

IRISH AIRSOFT ASSOCIATION

Meeting with the Department of Justice

11th January 2008

Committee Members Present:

Conor Scolard, Ronan Lowe, Sean O'Callaghan, Stephane Ambrosini, Keith Douglas

Department of Justice Representatives:

Garrett Byrne (Principal Officer, Crime 4), John Guinane (Firearms Range Inspector), John Phelan (Crime 4)

I. Announcements

- Garrett Byrne stated that this meeting was for them to get a feel for airsoft, how we see it and the future of the sport
- All those present were introduced and each said their own greeting and small bit about what they do before the discussion.

II. Discussion

- Firstly the meeting started off with the DOJ stating how they came to hear of airsoft, through boards.ie and the radio (Joe Duffy and Drivetime Sports).
 - Garrett asked for our position on how and where the game should be played, policed and the risks involved. Sean explained how the sport is limited to the specific airsoft venues that are dotted throughout the country. He spoke of our two affiliated venues, HRTA and G-TAC. Also we defined ourselves as being a "TAG" sport.
 - Garrett then asked how easily it is to purchase airsoft devices. We mentioned eirsoft.ie, MIA and that most can be bought online from any retailer shipping to Ireland.
 - Sean provided Garrett with the size of the venues, in land mass, and how many teams we have currently on the scene in order to judge how big the sport has become.
 - Garrett queried how the other counties were doing. Ronan spoke of the huge number in Munster and of the need for Regional Sub-Committee's at this point.
 - The basics of the game, honor system, marshals, site rules and the IAA Players Code of Conduct were explained to those present.
 - The DOJ understood the safety of the 1Joule rule, i.e. that according to research in the U.K that an eyeball cannot be penetrated with this force but questioned how we have 2 incidents of teeth being damaged. Ronan went on to give rough estimations of how many bb's on average get fired and how this could have been avoided if the players have been wearing full-face masks.
 - John P. then asked about the safety involved in transporting the devices, how the public perceive these devices and how to prevent any issues like at the Toys 4 Big Boys event. We explained that in the U.S.A that they have adopted the method of painting the tip orange. We provided the negatives to this approach.
 - Stephane used the French system to give some idea on how they are treated in other countries, that they have 2j as their limit and that carrying them is illegal.
-

- John P. questioned how the arrival of the VCRA in the UK has affected the sport. The committee went on to explain how this has effectively “killed” the sport of Airsoft in the UK and out-right crippled international players hoping to attend UK games. This was viewed negatively by all those present.
- John G. asked how we see the “practical pistol” and if it has any place in airsoft. Sean gave his personal opinion that he disliked this practice. It was said that it had been tried in HRTA twice but was not taken up due to lack of interest.
- Garrett explained the problems they saw it were as follows:
 1. How to limit the sale to responsible adults
 2. How to prevent the use of such devices in housing estates
 3. How the public perceives these “guns”
- We stated that in accordance with the IAA Retailers Guidelines that our affiliates will only sell to people over 18 with ID in store and with a Credit Card online.
- The question of how to tell if these devices could be over a joule was raised. According to John G. there is “No designated site to chronograph these” (devices). We explained that most of these have the FPS stated on the front of the box. Ronan went on to explain how simple it is to downgrade these slightly over the limit devices down by merely changing a spring.
- At this point Keith showed the DOJ a sample “M4-type” AEG. He demonstrated the internals, gearbox, piston and chamber. He also showed them a gas powered “glock” pistol. Their initial reaction was one of surprise and understood how the public could perceive these as “Real Guns”.
- John P. asked us what our stance was on lasers. Stephane explained that as per our interpretation of the law, we see such devices as illegal and do not permit them.
- Garrett asked what the cover was for the players who were on-site, i.e. do they have individual insurance and who insures us. We explained that each site would clearly have its own Public-Liability insurance in case of an accident. However we explained that nobody in Ireland currently insures Airsofters.
- Garrett saw the sport as being a positive due to the physical nature and the ability to get children and adolescents out and exercising and the growing number of foreign nationals who are playing the sport which is widespread in other countries.

III. Conclusion

- To conclude the DOJ asked us what we would like them to do in order to safeguard the sport. Ronan and Sean referred to the IAA Retailers Guidelines and the Players Code of Conduct as being the preferred method of controlling the sale and use of these devices. The idea of Airsoft devices being limited to retail by IAA affiliates only was raised.
-