

Run-up to US Led Attack on Syria: Large Number of US War Planes Transit Through Shannon Airport

By [Global Research News](#)

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[Shannon Watch](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD, US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Shannonwatch have called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs to clarify the significance of several U.S. troop carriers and other military aircraft at Shannon Airport in the run-up to what might well be a U.S. led attack on Syria.

As U.S. President Barack Obama continues to look for support for an attack that would have serious repercussions for the Syrian people and the region as a whole, the organisation calls on the Irish government to make its opposition clear by immediately ending the U.S. military use of the airport.

In the last week Shannonwatch recorded 14 U.S. military aircraft as well as four troop carriers at Shannon Airport. The military aircraft included Hercules C-130s operated by the U.S. Air Force and Navy, and two KC-10s. The KC-10 is a military version of the DC-10 and is used by the U.S. Air Force for transport and aerial refuelling. The presence of the KC-10s at Shannon could indicate that other US military aircraft are being refuelled in or near Irish airspace.

Shannonwatch are particularly concerned at the fact that on Saturday Sept 7th an armed man in army clothing was seen beside one of the U.S. Air Forces' Hercules at the airport. "This man was either part of a support service being provided by the Irish army to the U.S. military, or the unauthorised presence of an armed U.S. soldier on Irish soil" said Shannonwatch spokesperson Edward Horgan. "If it was an Irish soldier providing support for the U.S. military, it calls our neutrality into serious question. If it was a U.S. soldier, it is a violation of Irish law as well as our neutrality, since the U.S. does not have permission to have weapons on its military aircraft at Shannon".

The situation regarding the presence of weapons on U.S. military flights at Shannon was outlined by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Eamonn Gilmore in June of this year. In answer to a written parliamentary question he stated that permission for foreign military aircraft, including U.S. aircraft, to land at Irish airports is given only on condition that the aircraft are unarmed, carry no arms, ammunition or explosives and do not engage in intelligence gathering and that the flights in question do not form any part of military exercises or operations.

"It is inconceivable that U.S. military aircraft transiting Shannon airport would not be carrying armed personnel" said Edward Horgan. "The only way to be sure that they are not is to inspect them. But despite being asked repeatedly to do so, the authorities refuse".

On 7th September Shannonwatch also recorded a U.S. Army C-12 twin-engine turboprop aircraft at Shannon Airport. C-12's are used for various duties, including embassy support, medical evacuation, as well as passenger and light cargo transport. Some C-12's are modified with surveillance systems for various missions.

"It is not clear if the C-12 seen at Shannon on Saturday was carrying military cargo or not" noted Edward Horgan. "Given the risks associated with a U.S. military attack on Syria, it is more important than ever to inspect these aircraft now".

On Sunday 8th September two Omni Air International troop carriers departed from Shannon. "This means hundreds of troops passing through a civilian airport. Shannon is not equipped to deal with potential attacks on an army that may be now be preparing to attack Syria, having already invaded Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya over the last decade" said the Shannonwatch spokesperson.

In addition to the U.S. military planes at Shannon this week, Shannonwatch also identified a Gulfstream Aerospace G-1159A Gulfstream III that is reportedly leased by the Italian Air Force. It is not the first time it has visited Shannon but its presence in a supposedly neutral country is worrying. While Shannonwatch welcomes the Italian government's statement that they will not take part in any US-led attack on Syria without full UN authorisation, there are nonetheless questions to be answered about the Italian Air Force presence in Shannon at the same time as the US Air Force according to their spokesperson Mr. Horgan.

"Because of the unusually high level of military activity at Shannon over the weekend, we are asking the Minister to immediately clarify whether or not the airport is being used to assist in the build-up to an attack on Syria, and to make a statement on the matter. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs it is his duty to ensure Ireland is not complicit in another illegal attack on a Middle Eastern country by the U.S. And the only sure way to do that is to end their use of Shannon Airport now."

[Link to photographs of military aircraft at Shannon on 7th/8th Sept.](#)

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