



THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

# ÁNCOSANTÓIR



## DCOS (SP) INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH MAJ GEN Ó MURCHÚ

### DF VALUES AWARDS

THE VALUES CHAMPIONS OF 2023

### EXERCISE SIEGE ENGINE

ENGINEERING EXERCISE IN CYPRUS

### DEFENCE FORCES RUGBY

A HISTORY OF THE SPORT WITHIN THE DF

STRENGTHEN THE NATION



## FEATURES

- 04** DCOS (SP) INTERVIEW
- 07** D CS & ISTAR 2024 IN REVIEW
- 08** JITC RECRUITS
- 09** MP SENIOR NCO COURSE
- 10** DF VALUES AWARDS
- 12** THE UNDERGRADUATE AWARD
- 14** EXERCISE SIEGE ENGINE
- 17** ICMD & ENGINEERING YO'S COURSE
- 18** RDF PO'S COURSE
- 22** DF RUGBY
- 24** GENAD COURSE
- 26** IRISH DESERTERS DURING WWII
- 29** BOOK REVIEW

## REGULARS

- 20** PEOPLE OF THE DF
- 30** ON PARADE
- 32** SPORTS & CLUBS
- 34** FROM THE ARCHIVES



**04**



**10**



**18**

## From the editor

— Cpl Eric Ryan

Welcome to the first edition of An Cosantóir for 2025! This issue kicks off the new year with a continuation of 2024 in review, including a review by Col Tom McGrath, who reflects on the key achievements of D Combat Support & ISTAR. We also feature an interview from the outgoing DCOS (SP) Major General Adrian Ó Murchú. We've made some changes to the layout of the magazine this year, moving On Parade and our regular features to the back to give more space upfront for the main articles and stories. Looking ahead, we'll continue to bring you operational highlights and insights from across the Defence Forces. This edition features more stories from the RDF, and we plan to showcase even more from our reservists throughout 2025. As always, sports remain an important part of military life, bringing camaraderie and team spirit to our community. Comdt Niall Wilcox penned a feature on rugby in the Defence Forces, which explores the history and impact of the sport within our ranks. We are looking for articles on training, operations, sports, history, and personal stories from across the Defence Forces. If you have a story to share, we'd love to hear from you. We hope you enjoy this edition of An Cosantóir!

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." — Phil Jackson



14



22

# AN COSANTÓIR



## Manager

Comdt Helen Hosback  
info@military.ie  
+353 (0)45 44 5306

## Editor

Cpl Eric Ryan  
connect@military.ie  
+353 (0)45 44 5307

## Photographer

A/M Sam Gibney  
photo@military.ie

## Admin NCO

Cpl Martin Bennett  
Cpl Christopher Kenny  
requisitions@military.ie  
+353 (0)45 44 5307

## DF Webmaster

Sgt Louise McDonald  
webmaster@military.ie  
+353 (0)45 44 5307

## Designer

JM Publishing & Media Arklow,  
Co. Wicklow, Ireland  
Tel: +353 (0)87 1344135  
Email: info@jmpublishing.ie

*The fact that an article appears in this magazine does not indicate official approval of the views expressed by the author.*

## Front Cover

Photo provided by Lt Oisín Gribben - JITC

## Back Cover

Provided by 105 SQN

## Print

Delivered to barracks bi-monthly

## Online

Visit the link below for current and past editions  
[www.military.ie/magazine](http://www.military.ie/magazine)

## Social Media

Follow @ancosantoir on Instagram

© Published by OiC Public Relations Branch for the Defence Forces

# DCOS (SUPPORT) MAJOR GENERAL

## ADRIAN Ó MURCHÚ

INTERVIEW BY COMDT HELEN HOSBACK  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN Ó MURCHÚ

### SIR, YOU ARE DUE TO RETIRE FROM THE DEFENCE FORCES SOON AFTER 42 YEARS OF SERVICE, WHAT HAVE BEEN THE HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR CAREER?

