



# SLÁNDÁIL HAS SUMMIT TO SAY ABOUT IRELAND'S FUTURE SECURITY NEEDS

*Dr Gerry Waldron, Director of Slándáil, welcomed delegates to Ireland's first-ever National Security Summit at the Helix on 25-26 February.*

There's a huge appetite for a serious debate on Ireland's future security needs, demonstrated by the wide range of presentations from all sectors of the emergency services not to mention the very large attendance at the inaugural National Security Summit, according to Dr Gerry Waldron, Director of Slándáil, who provides a synopsis of the two-day event in February.

**W**e were delighted to welcome over 1,000 attendees to the Helix on 25-26 February with speakers and delegates from approximately 50 organisations, spanning 20 countries, 10 universities and representatives from all of the uniformed services on the island. The delegate count alone demonstrated quite clearly that there is a huge appetite for a serious debate on Ireland's future security needs.

The summit was opened by Minister of State Paul Kehoe and with the Covid-19 crisis pending the emergency preparedness, response and resilience (EPRR) conference was packed to capacity all day on the first day of the Summit.

Conference delegates were introduced to the topic of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear

(CBRN) threats, and were presented with an overview of the global CBRN threat and in-depth briefings on the lessons learned from the Salisbury nerve agent attack in the UK.

These briefings were provided by senior members of all three UK emergency services during the earlier part of the first day, followed by later sessions with contributions from Irish public health officials and retired HSE emergency planners on how our health systems plans and reacts to emergencies.

The afternoon saw an in-depth discussion of Ireland's emergency management framework, with the panel debating the adequacy and preparedness of all uniformed services to meet potential threats and the current crisis was never far from each delegate's thoughts. Meanwhile a range of sponsored presentations



With Covid-19 crisis pending, the event was packed to capacity on the first day of the Summit, officially opened by Paul Kehoe TD, Minister of State at the Department of Defence and Chairman of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.



Minister Paul Kehoe pictured with Dr Gerry Waldron, Director of Slándáil, following the official launch of the inaugural National Security Summit on 25 February 2020.

highlighted how technology can make incident management more effective for all emergency services.

**CBRN AND TERRORISM THREATS**

The EPRR conference finished with an in-depth and lengthy presentation by the FBI on their approach to CBRN and Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the FBI's Special Agent Kevin Bosch certainly kept the conference hall

packed till the very end of the day.

We also ran parallel sessions examining the future of air power globally and what that means for small states. The future of the Air Corps and the investment, skills and equipment required to return a fighter intercept capability to Ireland were discussed at length with input from serving and retired officers, industry experts and national politicians.

Other sessions during the first day also saw a keynote address from the Director of the US National Counter-Terror Centre on maintaining a focus on terrorism in a world of changing priorities, a discussion on the links between security and our economy and a presentation on the clinical management of CBRN casualties.

The jam-packed programme continued into the afternoon with presentations on intelligence oversight, space and security and the constant battle between disruptive technologies in law enforcement and civil liberties.

The afternoon programme also included a thought-provoking presentation from the Dean of NATO's Defence College on why countries adopt national security strategies, which was followed by a highly-engaging debate on what a future strategy for Ireland may entail.

**SECURITY AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY**

The second day of the Summit brought a number of different themes including presentations and debates on the Irish security and defence industry and how small to medium businesses (SMEs) and start-ups can help Ireland's emergency services to address their multiple challenges. We also looked at the connections between cyber and national security with insightful contributions from the new Director of the Irish National Security Analysis Centre and the UK's former Deputy National Security Advisor.



Colonel Darren Doherty British Defence Attaché and Brigadier General Rory O'Connor, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Irish Air Corps.

The implications of EU Maritime Security Strategy for Ireland were examined, with a discussion on the potential roles for the Irish Naval Service beyond Irish waters. The additional capabilities that the new multi-role vessel can bring to the Irish State were also examined with input from industry and local government representatives.

A much anticipated discussion on the future of the Irish Army saw a number of opposing views on the future of our land forces and what capabilities need to be prioritised in the coming decade.

The afternoon session during the second day of the summit saw well-attended presentations on Irish Public Sector Innovation and Unmanned Systems, with panel discussions on the future of European Security and Defence and Autonomous Weapons Systems.



*Brigadier General Tony Cudmore, GOC Officer 2 Eastern Brigade, Des Dowling, Department of Defence, and Vice Admiral Mark Mellett, DSM Chief of Staff, Irish Defence Forces.*

**'WHY INTELLIGENCE MATTERS'**  
Our final session of the summit – 'Why

**SNAPSHOT OF EXHIBITORS AT NATIONAL SECURITY SUMMIT IRELAND**





*Captain Brian Fitzgerald, Naval Service, and Andrew Cotter, University College Cork.*

Intelligence Matters' - brought together for the first time in Ireland former senior intelligence professionals from the Defence Forces and Gardaí, alongside retired members of Government and the Department of Foreign Affairs to discuss the importance of effective intelligence services to senior decision makers across government.

The panel discussed the significant contribution the intelligence branches of both services had made to the security of the state over the last number of decades, the potential for greater co-operation across all of government in intelligence gathering, the oversight of these activities, recruitment to the services and the future direction of these services. It was a fantastic session to finish with and yielded a number of talking points for all those present.

Serving and retired members of all uniformed services contributed to the majority of our sessions whether it was

from the podium or from the floor and ensured that an informed and healthy debate ensued on a number of topics. Countless individuals serving and retired assisted with the planning and running of the event in a variety of ways and we thank them wholeheartedly for their support.

On a final note, a very special thanks to our event media partner 'Emergency Services Ireland' for their assistance in the lead-up to the summit and for their continued support of our activities.

The National Security Summit will return in 2021 and dates will be confirmed in due course. In the meantime, visit [www.nssi.ie](http://www.nssi.ie), LinkedIn and Twitter for more information.



*Defence Forces' Assistant Chief of Staff Brigadier General Adrian Ó Murchú and Caitriona Heini, Azure Forum.*



*Brigadier General Tony Cudmore, H.E. Robin Barnett, CMG British Ambassador, and Regimental Sgt Major Jim Aherne.*