For example: is a Hum-V still a military machine after it has been stripped of its weapons and armour? We are gathering facts so that we can make a response to these allegations. OK, let's start.

**Margaret Havemann:** Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

**MM:** I've been in American Foreign Service for 22 years, right out of grad school. (He encourages me to take the Foreign Service Exam as soon and as often as I can.) My first job was in Yemen, then Egypt, then Russia, Kosovo and finally, in September 2004 I came to Ireland. I will leave in a couple of months to go to Baghdad, where I will hold a position in the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team, which operates mostly outside the green zone. (He seems nervous but very proud of himself, too.)

40% of American ambassadors around the world are non-career ambassadors. Ireland has always had this type (who choose to come to a country, rather than are appointed to a country). Ireland is worth it: it's nice to live in, English-speaking, challenging but not too challenging. "It's like London, without the work."

One sixth of Americans are of Irish decent, so we are well connected. There are many people who can serve America well here (like Kenny, who is of Irish decent). Other than the Ambassador and his assistant here, we are all political appointees—we were assigned this job.

**MH:** (Tries to ask the first question.)

**MM:** Don't you want to know about my educational background? (He gives it, extensively.)

**MH:** Tell me about the relationship between the US and Ireland.

**MM:** Here are some things to keep in consideration:

-America was the first country to recognize Ireland as a Free State. Eamon DeValera was an American citizen; that's why he wasn't killed by the British after the 1916 Easter Rising.

-One sixth of the US is of Irish decent. The Irish are very, very prominent in politics in New York City and Boston, so Irish have had a powerful role in the US domestic policies. Kennedy was from Massachusetts; he was Irish. More presidents have been of Irish-Scottish decent than any other ethnicity.

-In Ireland today, there are over 600 US companies. We are therefore responsible for the Celtic Tiger. One fourth of our investment in the EU goes to Ireland—very disproportionate to its size. We invest ten to eleven times more in Ireland than we do in China (investment—*not* trade).

**MH:** Do you think this disproportionate investment is due to pressures on the US by all the Irish people in America?

**MM:** No, Ireland has strategic advantages. It's English-speaking; it has a good rule of law, so contracts made here can be trusted; it is business-friendly with its low taxes and streamlined procedures; it is in the Euro-zone, so there is easy export to the EU (America's largest trading partner); it has a very well-trained work force (when the Celtic Tiger was at its start. Now there is cheaper labour from Poland and Latvia, but Ireland is producing very educated workers now.).

**MH:** What about Bush and support in Ireland for him?

**MM:** This is the way I see it: Ireland and Europe are basically Democratic (in the American sense of the term). Having a Republican president is always going to make things harder. Even with Reagan, there was widespread opposition to his policies. Only when the Irish realized he was of Irish decent did they cut him some slack.

If Kerry had won the US election, he has said he would have changed nothing in Iraq. He would be doing the same as Bush, yet I'm sure he would be much more supported, simply because he is a Democrat.

In 1999, the war in Kosovo was not approved by the UN; it was NATO versus Serbia: it was an invasion. There was little condemnation of it because it was led by the Greens of Germany and the Democratic Clinton. The Irish didn't have a problem with that. Had it been Bush, things would have been different.

**MH:** Speak about Shannon Airport.

**MM:** "I don't think the Irish people care too much about Shannon Airport. There is a small group of protestors who are anti-globalization, anti-capitalism, anti-US, who just want to protest against *something*. It keeps them going to use Shannon."

These protestors *ignore* the UN Resolution 1546 that authorizes members to transport cargo through other members' airports. They ignore the fact that the US is *not* at war with Iraq, that Iraq is *not* occupied any more, that we're there at the request of the Iraqi government.

All that these protestors care about is anti-Americanism. I don't think for a minute that they are representative of the Irish population.

**MH:** What about the polls that tell us that the majority opinion in Ireland and the EU is against the war? And Ambassador Kenny saying that he needs the agreement of the EU to justify the state's moral missions?

**MM:** There's plenty of disagreement over the circumstances around the invasion of Iraq. That's an argument for the historians. We need to be concerned with the well-being of the Iraqi people now.

If you ask the Irish people the right question, you will see: "Do you think the US should withdraw troops and leave a chaotic Iraq riddled with civil war?" People will answer "No."

All demonstrators in Ireland against the war are pathetic. There *isn't* widespread anti-American foreign policy sentiments here. Even when the President flies through Shannon, no more than 10 or 12 people show up to protest. It's the same people every time.

Practically everything Bush's critics here say is straight from the Washington Post or New York Times or Newsweek. "Bush's critics at home are his critics abroad."

If a Democrat were president, you wouldn't see America's neo-cons finding neo-cons in Europe to take up the cause and protest across the ocean. Liberals are simply more extreme.

Go to [Irishantiwar.com](http://Irishantiwar.com) and [indymedia.ie](http://indymedia.ie) to see what the critics are saying.

**MH:** (Ends interview: time up.)

**MM:** (Encourages me to read the Economist—which I do, religiously—and Tom Friedman's columns—I've interviewed the man.)

