

'We did good work together': JFK in Ireland 1963

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John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected President of the United States of America on 8 November 1960. In terms of the total votes cast, his win was a narrow one and he obtained only 118,000 more votes than Richard Nixon. This was a margin of only 0.17%, with nearly 69 million votes cast.¹ The Electoral College (EC) system that the United States uses, did not reflect such a small victory. Kennedy won 303 EC votes against Nixon's 219 - a margin of 17%. (It should also be noted that via the 'quirky' EC system, white supremacist and segregationist Henry Byrd – who did not even stand as a candidate – received fifteen EC votes from members in Alabama, Mississippi and Oklahoma.)² Kennedy was the first Roman Catholic to become President. Both his father, Joseph, who died in 1969, and his brother Joseph Jr. (killed in action, August 1944), had harboured ambitions for the presidency before him. The family's political ascent through Democrat politics began with the election of grandfather Patrick to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1884. The family had migrated from Ireland to the US in the late 1840s, because of the potato famine.

Kennedy was inaugurated on 20 January 1961. The Irish government, via Head of State (*Uachtarán na hÉireann*) Eamon De Valera, immediately extended an invitation for him to visit Ireland. Sean Lemass, who had taken over from De Valera as Prime Minister (*Taoiseach*) in 1959, had inaugurated a Programme for Economic Expansion.³ This was a step away from the protectionist policies that had been in place since the 30s, in favour of offering tax breaks and grants to foreign firms wishing to locate in Ireland. Not all these arrangements were profitable for Ireland. Less than 50 jobs resulted from the decision by Lemass to sell gas and oil exploration rights to the Ambassador Oil Corporation, Fort

¹ See <<https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/campaign-of-1960>>.

² See <<https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/1960>>.

³ Like De Valera, Lemass took part in the 1916 Easter Rising, and was later active in the war of Independence 1916-1921, and Civil War 1921-1923. Elected a TD – a member of the lower house of the Irish parliament – in 1924, he became a government minister, under De Valera, in 1939 and took over from De Valera as leader of Fianna Fáil and *Taoiseach* in 1959, holding the office until 1966.

Worth, Texas in 1959 for £500.⁴

Both De Valera and Lemass were aware that the Irish economy remained weak. The population continued the decline that had started after the potato famine and had fallen 2.8 million by the early 60s. Like Australia and New Zealand, Ireland remained part of the Sterling Zone and its economy was closely linked to that of its nearest neighbour, the UK. Seeking to improve matters, Lemass and his government applied to join the EEC on 31 July 1961.

In late 1961 Kennedy confirmed he might visit Ireland if 'there were a substantial event that would justify his doing so'. Eventually, it was agreed he would come to the country for three days, beginning on 26 June 1963, arriving immediately after he had concluded a trip to West Berlin.⁵ When this was confirmed, the UK government attempted to get Kennedy to visit Northern Ireland, possibly to open a tourist attraction at the Giants Causeway. These were rebuffed and it was suggested that Prime Minister Harold MacMillan do this instead.⁶

In the meantime, preparations commenced. Additional telephone lines were installed for press use in Dublin, and the White House helpfully confirmed the identities of the persons 'attached to the Embassy' for the President's visit and even of his personal security detail.⁷ A frantic search commenced to find Kennedy's remaining Irish relatives. Distant cousins were unearthed and interviewed at length by the media.⁸ Finally, there were approaches from documentary film producers anxious to record the event for posterity. Wolper

⁴ See <<https://shorturl.at/RN79E>> or <<https://www.historyireland.com/sale-of-the-centurythe-500-deal-for-irelands-gas-and-oil/>> which records 'In 1961 a two-thirds share in those rights was sold for \$450,000 [. . .] by 1975, following the discovery of gas off the coast of Kinsale, Co. Cork, the lease was valued at £31 million.'

⁵ Where he made his famous 'Ich Bien Ein Berliner' speech.

⁶ Irish State Archive files TAOIS/s17401A/63 and DFA/6/434/682/10 show Kennedy declined a visit to Northern Ireland and suggested to the UK that MacMillan visit the Giant's Causeway. MacMillan didn't.

