



Colm Ward reports from Shannon

Security patrols are stepped up after threats to 'close' Airport

By PAT FLYNN

ROUND-the-clock armed mobile patrols have been reinstated at Shannon Airport following threats by anti-war protesters that they would "close down Shannon."

As many as 60 extra gardai from across the western Garda region have been drafted in while the existing army presence at the airport has also been increased. Airport Police officers began 24 hour patrols two weeks ago immediately after the threats were first issued.

Following a 12-day trial at the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court last month, five people were acquitted of causing criminal damage to a US Navy plane at Shannon Airport in 2003. The five activists, known as the Pitstop Ploughshare five also admitted that they had broken through the glass doors of the hangar and attacked the jet.

Following their acquittal, one of the five, Ciaran O'Daill, said he was back



Garda checkpoint

until it is demilitarised. The Government has no public mandate to turn Shannon into a petrol station for the US war machine," he said.

This threat has been taken very seriously by the authorities at Shan-

The army was first drafted into Shannon in February 2003 by then Defence Minister Michael Smith after a US Navy 737 was damaged days earlier by anti-war protester Mary Kelly. Ms Kelly was subsequently convicted

Ploughshare Five. The aircraft had been moved to a hangar at the airport after being first damaged but the five gained access. A huge security operation swung into operation at Shannon the following day.

A spokesman for the Clare Garda Divisional Headquarters in Ennis said they would not comment on security issues although one source confirmed that extra gardai have been drafted in from across counties Clare, Galway, Mayo and Roscommon, the four counties which comprise the western region.

"We continue to have a presence in Shannon but that has now been increased. We are there to back up the Airport Police and to make sure that the law is not broken," he said.

An airport source also confirmed that airport police personnel stepped up their perimeter patrols immediately after last month's trial in Dublin.

"Perimeter patrols were increased straight away and now the guards have sent more people in. The army were always here and they continue to provide armed protection



Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, Sile de Valera, TD enjoying a boat trip off Scarriff Harbour to celebrate the opening of the new Waterways Ireland Regional Office in Scarriff.

Waterways office in Scarriff is set to benefit region says de Valera

By AINE FITZGERALD

SILE de Valera, Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, has officially opened Waterways Ireland new regional office in Scarriff—a venture which is set to bring new potential to the town and surrounding areas.

The new regional office is a two-storey building adjacent to Scarriff Harbour, with views of both the harbour and the Scarriff Diver to the Clive-

Scarriff and surrounding areas," said Minister de Valera.

The office is now the base for the Operations and Administrative staff of the west region of Waterways Ireland and is also the base for the Internal Audit section, Environment section and staff from the Technical Services Division.

Until now, the Waterways Ireland staff in Scarriff were located in three offices—on the Mountshannon Road, Market Square and Ennis-

am particularly honoured to be asked to officiate at this event today, not only because I, along with Minister McGimpsey of the Northern Ireland Executive, took the decision in 2000 to locate the Western Regional Office of Waterways Ireland in Scarriff but also because of its importance and the potential it provides for the town of Scarriff and the surrounding areas," continued Minister de Valera.

The waterways under

Navigation.

This network provides a waterway link from Belleek to Waterford, Limerick to Dublin and many places in between.

The new office building was completed, within budget and before target completion date, in May 2006 and the staff moved in on June 6.

The opening of the office also marked the launch of the Scarriff Harbour Festival, now in its fourth year, which offers a varied line-up of music and activities to

Derg, a Young Anglers' Competition and a unique Clash of the Gaeltachts Currach Race on Lough Derg, all sponsored by Waterways Ireland.

John Martin, Chief Executive of Waterways Ireland spoke of Waterways Ireland involvement in the Scarriff Harbour Festival.

"The contribution to and awareness of the wonderful resource that is the waterway is greatly enhanced by such events and community involve-

glass doors of the hangar and attacked the jet. Following their acquittal, one of the five, Ciaran O'Reilly, said he was looking into how to close the airport using non-violent means because of the ongoing US military presence at the airport. "I want to analyse how many people it would take to close down the airport

for the US war machine," he said. This threat has been taken very seriously by the authorities at Shannon as well as by gardai. Several meetings are understood to have taken place in recent weeks between airport management and senior garda and army officers ahead of Monday's deployment.

Smith after a US Navy 737 was damaged days earlier by anti-war protester Mary Kelly. Ms Kelly was subsequently convicted in November 2004 of causing criminal damage to the plane having always claimed she felt justified in doing so. It was the same plane which was attacked a few days later by the Pitstop

away and now the guards have sent more people in. The army were always here and they continue to provide armed protection in the secure area we have for aircraft," the source said. The increased measures at Shannon are expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

The new regional office is a two-storey building adjacent to Scarriff Harbour, with views of both the harbour and the Scarriff River to the Slieve Bearnagh Mountains. It provides office space for Waterways Ireland's 26 staff and is designed to be accessible to all. "This is an exciting development which will be greatly beneficial to

potential it provides for the town of Scarriff and the surrounding areas," continued Minister de Valera. The waterways under the remit of Waterways Ireland are the Lower Bann Navigation, the Erne System, the Shannon-erne Waterway, the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal and the Shannon

office also marked the launch of the Scarriff Harbour Festival, now in its fourth year, which offers a varied line-up of music and activities to cater for all tastes over the Bank Holiday weekend. Some of the activities which brought out the crowds were complimentary boat trips on the Scarriff River and Lough

"The contribution to and awareness of the wonderful resource that is the waterway is greatly enhanced by such events and community involvement - a shining example of what is the Scarriff Harbour Festival. I am delighted that the festival is now in its fourth year with an enhanced and exciting programme of events," he said.

