

## **Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Meeting minutes 27/1/2009**

### Present

- Department of Justice Crime 4 Unit
- IAA
  - Stephen Fay, Keith Douglas
- IASRA
  - Derek Talbot, Alan Concannon

### Proceedings

#### Opening Greetings.

DoJ spoke about issues surrounding Airsoft in Ireland.

- Illegal Skirmishing on public land
- Customs and postal service being overwhelmed
- Garda Ballistics and Army spending too much time on equipment testing
- Appearance of the devices

Misc. Provisions Bill coming forward in the next month with regard to firearms

- 1 head regarding Airsoft
- 7 points in the head
  - No details on this but these will not all be enforced, head for the provision of later SI
- Brandishing or carrying in public place to be specific offence
  - Stephen: IAA wishes intent not be required for the offence, take the strict approach

#### Venues

- DoJ does not want to get into managing standards for venues.
- Local Superintendent should be kept in the loop by site owners

DoJ put forward a solution for the Airsoft issues

- All Airsoft devices (Replica firearms) be made of clear plastic.
- IAA and IASRA reps put forward how this and similar approaches in other countries have killed the sport and not eliminated the problem.
  - Bad for the sport
  - Bad for retail
  - Limited models available
  - Ruins collectors aspect
  - Limits attraction of the sport
- Stephen mentions boost to the Irish economy from Airsoft, clear devices will undo this.
- Social acceptance of Airsoft is limited, vs. in the Philippines etc..
- Lifespan of Airsoft devices (with regard to clear guns), it could take years for current non-clear devices to be removed from circulation.
- DoJ feels that the appearance of the devices in the main issue and that must be addresses
- Topic is debated
- Derek Talbot mentions Office of Public Works and his attempts to acquire access to magazine fort in Phoenix Park.
- John Phelan (DoJ) mentions his own experience buying an Airsoft gun at local market and being told by seller "There's something to shoot the pigeons with"

- Customs
  - Issues with identification of equipment
  - Suggestion of Airsoft parts encyclopedia
    - Unworkable to expect customs staff to reference
    - Essentially, they don't know what they're looking at, and have a lot more than Airsoft to deal with
- Comparison of Laws in Poland/Hungary etc.
  - Ireland is at lower end of power scale.
- Issues with importation of devices which are faulty/over 1 Joule despite assurances otherwise.
  - Retailer possibly breaking Law while stock is still over 1J
  - New legislation should take this into account and allow retailers to import but not sell over 1 Joule
- DoJ offers alternative to clear plastic Airsoft devices
  - Strict offence for brandishing or carrying in an irresponsible manor in a public place
  - Retailers must be certified to sell Airsoft devices
  - Only certified Airsoft retailers can import Airsoft devices, individuals cannot import Airsoft devices.
  - Options are presented as a choice between the two
  - Similar to firearms dealer licensing, Derek gives example of new Category C licence
  - Stephen makes the distinction: Airsoft should be kept separate to real firearms laws.
  - IAA States it should be a replica permit and not associated with real firearms permits in any way.
  - Thus is in line with EU Weapons directive coming into force soon

Topic moves to measurement of power of Airsoft devices

- DoJ Confirms that the CJA 2006 limit of 1J has no flexibility, tolerance or margin for error. Devices must be chronographed up to 1J anything above that is a illegal firearm.
- DoJ points out case of shop in Tipperary closed for selling devices above the limit, charges have been made.
- DoJ points out that if a person is injured from a device sold above the limit the seller of the device will be liable in law.

IAA puts forward the progress that the community has made in its development, highlights the new range of clubs that are setting up and how this brings a more socially responsible element.

Derek Talbot puts forward proposals that certified retailers should be available to chronograph devices for the Gardai and customs.

DoJ asks the reps to draw up proposals for a system to certify retailers

- DoJ in favour of "Airsoft only" shops, no mixed retail establishments.

Meeting Ends.

# **IRISH AIRSOFT ASSOCIATION**

**... BY AIRSOFTERS, FOR AIRSOFT**