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Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. ROLLINGNEWS.IE PHOTO.

Military mulled

By Anthony Neeson

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has warned that troops could return to the border in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

Speaking on Bloomberg Television, Varadkar said a hard border could "involve people in uniform and it may involve the need, for example, for cameras, physical infrastructure, possibly a police presence, or an army presence to back it up."

He added: "The problem with that in the context of Irish politics and history is those things become targets."

British MPs are demanding that Prime Minister Theresa May scrap the backstop – the legal framework to prevent a hard border in Ireland – in her discussions with the EU, as they believe it will tie the UK, and in particular Northern Ireland, to EU structures. The DUP have branded the backstop "a trap."

An Irish government spokesperson said Mr. Varadkar was not referring to Irish troops at the border.

"He was asked to describe a hard border, and gave a description of what it used to look like, and the risk of what it could look like in the worst case scenario."

Last Sunday, Tánaiste Simon Coveney said the deadlock over the backstop was not a "game of chicken."

Speaking on the BBC, Mr. Coveney said there was "no magic solution" to the Irish border issue.

"If there was it would have emerged by now. That is why Ireland will insist on the UK keeping its word, both to Ireland and to the EU, and to people in Northern Ireland, in terms of protecting a fragile but hugely valuable peace process."

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NY BREXIT SUMMIT

Range of issues covered at Manhattan meeting



Consul General Ciaran Madden (seated near right) with members of the American Brexit Committee.

By Irish Echo Staff

With just two months to go before Brexit, Irish Americans are increasingly focused on the implications for the island of Ireland, most especially in the event of a no-deal UK crash out from the European Union.

This was the backdrop to a meeting in New York last week of the American Brexit Committee, a group of activists focused on the effects of Brexit on the Northern Ireland peace process and Good Friday Agreement in particular.

Committee members gathered at the Manhattan law offices of John Dearie in a meeting attended by Irish Consul General in New York Ciaran Madden.

Said a statement from the committee: "While Americans watch with puzzlement at the apparent meltdown of Britain's Conservative government over how to exit the European Union (it has been a member for 42 years), the American Brexit Committee met to assess how that exit will impact Ireland and the 1998

Eire-UK Treaty (Good Friday Agreement). The Irish Consul General Ciaran Madden addressed the Committee to provide an update on the status of Brexit."

John Dearie, attorney and former New York Assembly member, said there was "little doubt that the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process in Ireland will be threatened with Brexit."

"The divorce will have a negative impact on the economy, not only of the Irish Republic but on Northern Ireland, one of the UK's poorest regions."

The meeting attendees included members and representatives of major organizations such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Irish American Unity Conference, Brehon Law Society, American Committee on American-Irish Relations, academics and labor activists.

The topics discussed, stated a release, included Brexit options still in play, continuing concern for British compliance with GFA obligations, the pro

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Brexit

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posed U.S.-UK trade proposals the Trump administration is preparing as a "reward" for Brexit, the suspended Northern Ireland government, invitations to member of the European Parliament Martina Andersen, legal activist Niall Murphy and others as expert witnesses before Congress, and the role of congressional groups like the Friends of Ireland headed by Representative Richard Neal and the Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs, co-chaired by Representatives Eliot Engel and Peter King.

Stated Peter Kissel, National President of the IAUC: "Americans must be aware that some in the (Prime Minister Theresa) May government wish to scrap the GFA as "outliving its usefulness" and of the British Ministry of Defense's incessant efforts to undermine legacy investigations.

"Also in the sights of this Conservative government is the removal of the European Convention of Human Rights from English law and the adoption of a statute of limitations to grant amnesty to soldiers in-



Brexit Committee members attending the Manhattan meeting.

involved in the murder of innocent civilians in Northern Ireland.

"If the GFA is in peril there are hundreds of cases that may be denied any form of truth or justice."

Added the committee release: "British negligence in cases like those of the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, the murders of lawyers Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson, and the cases of Ballymurphy and Loughinisland were reviewed."

And it continued: "A larger discussion ensued on the actions of the Trump administration to promote and reward the UK, the world's fifth largest economy, with a massive trade

deal despite the substantial deficit the U.S. has with the UK.

"President Trump's Trade Ambassador (Robert) Lighthizer gave no evidence the administration has given any thought to how Brexit will impact the partitioned island of Ireland, or if Brexit serves the interest of President Putin, who promotes EU break-up."

Dan Dennehy, AOH National Board Member stated: "The absence of a new U.S. ambassador to Ireland has added to our concerns that Ireland may be getting shortchanged in this rush to play patty cake with the UK."

According to the committee release, a letter was circulated

showing that British trade staff have been "camped out" in the office of the U.S. Trade Representative since July, 2017.

"We should work to get key members of Congress to reveal the contents of this pending trade package so that as Brexit unfolds, and the true extent of any harm to Ireland is known We then can ask the members

to question the British about mitigating any damage and to reserve judgment on the merits of the trade deals.

"Hopefully, the British will respond to Congress with truth faster than the forty years it took them to tell the truth about Bloody Sunday," said American Brexit Committee chairman, John Corcoran.



Pictured at the Brexit committee gathering were (l-r) John Dearie, Irish Consul General Ciaran Madden, and Michael Cummings, Secretary of the American Brexit Committee.

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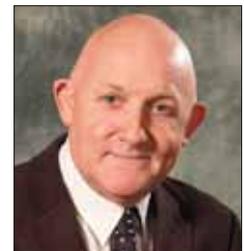
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