I suppose that I have always been very lucky in the type and variety of appointments that I've enjoyed over the years, at home and abroad. At home, my career was marked by a wide range of operational, training and staff jobs, such as in the 5th and 6th Infantry Battalions, the Army Ranger Wing, Military Intelligence, the Military College (Infantry, Cadet and UN Schools), CMU and DFHQ (e.g. J3&5 and Strategic Planning Branch). Command jobs were always a highlight, such as Platoon Commander in the Army Ranger Wing, Company Commander and 2IC in the 5th Battalion and OC CMU. All these jobs gave me wide exposure to all sorts of DF activities, which helped me immensely during my time as ACOS and more recently as DCOS (Sp). My overseas service included tours with the UN in Lebanon, Somalia, Western Sahara, Israel and the Ivory Coast. I also deployed twice with the EU - as Chief Intelligence Analyst with EUFOR HQ in Eastern Tchad and more recently for two years in Brussels as Military Assistant to the Chairman of the EU Military Committee (the Chief of Staff will take over the Chairman's appointment later this year). While that time in Brussels was certainly remarkable as I worked at the very highest levels of European Defence, my time in Somalia remains my most memorable trip, for a few reasons. While it was certainly the most challenging and dangerous of my tours, we really believed that we were making a difference to end the famine, and I was lucky to be part of a magnificent group of individuals that displayed the very best of Irish soldiering, humanity and good humour. They certainly instilled in me a huge respect and admiration for our troops ever since.

### YOU HAVE A STRONG MILITARY TRADITION IN YOUR FAMILY - DID THIS INFLUENCE HOW YOU APPROACHED YOUR CAREER?

Certainly, I was always very conscious that soldiering was the family trade on my father's side. He had joined the Céad Cath (1st Infantry Battalion) in Galway in 1935 for three years, and re-joined in 1939 for the duration of the Emergency (World War II). He demobbed

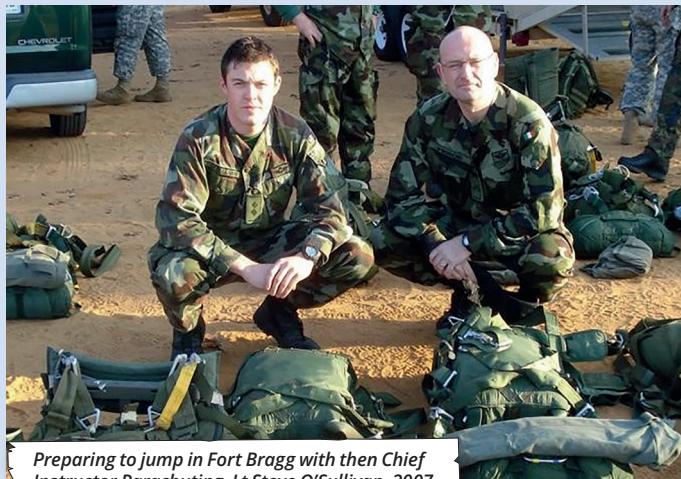
as a Sgt after the War but always remained a soldier at heart. His father had been an NCO in the Munster Fusiliers and was wounded at Gallipoli. My maternal grandfather was also in the British Army, as was my maternal grand-uncle, who was killed while serving with the Irish Guards in France in 1918. So, in many ways soldiering was in my DNA. My Dad proudly wore his ONE blazer and service medals on the day of my commissioning. Sadly, he died only a few weeks later, but despite our grief at his loss it was a consolation that he lived to see that soldiering tradition carry on to the next generation. I have spent my time in service living up to his high standards, and, I hope, his values.

