



STATEMENT

Jim Mulligan, GRA President

Weaponizing Covid-19 is unpatriotic, says GRA President

Stronger measures in law and equipment needed to protect gardaí

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Garda Representative Association President Jim Mulligan has said that weaponizing the Covid-19 virus is unpatriotic and has called for stronger measures to protect gardaí.

His comments follow several incidents of gardaí being coughed at, spat at and threatened by people claiming to be infected with Covid-19.

Mr Mulligan said: "Movement restrictions must be enforced. Gardaí would prefer not to instruct people and inquire into their business in this way but it is absolutely necessary.

"At a time when the whole country is putting their shoulder to the wheel to save lives, it is essential that everyone pushes in the same direction. Anything that undermines this national effort is nothing other than unpatriotic.

"We all have a duty to save lives by maintaining social distance and gardaí have a job of work to ensure this happens. Our members should not be deliberately endangered for carrying out their duty in protecting the public from this virus.

"Public Order legislation allows gardaí to deal with this threatening behaviour, but we are calling for a specific Garda Síochána policy to always oppose bail in cases where someone is charged with offences connected to the weaponization of Covid-19.

"The GRA is engaging with Garda management on these matters and have reiterated to them that this behaviour shows the need for greater availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including face masks.

"A cast-iron protocol adopted in every Garda station and specialist unit in the country for the deployment of PPE is also required.

"Currently, members are being sent on duties that involve close contact with the public without being issued facemasks.

"The GRA is due to meet the Department of Justice tomorrow (Wednesday April 1) to discuss the implementation of new regulations on dispersal of groups, enforcement of confinement orders and other matters contained in the new emergency legislation signed into law two weeks ago*.

"We will seek clarity for our members on the legal operation of the regulations but also that gardaí be recognised as a special category of frontline public service requiring a special priority for the allocation of national stocks of protective equipment."