**Person Interviewed:** Joe Murray, AfrI Coordinator

**Organization:** Action from Ireland

**Address:** 134 Phibsborough Road, Dublin 7

**Date:** Thursday 20 April 2006

**Time:** 10:15 a.m.

**Duration of Interview:** 45 minutes

**Margaret Havemann:** Please tell me a bit about AfrI.

**Joe Murray:** In 1975, it began as an aid agency to raise money in Ireland to send abroad, first to India then elsewhere. After 5 or 6 years I joined and re-evaluated the organization. We realized that even with money flowing, nothing was changing. Aid is not the answer—it is only a necessary step. "AfrI changed from aid to issues, and we started to address the causes rather than the symptoms."

Sean McBride, an Irish statesman involved with AfrI said “You can’t talk about poverty and hunger without talking about militarization.” I say, “The war machine and arms trade are used to suppress and oppress minority groups civil rights.”

AfrI tried to connect Ireland’s own experience with what we do because that makes it easier for people to associate. So for example we link poverty in Ireland (under the famine) to poverty overseas.

Ireland has a particular role to play in the world. Through most of its history, it’s been a positive role, specifically in peace-building overseas. Ireland is very unique because when we help abroad, we aren’t part of any aggressive force. We are independent, there to help without strings attached. Ireland has argued for disarmament of UN. Their position has always been of non-militarization, peacekeeping.

Sadly, that is changing now. “For me and many others, there’s nothing more important than whether we are neutral peace-keepers or aggressors.” DeVelera made the decision to stay out of WWII—that’s the origins of our neutrality. There is the valid question: How can you stand by in the face of fascism? But the fact is, that decision left an important legacy in Ireland. It set us on a path, a particular direction of peacekeeping.

This is the context in which we approach the situation in Shannon Airport. Sadly we have a government without principles that has sold out. The problem didn’t begin with this government, but it accelerated quickly under it.

There are three ways to gauge the focus of this government:

- growing involvement in the arms industry
- involvement in military aggressive endeavors in the EU is growing (the Partnership for Peace was joined under the Fianna Fáil government)
- participation in EU Battlegroups

These happened gradually so the public was largely unaware. The Foreign Minister, after 9/11, went to the US to offer Shannon Airport for use in war. He handed it to Bush on a platter. You should look at Shannon’s use during the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. People claim that the same was going on then, and that that justifies what’s going on today. But it was such a minimal use back then that you just can’t compare. Back then, the government *knew* what they were going was wrong, so they didn’t admit to it right out. They did it undercover, unlike today.

AfrI is absolutely opposed to the use of Shannon; we see it as the most serious issue on the foreign policy agenda today. In whatever events AfrI organizes, there is some mention of Shannon. We bring it up at every opportunity.

“From the River to the Planes” was an event that AfrI organized before Easter. 100,000 people marched from some river to Shannon Airport in protest. The government ignored it, and this made the people protesting feel confused and as if their show of opposition had been undermined.

The next election in Ireland is very significant. There is currently an arrogant government. The Iraq war and use of Shannon will be a huge issue in the next election because parties realize how important it is to voters.

The government is led by the Progressive Democrats, the most right-wing party of Ireland, a very neo-liberal, profit driven party, so “it fits into their agenda to bow before the alter of Washington.” Other right-wing parties then follow suit.

A possible alternative government will be Fine Gael, Labour and Greens, who have taken a strong stance. The Greens have a chance; they are in touch with people’s emotions and desires.

**MH:** And the Black Shamrock Campaign?

**JM:** The Black Shamrock Campaign was started by Eamon McCain who was involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. He is very respected, and he came up with the idea of the black shamrock pins “to mourn the loss of Irish neutrality and integrity, and the wholesale selling out that’s represented by this government.” It is a visible campaign, a good indication of public sentiment. AfrI helped give out the pins. People were keen to have a way to show their support, show how they felt.

**MH:** American-Irish diplomacy? Manipulation?

**JM:** During the 1980s, there was lots of unemployment, but also an extraordinary sense of connection with the oppressed people of South America and South Africa. In 1984, when Reagan came to visit, there was a powerful bishop in Ireland who spoke out against the president’s policies in Central America. He refused to meet with Reagan. Then the Taoiseach publicly criticized Reagan’s policies. The world didn’t come to an end because Ireland stood up for itself. I have no proof for this, but Ireland was maybe more respected then for having the gall to stand up to America.

There is no reason other than a shift in government policy to explain things today. Suddenly we become supine in the face of the US government. I don’t accept the idea that US businesses in Ireland and the large number of Irish-American mean that you give up all principles and sell out to the power of the US. The Irish government used the fear from 9/11 to assault our non-militaristic policy.

**MH:** Information about the Catholic Workers Group?

**JM:** The Catholic Workers Group is now on trial for defacing and disarming planes at Shannon. This is trial number three: number two was thrown out because the judge was invited to both of Bush’s inaugurations. This group has a particular approach, which wouldn’t be AfrI’s approach, but it has had an impact. After disarming the planes, three US companies did divert from Shannon for three months: it did work. Contact Ciaran Reilly or Deirdre Clancy (086 1512013).

Andy Storey is also handy: he teaches at UCD and is on AfrI’s board.

Ed Horgan is a former soldier who gave up his UN Peacekeeping medals because of current policies. He is working with Spirazi, welcoming immigrants—he deals with torture victims (085 1026631).