### YOU HAVE BEEN DCOS SP FOR 3 AND A HALF YEARS, WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND



## CHALLENGES OF THIS APPOINTMENT?

I think it's no secret that it's been a very busy and challenging few years, since both the Chief of Staff and I were appointed in September 2021. To be honest it has been rough at times, and the workload has certainly tested my resilience. That said, I am pleased to say that



Preparing to jump in Fort Bragg with then Chief Instructor Parachuting, Lt Steve O'Sullivan, 2007

things are definitely getting better, especially in the last 12-18 months. We have had some big 'wins', such as the introduction of Private Health Care for all ranks and the extension of the mandatory retirement age to 62, finally addressing the 'Post 94' problem. Other achievements that we can all be proud of include the very significant progress we've made on the Equipment Development Plan (EDP), the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) and on our training and education model. In that regard I firmly believe that we now have the best life-long learning programme in the Public Service, bar none. In my own case, for example, I was able to complete an honours degree in French and English literature from University of Galway, graduate (with Merit) from the French War College (École de Guerre) and complete a Masters (with Distinction) in International Liaison and Communication

at the University of Westminster. I later completed an Executive Diploma in Strategy (with Distinction) at the Smurfit Business School in UCD, and I hold a NATO interpreter qualification in French. All this was done through various DF training and education schemes, and has been hugely helpful in preparing me for the various appointments that I held over the years, at home and overseas. Finally on this question, I am very proud of the work that RSM Keith Caffrey (the Chief of Staff's Senior Enlisted Advisor) and I have done in the last decade to lead our 'Values



Shamrock Parade in UNDOF 2023

in Action' programme, which is aimed at ensuring that our DF Values are reflected in our everyday behaviours and decision making.

## DEFENCE FORCES PARACHUTING HAS REALLY EVOLVED SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT AND YOU'VE BEEN A BIG PART OF THAT – CAN YOU TELL US A BIT MORE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS SPORT IN MILITARY LIFE?

Again, I was very lucky to have great opportunities in adventure sports during my time in service, both diving and especially parachuting. All adventure sports develop teamwork, leadership and self-confidence, all key traits in military life, and especially when you're under pressure. During my time in the University of Galway, I became very involved

in the Diving Club and was Club Captain during my final year. That said, my main effort was always parachuting, and as the years went by, I became more and more involved in the sports side (An Para-Chumann Mileata or PCM), working my way up as Chief Instructor, Chairman and finally President of DF Parachuting. One highlight during those years was the trip to the World Military (CISM) Games in Brazil with the DF Skydiving Team, then the best part-time military team in the world made up of 'real' soldiers. On the military side I was Parachuting Officer in the Army

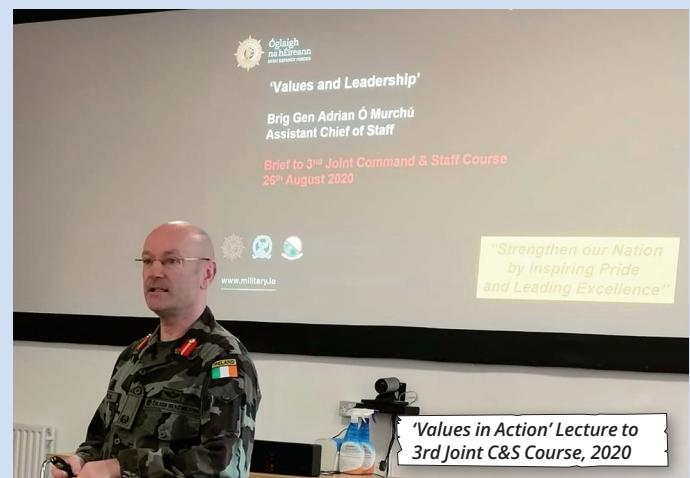
Ranger Wing, underwent several foreign Airborne courses and later underwent a HALO jumpmaster's course in Sweden. Since then, I have been involved in the development and governance of both Military Freefall (MFF) and Military Static Line (MSL) parachuting, and I am very pleased to see the great progress that both our ARW and Parachute Training Team experts have made in the last 20 years. The future in both areas is bright, not least because of the procurement of 'state of the art' parachute equipment and the scheduled delivery of a utility Airbus C295 later this year, which is designed for MFF and MSL operations. My involvement with both military and sports parachuting has been a real joy during my time in service, and as I depart the DF, I hope that our new personnel will make the most of those same opportunities that I had to get involved in fitness, sport and adventure training during their time in service.