⁷ File DFA/6/434/682/23 records those 'on temporary duty with the Embassy in connection with the proposed visit of the President to Ireland' among whom were John Burke, later US Ambassador to Guyana during the Jonestown massacre, and James Pettus, Press Attache at the London Embassy, and later in a similar role in Australia during the removal of Gough Whitlam as PM in 1975. For Burke see <<https://shorturl.at/ZpAgL>> or <<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/united-states-ambassador-guyana-nomination-john-r-burke>> For Pettus see <<https://adst.org/OH%2520TOCs/Pettus,%2520James.toc.pdf>>. File TSCH/3/S17401D/63 lists Kennedy's personal security detail among whom are John Roberts (CIA, London Embassy) and John Sullivan (US Secret Service).

⁸ Rather like President Biden today, whose ancestors left for the US at the same time as Kennedy's.

Productions were particularly keen. Their 1959 film *The Race for Space* had been nominated for an Academy Award, and one can imagine them promoting Kennedy as a young, hopeful, telegenic leader surrounded by cheering crowds. An Irish-Dutch combination – Vincent Corcoran and George Sluizer – were also interested. Corcoran had been cameraman on two heroic accounts of the Irish War of Independence *Mise Eire* (1959) and *Saoirse?* (1961) and his account of Kennedy's visit would probably have been framed in similar terms, presenting the event as a final triumphant coming of age for the Irish people. In the end neither were accepted, though Corcoran and Sluizer did eventually make *Ireland* (1966) for the Irish government.

Other than a possible curiosity about visiting his ancestral homeland, and shoring up the Irish vote back home by doing so, why was Kennedy coming? The files held at the Irish State Archives say he was interested in visiting Shannon Airport industrial estate. The first location in the world to offer 'duty-free' facilities, this had similarities to the US sponsored free ports found in the Caribbean. It was also a key transit point in and out of Europe for US aircraft, civil and military. However, it seems unlikely that the Americans would put the effort into organising a full-scale State Visit so that JFK could have a brief look at an industrial estate. There are clues that other matters, referred to obliquely throughout, may have been important. Correspondence on file, and dated just prior to Kennedy's arrival, refers to the setting up of an American Irish Foundation, and a possible 'quarantine station on an island off the Irish coast'.⁹

The proposed American Irish Foundation, mentioned in a letter dated 17 June 1963, would have promoted extensive cultural ties, run training and education schemes, organised employee placements and generally cultivated closer links between the two countries. On the US side some prominent trustees were proposed, including Peter Grace, a Democrat who later swung markedly to the right, and Rose Saul Zalles a noted 'Washington socialite and world traveller'.¹⁰ The quarantine station is mentioned on 19 June 1963 as a place where 'live stock from Western Europe could be brought into Ireland and the United States under safe conditions'. Apparently, this was something to do with eliminating foot and mouth disease.

Kennedy and his entourage flew into Ireland on 26 June 1963 in 4 Boeing 707's accompanied by 4 'heavy' and 6 'light' helicopters. He was accompanied by his sisters Eunice Shriver and Jean Smith, and sister-in-law, Princess Lee

⁹ See TAOIS/s17401B/63 for details of the American Irish Foundation and DFA/10/2/380 for the quarantine station.

¹⁰ See her 1987 obituary at <<https://archive.md/ZkKQ3>> or <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1987/05/17/rose-zalles-world-traveler-socialite-dies/0756d7c2-5b1a-455b-a321-ce046f2c0608/>>.

Radziwill.¹¹ His wife, Jacqueline Kennedy, was heavily pregnant with their third child and remained in the US.¹²

As would be expected, the visit was carefully orchestrated in minute detail. Papers show that a Garden Party and State Dinner, both held in Dublin on 27 June, attracted particular attention. The former contains correspondence concerning Lord Longford, who was anxious to attend, presumably on behalf of the UK opposition Labour Party, and Eddie McAteer, MP for Foyle in the Northern Ireland Parliament at Stormont, who wanted to ensure that 'northern nationalists' were not present at the reception.¹³ The State Dinner was presided over by Eamon De Valera, who seems to have used it to make a speech in which he referred to *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland*, a book written in 1904 by Arthur Griffiths, one of the founders of Sinn Fein. Griffiths had been suggesting Irish independence under a dual monarchy, similar to that of Austria-Hungary. Presumably De Valera was making the point that Ireland had always sought an accommodation with the UK, but the UK had not reciprocated.¹⁴

The amount of time spent by civil servants on the seating plan – with Archbishops and Bishops positioned according to their rank and date of ordination – is particularly revealing. Special pleadings were made to ensure that up-and-coming politicians Charles Haughey and Jack Lynch (accompanied by their wives) had favourable positions whilst an X is listed against proposed invitees Dr and Mrs Solomons of Dún Laoghaire, County Dublin. At this distance it is hard to determine whether this meant they were 'in' or 'out' but it may be relevant, given the presence of so many religious, that their son was a prominent advocate of family planning.¹⁵

¹¹ Shriver's husband was Sargent Shriver, Director of the Peace Corps. Smith was married to Stephen Smith, Kennedy's campaign manager, and Radziwill's husband was Prince Stanislaw Radziwill.

