



Texaco garage , Roxboro, Limerick 2004

# COR-DON SA-NI-TAIRE

Paul Tarpey



## Title

Cor-don Sa-ni-taire 2004-

## Medium

Photographic image scanned from negative on Perma Jet 250 gramme paper 91 x 61 x 4 cm. Framed with wood and glass with gold leaf vinyl text on glass surface. The framed piece is accompanied with an edition of 100 national freepost postcards with similar image and text.

## Installation

Available wall space for the framed piece with the postcards to be made available at gallery reception desk.

## Artist statement

Cor-don Sa-ni-taire 2004- is an image that references the limit of a boundary created by the Irish Riot Police who prevented protesting marchers from entering Shannon Airport on June 26th 2004. This was the occasion of the visit of the US president George W Bush for the US / EU summit in nearby Dromoland Castle.

A dominant issue of this protest was the contested nature of Irish compliance in the Iraq war by an Irish government who had granted unlegislated use of Shannon airport to the US military. This still remains in place and continues to contradict article 29, number 1 of the Irish constitution, which states: Ireland affirms its devotion to the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst Nations founded on International justice and morality.

The definition of a Cordon Sanitaire (cor-don sa-ni-taire) states that it is 'A chain of buffer states organized around a nation considered ideologically dangerous or potentially hostile'. The text 'Shannon D I E THR U .' commemorates a then intervention that referenced the war traffic on a sign for the McDonalds DRIVE THROUGH in Shannon town. This was an anonymous intervention that remained in place for the visit.

Little documentation or commemoration of this 2004 citizen protest remains. The march itself gave rise to a significant amount of associated agit-prop events unique to the main events that are mostly forgotten. Cor-don Sa-ni-taire exists as a visual marker that references the spirit of such acts. It commemorates the physicality and need for citizen led action and its human consequence. The short visit by Bush exposed the fragility of the constitution and generated new knowledge in respect to what the US military now expect on demand from this neutral country.





# WHAT HAS BEEN SHALL ALWAYS NEVER BE AGAIN

Curated by **Ian Alden Russell**  
Ormson house Gallery Limerick  
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## Cor-don Sa-ni-taire

In June 25 2004 George W Bush arrived in Shannon airport for a EU-US Summit. Security guidelines requested by the US ensured that 2,000 Irish troops and 4,000 Gardaí kept 1,000 anti-war /anti-Bush protestors in a Cordon Sanitaire. The boundaries of this cordon included both the airport and the summit base in nearby Dromoland castle. This security presence exceeded that of any previous US president and cost the Irish taxpayer €2 million.

Protests on the Iraq war, and the compliance of the Irish state in the continuing use of Shannon for war purposes, were held simultaneously in Dublin, Galway, Waterford and Sligo. Almost 200 Dublin lawyers called for the arrest of Bush for war crimes and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions denounced him as “a menace to world peace”.

Specifically, in relation to Shannon airport, the protestors held that this visit was evidence of the continuing abuse of article 29, number 1 of the Irish constitution which states: Ireland affirms its devotion to the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst Nations founded on International justice and morality.

It is reckoned that an average of 10,000 US soldiers pass through Shannon each month with military and other clandestine US aircraft remaining a constant presence in the airport. On occasion stopover groups of US troops have appeared in uniform outside the airport. To allow this, official permission from the Irish government must be sought.

At the time of Bush's visit there was public concern that the continuing use of Shannon by American forces would invite anti-American terrorist activity. The authorities denied this. At the summit an Irish EU presidency spokesman said. “We are not involved in the war in Iraq. We have no troops involved in it. So there is no reason for us to be specifically targeted for attack.” In fact the Irish government has waived charges for the use of all Irish airspace, thus effectively subsidizing the US war effort and technically making the Irish complicit in the application of US foreign policy.

Official denials aside, the Irish compliance to US requests sequestered Irish forces to enforce US demands without question. As part of this process, Gardaí called to each of Shannon's 2,800 homes and business premises to vet residents. The resulting database was to be made available on request to US authorities. Any resident who choose not to comply with this process would then be cautioned and told that they may not be issued with an access pass for the area during the Bush visit. The Department of Justice confirmed that a wing in Limerick prison was to be made available for use as a detention center in the event of any disorder arising from the visit. Some Irish contractors for Shannon based US multinationals vetted their staff themselves. In one such company a known protestor who was employed on a temporary contract company was instructed to take leave for the duration of the visit.

Before the visit the Irish Independent newspaper reported that “anti-war protesters argue that the Government is merely engaging in a form of Jesuitical wordplay over Shannon. The official position is we are ‘providing facilities’ at Shannon for transiting US forces. But how does facilitating somebody differ from offering support or assistance? The spokesman responds that the long-standing arrangement with the Americans at Shannon “is not an involvement in war”. To date there has never been an official government debate on what protestors currently describe as the ‘improper use’ of Shannon airport.

A Bush protest organiser, Roger Cole, condemned the Taoiseach's position on Shannon. He said the lives of Irish citizens had been put in danger by the nature of the agreement between the Irish State and the enforcing of American foreign policy “Bertie Ahern’ he said, has totally reneged on the fundamental role of a Taoiseach - to protect his people.’

Speaking before Bush's visit, the former Irish army commandant, UN peacekeeper and peace activist Edward Horgan stated at the time that the most worrying aspect of the Cordon Sanitaire would be the immunity demanded by the Americans should they kill any demonstrators here. Horgan stated in the Irish Independent newspaper that the likelihood is that the Irish Government has already given them such immunity.

As Bush left the summit on Saturday 26th June hundreds marched on Shannon to see him off. The diversity of the marchers was notable as families and the youth of traditional left came together before being prevented from entering Shannon by rows of riot police. The crowd dispersed peacefully once it was accepted that Bush had departed.

Attending this march the writer Harry Browne described the creative nature of the protests emphasizing a variety of performance embedded within the event. This included an updated Iraq-quoting version of Shakespeare performed as ‘McBush.’

Browne also mentioned transient details that temporally contextualised the landscape and focused a particular reading based on the identity of Shannon as occupied space.

“A sign pointing the way to the local McDonald's was carefully amended to read ‘SHANNON D I E THR U’. Shannon is an important link in the chain of corruption and brutality that runs from the boardrooms of America, through the White House, and into the oilfields of Iraq. Breaking that link would give encouragement to others resisting the Empire, and it would weaken the chain.”

The subject of Shannon as a site of protest remains. In July 2013 Margaretta D'Arcy of Galway Alliance Against War faced charges of interfering with the proper use of the airport. In a statement, she described her protest as one of ‘active citizenship’ and quoted the call by Irish President Michael D Higgins for the Irish people to conduct “conversations” in public places as part of active citizenship.

In 2012 The US president Barack Obama has officially thanked the Irish Government for the ongoing support of Shannon airport.