OP Briefing in UNDOF 2023

## BEHIND THE UNIFORM, YOU HAVE A FAMILY – YOU'RE A FATHER AND HUSBAND. HOW DID YOU BALANCE THE ROLES?

Anyone who serves in the DF faces the challenge of juggling their professional commitments (duties, overseas, career courses etc.) with their home lives, and I was no different. I was lucky that I have lived near the Curragh for the last 30 years, so I was able to commute to various jobs in Dublin, the Curragh and Newbridge relatively easily. That said, like a lot of my generation, I have spent a lot of time overseas, which was challenging especially when our children were young. While we get the medals for those trips, it's our partners at home who probably deserve them more – we are generally fed and found overseas, while our partners have to hold down their own jobs, look after the kids and keep a household going on their own. My wife Deirdre was no exception, and she still reminds me that all the big family crises (such as when one the kids ended up in hospital) happened while I was away. You try to make up for these absences at the weekends and during leave, but I'm not sure that we ever really pay back the debt that we owe to our families, especially our partners. Now that I am retiring, I will be





more present at home and available for the daily housework and 'Dad Taxi' runs (though hopefully not too many family crises!).

**DCOS (SP), AS A POSITION IN THE ORGANISATION, HAS A LARGE, WIDE RANGING PORTFOLIO. DO YOU THINK IT IS WORTH CONSIDERING SPLITTING THE RESPONSIBILITIES ACROSS MORE OFFICES AS PART OF THE NEW C2 STRUCTURES BEING DEVELOPED FOR THE DF?**

Indeed, this is one aspect that is being considered in the ongoing C2 and strategic force design projects. DCOS (Sp) is currently responsible for aspects of HR and Administration (J1, including Ceremonial, Data Protection and Regulations), Logistics (J4), Engineers (Combat Engineering, Infrastructure and Energy), Military Finance, Legal Branch and the Military Justice System, the Medical Corps (DMB and CMU), Ordnance (including procurement and catering), Transport, the Chaplaincy Service, the DF School of Music, the Equitation School and various other governance functions, including on the High Level Procurement Planning Group and the Defence Audit Committee. I've probably missed something there! While I have certainly been put to the pin of my collar to keep up with this very busy portfolio, things have improved greatly with the appointment of the Head of Strategic HR, Mr. Declan Carville, in the last year. Declan has a very impressive HR background in the private sector, and his expertise and hard work on strategic HR issues (and that of the growing team in Strategic HR Division) have allowed me to devote more time to other priority areas such as HR executive management (appointments etc.), Governance, Military Finance, the EDP and the IDP. That said, it's generally acknowledged that Support Division as currently established has too wide and demanding a portfolio, and I would hope that the ongoing strategic force design and C2 projects will address that issue



specifically, so that we can maintain the highest and most up to date governance and management practices in the future DF.

**ANY FINAL REMARKS?**

Two points, if I may. First of all, as I leave the service after 42 years, I am more optimistic now about the future of the DF than ever before. We have a shared commitment by all stakeholders (such as Government, DOD, our Representative Associations and the DF Leadership) to make the DF the best that it can be, and ready for the challenges that it will face in the years to come. We have a Government commitment to 'Level of Ambition 2', which includes a phased 50% increase in Defence spending. We are already seeing the benefits of that funding, for example in the multiple infrastructure projects completed and ongoing across the DF (almost €60m in 2024, with much more on the way). We have a Government decision to bring the DF back up to 11,500 (military and civilian personnel) and to regenerate the RDF. We are making real progress on recruitment, and our retention rates are also improving. The 'Bottom Line' is this – our ship is turning in the right direction and picking up speed. I hope that all those who are currently serving



will stay in the DF to enjoy the better times that are coming, and live the 'Life Less Ordinary' that I have enjoyed for over four decades.

