



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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Irish army identifies 300 border crossing points

THE Irish army has completed a confidential mapping of the Northern Ireland border ahead of Brexit that has found substantially more routes into the region than previously thought.

The mapping exercise is believed to have identified almost 300 crossing points across the 310-mile frontier, including many routes that had not been officially recorded before, according to informed sources. The routes are understood to include country lanes, private roads, rights of way across private lands and other unmarked access points leading into Northern Ireland that have the potential to be smuggling routes. The highly sensitive work was conducted by members of the Irish Defence Forces, working with gardai. It involved a physical mapping of the border by army personnel along with desktop work and was completed in recent months.

The Republic's defence forces are continually mapping the border for security purposes, such as during the foot and mouth disease outbreak 17 years ago.

The latest exercise is regarded as particularly significant in light of the potential security risks posed by Brexit.

The updated map of the frontier will form a key part of the security services' contingency planning for a doomsday scenario that could follow Britain plunging out of the EU without a deal. The last report on the border by authorities on both sides of the border in July identified 208 official crossing points.

However, it highlighted only public roadways along the border and did not include any private roads or laneways.

The survey highlighted scores of private crossing points, some of which could be vulnerable to criminality in the event of a hard border. The Irish Army's border mapping work can be viewed in the

context of the security risks posed by Brexit, which were outlined in stark detail at a cross-border crime conference last month.

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris told the conference that dissidents would "undoubtedly" attempt to exploit a hard border as "something they wish to rally around".

But the conference was also warned that even a soft Brexit could lead to challenges, with increases in cross-border smuggling of all kinds, including people trafficking, cigarette and alcohol smuggling and fuel laundering.

The conference was told that 43% of cross-border gangs are highly mobile and operate on both sides of the border.

Previous security assessments have identified 10 criminal gangs dominating cigarette smuggling on both sides of the border.

The Irish government's position is that there must be no return to a hard border.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

20 December 2018

'The minute you put up a hard border it's just a nightmare'; PJ McMonagle's milk crosses the Border twice before reaching the shops

PJ McMonagle supplies Strathroy Dairy in Northern Ireland with about 800,000 litres of milk every year from his farm in Aughnakeeragh, Co Donegal.

The produce from his 120 cows crosses the Border twice before reaching the shops.

The 51-year-old previously supplied a creamery in the Republic but as a result of low milk prices he decided to move to the Omagh company over eight years ago.

Now he is faced with potential disruption to his business as the UK finalises the terms of its withdrawal from the EU, which some fear could result in the return of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

McMonagle's 250 acre-farm is located just outside the east Donegal town of Raphoe, approximately 10 minutes away from the Border near Strabane.

He believes some of his Northern counterparts in the dairy industry might have voted to leave the EU due to its strict farming rules including controls around slurry spreading and time-consuming paperwork.

The father of three, who was the first farmer in the Republic to sell milk to Strathroy Dairy, told Belfast-based investigative website The Detail: "I've spoken to people in the North who voted to

leave and they said if they'd sat back and looked at the situation right they wouldn't have voted that way.

Brainwashed

"They were brainwashed into thinking they would be better off on their own and, when they look at it now in the cold light of day, they know they would have been better off voting to stay. I'm sure if there was a new referendum it would be a clear run for staying in the EU."

However, McMonagle is critical of the amount of EU bureaucracy farmers currently have to deal with.

"The EU needs a bit of a wake-up call because the red tape has got unreal as far as farmers are concerned," he said.

"The department knows more about me than I know about myself. They know every animal that I have, how many acres I have, they know what's on the land, in every field, and people probably felt we would be better off without them. Hopefully this is a wake-up call to sit up and watch what they're doing because the red tape across Europe is madness."

Despite these concerns, McMonagle credits the EU with improving food traceability for the consumer and fears what could happen if tariffs are introduced on products crossing the Border post-Brexit. He receives a base price of about 31 cent plus VAT for every litre of milk he sells to Strathroy, which then sells a two-litre jar in the Republic at about EUR 1.50.

"If there's a tariff on that milk it's going to be at a higher price so people are going to buy a similar product that's cheaper," he added.

Male calves born on McMonagle's farm are sold to local beef farmers or exported to the Netherlands via England to be sold as veal - which he fears could potentially face long delays as a result of increased animal welfare and customs checks after the UK leaves the EU.

Worst-case scenario

"A hard border would be the worst-case scenario. I do business in the North, buy animal feed in the North, my milk goes to the North. Being so close to the Border, you're using contractors coming out of the North, you buy some of your parts in the North.

'Nightmare'

"It's much easier to get to Strabane or Derry than it is to Dublin. We've always been aligned to Northern Ireland rather than Southern Ireland so the minute you put up a hard border it's just a nightmare.

"I would hope we could continue as we are but selling our product will probably become more difficult if there's any kind of a tariff between us and England.

"If you want to sell sheep meat or beef, and maybe even milk, and they put any kind of tariff on that then I'm not getting the price for my product so that puts my business under pressure. That's what I see happening.

Source: The Irish Times