



DOUBLING OF MUSLIMS REFUSED ENTRY AT CORK AIRPORT

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The number of Muslims deemed to be a security risk and refused entry through Cork Airport has almost doubled in the past two months.

Further armed gardaí are expected to be posted to the airport as concerns heighten about the continuing threat of Islamic extremist terrorist attacks in Western Europe.

Gardaí are also liaising closely with the Muslim community in Cork and monitoring its own ranks amid fears of infiltration by Islamic State (IS) cells or "lone wolf" fighters.

Senior gardaí say around 40 people who had arrived at the airport on foreign flights in the past two months had been refused entry.

The figure compares to about 12 each month in the previous year.

Chief Superintendent Michael Finn said gardaí were extremely vigilant in the wake of recent terrorist attacks in London and Paris. He said people were refused entry because of concerns about the validity of their passports and other paperwork they were carrying.

Chief Supt Finn said that gardaí were not monitoring any specific threat from Muslim extremists in the Cork region, but were liaising closely on a continuing basis with members of the local Muslim community.

"They are as concerned [about the IS terrorist threat] as we are," he said. "They feel vulnerable that there could be a backlash against them if anything happens."

"We are having regular meetings with them to reassure them that if they thought they had concerns about anybody in their community, they can call us."

Chief Supt Finn said that, in the wake of terrorist attacks in other European cities, British authorities have already tightened up security at their airports.

Armed gardaí are already present at Cork Airport. However, their numbers are likely to be increased amid heightened European concerns about attacks.

The divisional chief said the likely advent of transatlantic flights coming to the airport next year would also demand an increased armed security response.

Norwegian Air International has made an application with the U.S. department of transport to commence transatlantic flights between Boston and Cork.

The application has still to be cleared in the U.S. but significant lobbying was undertaken by a Cork County Council delegation which visited Massachusetts last week. The delegation remains hopeful it will be signed off on soon.

The chief superintendent made his comments following security questions by Fine Gael TD Jerry Buttimer which were posed at a meeting of the Cork City Joint Policing Committee in City Hall yesterday.

Mr Buttimer said that, following the Paris and London terror attacks, it was important to know what security measures were being put in place here to counter any potential threat to national security.

"It's important that we maintain vigilance at our airport [Cork] and port [Ringaskiddy/Tivoli] to ensure we are not a gateway into other European countries for terrorists and drug traffickers," Mr Buttimer said.

Meanwhile, Minister for Defence Simon Coveney has indicated that while he wants to see the Naval Service return to humanitarian rescue missions in the Med next spring, it will depend on assessing the changing security situation in Libya.

He made his comments after reports that IS had occupied around 200km of Libya's northern coast, from where people-smugglers have been launching boats.

It has been reported that British and U.S. special forces have been sent into Libya to gather intelligence on IS, which is said to have established a new headquarters in Sirte and in camps where they are training children as young as 14.

SOURCE: IRISH EXAMINER

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