

TRUE COST OF PROTECTING WITNESSES EXPOSED

● Dept spends €4.3m since 2016 on families

● Dowdall's relocation set to hike up the price



The Monk walked free after lengthy trial

Not guilty... The Monk



Shot dead... thug Byrne



MURDER

Cops at Regency in 2016



State witness... Dowdall gave evidence in Hutch trial

Difficult to find a country to take Dowdalls



Find... Sheriff Capers

5 blasted to death after rifle noise row

By BARRY GALLAGHER

A GUNMAN shot five of his neighbours dead – including a boy of eight – for complaining about the noise of him firing an assault rifle in his yard. The family of ten asked Francisco Oropeza to stop at 10.30pm on Friday. But the 38-year-old suspect went next door and killed three women, one man and the child, in Cleveland, Texas, before going on the run. Two of the women were found lying over the child in a brave bid to protect them. Sheriff Greg Capers said: "They were actually trying to take care of the babies." Oropeza, believed to be Mexican, is still on the run and thought to be armed. Cops found a phone and clothes in a forest but tracker dogs lost the scent. Oropeza, who's been charged with five counts of murder – had been warned before by cops over shooting in his yard.



Brave... RNLI crew

Lifeboat service's mayday fund call

By BARRY GALLAGHER

SOME 1,061 lifeboats were launched here last year, the RNLI's revealed. Brave crews carried out hundreds of rescues across the country. And with demand for its services at a high, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution is putting out a mayday call ahead of May Day today as it prepares to face another busy summer season. The charity is calling on the public to join the RNLI Mayday Mile and run, walk or even skate a mile each day this month. Irish chief Anna Clason "We rely on the generosity of the public to take part in events like the Mayday Mile and raise the funds that allow us to be there when we're needed most. "But we need to be ready. Training, kit, stations, fuel, these are just some of the things we need to save lives." ● SEE Rnli.org/mayday/mayday-mile to sign up.

THE Gardai have spent over €4million to protect state witnesses and their families since 2016, The Irish Sun can reveal. The Justice Department hands the force €1.2m each year to fund the Witness Security Programme, currently harbouring 20 to 30 people. Since 2016, €4,273,000 has been spent of a total of €8.4million. It's believed family members make up the bulk of the few dozen people in the Irish Witness Security Programme, which has housed the likes of Gilligan gang supergrass Charles Bowden. The scheme was thrust back into

EXCLUSIVE by MICHAEL DOYLE the spotlight after former Sinn Fein councillor Jonathan Dowdall turned State's evidence against Gerry 'The Monk' Hutch last year. It is expected that the cost of relocating Dubliner Dowdall and his family will come out of this year's allocation. Along with his father Patrick – who was released from prison in recent days – he was only recently accepted into the programme. His sign-off followed a six-month assessment period and there are difficulties finding a country to take them, such was the level of threat they posed. In 2022, running the Witness Security Programme cost €600,000, while the previous year it was €400,000 and in 2020 it cost

€300,000. In 2019, just €200,000 was spent – up from €653,000 in 2018 and €800,000 in 2017. The most spent since 2006 was €1.32million in 2016. Last October Dowdall was jailed for four years for facilitating the murder of Kinahan cartel thug David Byrne at Dublin's Regency Hotel in February, 2016. A murder charge had been dropped before he told the Special Criminal Court that Hutch admitted to him that he murdered Byrne. But the three judges of the Special Criminal Court rejected Dowdall's version of events and The Monk walked free after being found not guilty. Justice Minister Helen McEntee previously said she was in favour of putting the WSP on some kind of statutory footing. But her interim

replacement Simon Harris last week said he feels the programme "functions well" – but would be happy for discussions to take place within Government. And the Fine Gael TD added that access to the protection can't be linked to a successful conviction. If Irish legislation is introduced it is likely to draw on international law, which varies by country. The Italian witness protection system – home to more than 6,000 people – was thrown into disarray in 2019 when former drug smuggler and police informant Gianfranco Franciosi accused the authorities of abandoning him. *Left living in a caravan, he said: "I betrayed the narcos but I realised the Italian state betrayed me."* Budget constraints meant that anti-Mafia witnesses such as

