

To: Enforcement Section  
Planning Department  
Clare Co. Council

Re: Preliminary Submission on Unauthorised Developments at, and Use of,  
Shannon Airport

Dear Sir,

I visited the offices of Co. Clare Planning Department, on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> for the purpose of establishing if any application has been submitted for a change of use of Shannon Airport, Co. Clare, from use of the airport as a civilian airport to its use as joint civilian and military airport. My enquiries indicated that no such application has been submitted.

Separately, in my capacity as International Secretary of the Irish Peace and Neutrality Alliance, and in conjunction with a number of other individuals, I have been monitoring the use of Shannon airport for military purposes on an occasional basis since 1999 and more frequently since mid 2001. I wish to inform you that this airport has being used virtually on a daily basis by the US armed forces for the conduct of military operations, including making war in Kosovo/Serbia in 1999, war in Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002, and war Iraq in 2003, to date.

I will provide specific details of the quantity and type of military and chartered troop-carrying aircraft that have been landing and taking off at Shannon Airport later. However, I now wish to inform you, that I am in possession of information that approximately half a million armed US troops have passed through Shannon airport since 1999, most of these, between October 2001 to date. I also wish to inform you that in addition to armed troops, large amounts of munitions, explosives and other military materials have been transported through Shannon airport.

As you may be aware, or should be aware, Shannon airport has been constructed specifically for civilian use only, and is neither designed for, nor suitable for, the transit of military personnel and munitions. You should be aware that the transit of US military personnel through Shannon airport, for the purposes of waging war on foreign states incurs a significant risk that those states being attacked, or individuals from those states, may retaliate by carrying out military or unconventional attacks on Shannon airport. Because the specific wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq have been in contravention of the UN Charter, those countries have the right under international law to take the necessary military actions against facilities such as Shannon airport, that are being used to wage war on their people and property. You should also be aware that Shannon airport has no effective defence mechanism, procedures or emplacements to protect its employees, its customers or the general public from such attacks.

As the responsible planning authority for such matters, Clare Co. Council should also be aware, and I am now informing you, that the safety and construction standards for military airports, used for the regular transport of munitions and explosives, are far more stringent than those for civilian airports. In particular, in military airports that are regularly used by aircraft carrying large amounts of explosives and munitions

special precautions are necessary in the design of airport buildings, and in the construction of embankments and protection walls, to minimise the blast effects in the event of a crash or serious fire involving military aircraft. Shannon airport is designed to safety standards appropriate only for civilian use, including the very occasional risks associated with a civilian air crash or fire involving such aircraft, where there are no risks of additional explosions.

As Clare Co. Council is no doubt aware, virtually no protection is provided for at Shannon in the event of serious explosions either in the taxiways, or in the aircraft parking areas close to the main terminal building. On the contrary, the main walls of the terminal building, facing the airside of the airport, and facing on to the aircraft parking areas are almost exclusively constructed with or faced with glass. To the best of my knowledge, it is likely this glass is neither bullet-proof nor explosion-proof. In the event of a serious military type of explosion, or the discharge of military weapons, either inside the terminal building, or from the airside into the terminal building, it is certain that, in addition to the direct damage caused by such bombs and bullets, there would also be far more serious injuries and collateral damage caused by flying glass. It is likely I believe that the glass on the terminal building facing the airside, is what is known as plate-glass or slightly reinforced glass. You should be aware that the effects of this type of glass shattering inwards due to an explosion on the airside could be catastrophic for people within the terminal building. Military airports are specifically designed to eliminate such risks, by use of devices such as low buildings, shielding of buildings by embankments and reinforced walls and the minimisation of glass in all walls facing airside.

The lack of provision for, or precautions against, the use of firearms in or near the main terminal building at Shannon airport is also of serious concern. The design of this terminal building is such that if high velocity bullets were discharged toward one side of this building, they would likely pass right through the building, and unfortunately pass through any persons in the intervening spaces. I wish to inform you that I have specific knowledge, which I will share with you later, that most chartered aircraft carrying US troops through Shannon include an M 16 automatic rifle for each of the soldiers on board these aircraft. These weapons fire what are known as very-high-velocity bullets, a proportion of which are armoured-piercing. If just one US soldier were to suffer a mental disturbance and fire his/her rifle at the terminal building the results would be very severe. A deliberate attack by anti-US forces would of course have catastrophic results, and to my knowledge, there are virtually no effective counter measures in place against such an attack. I would remind you that such attacks have occurred in other airports, including Lod Airport in Tel Aviv.

Since no application for change of use of Shannon airport from civilian use to joint civilian/military use appears to have been submitted to Clare Co. Council, it is clear that such military use is unauthorised by Clare Co. Council. It is also clear that such military use poses the most grievous of risks to the workers, the customers and the public at Shannon airport, and that urgent steps are needed immediately to remove these unacceptable risks. I formally request therefore that Clare Co. Council immediately investigate the unauthorised military use of Shannon airport, and take appropriate steps to ensure that this unauthorised use, and the consequential dangers to human life, are eliminated as soon as possible.

I intend to submit considerable additional information later in support of this complaint, as soon as I have assembled the necessary information. However, I wish to emphasise that it is the responsibility of Clare Co. Council to ensure that all planning and safety regulations are complied with in all areas of Co. Clare, and in particular that fire safety precautions and procedures are adequate and implemented. Of equal importance is the duty of Clare Co. Council to make provision for possible disasters within the County, and to minimise the effects of, or prevent such disasters occurring. The duty of enforcing the planning regulations in Co. Clare rests with Clare Co. Council, and this duty includes the duty to detect any breaches of planning regulations. In matters as serious as those I have listed above, it should not be necessary for members of the public to bring such matters to your attention. In fact, it is inconceivable that the planning department of Clare Co. Council, would not be already aware of the matters I am now bringing to your attention.

I am basing this particular complaint on my direct knowledge of Shannon airport and from close observation of events taking place at the airport over the past several years. In addition, I am a former military officer with considerable knowledge of explosives and munitions, and safety precautions for dealing with the transport and use of such explosives and munitions. In addition I have worked as an industrial fire chief for eight years, and I also have considerable experience in emergency planning and preparedness, including involvement in the organisation of major emergency exercises in the Mid West Region, in the mid 1990s. I have diplomas in safety and security management, and additional third level qualifications in international relations and international security.

Yours truly,

Edward J. Horgan (Commandant Retd.). BA, M.Phil., Dip. Health and Safety.

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