Tim Harrigan is based in Shannon.

**Person Interviewed:** Andy Storey, Centre for Development Studies, UCD

**Organization:** University College Dublin

**Address:** UCD Campus, Library, Room 546

**Date:** Monday 24 April 2006

**Time:** 3:00 p.m.

**Duration of Interview:** 45 minutes

**Margaret Havemann:** I explain in some length my ideas for my paper. I suggest maybe going in the direction of focusing on Irish neutrality.

**Andy Storey:** The narrow definition of “neutral” would cause some problems if you were to approach your project with that angle. Some people define “neutral” as meaning no commitment to common defense at all. There are two aspects that have brought Irish neutrality into question: 1) The Irish government’s involvement in the EU Battlegroups, which, aside from the “Triple Lock,” completely violate neutrality; and 2) The use of Shannon Airport in the facilitation of the war.

There is a problem in casting “neutrality” as a defensive concept, because that allows for a country to use offensive action without violating neutrality. I have an unease with the term “neutrality”; it seems to be a slippery slope that I would wary about focusing your project on.

Ask the political parties *why* they support the use of Shannon or *why* do people oppose its use? Is it to try to make a difference globally or is it to try to assert Irish independence?

For the anti-war movement:

- Is there an intent to make a difference in stopping the war?
- Or is the purpose to make us feel better about ourselves?

I have a major problem with the anti-war slogan, “Not in our name,” because that just means that it’s OK if it’s in other people’s name.

In terms of government support: find out *why* they support the use of Shannon:

- Is it because they want to help in the war on terror?
- Or is it an effort to maintain good ties with America?

The *why* question is the interesting one—you could then tie that into neutrality. What would be the point of reaffirming neutrality? To make a difference in the world or to externally (to the rest of the world) and internally (to the Irish people who value neutrality) establish some legitimacy?

The anti-war movement might oppose the use of Shannon or the war for these reasons:

- it's a breach of Irish neutrality
- it increases misery in Iraq
- it makes Ireland a possible target for terrorist attacks

But which of these is most *important*? Try to get people to prioritize the main points supporting their stance.

The pro-war, pro-use of Shannon people would argue:

- a need to remain friends with the US
- a desire to contribute to the fight against terrorism
- other reasons?

But which is the most important? Get to the bottom of this sloppiness—this mashing together of everything. Ask the question that will force people/politicians to rank the aspects behind the core of their stances.

You can tie this into American foreign policy: do countries support or oppose US foreign policy? Why? Because of the policies themselves, or because of unrelated reasons, such as domestic reasons or diplomatic ties? How effective has the US been in getting allies for the war? They succeeded in Ireland, but now because of the war itself; it was because America plays a major role in the Northern peace talks.

Maybe bring discourse analysis into this: ask politicians for speeches and statements, and analyze the words.

**MH:** Which political parties would you suggest meeting with, if I had to choose due to a time constraint?

**AS:** Talk to the largest for sure, Fianna Fáil. Also, the Progressive Democrats, because they are in power. Fine Gael, Labour (I know Higgins), Sinn Féin (I know Angus O'Snodugh), Green Party (Gormley or Carole Fox, research officer). Most of what the Socialist Workers Party will tell you will be very similar to the anti-war movement.

**MH:** Tell me about yourself.

**AS:** I am on the executive board of AfrI. I used to be a spokesperson for NGO Peace Alliance, which is a coalition of NGOs who want to take a stance on issues but don't necessarily want to be associated with the anti-war movement.

The large marches in February 2003 (where 100,000 people marched in protest of the war) were organized by the Irish Anti-War Movement, NGO Peace Alliance and Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA—contact Roger Cole).

I am not currently involved in the anti-war movement. I teach at UCD.

**Person Interviewed:** Edward Horgan, ex-military general and peace activist



**Organization:** SPIRASI, Center for Care of Survivors of Torture

**Address:** 213 North Circular Road

**Date:** Wednesday 3 May 2006

**Time:** 2:30 p.m.

**Duration of Interview:** 45 minutes

**Margaret Havemann:** (I tell Ed about my project and asks him about his background in the UN Peacekeeping Forces.)

**Edward Horgan:** I was in the Irish Defense Forces for 22 years; I got up to the position of major. I retired almost 20 years ago now. I was stationed in Cyprus and the Middle East. I was also a civilian guard, an election monitor with the UN Volunteer Force. In that position I worked in Coratia, East Timor, Zimbabwe and Indonesia.

“I’ve always had an interest in the area of peace and justice.” I joined the army right after high school, when Irish soldiers had been killed in the Congo.

Partly I joined because of the romance of it, but also because I was interested in promoting peace.

People say what I’m doing now as a direct contradiction. I was in the military and now I’m an active peace activist. I see my work as continuing, not changing. I enjoyed my military career, and fortunately it was all peace-orientated. I have deep objectives to war—I think the military should be used in peacekeeping capacities. I believe the primary role for the military should be in peacekeeping.

**MH:** So in terms of Iraq and Shannon Airport...

**EH:** I am a member of PANA and have been involved with most of the anti-war groups. But I see my activism primarily as an individual citizen. I attempt to hold my government to account for what it is doing. I see the role of a citizen as being extremely important in a democracy and I think that most citizens underrate their role and power as citizens.