¹² Jacqueline Kennedy gave birth to her third child, Patrick Bouvier Kennedy, on 7 August 1963. He died from a serious lung ailment two days later.

¹³ All referred to in file DFA/6/434/682/22. As his name would suggest Longford had strong Irish connections and would later serve as Secretary of State for the Colonies and Lord Privy Seal whilst being Wilson's Leader of the House of Lords. He also held cabinet rank in the Attlee government. McAteer and his colleague Joseph Stewart were anxious to exclude less moderate nationalists. Also in attendance, at the State Dinner, was Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, a prominent Anglo-American industrialist and philanthropist, long resident in Ireland.

¹⁴ PRES/1/P5916 contains a letter from De Valera to Kennedy (23 July 1963) reminding him of this.

¹⁵ On Solomons see <https://jewishmuseum.ie/jews-of-ireland/prominent_people/bethel-solomons/>. On his son see <<https://www.dib.ie/biography/solomons-michael-joseph-maurice-a9544>>.

The following day Kennedy addressed the Dail.¹⁶ It was a remarkable speech, and made much of the connections between Ireland and the US whilst ignoring – completely – Ireland’s close relationship with the UK. He saluted the country for being ‘the first of the small nations in the twentieth century to win its struggle for independence’ and, in language that would have grated in London, drew a direct parallel between its experience of ‘foreign domination’ and the continuing Soviet occupation of eastern Europe. In a possible echo of De Valera’s speech the previous day, he referred to Hungary, and its struggles in 1956, as well as his own Berlin speech a few days earlier. For the future, he praised Ireland’s role in UN peacekeeping and endorsed its application to join the EEC.

On 29 June Kennedy headed to Galway, where he stopped for a brief visit, before flying back to the US from Shannon Airport. One aspect of the Galway trip that caused a commotion in official circles was a subsequent dispute about payment for a hotel room that had been reserved for Kennedy’s use that day. Given he only stopped in Galway for an hour (11.30 am to 12.30 pm) why did he need a hotel room? Smelling something odd, the civil servants asked the head of the Gardai in Galway to check if the room had been used. Official memos are in Gaelic after this point. Eventually, and with the room apparently not used, they agreed to pay the outstanding £7 (approximately £150 today).¹⁷

Other correspondence relating to the visit had a decidedly sinister tone. De Valera was written to on 27 June by Joseph Beauharnois, asking him to forward an enclosed letter from The White Circle League of America to Kennedy. The content is racist, abusive and threatening with Kennedy referred to the ‘Uncrowned White Pope and Father of the American Negro’. Another hand written, largely indecipherable letter, equally threatening and abusive, arrived from the US, followed in early July by an unsigned card sent to Lemass, sharply criticizing Kennedy, and saying that LBJ should take over, once Kennedy had been impeached.¹⁸

A great deal of Kennedy’s visit was centred on ceremonial and civic occasions. But there were clearly discussions about policy. It appears, from reading the files, that this included a way for Ireland, as a neutral and non-

¹⁶ The speech can be read in full at <<https://shorturl.at/iDMPn>> or <<https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/address-before-the-irish-parliament>>.

¹⁷ Correspondence on which is held in file DFA/6/434/682/22.

¹⁸ The Beauharnois letter is in file PRES/1/P5916. He had previously been prosecuted in the US for engaging in abusive correspondence. See <<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/343/250/>>. The unsigned card sent to Lemass can be read at TSCH/3/S17401D/63.

aligned state, to assist US and NATO security, with agreement delayed until Lemass made a reciprocal visit to the US in the autumn of 1963. One item, as noted above, occurs in a memo dated 1 July 1963 and refers to 'a joint American-Irish operation to establish an animal quarantine station on an island off the Irish coast. He [JFK] displayed interest but offered no view on the possibility of US participation'.

