

PHOENIX

THE



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D'ya wannim
dead or alive?

What's best for
my ratings?

Kill the
wife too

Use the
machine gun
dammit!

Harney's €450,000 from Denis O'Brien

Kenny puts judges in the dock

Profile: John Bruton for the Áras?

Frank Flannery for the Senate?

Young Blood: Regina Doherty TD

**Also: Aidan O'Brien's bad luck; Gary Lavin feels the pinch;
Film Board favourites; Peter Curistan takes on Anglo;
Brendan O'Carroll's BAFTA boost; The Wesht Wing**

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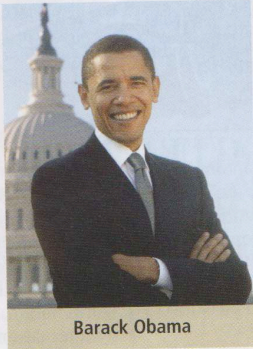
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Foreign Frolics



OBAMA'S SDU SPIES

AMONG the advance security posse at Moneygall ahead of the Obama visit were some rare creatures – Washington's super-spies in Ireland – known officially as the State Department SDU (Surveillance Detection Unit). About 25 of them operate permanently from a discreet back-door section of the palatial American Ambassador's Residence in Phoenix Park. From there they carry out detailed covert surveillance on large numbers of Irish citizens while working undercover as Diplomatic Protection Officers.



Barack Obama

You've got to hand it to the Yanks: after so many bad stories about the CIA and FBI, gathering intelligence on the ground was never going to be easy in countries like Ireland where sensitivities are easily damaged. But running an espionage group which has a small, above-round "routine tasking" – and a larger underground purpose – is an ingenious way of spying on a friendly country without upsetting the natives. By claiming the covert surveillance you are working on is to protect your embassy and its staff (and keeping secret its real purpose) you can avoid protests and get greater efficiency: and if things get awkward, as a "Protection Officer" you can invoke the Vienna Convention, which provides immunity to diplomats – and spies who pretend to be such.

While the existence of the American

super-spies has been whispered among some gadaí, little was known until recently; but the Obama visit and events in Scandinavia have combined to throw new light on SDU undercover operatives in Dublin.

The existence of the SDU was first reported last autumn when a Finnish detective tipped off a Helsinki newspaper. The Norwegian and Swedish media followed up this report – and found similar American spy networks under diplomatic cover operating in Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen. Sweden's Chief Public Prosecutor Tomas Lindstrand investigated. He was the first European official to publicly identify the American SDU in January 2011. With the assistance of the Swedish Security Service, he gave a meticulous, lawyer's report on who they were and what they did. He also reported to the Swedish Government that the spies could not be prosecuted for "the crime of unlawful intelligence activities" because they had diplomatic immunity.

It would be a patriotic act of importance if some Deputy were to read into the Dáil record Lindstrand's full report – an English translation of which has been placed on the Internet – if only because it might halt the gallop of the super-spies in Ireland by shining a light on their operations.

Lindstrand first consulted Finnish and Norwegian colleagues. He noted that the SDU in Norway used separate, off-embassy premises in Oslo, where 15-20 former police officers "monitored and photographed a large number of people during demonstrations." The information was entered into a Washington intelligence database named SIMAS. Later, Lindstrand had it confirmed by a "US high official" that the covert American intelligence operatives in Sweden "were performing surveillance of a nature similar to that in Norway."

