



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Ahern says 'NO' to Sinn Fein in government



Blair and Ahern ... Partners in hypocrisy

According to a report in the *Irish Times*, the Irish Prime Minister, Mr Bertie Ahern, has said he would not enter coalition government with the Sinn Fein while the IRA retained some of its arms. There is political speculation in the Irish Republic that Sinn Fein may hold the balance of power after a general election due by June next year. Mr Ahern said the IRA -which decommissioned some of its weapons in October -had not done enough for his party, Fianna Fail, to drop its objection to shar-

ing power with Sinn Fein. He said the question was that of the continued existence of an illegal private army associated with a political party. Until that position is resolved, it would not be tenable for Sinn Fein to participate in an Irish Government, as the constitution recognises only one army and one police force in this jurisdiction, he said.

Such a stance is in direct contradiction to what he and the British Prime Minister and all the supporters of the "Peace Agreement" have thrust upon the people of Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein presently holds office in the Northern Ireland Assembly, that of the Health and the Education Departments, while maintaining its private army and while that army continues to engage in murder, punishment shootings and beatings and drug-trafficking. Why are such illegal acts acceptable within the boundaries of a Northern Ireland political group, while they are (quite rightly) not acceptable within the Irish Republic?

New evidence has been uncovered to link the Provisional IRA with a terrorist group involved in the Colombian drugs trade, according to a leading figure in the United States Congress. Democrat William Delahunt, who heads the congressional investigation into the role of the IRA in Colombia, has also revealed that the CIA is to be asked to give evidence about the republicans' connection with FARC, the Marxist guerrilla group involved in producing cocaine and heroin. Three Irishmen - two of them convicted IRA members, the other a Sinn Fein activist - were arrested in Bogotá while trying to leave Colombia on 11 August. The Colombian authorities allege the trio were training with FARC guerrillas. Delahunt has confirmed that his inquiry has unearthed fresh details about the IRA's presence in Colombia and its relations with FARC. "There is new information but I cannot at this stage disclose exactly what this is because that would prejudice the inquiry," he said in Washington. His committee would ask the CIA to appear before it in April. "I would be surprised if they did not have information for us," he said. Delahunt denied that committee members had come under pressure from the US State Department or the Irish government not to hold the inquiry in public and allow it to be televised. However, a campaign to stop the inquiry is underway. But according to Delahunt, there is no prospect that the inquiry into allegations about links between the IRA and the Colombian narco-terrorist group FARC will



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stop. "Any idea that this will go away is foolish, it's craziness," he said.

He was responding to a letter from the Irish National Congress that was sent to all members of the House Committee On International Relations, appealing to them "not to schedule the above-mentioned hearing" because it would "harm the Irish peace process." It was sent by the INC president, 'Father' Sean McManus. The hearings would be scheduled for next spring, if the ongoing inquiry finds substance in the allegations that the IRA has been involved in training FARC activists for a number of years. In a separate letter sent to Rep. Bill Delahunt, who is heading up the inquiry, the INC's McManus said: "If you were a right-wing, anti-Catholic Republican from the Bible Belt, I could maybe understand. But for God's sake, Bill, you are an Irish-American Catholic Democrat from Massachusetts! What are you thinking?" According to McManus, if such a hearing were to go ahead, it would "inevitably be seen as an attempt to embarrass Sinn Fein — thus helping the forces that are intent on sabotaging the Irish Peace Process." McManus said that there was "growing concern" in Rep. Delahunt's South Boston district, which is heavily Irish American. Jack Meehan, national treasurer of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, who is a Delahunt constituent, said that Irish Americans in the district "fail to see what his motivation is." "It allegedly happened," he said of the possible IRA-FARC link. "But let's move on. Let's not embarrass Sinn Fein."

The Observer newspaper has claimed that it has obtained information that the Colombian authorities now believe one of the Irishmen is an expert in armour-piercing technology and was sharing his knowledge with both FARC and the Basque terror group, ETA. It also claimed IRA training manuals and maps have been found by Colombian police as the case against three Republicans accused of colluding with terrorists continues to build. A senior police officer from Northern Ireland flew to Bogotá recently to compare documents seized from IRA arms dumps in Ireland with similar ones unearthed by the Colombian authorities. "The Colombians have accepted that the documents he brought over are exactly the same as the ones they found in their country. The latter are copies of manuals and maps used by the IRA in Ireland," a senior source in the Police Service of Northern Ireland has stated. The three include James Monaghan, an IRA veteran who invented the Provisionals' mortar in the Seventies. Monaghan was arrested with another convicted IRA man, Martin McCauley, who served a prison sentence for possessing illegal weapons. The other Irishman arrested is Niall Connolly, a Sinn Fein member.

A campaign has been launched in Ireland to have them repatriated. The Bring Them Home committee's supporters include singer Christy Moore, the former Beirut hostage Brian Keenan and a BBC Northern Ireland drama producer, Pam Brighton. The Irish government, however, is reluctant to upset the Bush administration - which recently gave \$1 billion to fund Colombia's fight against FARC and the drugs trade - by asking for the men's release.