

EDITORIAL

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Death riddle

THE mysterious death in Limerick Prison this week of Kenneth Kelly is firstly and obviously a personal tragedy. He was only 20. He was a convicted criminal and a suspected drug dealer but he did not deserve to die.

Yet, whatever about personal considerations, his death raises disturbing issues of public concern. He died at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital on Monday after being observed suffering breathing difficulties on Sunday. His death, according to informed sources, may have been drug-related.

Only days previously he repeatedly phoned the Limerick Leader. He claimed that up to four prison officers were smuggling cocaine, heroin and hash into the jail. He told news reporter Barry Duggan: "You can get anything you want inside here."

"They are being brought in by prison officers. A nine bar of hash will cost you so much but will cost more inside here. It is the same for everything else."

The case has a wider context. Last week Justice Minister Michael McDowell confirmed a claim by prisons inspector Dermot Kinlen that



Drug mystery: Limerick Prison

a number of prison officers nationwide have been suspended "in relation to criminal proceedings pending in a number of cases." Justice demands that judgement in all such cases must be left to due process.

Prison officers have a difficult and often impossible job. The overwhelming majority of them are self-evidently above reproach. The fact remains that our jails are awash with drugs.

The Minister is undeniably right to react drastically. Any response other than zero tolerance would be a dereliction of duty. The Minister's measures include mandatory testing, physical searches, deployment of sniffer dogs and stricter supervision of visits.

His refusal to connive, in effect, in drug trafficking will provoke the wrath of the usual suspects who talk about human rights for prisoners but whose permission

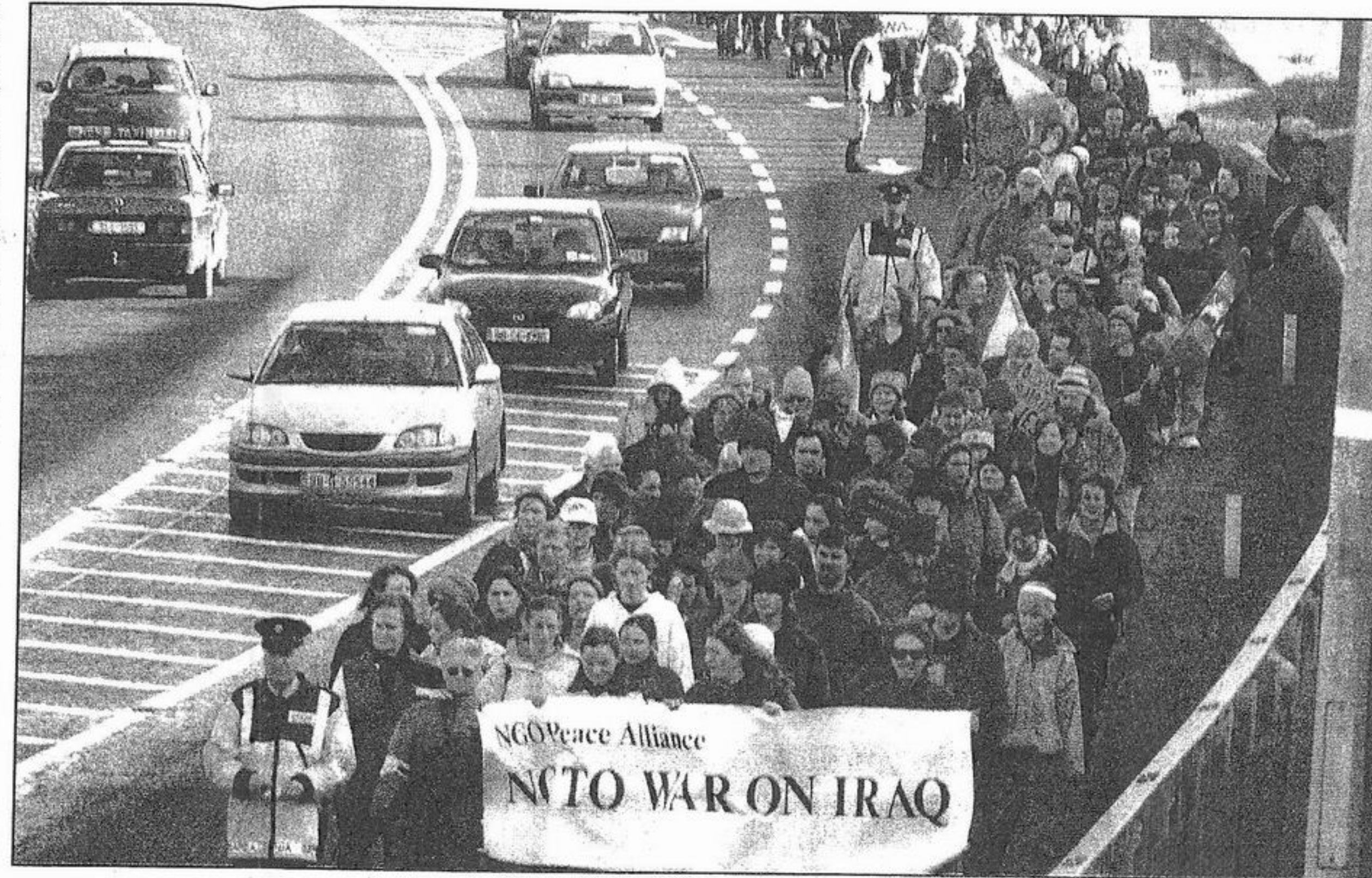
□ THE US Ambassador, James C Kenny, and the Limerick Leader issued a thinly-veiled but toothless threat to the people of the Mid West by suggesting that Dell Computers and other US multinational investments would disappear if US military and the CIA were prevented from using Shannon Airport as one of their main refuelling stops for the Iraq War and for the torture rendition programme.