This was a reference to Spike Island, a fortified island within Cork harbour that had been a UK base until 1938. It remained an Irish military facility until 1985, and was used as a prison until 2004, before being converted into a museum. An animal quarantine station was indeed established there, in November 1964, by Minister of Agriculture, Charles Haughey, who attended accompanied by representatives of the Irish Navy. Coverage by Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTE) mentions the importing of livestock from France and the Netherlands, but *not* the US. Quite how long this facility existed isn't clear, but it seems to have been out of use by 1979. Nor is it clear if the US ever imported or exported livestock via Spike Island. Why would they? They had their own facility in Clifton, New Jersey. Was an unnecessary animal quarantine station on Spike Island a 'cover' for some type of non-attributable military/naval co-operation?¹⁹

Some in the Dail clearly thought so. On 16 July 1963 Progressive Democrat TD's Dr Noel Browne (Dublin South East) and Jack McQuillan (Roscommon) asked, in a written question, if 'an invitation has been received by Ireland to take part in any military agreement in Europe' and whether discussions with President Kennedy had raised the question of 'Irish bases . . . as an alternative to bases in Europe which are available at the moment to the US'. During a debate, Labour TD Steve Coughlan made a similar enquiry about NATO and possible bases in Ireland. Official denials were made in both cases. The same file, though, contains written confirmation to ministers that US armed guards were occasionally placed on US aircraft at Shannon Airport, confirmation that it was used as a transit point by non-civilian flights. There is also correspondence from Betty de Courcy, Secretary of Irish CND, who was a well-known activist.²⁰

The records covering Sean Lemass's return visit to the US, in October 1963, are much as one would expect. He made a speech calling for the end of partition, had meetings with companies that might invest in Ireland and

¹⁹ On Spike Island see

<<https://www.rte.ie/archives/2019/1107/1089258-spike-island-quarantine-station/>> and <<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1979-07-17/173/>>.

²⁰ All contained in file TSCH/3/S17401D/63. For a biography of de Courcy, who appears unrelated to her namesake Kenneth see <<https://www.dib.ie/biography/ireland-beatrice-de-courcy-betty-bet-nee-haigh-a4211>>.

discussed at some length the country's application to join the EEC. This was expected to occur – despite De Gaulle's veto of the UK's bid – 'by 1970'. On file are notes of Lemass's talks with Duncan Sandys (mainly about Cyprus and peace-keeping operations), Harold Wilson (highly generalised with Wilson not making specific commitments, or positive suggestions) and Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home (on trade and Europe, with Douglas-Home not saying very much about the latter).

Kennedy and Lemass discussed the attitude of the UK government toward joining the EEC on 15 October. Lemass thought a Labour government would be harder to deal with than a Conservative. Kennedy thought Labour would do more to get the UK into EEC. The US view was that Wilson would be more positive about Europe than Gaitskell. Lemass disagreed, and spoke of an ingrained anti-EEC sentiment within Labour.²¹

These exchanges were private, but within the public domain. What followed wasn't. The relevant file contains a *Secret Memoranda of Conversations at the White House on 15th October 1963 and at the Department of State on 16th October 1963*. The content of the discussions on the first day, which started at 4pm, are set out in a separate *Memorandum of 15th October 1963*. A later memo (presumably from some time in either 1964 or 1965) reminds Lemass

This arrangement originated in the discussion which the Taoiseach had with the late President Kennedy at the White House on the 15th October 1963. A copy of a secret memorandum made by the Americans of that discussion was received from the then American Ambassador here and shown to the Taoiseach.

What exactly are we talking about here? The *Memorandum of 15th October 1963* on the Kennedy/Lemass discussions records, in paragraph 18, that Irish officials were searching aircraft from the eastern bloc that were bound for Havana via Shannon Airport, presumably to monitor who was travelling to and from Cuba, and what they were carrying with them. Paragraph 19 has Lemass asking Kennedy about Cuba itself, with Kennedy replying that Soviet troops were down to 5000, Cuban export crops had been damaged by hurricanes and Havana and Moscow 'were not getting on'. Prior to that, though (paragraphs 16 and 17) contain a reference to co-operation on fishery policy in the north Atlantic:

Turning the [sic] Sea Fisheries Resources of Ireland, Mr Lemass spoke of the immense possibilities for development. The Irish authorities, he

²¹ See files GIS1/218, S17400/E/95 and 2007/58/19. In private discussions on ending partition, Kennedy told Lemass that the Labour Party would be more helpful. Lemass disagreed. See Michael O'Sullivan, *Sean Lemass: A Biography* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1994) p. 167.

mentioned, would be glad to have access to the research carried on by a deep-sea exploratory vessel. President Kennedy replied by referring to the visit to Dublin, quite recently, of Mr J Carr, US Under-Secretary of the Interior.