In 2003 I took a high court case against the government a constitutional challenge over the use of Shannon Airport by the US military and the breach of international law that that involves.

I lost most of the case. I claimed that Ireland was breaching articles 28 and 29 of the Irish Constitution. I lost that part. But I won that case that Ireland was breaching international law on neutrality. The judge found that Ireland was in clear breach of the 1907 Hague Convention on neutrality.

The judges in Ireland are much too slow to challenge the government. They use that argument that the powers should be separate. So the government gets away with breaching the constitution. In my opinion the judiciaries are reneging on their responsibility to uphold the constitution.

For me this was a very important action to take. The fact that I could take up the court case showed my rights in a democracy and my rights as a citizen. I took the case against the Prime Minister and three other ministers as well as the government itself. It was very much a legal battle. It lasted 6 weeks.

More recently I went to the European Parliament and proposed a similar challenge in terms of what Ireland is doing in connection with the “rendition for torture” program. It was even more challenging and equally as important for a citizen of a small country to take an issue like that to the European Parliament.

My primary purpose was to put a large amount of *prima facie* information and evidence on the record at the European level on Ireland’s facilitation of torture flights. I also insisted on tying the torture planes to the war in Iraq.

That turned out to be very difficult because the parliament did not want to make that link. They wanted to keep Iraq out of the discussion all together. While the torture planes concerned me, the number of lives lost through that is small when compared with the lives lost in Iraq (over 100,000 lost already). Now there is a tendency to treat that as normal diplomatic action rather than the unlawful killing of people that it is. I was severely criticized by Europe and by Ireland for linking these issues publicly. But I am pleased with my statement.

**MH:** Did you have hard facts linking the two issues?

**EH:** Well that was the argument made by those opposing my statement, that I didn’t have facts. But I produced very detailed logs of CIA aircraft landings at Shannon, which presented significant circumstantial evidence but not a “smoking gun” as some people wanted. My statement was very embarrassing for Ireland and other European governments.

I also refer to Ireland as a “rogue neutral state,” because I firmly believe that Ireland is no longer neutral. As of March 20, 2003, Irish neutrality, at least temporarily, is gone. I have caused embarrassment for making those assertions.

**MH:** What about the vagueness of the term “neutrality” (as Andy Storey pointed out to me)?

**EH:** I would strongly disagree. In terms of international law, the term neutrality is clearly defined in the Hague Convention (articles 2 and 11) and the San Remo and other conventions. These present clear legal parameters. It has very clearly been breached by Shannon Airport activities. It’s black and white to me. The government is lying and being disingenuous when they claim neutrality while still allowing over 200 military troops through Shannon.

**MH:** So is this a temporary end to neutrality? During Vietnam and the Gulf War, wasn’t Shannon used similarly?

**EH:** That is untrue. The allegations, particularly by the US Ambassador James Kenny and by the Irish Cabinet of Foreign Affairs that Shannon was used during Vietnam are ludicrous.

The shortest way from the US to Vietnam is over the Pacific Ocean. I have established through research in the Cabinet of Foreign Affairs that American troops going to Vietnam did not pass through Shannon. Some troops, though, *did* come through back in the 70s but that was with NATO consent and the troops were unarmed and it was during peacetime. Therefore there was no breach of neutrality in that case.

**MH:** So this is the first instance of Shannon being used like this?

**EH:** There would have been some involvement with Shannon during the Gulf War in '91, but it wasn't widely known back then. There would have been significant involvement in '99 during the Kosovo war and in 2001 during the Afghanistan war. The first clear breach of neutrality, then, was in 1991.

I became aware of the issue after 9/11 when troop activity greatly increased at Shannon. I began organizing protests at Shannon in November of 2001.

**MH:** Is it true that your Minister of Defense, after 9/11, offered Shannon Airport up for war activities?

**EH:** Actually it was Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach, who did that. That was very clearly a breach of neutrality and of international war, because the war was waged in contravention to the UN.

**MH:** And neutrality in the future?

**EH:** "The issue of neutrality, strangely enough, is not that important to me." What is important to me is to prevent the unlawful killing of people. "And neutrality is primarily a means towards the prevention of unlawful killing, towards peace." I have a very positive view of neutrality. I don't agree with the claim that neutrality means standing idly by as crimes against humanity are committed. I do think that Ireland should intervene to prevent crimes, but that it should do so in a clerical, controlled and lawful way.

**MH:** Is that attitude towards neutrality common among the average Irish people?

**EH:** Yes, neutrality is very important to the people. They really believe that Ireland should be a peace-promoting, neutral country rather than become involved in war and military alliances. In that respect, the government and even some opposition parties are out of line with the people and their wishes. Like Fianna Fáil, the PDs and Fine Gael.

**MH:** Will neutrality be an issue in the next election?

**EH:** I'm skeptical about that. There hasn't been enough effort to make it an issue. There's been much propaganda from the US ambassador and the Irish government to ensure that the issue is confused and misrepresented.

**MH:** A couple of weeks ago, some apache helicopters were shipped from the US to Israel. What are your thoughts on that?

**EH:** That was not as clear of a breach of the Hague Convention. It depends on how you view the Israel-Palestine issue: are they at war? If they are not, then these helicopters were not a breach of neutrality. This is more of a gray area to me. It's certainly not as important as troops stopping by at Shannon on their way to war.