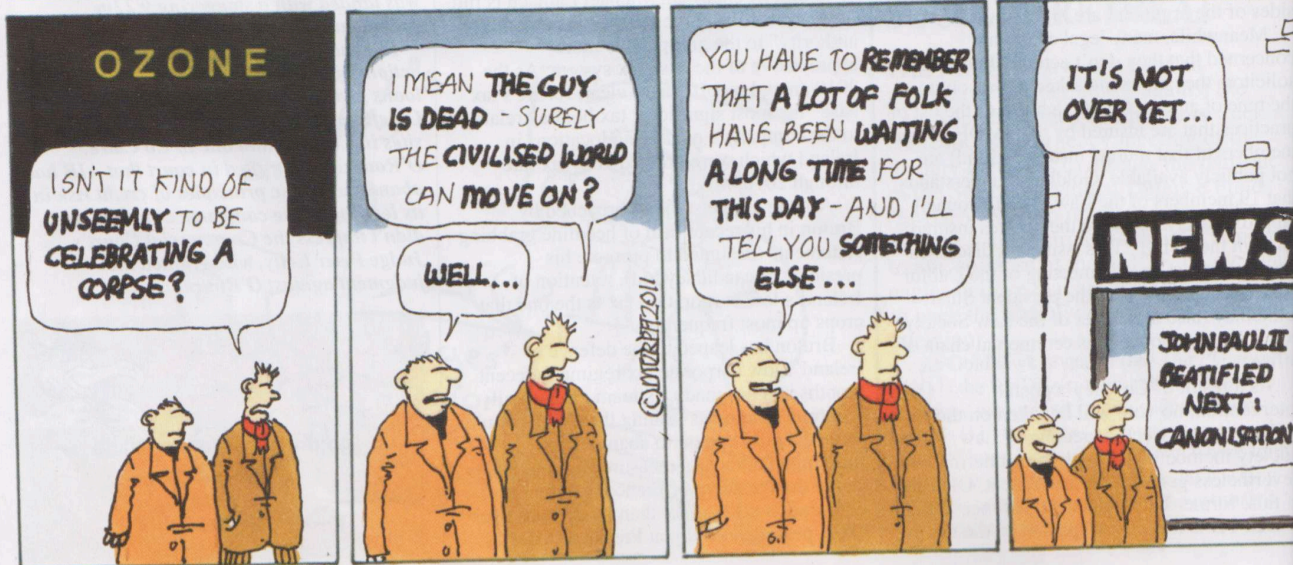
Identical operations were discovered by the Finns, and in Denmark, said the Swede Prosecutor – essentially, undercover operatives working from anonymous bases well away from the American embassy,

while pretending (a precaution ahead of being caught) to be part of a US diplomatic protection team. During his investigations, Lindstrand visited the Swedish covert surveillance centre in Stockholm with US permission, after the Swedes tracked it down. He found a 300 sq metre office of the Surveillance Detection Unit (SDU) which contained spying equipment, desks, computers, clothing and files. An "American high official" told him all the people who worked there, the office and equipment were "inviolable since they are a part of the (US) diplomatic territory."

The US Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) contains regulations to be used internally by the US Foreign Service. Volume 12, Section 322 specifies that setting up an SDU requires the approval of the government of the receiving state, Lindstrand notes. No such approval was obtained in the Scandinavian countries and – according to Irish intelligence sources who had never heard of the Phoenix Park SDU – it is unlikely that such approval was sought in Ireland.

The choice of the American Ambassador's Residence – a 28,000 feet period mansion near Áras an Uachtaráin and Garda HQ – as the SDU Surveillance Centre was an excellent one, given its high level of security and diplomatic inviolability. Intelligence gathered by SDU offices is accessible on tap to the CIA, the FBI and the National Security Agency (NSA), making many of the tasks of the CIA and FBI redundant in friendly countries where the SDU "diplomatic spies" operate. A vast network of computer files called SIMAS (Security Incident Management Analysis System) provides the CIA and others with immediate intelligence gathered by SDU undercover teams abroad. Information collected by the State Department, for example name, photo, citizenship, address and family information obtained from visa applications, is also routinely recorded on SIMAS. The information remains on the database for all time.

Note to readers: you can spot the SDU operatives when Obama visits. The Secret Service bodyguards wear sun-shades: those with digital cameras taking pictures of would-be protestors are SDU.



AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



WHO HAS ACCESS TO CENSUS INFO?

AFTER brief interest from Sinn Féin and ULA TDs about the involvement in the recent census of CACI International – the US based spooky, corporate military outfit – the media consigned objectors to the realm of conspiracist paranoia. But as the old saying goes: just because you're paranoid doesn't mean there isn't a multinational military contractor involved in processing your census form.

The reaction from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to questions about its employment of CACI as a contractor has been: "nothing to see here" – the €6.7 million deal for this census with CACI was a repeat of an old arrangement and the CSO itself controls all the crucial data, the reassuring press release said.

But what about that 'old arrangement'? In 2006, in the absence of controversy, the CSO happily trumpeted its outsourcing of work on the census in *The Irish Times*: "British company CACI aims to have the first set of definitive results ready by April 2007," the newspaper then reported. And CACI itself boasted that it "provided all consultancy, technical design, system implementation, training and support" for processing the 2006 census.

Maybe the CSO is correct when it says all personal information is safe, but why is the neutral Irish State employing a mega defence contractor to work on its census? The answer, which we've learned previously in relation to Raytheon and other companies, involves the corporate intersection between military and civilian work, especially when it comes to IT and

data analysis. Even by these standards, CACI has been prepared to get its hands dirty – very dirty.

CACI (UK) Ltd is the company doing the census here, and the CSO has tried to distinguish between US-based CACI International and its wholly owned UK subsidiary. But it is a distinction without a difference – at least in the view of the US parent company's website, which boasts of its subsidiary's Irish census contract.