Against this is a hand written annotation 'Extract put on relevant file.'²²

Why did this require a secret memorandum? And one the Irish government could deny, on the basis that they did not possess a copy? Was this really about fishery research? Given that the US fishing fleet hardly ever visits Irish waters, probably not. It looks like a euphemism for something else. The day after his meeting with Kennedy, Lemass had discussions at the State Department with Dean Rusk. These opened with Rusk asking if 'everything is alright?' in relations between the two countries. After which he expounds on nuclear test treaties, the UN, the stand-off with Soviet Union and finally prospects for US tourism in Ireland (the last part containing highly American views about visiting old castles, staying in nice hotels, and so on).

After which, Lemass and his team returned home. Shortly after his arrival a telegram arrived from Kennedy, dated 20 October 1963, thanking him for his visit and saying 'I think we did good work together'. By 20 November 1963 a courteous and uncontroversial reply from Lemass had been agreed. A sad memento of events two days later, it remains unsigned and attached to a stamped (but not franked) envelope in the file. One imagines it being intercepted and filed away once news came through of Kennedy's assassination

US involvement in 'fishery research' in Irish waters continued to feature in official correspondence in the aftermath of the 1963 visits. A letter dated 3 January 1964 to Dr O'Nuallain (Department of the Taoiseach) states on page 2:

It will be noted that the reports now received are more extensive than the memoranda we received through the American Ambassador here and that the present reports cover such matters as the question of co-operation in fishery research which were not mentioned in the earlier memoranda.

An annotation (by hand) in the margin of this states 'See Taoiseach's minute to me of 18.11.63'. This minute has not survived on the official record, but one imagines that it was a briefing about an agreement reached between Lemass and Kennedy during their talks in Washington. A further note, from late 1964 records 'The practical effect of the discussion was the survey carried out by the American Survey Team who presented their report to the Taoiseach in June 1964' and, as if to remind Lemass about this, a memo dated 9 April 1965,

²² See file DFA/10/2/381.

records an 'Arrangement entered into by the late President Kennedy.'²³

A close reading of the correspondence indicates that Lemass and Kennedy reached an agreement in October 1963. It is unlikely this was about fishery research, and much more likely that it covered naval (or military) matters involving the US, a member of NATO. The US kept a secret memorandum of this, a copy of which was held by the US Ambassador in Dublin. The Irish government did not have a copy, and could, therefore, plausibly deny its existence. The visit of Mr J Carr, US Under-Secretary of the Interior to Dublin was likely connected to this.²⁴ By early 1964 Irish civil servants were noting that 'reports now received are more extensive' and were 'not mentioned in the earlier memoranda'. An American Survey Team presented Lemass with its report in June 1964. It appears Lemass may have queried some aspects of this. When he did, he was reminded of the 'Arrangement entered into by the late President Kennedy.' (Phrased in this way, in an official document, it would imply to the casual reader that it was a reference to something the Irish government were not really involved with.)

All of which leads to the vexed subject of Irish neutrality. Article 49 of the 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State states 'Save in the case of actual invasion, the Irish Free State . . . shall not be committed to active participation in any war without the assent of the Oireachtas [Parliament].' This is not strictly the same as neutrality, and in many ways is the the position most countries with a written constitution would take: i.e. if invaded we will automatically defend ourselves, but in any other case Parliament will decide.

Because Ireland has not fought a war since independence, it is taken as having an inviolable commitment to neutrality. Despite keeping to this line, it is clear successive Irish governments have co-operated with the west (and the UK), usually in secret, and with the object to strengthening their security.

Although officially neutral in September 1939, secret talks commenced with British ministers and military figures, in London on 24 May 1940 (once

²³ For this, and the above see DFA/6/436/160 ANNEXE and 98/6/464.

