



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Baile Átha Cliath 2

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Dublin 2

Mr. Páraig Lynch
Municipal District Officer
Cork County Council
Carrig House
Cobh
Co Cork



12 July 2017

Our Ref: POL170043

Dear Mr. Lynch,

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Simon Coveney TD, has asked me to thank you for your email correspondence of 20 April, which former Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny TD, forwarded to this Department, and to respond on his behalf.

In response to a request from the US Embassy, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade granted permission for a visit by the US naval vessel, USS Donald Cook, to visit the port of Cobh from 21-25 March 2017. The purpose of the visit to Ireland was crew rest and relaxation. As is the case, for all requests for ships to pay routine calls to Irish ports, this Department seeks the views of other agencies including An Garda Síochána and the Naval Service prior to permission being granted.

In seeking permission for this visit, clear assurances were received from the US Embassy that the vessel in question would not be carrying any nuclear weapons and would not engage in any military exercises while in Irish territorial seas. These conditions are imposed in line with Ireland's longstanding policy that visiting naval vessels not carry nuclear weapons and not engage in military exercises while in Irish territorial seas.

Security arrangements for visits by ships paying routine calls to Irish ports, such as this visit, are a matter for An Garda Síochána with whom this Department consults before granting permission for a ship to visit. The vessel concerned would have been an armed vessel just as Irish Naval Service ships are armed in order to be able to carry out their tasks and to protect themselves. Like Irish Naval Service personnel who carry arms while on-board Irish Naval vessels, naval personnel from other countries carry arms while aboard their own naval vessels. This Department has received no reports about any US personnel carrying weapons while onshore.

Routine courtesy visits by naval vessels to foreign ports are a regular feature of international relations and help to further bilateral ties between friendly nations. Ships from our own Naval Service also regularly pay such visits to foreign ports. Permission was granted in this case in consideration of the deep ties of friendship between Ireland and the US.

Ireland's policy of military neutrality, which is characterised by non-participation in military alliances such as NATO, has been pursued by successive governments for more than sixty years. Our visitors, as longstanding friends, understand and respect Ireland's clear position.

Yours sincerely,



Cormac Hynes
Private Secretary