**MH:** What are your thoughts on public opinion in Ireland towards the US?

**EH:** People who are well-educated are aware that the US isn't nearly as great a power as they would like to be. The failure of the US military in Afghanistan and Iraq to subdue the insurgencies—while not on par yet with their failures in Vietnam—is a clear indication that the US is quite clearly incapable at controlling the world, as some people seem to think.

The reality is that Ireland's involvement in helping the Iraq war is primarily for financial reasons, and in some respect, for almost spurious financial reasons. I would say that most US multinational companies are *not* controlled by the US government and they are in Ireland for sound financial reasons and not for anything remotely connected to the Iraq war or American foreign policy.

There is no moral basis for Ireland to support the war in Iraq. There is no international law basis. I think the only rationale behind it is the financial reasons and that those are inherently flawed.

**MH:** OK, I think that's all the questions I have. Do you have anything to add?

**EH:** I just want to make one final comment. One of my main motivations in peace work is the killing of children. I am a father and a grandfather and I am horrified at the unjust killing of up to 46,000 children in Iraq. It's a crime of a similar nature—though not to the same scale—to the Holocaust.

Margaret and Ed continue to talk for another couple of minutes. Ed is part American and has much family in the States. He respects the US and thinks it has done great things for the world throughout history. He doesn't agree with the current administration, but he thinks that the world would be a worse place without the US (no Marshall Plan, no UN) and that many people fail to see that.

**Person Interviewed:** Jim O'Keefe, Spokesperson for Justice

**Organization:** Fine Gael Party

**Address:** The Daíl, Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2

**Date:** Thursday 04 May 2006

**Time:** 10:50 a.m.

**Duration of Interview:** 20 minutes

**Margaret Havemann:** (I describe my project, tell Mr. O'Keefe that I am eager to talk to the politicians to get their side.)

**Jim O'Keefe:** First off, I am not the spokesperson for foreign affairs any more. I am the spokesperson for justice. But I will try to tell you a bit about Fine Gael's position.

We value a friendly relationship between Ireland and the U.S. We value it very highly. And we question the issue of neutrality. Has Ireland ever really been neutral? As far as I'm concerned, Ireland is neutral insofar as we have never, and will never, be part of a military alliance like NATO. Other than that, though, we are not neutral.

During WWII, we were considered neutral. But we failed miserably at that. Being neutral means you approach conflicts very evenhandedly. In WWII, we were not at all evenhanded. We have never been neutral in the classical sense.

Now in terms of the war in Iraq, we don't have any policy that supports the war *per se*. We support the UN. As far as we are concerned, it's the UN that is making the decisions about the war, and we support the UN. There was much debate over the legitimacy of the start of the war, but I don't think there's any controversy now. At the start, people questioned the international legality of the war. Now it's internationally legitimate, with UN backing.

As far as Shannon Airport goes, there is no reason to stop the soldiers from coming through. (Here, Mr. O'Keefe made the matter sound very innocent, and a non-issue.) Some people have concerns that it will put Ireland on the target list for terrorists, but I don't see that as a great concern.

**MH:** So is the main motivation to remain on good terms with the U.S.?

**JO:** Yes, I would say the main motivation is to keep good relations with the U.S. Also, some people do want to support the UN Resolution on Iraq.

**MH:** What about the speculation around rendition flights?

**JO:** There is no evidence for rendition flights. (Here, again, Mr. O'Keefe brushes the issue off as being so insignificant, it's almost not worth his time.) We have asked the Americans up front whether they are transporting prisoners of war through Shannon and we have gotten the full assurance of the U.S. I prefer to take Condoleezza Rice's word than the accusations of some half-baked socialist activist. Now if there were evidence, then it would clearly be a breach of our position. It would also be a terrible breach of our trust with the U.S. if we were to inspect their planes at Shannon.

**MH:** Will this be an issue in the next election?

**JO:** It will be a very minor issue; a tiny issue. It will affect about one percent of the electorate, who will already be anti-American, anti-capitalism, anti-everything.

There is, however, a distinct unease on the part of many of us. We are wary of the neo-conservative approach to U.S. foreign policy. It has nothing to do with being a Democrat or a Republican. Clinton was a hero here because he did great things with the Northern Ireland peace process, not because he was a Democrat.

There is a certain unease towards Bush and Rumsfeld and Cheney in relation to the use of military power and what seems to me to be a direct disregard of international institutions like

the UN. Although that being said, the U.S. is now running for the cover of multi-national support with their failures in Iraq.

International law depends on a respect for its basic premises. There is no international court to enforce it, so countries must simply respect it. Bush and co. are not necessarily respectful of international law.

There's also the fact that Bush is not interested in the Northern Ireland peace process. I'm not saying that that's an issue, because the violence has mostly ended, but I'm just trying to explain why there is this unease.

**MH:** Thank you very much for your time, you were a great help. (Mr. O'Keefe's time was up.)

**Person Interviewed:** Deirdre Clancy

**Organization:** Catholic Workers Group

**Address:** Eason's Coffee Shop, O'Connell Street

**Date:** Saturday 06 May 2006

**Time:** 4:45 p.m.

**Duration of Interview:** 45 minutes

**Margaret Havemann:** I explain my project to Ms. Clancy and say that I am particularly interested in her personal story—the human side to activism.