Secondly and finally, I hope that DF members, both PDF and RDF, take great pride in their membership of the Defence Forces and in all that they do in service of our 'bosses', the citizens of Ireland. Having spent a large proportion of my service overseas, I can honestly say that being small does not stop us from being world class. Whether it's at home during times of crisis (such as Covid), overseas (such as on peacekeeping missions), or when participating in multinational



training and competitions (such as the EU Battlegroup, 'Arduous Serpent', the 'Cambrian Patrol' or on external academic courses), our people show that they are world class, time and time again. As I retire, I hope that all our Army, Air Corps and Navy personnel appreciate how good they are, and always take pride in being a member of this great organisation that founded this Republic - Óglaigh na hÉireann.

# DCS & ISTAR

**2024 IN REVIEW**  
**ARTICLE BY COLONEL TOM MCGRATH**

*Artillery night shoot*

Combat Support (CS) & ISTAR comprising the Directorate, Artillery and Cavalry Corps had a busy 2024 in support of training and operations on-island and overseas. Notable Peace Support Operation contributions included, the Cavalry Recce Section (13) role in the UNDOF withdrawal (April) and the ongoing Artillery (27) and Cavalry (25) personnel deployed in UNIFIL, this within an increasingly challenging operating environment. EUBG 24/25 has also occupied both Corps resource planning, as training and exercises in preparation for the Standby phase progress.



*Cavalry Combat Tracker Instructors Course.*

Our two 2 Artillery Regiments and three 3 Cavalry Squadrons continued to conduct ATCP operations and ATCA tasks on request, while also providing ceremonial honours for visiting dignitaries and State ceremonies.

The Schools, ably supported by our Units continued to deliver a high standard of education and training courses focused on maintaining the essential CS 'skills sets' of direct and indirect fires, GBAD, armour driving and gunnery and ISTAR. The breath of courses conducted ranged from Artillery Gun Detachments Commanders, UAV Operators and Regimental Survey, while Cavalry courses focused on induction training (Scout Tactical, CRV Crew courses), career courses (Young Officer, Standard NCO) and professional development training (Combat Tracking Instructor, AFV Range Managers).

With a view to maintaining and developing CS & ISTAR capabilities, the support provided to the Directorate by Schools and Units is an invaluable resource. Artillery Corps projects ongoing include 105mm Light Guns upgrade and refurbishment, procurement

of Tactical and Operational UAVs and the replacement of Ground Surveillance Radars. Cavalry Corps projects include 'Scout' equipment (surveillance cameras, spotting scopes and multi spectral camouflage nets), UAS in both fixed and rotary wing configurations, while an interim direct fire capability – CRV+ (30mm cannon on a Kongsberg RS6 weapons station) MOWAG PIRANHA IIH – is progressing as planned.

Capability development in the context of CODF, where specifically within the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) the Armour Fleet Replacement, Military Radar-Recognised Air Picture, Anti-Drone/C-UAS and UAS/RPAS projects are essential to 'future proofing' the CS & ISTAR roles.

In the previous 12 months' members of both Corps have engaged in various external courses and international visits. One such course was the Reconnaissance Operators Course (ROC) in Canada, viewed as the leading course for recce units, while visits included the International Armoured Vehicles Conference, Land Warfare Europe Conference and Eurosatory 2024, all with a view to developing training and operational standards, where interoperability and relationship building are key enablers.

My thanks to the Artillery 'Gunners' and Cavalry 'Troopers' for their continued commitment and professionalism.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge Comdt Joe Tynan's departure as Chief Instructor, Cavalry School, an appointment he held for almost 5 years. His dedication, determination and vision in progressing ISTAR training and capabilities was admirable. I wish him the very best in his new role in the Office of Joint Capability Development, Chief of Staff Division, an appointment in which he will no doubt bring the same energy and vision. (Insert pic 4)



*Cavalry Standard and YO's course in Kilworth*



*Comdt Joe Tynan*

# JOINT INDUCTION TRAINING CENTRE



## 2ND RECRUIT PLATOON

BY LT OISÍN GRIBBEN

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LT OISÍN GRIBBEN



On the 26th of August 2024, 52 Recruits of the 2nd JIJC Recruit Platoon entered through the gates of Gormanston Camp ready to embark on a career in the Irish Defence Forces. The Recruits, who came from all three service branches and hail from 14 counties throughout the Island of Ireland were beginning their 12 week induction training.

