



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### Head of US 'counter-terrorism' labels IRA 'a threat'



Mr. Richard Egan

President George W Bush's newly-appointed head of counter-terrorism, Francis Taylor, has described the Provisional IRA as 'a threat' because of its links with the Colombian narco-terrorist group FARC and the IRA's suspected role in 'training them in explosives to conduct urban terrorism'. This places the IRA amongst a number of terrorist groups, which include Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida, and which are considered a threat to Americans.

The US views the IRA's training of FARC guerillas in explosives with 'grave concern', because the Colombian terrorists welcomed the September 11 attacks and reiterated its calls to murder and abduct US citizens. Mr Taylor's denunciation of the IRA was one of three separate official attacks

on the Provisionals in the last two weeks by two of the most senior US officials involved in the fight against terrorism.

The IRA is now officially a prime target in America's war on global terrorism, a development which is sure to have serious repercussions for Sinn Fein's fund-raising efforts in the US. In testimony, before the US Congress on October 10, Ambassador Taylor, co-ordinator for counter-terrorism at the US Department of State, described FARC as the 'most dangerous terrorist group in the Western hemisphere'. FARC, he said, had murdered 13 Americans since 1980 and kidnapped more than 100, including three New Tribes missionaries abducted in 1993 and now believed dead. 'FARC leaders not only welcomed the September 11 attacks but afterwards they reiterated their periodic call for the targeting of Americans for murder and abduction. In addition we have seen in recent months evidence of an apparent relationship between the FARC and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and possibly the Basque separatists ETA.' Strange to relate, Mr. Richard Egan, the US ambassador to Ireland, attended the annual gathering of IRA/Sinn last month, which was also attended by representatives from ETA!!

The US Ambassador was pictured shaking hands with Joe Cahill, a leading member of the IRA who was convicted of running guns from Libya to Ireland. Egan met Cahill at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in early October.

#### **IRA Man**

Cahill is a founding member of the Provisional IRA and is one of its most prominent members and a long-time member of its governing body, the Army Council. In 1972 he was believed to have been involved in smuggling rockets from Libya into Ireland. In March 1973 he was arrested with a huge shipment of Libyan weapons. After his release from prison, he was known to be a frequent clandestine visitor to the US where he met republican fund-raisers and gun-runners. The meeting came as the U.S. administration was gearing up to build a coalition for its war on international terrorism, following the attacks on New York and Washington by Moslem fundamentalists. The visit of the recently appointed ambassa-



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...dor to the Ard Fheis was played up by Sinn Fein sources as giving an 'imprimatur' on the party's current policies, including that on the decommissioning of IRA weapons. But well-informed sources in both Ireland and the US warn that it could 'backfire badly' on Sinn Fein as it is certain to embarrass President Bush's strong anti-terrorist campaign.