**Deirdre Clancy:** My master's thesis at Trinity College was on Eva Gorbuth, the sister of Countess Marchiavich. She was an activist, but primarily a theologian. My thesis was mostly on her study of the fourth Gospel, John's Gospel. I didn't focus too much on her activism but I suppose I would have been attracted to her because of it. This was way back in '95.

For the past ten years I have been working as an editor. I have been an activist on and off for those years, but I would say that my involvement wasn't huge until 2001-2002. It started at the time of 9/11, when I was working in Sweden. I was in San Francisco on the day, and when I returned to Sweden, people were starting to take to the streets to protest the imminent invasion of Afghanistan.

When I got back to Dublin in 2002, I realized that there was a Catholic Workers Group in Ireland. It's well known in America, but in Ireland, this is unheard of. In Ireland you get two types of people: people who are very into the Church and who tend to be politically conservative; and liberals who are anti-Church and anti-religion. I never really fit into either group, so it was really exciting to know that there was a Catholic Workers Group here. It was founded in late 2001 by Kieran O'Reilly. I got involved in September '02. I started to go to liturgies and hanging out with the people, discussing the imminent invasion of Iraq.

I had known about the economic sanctions that had been placed on Iraq for about ten years, but I learned so much more through the Catholic Workers Group and through research and speeches. I became very aware that the country was compromised economically. An invasion

would have a pretty horrific impact on civilians. I also know the aftereffects of the 1991 invasion, which were also pretty horrific.

So a group of us decided to take some action: Kieran, Damien Morran (who is about ten years younger than me), Nguyen Dunlop (a U.S. citizen), Karen Fallen and me. Before this time, it would have been inconceivable to take an action like this. “I was pretty focused on working and going back to study and the idea of doing something that might land me in jail would have—even though I was an activist on various issues—that to me would have crossed the line. It was just a gradual evolution over months that I just realized I really wanted to do something pretty strong against the invasion and the Irish complicity in it.”

The Irish complicity did offend me. It offended my sensibilities as well because I had been brought up in Ireland to value Irish neutrality and I was always taught in primary school that we were a neutral country and this was always presented as a good thing. Irish complicity was something I found difficult to accept.

It was a role that politicians would have just written off: “Oh, we’re just letting planes land here, we’re not actually participating,” and so on. But it is something that really supports the war effort. My sympathies are with the troops because I know that many of them are young and are in the army to go to college or for economic reasons. It’s not them that’s the problem; it’s just our government’s policy which just didn’t have the courage to get up and say “Look, we don’t agree with this war and we would rather not play such a pivotal role in it.” And I do think that it is a pivotal role.

**MH:** What about the argument that the U.S. would just go somewhere else if they were kicked out of Shannon, and a lot of Irish people would lose their jobs?

**DC:** That’s an argument that a lot of people use and it’s an argument that people in the Shannon region and County Clare feel quite strongly about. But I don’t believe that any of the airport workers would lose their jobs if the U.S. military pulled out of Shannon.

Tim Hourigan did a study on this. He reckoned that the income brought in by the troops was actually a lot less than people reckoned because we don’t charge over flight fees. But I also think that it’s just too high a price to pay for economic prosperity. I mean, we are a country with an economic boom. We are a lot more prosperous than we were 20 years ago, but I think you have to draw the line somewhere. “It just seems too high a price to pay for a few extra American dollars.” There are plenty of other sources of income for the Shannon region.

I’m looking at it from a moral perspective. I see the argument that people need money to support their families, but it’s just something that I cannot support. I know this comparison is used a lot, probably too often, but what about the people who lived in the village beside Auschwitz? I just feel that standing back and letting this happen in the same as complicity in murder, the same was that a lot of people in Nazi Germany stood back and allowed trains to transport the Jews to concentration camps.

I do think that most soldiers going to Iraq believe that they are doing something good. But the motivations for American invading were mostly economic. Knowing what I know of the

'91 invasion, it just seemed that “for us to get prosperous in Ireland on the backs of the suffering Iraqis, that just didn’t seem to be an option.”

**MH:** To go along with this comparison with the Holocaust, would it not be more appropriate to compare the trains carrying the Jews to the rendition flights that some say are traveling through Shannon?

**DC:** There is proof that planes have gone through Shannon, but there is no proof that there are prisoners in them. We have photos of planes that we know to be CIA rendition planes. But because the Irish government refuses to inspect the planes, we can’t tell if there are prisoners on them.

Our government now is pretty anxious on a diplomatic level not to do anything to anger the U.S. I think there’s a wider perception in Ireland and a fear that a lot of the economic prosperity we have now is from U.S. investment and that all of it will go away if we alienate the U.S. government in anyway.

I actually don’t think that that’s the case because I think companies that do come to Ireland do so for very pragmatic reasons to do with wages. But I think that fear is very strong in the mainstream parties, and a lot of people buy into it.