Franciosi were left without safety and support from the state. This didn't prevent mob boss Raffaele Imperiale, a close pal of cartel kingpin Daniel Kinahan and Italy's second-most-wanted man, from turning informer last year. The drug trafficker began a crown witness procedure in a major criminal case, making statements against two co-accused and promising the authorities he was ready to turn his back on crime. Gardai were hoping the drug lord – who was extradited from the UAE in 2021 following a personal intervention from the country's justice minister – would cough up info on his Irish associate, who is also based in the UAE. Imperiale, who attended the Kinahan cartel chief's lavish Dubai wedding in 2017, would have to

own up to all his crimes to avail of the WSP. Barrister Gregory Murphy told The Irish Sun that might not be the best idea for any new legislation here. He said: "The Italian model clearly works for them, but you don't want a situation where criminals can receive an amnesty for all their wrongdoing just to enter the programme on the basis of them giving evidence. "We will have to see how it is legislated in other jurisdictions. "But it is encouraging to see Helen McEntee say she's in favour of some kind of legislation in relation to the programme. In Ireland, the first people to enter the programme were Russell Warren, John Dunne and Charles Bowden, who were members of John Gilligan's drugs gang in the 1990s. But the word of a State witness

has counted for little in the 25 years it has been in existence. Gilligan was convicted of drugs offences, but he was found not guilty of the murder of journalist Veronica Guerin, as was Alan Wilson despite Fergus O'Hanlon's evidence in the murder of Marioara Rostas. And now Hutch walking was in large part due to the unreliable testimony of Dowdall. *Mr Murphy said: "It's important to note that the nature of state evidence is not to make sure a conviction is secured but it is simply to allow certain evidence to be heard and then it's up to the courts or a jury to analyse that evidence and make a decision on its credibility. "It's pleasing to say that our judicial system still makes*

determinations on this regardless of the circumstances of someone testifying and entering the WSP and can still turn around and say, well, we don't believe that and can make our own mind up." In the EU there is no primary legislation on witness protection. However, since 2000 Europol has run a coordinated European Liaison Network comprising specialists from the separate witness protection units. Some EU states leave responsibility to police forces, as here, while with others it's the responsibility of government and there are still huge administrative and judicial differences between the member states. However when a witness is going to relocate to another country, as in the case of Dowdall, international cooperation requires the sharing of relevant information. Criminology lecturer Aaron Harte-Hughes said the lack of legislation in Ireland makes our system unique but added: "No policy should ever be deemed so secretive in an open and democratic society as to avoid some measure of scrutiny."

Programme... Gilligan and Harris

michael.doyle@the-sun.ie

STATE SUPERGRASS\$

HOW OUR CROWDED PRISONS ARE PUTTING LIVES AT RISK



Cleared of murder . . . Gerry Hutch

EXCLUSIVE by MICHAEL DOYLE

NOTORIOUS wife killers serving life sentences including Joe O'Reilly pose far fewer problems for prison officers than Ireland's warring gang factions, they have revealed.

Daily battles to keep a lid on simmering tensions are among the biggest issues facing those tasked with keeping the 4,600-inmate population under control.

Deputy General Secretary of the Prison Officer's Association Gabriel Keaveny has lifted the lid on the challenges they face and pleaded with the Department of Justice to sort out the problems.

And while issues with overcrowding and staff shortages top the list of concerns, he revealed that some of the more infamous inmates cause the least grief.

Some 362 people, 352 men and ten women, are serving life sentences in Ireland — including O'Reilly who bludgeoned to death wife Rachel Calley in 2004 and Brian Kearney who strangled his wife Siobhan 17 years ago.

Depraved Graham Dwyer is serving life for the 2012 murder of Elaine O'Hara, while former soldier Sean Courtney, who murdered insurance worker Patricia O'Toole in 1993, has been freed.

Mr Keaveny said: "People like that just tend to put their heads down and get on with it."

"They are in jail for horrendous crimes but they don't necessarily come from what you might call a criminal background so they don't cause problems. It's in the tougher jails, trying to control the gangs, where the bigger problems are."

He added: "There is a huge threat from organised crime gangs behind bars. We have to deal with about 25-30 factions because they fall out with each other and have to be kept apart."

Associates of the Kinahan cartel are housed in Mountjoy Prison and Portlaoise, while those aligned to the Hutch faction are in Wheatfield, where Gerry 'the Monk' Hutch was held on remand after his extradition and during his trial before he was found not guilty of David Byrne's murder in April.

Mr Keaveny said: "There's only a few members of the Hutch organisation left in Wheatfield. The Kinahans are in Mountjoy, with a few in Portlaoise."

"Each prisoner and faction is treated in the same manner and risk assessments are performed while they're behind bars. We don't look at it to say who is more dominant."

Warders endure daily Challenges . . . Keaveny

● Mobsters 'cause more issues than wife killers'

WITNESS FOR THE STATE

Protecting Dowdall needs considerable manpower

A TOUGH STRETCH

● Calls to Government to help ease lag tensions



Extradited . . . Arakas

672 of lag total were not born in Ireland

By JOHN KIERANS

ALMOST 15 out of every 100 prisoners jailed in Ireland are non-nationals, new figures reveal.