The UK company's emphasis on civilian contractors is consistent with part of the US business, but Virginia-based CACI has risen to \$3 billion annual sales last year on the strength of its military efforts. Founded in the 1960s to commercialise a computer programming language that could run simulations, CACI got new opportunities from the 'war on terror', including a contract to supply dozens of interrogators for the notorious Abu Ghraib jail in 2003.

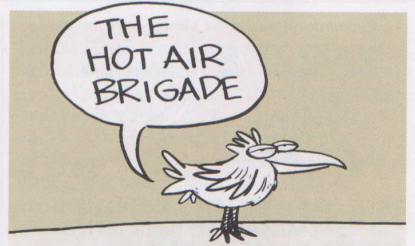
A 2004 Pentagon report said CACI contractors were involved in abusing prisoners in Iraq, and a 2006 investigation by journalists at Salon.com said a CACI employee had been named in a court-martial and by other sources as having directed torture at the prison.

Andrew Cockburn, writing in the US political newsletter *CounterPunch*, calls CACI's board of directors, packed with retired senior US officials, military brass and politicians, "a useful cameo of today's military-industrial complex". That complex is international: CACI's website reveals it got its text-recognition software for the 2006 Irish census from Tel-Aviv-based Top Image Systems. Not to worry: in the unlikely event that Irish personal information somehow leaked out, it would be sure to be safe in Israeli hands.

Contrary to a CSO statement in late March, which implied that no CACI employees would be involved when it comes to actually processing census data, Government chief whip Paul Kehoe admitted in the Dáil on April 6 that "a small number of CACI (UK) Limited employees" will be giving "technical support... to process the completed census forms in the second half of this year."



Paul Kehoe



"On a conversational level with William and Harry, it's extremely normal. The rest of her life is abnormal – for want of a better word. But Amy's going as we felt there was an element of our representing Ireland as well."

Brian O'Driscoll on Amy Huberman's

attendance at the Royal wedding, Irish Times



Amy Huberman

Dublin never responded to the call of the Proclamation...the result today is a strange town...inhabited and run by people from outside itself, who seem never really to settle or belong but who existentially reject and are rejected by a city with a mind of its own.

John Waters, Irish Times

Just 48 hours before she becomes a princess, Ms Middleton was spotted unloading a cardboard box from Tesco from her car... Prince William, meanwhile, played a five-a-side football match.

Irish Independent

Mugiyono Kasido will present *Bagaspati*, a spellbinding homage to the cycles of the sun set amid a sea of candles, followed by *Kabar Kabur*, in which he playfully contorts himself on a tiny square of the stage, using his body as a metaphor for society at large.

Programme notes for Dublin Dance Festival (submitted by reader)

A child not read to when going to bed at night was an abused child, the Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn told the Dáil.

Irish Times (submitted by reader)

"I could give every chef in town my recipe book; that doesn't mean they're going to be able to do what I do. It's about finesse."

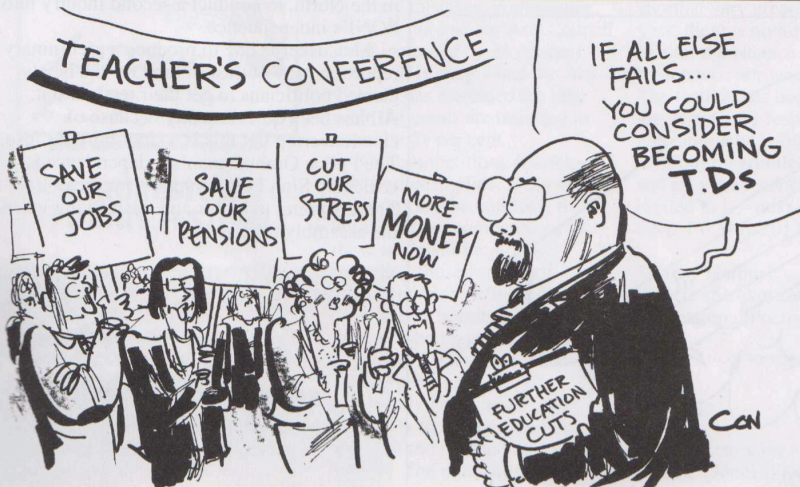
Conrad Gallagher, VIP

"I can think of few visits that are of greater significance. We are on the same level as previous state visits to Russia or China...this visit is about making history, not just following it."

The British Ambassador, "His Excellency Julian King", on Queen Elizabeth's visit, Social and Personal

"A Gonzaga education would have saved us from economic disaster."

Title of Gonzaga College debate to be chaired by Peter Sutherland, Fri 6 May



€15 for suitable contributions, send to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie