

THE GLOSS MAGAZINE

Inside today



When the British establishment looks on and sees an unprotected island with Russian ships hovering nearby it feels not just anxious but genuine despairing frustration

Finn McRedmond
Opinion&Analysis



A CENTURY ON THE AIR
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Submarines off Irish coast to be tracked by sonar buoys

Military aircraft to deploy dozens of devices to detect Russian submarines

French company Thales in €50m deal aimed at protecting undersea cables

CONOR GALLAGHER
Crime and Security Editor

Plans are under way to drop dozens of devices from military aircraft into the waters off the coast of Ireland to help detect Russian submarines.

The project forms part of Government efforts to increase the State's "maritime domain awareness" in response to increasing concerns about the vulnerability of subsea infrastructure, such as communications cables and energy connectors, to attack or sabotage.

Earlier this year, the Government announced a contract with the French company Thales to provide a sonar capacity for the Irish Naval Service by 2027. This €50 million investment will, for the first time, allow Irish ships to detect underwater activity at long distances by towing a sonar device while on patrol.

The next stage of the plan involves acquiring a large number of devices called sonobuoys. These are torpedo-shaped objects, about a metre long, which float on the water and use sonar to detect movement under the waves.

Sonobuoys, which have been in use since the second World War, are typically deployed from aircraft in large numbers to monitor specific maritime areas. They have a limited lifespan and require replacement every few years.

Maritime research

The devices can also be used for non-military maritime research. They are widely used by European navies and have been known to wash up on Irish shores on occasion. Ireland has never itself deployed the technology.

The sonobuoys will be deployed by the Defence Forces in sensitive areas, such as around subsea cables and near planned offshore renewable infrastructure sites.

Along with the Naval Service's new sonar technology, they will be able to detect suspicious or anomalous activity which may indicate an attempt to interfere with underwater infrastructure.

The technology is viewed as vital due to the increased presence of Russian military ships in the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

This includes Russian intelligence-gathering surface vessels such as the Yantar, which has entered the Irish EEZ on several occasions in recent years. Security officials believe it is usually accompanied by a Russian submarine. It is also capable of deploying its own on-board submersible.

"The Yantar is only the visible bit you see in public and it's not the bit that worries me the most. It's what's going on under the waves that most concerns me," the head of Britain's Royal Navy, Gen Sir Gwyn Jenkins, said earlier this month.

Maritime patrol aircraft

The sonobuoys will be dropped from the back of the Air Corps' recently acquired C295 maritime patrol aircraft. Specially fitted equipment will be fitted to the rear doors of the aircraft to deploy the devices.

Their signals, along with signals from the sonar array and surface radars, will feed into a national control centre. The aim is to build up a "recognised maritime picture", showing all activity off Irish shores.

"The sonobuoy project is part of a larger programme of work for subsea domain awareness, and this programme is currently under way," a Department of Defence spokesman said.

"Subsea domain awareness and in particular protecting subsea critical infrastructure requires a multifaceted approach, with different capabilities working in co-ordination to firstly detect an undersea threat, localise it, classify it and track it as it moves through the water."

He said the sonobuoy project is in the planning phase and market research is ongoing.

"It will result in the Air Corps receiving a capability to detect, localise, identify, and track objects in the Irish EEZ."



Procession of Light Performers mark New Year's Eve in Dublin

Street performers take part in the Procession of Light at Christ Church Cathedral before moving on to a New Year's Eve countdown concert at Dublin Castle. Cities around the world marked the occasion with fireworks, prayers and celebrations.

Report: Page 5
Photograph: Alan Betson

Transport budget 'will not allow for new services'

Department of Transport warned of limits of €4.74bn Budget 2026 allocation

JACK HORGAN-JONES
Political Correspondent

The Government's transport budget for 2026 will not be enough for any new services, senior Department of Transport officials privately warned. Records released under the

Freedom of Information Act show that on the day of Budget 2026 in October, the Department of Transport's management board met and noted its €4.74 billion allocation.

"The allocation, while substantial, will not allow for new services to be delivered," minutes of the meeting show. However, it noted the amount "will allow for continued investment on major projects".

Officials nonetheless believed the department secured a "better position" on the Public Services Obligation – which contracts and provides funding for public transport services – with €940 million earmarked for 2026, an increase of more than 40 per cent.

The Opposition rounded on the Government in light of the information. Green Party leader

Roderic O'Gorman said the document was "confirmation" that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have not provided the funding for new public transport services.

"While the figures for 2026 look big, they are just about funding existing services," he said. "There isn't enough in the Department of Transport's allocation for the roll-out of new services, promised in various glossy documents published by the Government, which would make a real difference in people's lives".

The Dublin West TD accused the Government of having an "ideological problem" with public transport.

A spokesman for the department said its 2026 budget allocation "prioritises the advancement of ongoing programmes and commitments in line with operational readiness and resource availability", citing the BusConnects F-Spine in Dublin and new town services planned for Mullingar in 2026.

He said the department must ensure that submissions made

as part of the budget are within financial and governance parameters set by the exchequer, "recognising that available resources are finite, and not all projects can be funded".

The department continues to engage with the National Transport Authority (NTA) as it finalises its 2026 service plan, the spokesman said.

An NTA spokesman said it is still in talks with the department about the plan, "in line with funding allocations, [and] operational and resource availability".

Cameras installed at Merrion Gates to catch drivers breaking red lights

OLIVIA KELLY
Dublin Editor

Cameras to detect drivers who break red lights will be used for the first time in a decade with their installation at the Merrion Gates level crossing in Dublin in the new year.

The automatic cameras will take pictures of drivers who fail to stop when the flashing red lights are showing at the level crossing. Offenders will receive an €80 fine and two penalty points. Drivers who attempt to speed through the crossing will be fined €160 and given three penalty points.

In 2025 there were 22 collisions with level-crossing gates.

The cameras have been installed at the Merrion Gate level crossing as a safety collaboration between Iarnród Éireann, An Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council and will be operational from January. Cameras will be installed at six more level crossings in the coming months.

However, plans announced almost two years ago for their use on traffic lights at junctions across Dublin city, with a subsequent nationwide roll-out and use in bus lanes, have been stalled.

In 2015 cameras were installed for a six-month trial on traffic lights at the junction of Blackhall Place and the Luas Red line in Dublin's north inner city, following a number of crashes where vehicles failing to stop at the red light was the main contributory factor.

Hugely successful initiative

The initiative was hugely successful, with the number of drivers breaking the light falling by half in the second three months of the trial, and no successful court appeals against fines. However, the trial was discontinued.

The Merrion Gates initiative

marks their first use since. This level crossing was selected due to "traffic surveys showing persistent driver behaviour issues", Iarnród Éireann spokesman Barry Kenny said.

"The key issue at Merrion Gates is proceeding beyond a stop line when red lights are flashing," he said. "As level crossings represent a new deployment of the Garda Go Safe system, the cameras have been tested extensively in recent months, with activation to take place by the end of January."

In the coming months, cameras will be deployed at level crossings in Farranfore and Minish in Co Kerry, and Knockcroghery, Co Roscommon, "where speeding is the primary issue", Mr Kenny said.

Plan to use cameras to catch motorists breaking red lights in Dublin is stalled: page 4



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A cold start with patchy rain clearing southwards leading to a dry and bright afternoon. Highs of 4-8 degrees.

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Business Today

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Minimum wage: A series of measures including an increase to the minimum wage will take effect from today. Page 12

Sports Thursday

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