There are currently 672 non-Irish inmates in custody out of a prison population of just over 4,500 — 648 of them male and 27 female, the Irish Prison Service confirmed.

The majority, 362, are from the EU, followed by 100 Africa, 84 Britain, 41 South America, 38 other Europe and 37 Asia.

The top five non-nationals in custody by nationality are Polish 146, British 84, Romanian 75, Lithuanian 56 and Brazilian 36.

Kinahan gang hitman Imre Arakas was among the highest profile foreign inmates prior to his extradition to Lithuania in January.

Of the current female prisoners, there are four British, Brazilian, African and Lithuanian, and three Poles.

The figures released by the Irish Prison Service are up to May 31 last.

There are currently 398 prisoners on temporary release and 118 lifers, out living in the community.

Ten immigrant detainees are in custody facing extradition.

There were 4,598 persons in jail at the end of last month — including 414 killers and 564 sex offenders.

Eight prisoners classified as subversives are behind bars.

The most prisoners, 910, are being held in the Midlands prison.

Around 12 per cent of the general population are foreign-born, according to 2022 Census data.

BACKERS OF CARTEL BOSS

Dan Kinahan's associates held in Mountjoy and Portlaoise

abuse inside jails — while some have had to boost security at their homes after being targeted by dangerous inmates or their associates on the outside.

It's just one of the reasons why the POA is keen to meet Garda boss Drew Harris — another being that it takes up to ten months for new staff to get Garda vetting.

He added: "We've requested a meeting with him numerous times in that period, but he has yet to meet us. We have met every Commissioner over the years, but not the current one."

"The Garda

vetting situation is one we need to discuss with him and also some of our members have had to increase security on their homes because of threats. That has to be an issue for the Gardaí. This isn't regular but it does happen — but we are yet to secure a meeting with him."

Attacks on prison officers increased by 46 per cent between 2021 and 2022. Last year, there were 134 attacks, as opposed to 91 the previous year. Some 61 prison officers were injured in that period, a rise of 39 per cent.

With overcrowding rampant, the added headache of keeping State witnesses, including Jonathan Dowdall, safe stretches resources.

Mr Keaveny told The Irish Sun:

"Before Covid, there were 4,200 prisoners in Irish jails, which was the system at full capacity. There are now 4,600 inmates, but in reality we need 600-800 new places."

"Overcrowding has always been a big issue and the Department have listened to us in the past. But when they created 50 new single cells in Harristown, these were doubled up to take 100. The same happened when C-Block in Portlaoise got 50 extra places."

"When I first started working as a prison officer 32 years ago, the population of Ireland was 3.5 million. It's now five million and, with so many more people to cater for, you need more schools, hospitals — and prisons. These are issues for

the Department of Justice, not the Irish Prison Service.

"We also have huge staff shortages. We need about 200 more prison officers, but the vetting is a major issue. It takes nine to ten months to receive Garda clearance, which is absolutely ridiculous."

Ex-Sinn Féin councillor Dowdall is currently a protected witness in the Irish prison system. He was serving his sentence for facilitating Byrne's murder in Limerick Prison, along with his father Patrick, but after the elder Dowdall's release, he was moved to Arbour Hill Prison.

Mr Keaveny said more of their limited resources have to be put into protecting someone like the State witness, who testified against

Gerry Hutch. He said: "You have to post extra prison officers to protect one inmate. When they have to go court, extra security arrangements have to be in place to cater for that."

"Of course, added security is not a new thing, so you try and just treat each case in isolation. But certainly protecting someone like a protected witness presents its own challenges. We have no control or say over when they're released."

"It's our job to just look after them when they're with us."

Escape attempts still present a challenge and mainly take place when inmates are moved from the prison environment.

In 2015, Scottish career criminal Derek Brockwell stabbed two

prison officers from Portlaoise while on a visit to Tallaght Hospital, before being driven away on the back of the motorbike.

He was arrested in Belfast the following day after a botched raid on a shop.

Mr Keaveny says this was one of the most high-profile escapes in Irish prison history.

He said: "The Brockwell incident emphasised the dangers prison officers can face when they leave the prison for a hospital visit."

"We had two officers seriously injured that day and it really exposed the threats we face."

"Hospital visits are often the most common time that escape attempts might take place. Some are oppor-

tunistic, while some, like Brockwell, took a bit of planning. We need more resources and security for visits like this."

Criminal gangs continue to operate behind bars and 'throw-overs', where items of contraband are thrown over a prison wall, remain a problem.