**MH:** If you had to rank your motivations for what you did and your protests against the use of Shannon Airport...

**DC:** For me, the most important is the Iraq situation. I think it is for most people, in a way. But the neutrality issue is always kind of ambiguous. To be honest, neutrality is certainly not enshrined in our constitution. We’ve always taken that stance, but the constitution can be read ambiguously. It’s not really that clear. A judge came to that conclusion when Edward Horgan took a case to the court. I’m not saying that I agree with that judge, but it does read ambiguously to me.

I don’t think we’ve ever been truly neutral. We have allowed Russian planes through during the Cold War. We have allowed U.S. planes through during the Vietnam War. I just don’t think that then it really hit people’s consciousness.

While that is an issue for me and I would like if we did respect the idea of Ireland being neutral, “I just don’t think it’s a strong enough hook to hang anti-war activism on.”

It’s interesting in my view that they only party that spoke to you was Fine Gael. Even though I wouldn’t vote for them, in some ways I have more respect for them than I do for the other right-of-center parties in Ireland because they are honest about their position. Fianna Fáil and the PDs maintain that we are neutral regardless of what’s going on in Shannon. Fine Gael have publicly stated that one of the first things they would do if they were in government would be to put in some legislation to get rid of any idea of neutrality in Ireland, because they just think its not an option. While I would be the first person to campaign against that, I think its more intellectually honest.



**MH:** Has this been a longstanding problem, or something unique to the current government?

**DC:** It is a longstanding problem. And also we have a longstanding connection with America through emigration. A lot of the Irish-Americans, from my understanding, would vote Republican in the States. They are pretty conservative, pro-war. This seems to be a feature of the Irish-American community. They have achieved a sense of integration and prosperity, and they do not want to lose it.

That emotional connection means for some people that they cannot criticize the U.S. government's policies. Mary Harney from the PDs made a statement recently about anti-war activists being anti-American, which I find to be really illogical. The Catholic Workers Group has its genesis in America; all of my cultural influences (my books, CDs) come from the States. I'm anything but anti-American. I am anti-the current administration, though.

**MH:** One thing I hear over and over is that the protesters are always the same group of, just some anti-Americans, anti-Capitalists. This seems to be an easy way to shrug the movement off. Your thoughts?

**DC:** Certainly there's more than ten, although in recent years there has been a bit of a depletion. But people who turn up at Shannon are generally people like Tim Hourigan, Ed Horgan, who are actually extremely accomplished people. They're all well-educated, respectable people. It's not like they are hobos and cranks with nothing better to do with their time.

**MH:** Tell me about the current situation with your court trial, if you don't mind.

**DC:** There are two men and three women, although Kieran usually gets the most publicity because he is big and vocal. We have had two mistrials. The first was in March of 2005, when the judge made comments that could have been seen to be prejudicial. Our legal team collapsed the trial, since the judge is meant to be an independent arbitrator.

Another attempt was made in October of 2005, and this one went on a bit longer, it lasted two weeks. We thought it was going very well; this time the judge allowed us our witnesses, which the last judge had refused. We were being charged with criminal damage with out lawful excuse. Our main defense was that we did have lawful excuse.

But then the day before the judgment was to be made, the judge said we couldn't use our defense. So the jury had to disregard everything they had heard from our witnesses. We took a break after that announcement, and during that break, our legal team said they had uncovered some information. It was revealed that the judge had political interests: he was a good friend of Tom DeLay, and he had been invited to both of Bush's inaugurations, and had attended the first. Our legal team brought this up in court and the judge stormed out and then came back five minutes later and dissolved the case and dismissed the jury. If this had been a jury member who had had this connection and hadn't declared it, he could actually have been charged with a criminal offense. But the judge was back in court the next day with no censures or anything. It brought up for me some real questions about the connections between the establishment here and the establishment over there.

The second trial was fairly sensational. There was good media coverage of this judge. He was so flustered when his connections came to light that he forgot to make a ruling banning the media for covering the reasons for the trial collapse. I think this was a good thing, because it brought these things to light.

So that was two weeks wasted. There's another date set for early July of this year. I don't know what will happen if another trial collapses (unlikely, because judges will now be very careful) or a hung jury (quite possible). Public opinion is strong and supportive of us, so it may very well be a hung jury.

It's been three and a half years since our action. We didn't expect it to last this long. Its one way, I suppose, that they deal with dissidents. It's a gradual wearing down. It's hard to hold down a job when your name is going to be all over the media occasionally during these trials. I've been doing freelance work and contracting jobs, but I'm one of the lucky ones out of the five.

But I have absolutely no regrets. It's a small price to pay for opposing the invasion of Iraq. It's been heartbreaking to see what's been going on in Iraq, and now I'm a bit worried about Iran. But my role in the future, I think, will be more supportive. I don't think I could do something like this again any time soon.

**MH:** What are the possible consequences? Or would you prefer not to think of that?

**DC:** We did consider the consequences before the action. We examined each other's motivations for a month before we acted. The sense was that we could have a few years in jail. Part of me can't believe that I was willing to go through with it. I don't think we'll get jail time, but it's a possibility. Most likely, though, "the government would be loath to make prison martyrs out of political activists.

**MH:** Thank you so, so much for your time. You are one of the most fascinating people I have even spoken with.

## APPENDIX C

### MARGARET'S PRIVATE TOUR OF THE DAÍL

On Friday, 5 May 2006, I met with Jim O'Keefe of Fine Gael. After my interview with him (recorded in appendix B), he led me into the main building of the Daíl and introduced me to a security guard there, Eddie. Most of the offices of politician's are in a new, modern glass wing to the right of the original Leinster House, and it is there that I met with Mr. O'Keefe. The public is not allowed in either of the buildings without an invitation or special permission, but Mr. O'Keefe walked me right up to the door (actually, it was the back door, on Kildare Street—the front door is in fact on the opposite side of the building, a fact most Irish don't know).

I was expecting Eddie to quickly walk me around the building and send me on my way. Instead, he took me on a detailed tour of both houses—the Daíl and the Senate (both which were locked)—and the rest of the building. Eddie, a gray-haired, soft-spoken man in his fifties, was like a history book. He knew the intricacies of the voting system, he knew the story of everyone pictured on the walls, and he had even shaken President Clinton's hand on his visit—twice. What follows is an account of all that he told me, as well as I can remember it, with some comparisons made between the Irish political system and that of the States.

The Daíl is usually not in session on Fridays or Mondays, and it was not in session today, so Eddie unlocked the door to the top floor of the chamber, which looks down upon a smallish room set up with around 150 seats in an oval arrangement. From where we were standing (in the public's seating area up top), the Chair of the Daíl sat directly in front of us, with his clerks and some reporters surrounding him. To the right of the room sat the representatives from the parties in government; to the left sat the opposition parties, and in the center (directly under my feet) sat the smaller parties. There is a section to the right for VIPs to sit—diplomats from other countries, perhaps—and there is a seat across from that section to the left where a guard sits and operates the microphones and television screens.

There is also a section called the “corralling section,” I believe, which is where cabinet members sit when their leader (say, the Minister of Finance) is involved in a debate. Since the Minister of Finance couldn't possibly be expected to answer questions on, say, the budget for two hours straight *alone*, he would have a number of his staff sitting next to him, passing him notes.

The Chair of the Daíl is the only position that is not elected. The rest of them are elected by the people. The Chair, though, does not have to run for reelection if a vote is called in the middle of a four-year term. This is an interesting difference from the US system: the Taoiseach can call a vote whenever he wants during his four-year term. At the end of those four years, there will be a vote no matter what, but if he feels like it, he can call as many votes as he wants during his term.

When the Chair is standing, no one else is allowed to talk, and the microphones are all turned off. He also has a gong that he can strike if things are out of hand. People can be kicked out of the chambers, and can be suspended for a few days if they act out of hand. In

theory, Eddie said, they could be kicked out of their office altogether, though that rarely happens.

When a vote is ready to happen, a bell will ring in Leinster House for six minutes. This bell is not to be confused by the 13 other kinds of bells that ring for other reasons. After the six minutes, the bell will turn off and representatives have another four minutes to get to the Daíl chamber to cast their vote. Once those ten minutes are up, every door to the chamber is locked, with no exceptions. (Eddie once had to close the door on the faces of some Senators who had been dilly-dallying outside the Chamber.)

Each chair has a voting pad under its armrest, and once the votes are cast, they are shown up on a giant screen covered by a red curtain on the wall behind the Chair. The Chair will strike the gong and read the winner; as soon as that gong is struck, the doors are unlocked and people are allowed out. The losers of the vote (usually the opposition parties—the government rarely loses a vote in the Daíl) have the right to call for a walk-through vote if they are not satisfied with the results of the normal vote. In cases like that, each politician would walk either to the right or the left side of the chamber—the yes or the no side—and his name will be checked off a list. Those votes would be tallied, and the Chair will again read the winner. Eddie told me that in theory, no one is allowed to leave before he strikes his gong, but usually after a walk-through vote, the Chair allows members to leave after the cast their vote on one side of the room.

Eddie then explained to me in some detail the workings of the voting system: proportional representation. While it was very hard for me to grasp as he was explaining it (it is so different from the US's simple first-past-the-post system!), I did understand that in many cases, candidates who got ranked no higher than third or fourth on most ballots may still win a seat. Eddie assured me that the system here is far better than America's.

Next we visited the Senate chambers, on the other side of the building. The chambers are in what was once the main ballroom of Leinster House, which was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a townhouse for a very, very rich man. The Senate is therefore much smaller (there are only 60 Senators, remember) and yet the room was gorgeous, with original marble fireplaces and a painted vaulted ceiling. The system of voting in the Senate is the same; and interestingly enough, at the beginning of both Senate and Daíl sessions, a short prayer is read in English and in Gaelic. So much for the separation of Church and state. Outside of the Senate chambers is a spacious anti-room where Senators sometimes congregate, and where often they must wait if the chambers are filled.

Eddie let me have a peek inside the Senate Library, where only Senators are allowed, and where they go to do their research. Again, this was a gorgeous room with intricate designs in light blue on the ceiling. He showed me the flag of the Irish militia who fought in the American Civil War that Kennedy presented during his visit; he showed me a copy of the 1916 Declaration of the Irish Republic, donated by an ex-Taoiseach; he showed me the portraits in the entry way of various figures in Irish history.

It was an amazing inside look into how the Parliament works here. I learned so much, and it says something that Eddie, a guard who wasn't expecting me today, spent close to 45 minutes leading me around this historic building.