I wonder, did Michael Dell give permission for the photo of the Dell factory in Raheen to be published as part of US war propaganda? Peace activists were described as "a small unelected group of ideologues who claim to speak for the people of Ireland" and as being guilty of anti-Americanism and anti "anything that has to do with Israel".

I have never heard any peace activist claiming to speak for the people of Ireland. We speak for ourselves and work for peace and go to great lengths to seek and expose the truth. To claim that peace activists are anti-American and anti-Semitic is little more than a cheap shot, unworthy of a senior diplomat. I speak primarily as a private citizen, but I reject the suggestion that private citizens have no right to speak out on political matters, or to hold our elected political representatives to account for their actions.

The Limerick Leader's eulogy on the US and its ambassador ignored the pertinent facts that the unlawful US-led war in Iraq led to the deaths of over 100,000 people and up to one million war-related injuries and diseases, including cancers caused by US and UK military use of depleted uranium, and to the abuse and killing of prisoners on a scale never before practised by democratic states.

Mr Kenny describes US military use of Shannon



Shannon demo: protesting at American military traffic

as: "a business arrangement that suits everyone". Well, not quite—it did not suit little Ali Abbas, when a US bomb hit his home killing both his parents and all his siblings, and blowing away his hands and leaving him with horrific burns. This cosy "business arrangement" did not suit the tens of thousands of Iraqi dead, nor their relatives, who mourn their dead just as we in Ireland grieve when we lose loved ones.

Kenny says that US military use of Shannon: "it is not by any means a political deal. There are dozens of airports in Europe that could do the job just as well". In certain respects he is correct.

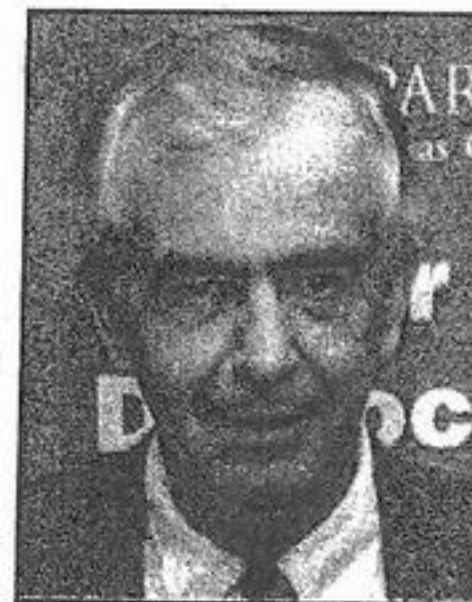
This war is more crimi-

nal than political. The heroin drug trade is also very profitable but surely not one the Irish Government should promote. The Irish Government is indeed supporting the US war in Iraq, for the worst of all reasons, money, with no account taken of the moral and legal implications arising from the killing of innocent people.

Particularly insulting is Kenny's comment that denial of Shannon to the US military: "would impact on hundreds of jobs in Limerick", as if the location of multinational companies in the Mid-West depends on the US military use of Shannon. It is insulting to the thousands of Dell workers in Limerick that their jobs depend on the killing

of innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There is no word of regret, and no mention of the deaths of all those innocent people, especially over 40,000 children



Attacking the Limerick Leader and the US Ambassador over Shannon: Edward Horgan

whose deaths are attributable to the Iraq War, according to the Medact and Lancet reports. Nor is there any mention of the rendition for torture investigation in the European Parliament and the Council of Europe.

The banner headlines and uncritical interviewing of the US Ambassador by the Limerick Leader appear to be designed to counter the negative publicity arising from these investigations, and from the likelihood that evidence will be forthcoming over the coming months that prisoners were indeed taken through Shannon for the purposes of torture. The subliminal argument is that this does not really matter as long as there is profit in this murky busi-

ness. This intervention seems almost an attempt at blackmail. "A big loser if military flights denied access to Shannon would be Limerick," says Mr Kenny.

Very many Irish people are deeply ashamed of what Ireland has helped to do to so many innocent people in Iraq. Kenny states: "The international community is helping the sovereign government of Iraq to establish security and bring peace and stability ...". A tiny self-appointed section of the international community, led by the US and UK, and some other complicit states including Ireland, representing less than 6% of the world's population, have brought untold suffering to the people of Iraq, and created

unprecedented instability in the Middle East.

Kenny claims that alleged rendition landings are "simply not an issue". Then can Mr Kenny please explain why CIA planes N313P, N379P, and N85VM landed at Shannon 85 times, and at Guantanamo 141 times?

"We would never bring detainees through Irish airports or Irish airspace in violation of Ireland's sovereignty." This statement is likely to be proved false in the near future. I presented substantial prima facie evidence to the EU Parliament TDIP Committee in Brussels, that Shannon Airport was being used as a crucial part of the rendition for torture process.

Kenny described US military use of Shannon as "in keeping with UN policy and Irish neutrality". The Iraq war was in direct contravention of the UN Charter and international law.

"Finally, there is no issue here of neutrality, either." In this statement Kenny is inappropriately interfering in internal political and judicial matters in Ireland. In April 2003, Mr Justice Kearns ruled in the High Court that Ireland was in clear breach of the Hague Convention on Neutrality. The Ambassador misinterprets Article 7 of the Hague Convention and ignores Article 2 which states: "Belligerents are forbidden to move troops or convoys of either munitions of war or supplies across the territory of a neutral power"—and Article 11: "A neutral Power which receives on its territory troops belonging to the belligerent armies shall intern them ..."

However, the protests by individual peace activists are not about legal niceties, but about the unlawful killing and torturing of very many people and Irish complicity in that killing.

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