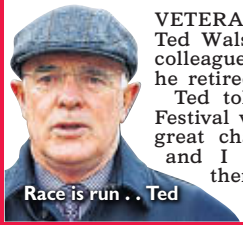
Mr Keaveny said: "Drones were an issue for a while, but new technology has been introduced to combat that."

"But throw-overs are still taking place. Drugs and phones are the most common items that come over but it's never the gang leader out collecting, it's probably some poor, unfortunate they bullied into it."



Notorious . . . killers O'Reilly, Kearney & Dwyer

TED CALLS IT A NEIGH



VETERAN racing pundit Ted Walsh stunned RTE colleagues yesterday as he retired live on air. Ted told PuncHESTOWN Festival viewers: "I got a great chance from RTE and I want to thank them very much." See SunSport

THE IRISH Sun ON SUNDAY

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I'M A CELEB EXCLUSIVE



DON'T TOUCH MY WIFE

Janice hubby Dean ruck

SEE PAGES 22 & 23

EXCLUSIVE

Prince Harry



24hr CORONATION TRIP

SEE PAGES 6 & 7

KINAHAN'S TARGETED MONK BRO

PATSY SCHOOL KILL PLOT

Marked for death... Patsy kill plot 'led to Regency hit'

Picture: PADRAIG O'REILLY

EXCLUSIVE by MICHAEL DOYLE

THE Kinahan cartel planned to murder Patsy Hutch as he dropped a child to school.

Supergrass Jonathan Dowdall, below, told gardai the plot was the catalyst for the Regency attack that killed Kinahan hood David Byrne.

The Irish Sun on Sunday today reveals the secret notes he gave cops as he turned on Gerry 'The Monk' Hutch.

One said he understands they planned to kill Patsy "outside an unspecified school".

Full Story - P4&5

Dowdall told cops about cartel's hit plan



DOWDALL'S SHOCKING TELL ALL TO COPS IN SECRET NOTES

EXCLUSIVE by MICHAEL DOYLE

A KINAHAN plot to murder Patsy Hutch as he dropped a child to school was the trigger for the Regency Hotel shooting, Jonathan Dowdall told gardai.

The Irish Sun on Sunday can today reveal the secret notes the ex-Sinn Féin councillor provided to cops when he turned against Gerry 'The Monk' Hutch during a secret meeting with investigators.

The document details Dowdall's decision to "help" Patsy Hutch before the Regency hit which led to the escalation of the feud – and how he turned state witness. The international mob targeted Gerry's brother Patsy following the assassination of his son Gary in Marbella in September, 2015.

They feared Patsy would try to avenge the murder and they wanted him dead before he could. Dowdall told gardai this was the reason he got involved – in a bid to save Patsy's life – as the two had an uncle-nephew relationship. Three months after Gary's killing, assassins then targeted The Monk in Lanzarote, but he escaped.

These actions culminated in the organised 2016 plot to whack drugs boss Daniel Kinahan at a boxing weigh-in at the Regency Hotel. It led to the death of cartel thug David Byrne, as Kinahan escaped.

The state witness told gardai that following Gary's murder, Patsy came to him to seek his help in using his IRA connections to help mediate the feud and he only got involved to save Patsy's life.

In their ruling at the Special Criminal Court on April 18, the three judges said "a reasonable possibility arises that the Regency was planned by Patsy and that Gerard Hutch, as head of the family, stepped in to sort out the aftermath of the Regency, because his own life was at risk".

The judges also found that Patsy was "centrally involved in the movement" of the three AK47s used in the Regency hit in the weeks that followed Byrne's murder after he was spotted in a car with IRA man Shane Rowan.

Just a half hour later, Rowan was arrested with the guns in his vehicle outside Slane, Co Meath, on March 9, 2016.

In confidential Garda notes taken from Dowdall after he first spoke to cops last May, it was recorded: "In the months following Gary Hutch's murder, Jonathan Dowdall understands that the Kinahan OCG planned to kill Patsy Hutch outside an unspecified school."

"He stated it was at this point Patsy Hutch approached him seeking help to see if dissident republicans could resolve the dispute, seemingly in a peaceful manner."

"Dowdall indicated that he travelled to Northern Ireland with his father to meet 'Kevin Tyrone' but he no-showed the initial meeting."

"Dowdall reiterated that it was his intention to use dissident republicans as a middleman in the dispute and help the Hutch family, in particular Patrick Hutch who he perceived at the time to be an innocent victim."

In the months that followed the Regency attack, cops foiled at least two other plots to assassinate Patsy. A number of Kinahan cartel members are now serving lengthy jail sentences for these crimes. Patsy and his family are still getting 24-hour Garda protection around their home on Champion's Avenue in Dublin's north inner city.

