

NEWS



**HARBORING DETAILS:** Fine Gael Justice Spokesman Alan Shatter at the scene of the fatal shooting

## Garda chief defends elite squad's role at Abbeylara

**GARDA** Commissioner Pat Byrne today defended the gardai's action at Abbeylara at an Oireachtas inquiry into the death of John Carthy.

He said that he fully supported the decision to deploy the gardai's elite Emergency Response Unit and the crucial decisions taken when John Carthy was shot dead.

"The tactical decision have to be taken by the person in charge of the tactical unit," he said.

He added that gardai were trained to make decisions on the ground in relation to the use of firearms.

The decisions could not be taken by someone removed from the scene.

"We are trained to be proactive. We do not believe in

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the philosophy of sitting back and waiting for someone else to do it."

Commissioner Byrne was one of a number of top gardai appearing before the sub committee on its first day of hearing evidence.

He said a major problem was that gardai could not engage with John Carthy.

"It was very unusual because the negotiator, who was one of our best, could not get John Carthy to engage," he said.

Commissioner Byrne also supported the gardai's decision to let John Carthy emerge from his house and get as far as the roadway

outside, which was criticised by FBI officers called in to investigate the affair.

Asked about the gardai's own Abbeylara report, he said he would not put his name to it unless he was satisfied with what it contained.

But he added that, in hindsight, at least one section of the report claiming that John Carthy's prowess as a handball player was overstated, should perhaps have been approached differently.

Committee member Brendan Howlin put it to him that the statement of gardai contained in the report had been treated in a different way from statements given by non-members of the force.

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**GARDA PROBE:** CAB says he owes £300,000 in taxes plus penalties

## Foot and mouth fear dealer is arrested

**LIVESTOCK** dealer John Walsh, suspected of importing sheep infected with foot and mouth disease, has been arrested.

Originally from Co Wicklow, Mr Walsh is facing charges in connection with the garda investigation into cattle smuggling as well as revenue offences. Mr Walsh has already been served with a tax bill of £300,000 by the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB).

When penalties are included, the total claim is expected to reach up to £600,000.

Mr Walsh, a former hotelier nicknamed 'The Kerryman' had been operating a livestock business from Clareen, near Birr, Co Offaly.

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He has admitted bringing sheep from England to the Irish Republic and described it as a "stupid mistake".

In a heartfelt public radio plea for forgiveness, he said he was a thousand per cent sorry for the possibility that he had brought foot and mouth infected sheep into south Armagh.

He had bought the animals days before the first outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Britain.

Mr Walsh's company Kingdom Livestock Agents is thousands of pounds in debt, according to the last balance sheet available for his company.

In its last annual return for 1999, creditors, with amounts due in more than one year, total £279,000.

The company's tangible assets, put at £280,000, include a dilapidated Georgian residence, just outside Clareen near Birr, Co Offaly. The farm has no livestock because of a forced cull by the Department of Agriculture.

Mr Walsh bought the Clareen House holding, which originally comprised 250 acres of land, and the two-storey residence in about 1993. A parcel of the land was sold to neighbours some time back but the remaining 151 acres remain unsold.

Described as very self-confident, driven and

shrewd, Walsh was regarded as a good stockman who would often buy sick-looking calves, bring them to health and make a profit.

He is a native of Wicklow and also farmed extensively on mountainy lands at Cadamstown, Kinnity and Blueball.

In recent times his trade has been based around the Midlands and he was a well-known supplier to the Kee-pak meatplant in Athleague, Co Roscommon.

Detectives travelled to England to interview Mr Walsh when he left the country within hours of the row erupting over the original consignment of foot and mouth infected lambs in South Armagh.

## Shop worker wins case against boss

A SHOP Assistant who was wrongly held and interrogated by a security firm acting for her former employer has won her legal action.

Phyllis Campbell (36) of Glin Avenue, Bonnybrook in Dublin lost an original claim at the Circuit Court last February that she had been held against her will and accused of stealing cigarettes and money from the till.

But the High Court awarded her £7,500 in damages as well as all the costs of the original case and the appeal. Mrs Campbell said her employer Lorcan Lynch, publican and owner of Halls Newsagents, Parnell Street, Dublin, had tricked her into going into a room above his neighbouring bar, Conway's Pub, by saying he wanted to have a word with her.

Once in the room, she was repeatedly questioned by two men working for Night-towl Security, subsequently named as Pat Brady, retired Garda Det Sgt and former Garda John Beirne.

She said they led her to believe they were acting in conjunction with the gardai under the authority of Det Sgt Walter O'Connell of Store Street station.

However, Det Sgt O'Connell had no knowledge of the incident on September 25 1998 and had not given his permission for his name to be used.

The men interrogated her in the room for two hours, before producing a pre-written statement for her to sign but released her from the room once she said that she wanted to see a solicitor.