Nature reserve seminars

By CLARE O'BRIEN

THE creation of nature reserves in Shannon and Doonbeg will be discussed at two workshops run by Clare County Council this weekend, August 12-13.

The workshops are open to the public and the communities of Shannon, Doonbeg and the surrounding areas are being invited to attend.

Clare County Council in partnership with members of the local community, have succeeded in identifying a number of potential locations for nature reserves. Those in attendance at the free public meetings will be asked to give their opinion on the local wildlife and the suitability of these locations.

These locations include Doonbeg Bay and Tullaher Bog and those attending the workshop in the Doonbeg Community Hall on Saturday at 2pm, will be escorted to these proposed locations.

The Oakwood Arms Hotel in Shannon will be the venue for the Sunday workshop which commences at 2pm.

The local community in Shannon will also be asked for their input into the creation of a wildlife area and will visit a proposed nature reserve site in the town.

Elaine Keegan of Clare County Council said, "In Shannon there is an area of wetland behind the Leisure Centre, which is a possible area for a nature reserve. It would be very accessible considering it is so close to the town centre."

The two-hour information sessions are organised by Clare Biodiversity Group and Clare County Council with funding from LEADER and the Heritage Council. They form part of a local authority project established to help communities in Shannon and surrounding areas to take action for wildlife in their local areas.



Busiest ever Shannon Airport

Record July as 400,000 transit through airport

By RÓISÍN CONNOLLY

THIS July was the busiest month ever recorded at Shannon Airport with passenger numbers soaring to over 400,000. So far this year, the airport has landed over 2.1 million customers and traffic numbers are up by 17 per cent.

This is the first time ever in Shannon's history that two million passengers have used the airport in the first seven months of the year.

On the August bank holiday weekend airport staff handled almost 55,000 passengers, indicating that this strong traffic performance is set to continue.

Commenting on the success Martin Moroney, Airport Director, said, "we are delighted with the continuing growth of our passenger numbers. More and more people are now taking advantage of the range of destinations of offer and together with our airline partners we are committed to developing even more services



Martin Moroney

direct from Shannon. We aim to provide the widest possible network of services to the community in the West of Ireland as well as helping tourism industry to develop."

The 23 short-haul ser-

grows by 24 per cent this year so far.

The transatlantic market has also performed well this summer and the services operated by Delta Airlines to Atlanta and New York JFK and by Continental Airlines to Newark contributed to a 12 per cent increase in numbers over the same period.

"The increased number of in going and outgoing services from the airport has led to the success of the year. We have many new services from Continental and American Airlines too. It is positive for tourism in the area and also for the people of the region who can now travel to more locations" said Claire McEnery of Shannon Airport.

The continuing success of the airport has meant a wider range of destinations are becoming accessible directly from Shannon. Commencing this winter are seven, new short-haul services to Venice, Biarritz, Carcassonne, Krakow, Gdansk, Edinburgh and Bournemouth.

Boris Yeltsin finally gets to touch down in region

By NORMA PRENDIVILLE

WHEN Boris Yeltsin touched down in Shannon last Thursday for the beginning of a four-day family visit, he was wide awake and ready for the road. Unlike his much-rehashed last visit, when he failed even to appear at the door of the plane leaving then Taoiseach Albert Reynolds twiddling his thumbs, this time Boris displayed his formidable knowledge of his host country coupled with a great appetite to experience whatever Ireland mid-west was going to throw at him.

Before he left again on Sunday morning, the former Russian President had clocked up a lot of miles, had visited the Cliffs of Moher and the Burren, had lunched in Doolin, gone shark-fishing off Lisconnor, stepped on to the stone at Inisheer and had enjoyed several delicious dinners at Dromoland Castle Hotel.



Former Russian President Boris Yeltsin

With him were his wife Naina, their daughter Elena and her husband and son Valeri and Vanya Okolov. Valeri Okolov is currently boss of Aeroflot

but the family group flew in on a Russian government jet. Security was tight throughout the visit and involved members of the Garda Emergency

Response Unit.

On the tarmac to meet Mr Yeltsin was the Russian ambassador Vladimir Rakhmanin who stayed with the group for the first day.

They were greeted at Dromoland Castle by the hotel's general manager Mark Nolan.

Billed very much as a private, family visit, Mr Yeltsin nonetheless generated surprise and excitement wherever he went and many people had to do a double-take, not quite believing their eyes. He even agreed to requests to sign autographs at one of their stops.

"He seemed very friendly, very gracious and very polite," said one observer.

The 75-year-old visibly limped at times during the visit but it is thought this is a result of a fractured leg rather than advancing age. "I thought he looked very well," said another who was delighted to be close enough to see "a bit of walking history".



Acclaimed fiddler Martin Hayes, left, and guitarist Dennis Cahill are among the acts taking part in the 19th Feakle International Traditional Music Festival taking place in the East Clare village from this Thursday, August 10 to Monday, August 14. Among the acts appearing over the weekend are Mairtin O'Connor, Cathal Hayden, Garry O'Briain, Seamus Begley, Mary McNamara, Nóirín Ní Riain and the Tulla Céili Band.