²⁴ For details on Mr Carr and his career see <<https://shorturl.at/AsSz3>> or <<https://static.jfklibrary.org/4h10b101ks7txn7xm77qvc856u7amd.pdf>>. In this he states that his responsibilities included 'the possibilities of desalting sea water with nuclear power as a heat agent' and 'the Kennedy Foundation had sponsored some studies and it had been shown that mental retardation apparently has some connection with protein deficiency during pregnancy and the lactation period . . . Eunice Shriver was interested in this very, very much and talked to me about it . . . I've naturally found it impossible to throw away my interest in desalting sea water and fish protein concentrate and these other things that we worked on . . . I'm presently serving as a consultant for the Atomic Energy Commission. I have been called recently both on desalting of sea water and the question of who should own the uranium enrichment plants'.

Neither desalination of sea water nor nuclear power were matters germane to Ireland.

German forces had reached the English Channel, but prior to Dunkirk) about how best to defend Ireland from German invasion. After follow-up talks in Dublin it was agreed that once German forces had landed, the Irish would call for assistance from the UK government who would authorise an advance by British forces in Northern Ireland into the Irish Republic.²⁵

Later, with the Battle of the Atlantic going badly, and the UK needing to maximize its aerial reconnaissance of the ocean, a secret agreement was reached in January 1941 between Eamon De Valera and John Maffey, the British representative in Dublin. This allowed RAF flying boats to take off from Lough Erne, in Northern Ireland, and fly across a 4-mile strip of neutral Ireland to access the Atlantic. By the end of the war Ireland had also agreed to the UK 'establishing a radar station in Southern Ireland for use against the latest form of submarine activity'.²⁶

It isn't clear where this radar station was, or if it became operational. But in 1952 De Valera agreed a secret memorandum of understanding with the UK government which allowed the RAF to intercept hostile aircraft in Irish airspace. One consequence of this was that the Lough Erne corridor remained in use for fighter and reconnaissance flights into the Atlantic. As noted above, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Seán Lemass authorised searches of aircraft that stopped over at Shannon between Warsaw Pact countries and Cuba; and that same year (1962) went on record stating 'NATO is necessary for the preservation of peace and the protection of the countries of western Europe, including this country. Although we are not members of NATO, we are fully in agreement with its aims.'²⁷

The secrecy around the Kennedy-Lemass talks of 1963 and the subsequent visit of the US Survey Team need to be considered in this context. The 'fishery research' referred to may have been the construction, somewhere in Ireland, of an Indicator Loop Station. Indicator Loops are deep sea cables, stretching across the ocean floor, with ASDIC repeaters at regular intervals. A network of these exists across the Atlantic and North Sea, providing NATO with advance warning of movements by Russian submarines. The function of the on-shore

²⁵ Ireland was represented in the talks by Joseph Walshe (Secretary of External Affairs) and Colonel Lionel Archer (Irish Military Intelligence) and the UK by Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Clarke.

²⁶ See a report setting out Ireland's assistance to the UK, by Viscount Cranborne, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 21 February 1945.

²⁷ The statement 'If Europe is worth joining, it is worth defending' is also attributed to Lemass. His government also prepared as best it could for nuclear war. See <<https://shorturl.at/UQLoE>> or <<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art/2024/05/11/inside-irelands-nuclear-fallout-shelter-its-more-a-basement-than-a-bunker/>>.

Indicator Loop Station is to collate this data and pass it on to the nearest NATO HQ.²⁸

Such matters, and Irish neutrality, continue to concern many in government in Ireland, the US, UK and EU. A report in the Irish edition of *The Sunday Times* (2 June 2024) was headlined 'Hunt for Putin attack sub off the west coast'. It noted France, Norway and the UK had deployed aircraft 'to an area off Sligo and Donegal' after reports of 'a suspected Russian submarine off the west coast of Ireland'. All parties declined to comment, though an unnamed NATO spokesperson did state 'NATO forces routinely track Russian ships and submarines near allied waters.' It isn't clear how they knew a submarine was in the vicinity of Sligo and Donegal in the first place, particularly when no photographs were provided of it running on the surface.

Whatever JFK and Lemass agreed in 1963 – and its tempting to believe it was something facilitating NATO defence lines across the Atlantic – such matters, and the vexed issue of Irish neutrality, continue to be a concern for governments in Ireland, the US and UK.

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Simon Matthews' latest book is

Before it Went Rotten: The Music that Rocked London's Pubs 1972-1976

See <<https://oldcastlebooks.co.uk/bookpage.php?isbn=9780857305749>>.

²⁸ Spike Island would be a perfect location for such a facility, as indeed would any of the small islands off Ireland's west coast.