Dowdall is currently serving a four-year sentence having pleaded guilty to facilitating a notorious murder at the Regency by booking a room there. He will enter the Witness Protection Programme, along with his family, when the sentence ends. Dowdall repeatedly told the Special Criminal

State witness . . . Dowdall



Murdered . . . Kinahan thug Byrne was shot dead at the Regency Hotel, left and right, in 2016



KINAHANS PLANNED TO KILL PATSY AT SCHOOL HIT AS HE DROPPED OFF KID



Free man . . . The Monk after he was found not guilty of murder on April 18



Kinahans planned to hit Patsy near school

Protection . . . Patsy walks near his home last week



Shot . . . Gary Hutch, below, killed in Spain

Court during Gerry Hutch's trial for Byrne's murder that he knew nothing about the attack before it happened. At Dowdall's own sentencing hearing last October, his barrister told the court that he was not aware of the purpose or significance for which the room in the Regency was to be used and that Dowdall had not used the hotel room. Senior officers interviewed the ex-politician in Dublin Airport Garda Station in secret in May 2022 following his

release from prison. He had been freed the previous month after serving a sentence for falsely imprisoning and torturing Alexander Hurley in his home on the Navan Road. Dowdall had been caged on the same landing in Wheatfield Prison as the Hutches and their associates, including 'The Monk' who was on remand for Byrne's murder. At this point Dowdall had also been charged with murder. But his solicitor Jenny McGeever wrote to the Gardaí in November 2021 indicating that he wished to speak to them in relation to the Regency. Gardaí and Dowdall were reluctant that any meeting between

them should take place while he was incarcerated with members of the Hutch gang. Officers waited until Dowdall was out on bail before interviewing him. They chose the airport garda station because lead investigator Det Sgt Patrick O'Toole trusted the sergeant-in-charge and also because it contained an interview room with a back door where no one would see Dowdall come and go. Accompanied by his wife Trisha, Dowdall was brought to the station at 8pm on May 18, 2022. The meeting was effectively an "off-the-record" chat in an interview room that did not have recording facilities. Over the course of the next

three hours, Dowdall told officers a number of aspects of the Regency attack, which were taken down in bullet point form by Det Garda Cathal Connolly. It was during this meeting that Dowdall first made the claims that he handed the key cards from the hotel room his father had booked in the Regency the night before the attack to Gerry Hutch on the Richmond Road. And he claimed that when they held a secret meeting in a park in Whitehall days later, The Monk personally told him he murdered Byrne. In their ruling, the Special Criminal Court completely rejected these

claims and said it was clear Dowdall was "acting in his own self-interest" when he testified. In the Garda notes, Dowdall also detailed how his relationship with the Hutches collapsed behind bars and he ended up communicating with them only when necessary. It was recorded: "In prison, JD stated he confided in Shane 'Fish' Rowan and made a comment along the lines that he'd 'tell the truth' if his father was ever charged. "Comment got back to the Hutches and following this JD's relationship with the Hutches deteriorated, particularly with Derek 'Del Boy' Hutch. JD later fell out with Shane Rowan in prison." Dow-

dall also claimed that "Gerry Hutch indirectly threatened him in prison, stating that there would be no deals done by co-accused in the upcoming trial and if anyone gives evidence there would be consequences". He said that on his release from prison, 'Del Boy' Hutch – Patsy's son and Gary and Patrick Jr's brother – contacted him by phone and in-person and even called to the family home with Patrick Jr. Dowdall also claimed that Patsy, Patrick Jr and James 'Mago' Gately went to Poland for firearms training prior to the Regency shootings. Along with dissident Kevin Murray – the man known as Flat Cap

who died of Motor Neurone Disease 18 months later – these were the only people he was aware were involved in the Regency hit. After the four printed pages of notes were taken from Dowdall, gardai asked him to go off and write down everything he could about the Regency attack. Nearly two months later he returned to the station with a 50-page typed document his wife Trisha read out to investigators. Following further discussions with the DPP, the decision was ultimately made in September of last year to drop the murder charge against Dowdall and replace it with one of facilitating the murder of

Byrne by booking the room in the Regency Hotel. He pleaded guilty to the offence and was ultimately jailed for four years after he had made a statement against Gerry Hutch and indicated that he was willing to testify against him at the trial. The State insisted that the decision to drop the murder charge was not related to him giving evidence and being entered into the Witness Protection Programme, along with his family. Dowdall is also currently appealing the length of his four-year prison sentence. michael.doyle@the-sun.ie



Picture: PADDRAIG O'REILLY