In the initial weeks of training, Recruits were instructed on a variety of lessons including weapons training, lessons on foot drill and they also completed lectures on a range of military subjects. Throughout these initial stages of training, Recruits became socialised into the military environment, creating bonds with the fellow Recruits in their section, building their physical fitness and robustness whilst developing military discipline.

During induction training, Recruits are tested on what they have learned in order to confirm their training. This testing is done through



the STAR TEST system which acts as a major milestone for Recruits during the 12 weeks. As training progressed, Recruits completed STAR TESTS on a range of subjects including their weapon TOETs, Footdrill, Fieldcraft, CIS, Unarmed Combat and Military Skills.

Upon completion of TOETs on both the Steyr Rifle and the GPMG, Recruits progressed onto their range week where they would complete the Recruit and ARP tables on both weapons. For many Recruits this was a highlight of their training.

As the 12 week program advanced into the later stages, the Recruits began their Tactical Phase of training. This included an introductory 24 Hour Exercise in the Cooley Mountains, with Recruits introduced to operating on the ground for the first time in their careers. This was followed by a section attack week, with the Recruits introduced to basic offensive tactics. This tactical phase culminated in a final tactical exercise in the Cooley Mountains where Recruits completed various patrols, ambushes and a raid on the final morning of the exercise.

After 12 weeks of training on the 15th of November 2024, 40 Recruits of the 2nd JIJC Recruit Platoon passed out in front of their families in



Gormanston Camp. The JIJC would like to wish all 2 Star Privates, 2 Star Airmen and Ordinary Rates the very best in their future careers.

## 3RD RECRUIT PLATOON

BY LT ADAM RUSSELL

On the 2nd of December 2024 the JIJC welcomed the 03rd JIJC Recruit Platoon. The platoon are led by their platoon commander LT Adam Russell and their platoon sergeant, SGT Joanne Woods both coming from the Air Corps. At induction, the platoon consisted of 33 Army and Air Corps Recruits hailing from 16 counties from across the island with recruits from Sweden and Romania joining them.

On the 2nd of December the recruits began their 12 weeks of training learning the basics of foot and arms drill. In the early stages of training they will be instructed on the use of the STEYR AUG Rifle and the FN MAG GPMG before moving on to facing the harsh February weather for their cumulative 96 hour tactical training exercise and Section attack week with a company commanders challenge to top it off. On top of these challenges, the potential recruits will be exposed to



skills and disciplines such as basic unarmed combat, CIS, Military fitness, and First aid response.

The platoon is set to complete their initial 12 week training on the 7th of March 2025 before being sent to complete the 2-3 star course and join their Defence Forces colleagues as trained soldiers. We all wish the potential recruits the very best as they begin their training in Gormanston.

*Several recruits from this Recruit Platoon have been featured in the ongoing People of the DF series on the An Cosantóir Instagram page @ancosantoir*



# NATO MP SENIOR NCO COURSE

ARTICLE BY RQMS ROCH RYAN  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY RQMS ROCH RYAN

## NATO MILITARY POLICE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE BYDGOSZCZ, POLAND

### Preparing Senior NCOs for Multinational Operations: Insights from the NATO Military Police Senior NCO Course

In an increasingly interconnected world, where cooperation is essential to mission success, the NATO Military Police Senior NCO Course plays a vital role in preparing senior NCOs to operate effectively within multinational environments. Recently, 27 senior NCOs from 18 NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries participated in this course, aimed at equipping them with the skills necessary for NATO operations, as part of an integrated, multinational Military Police (MP) force. The Irish Defence Forces contributed both a facilitator RQMS Roch RYAN MP Group, DFTC and a student CS Trevor HOWARD, DMP Branch, DFHQ.



RQ Roch Ryan, MP Corps RQ, briefing his syndicate on their taskings

#### A Diverse Faculty of Instructors and Facilitators

The course's instructional team included a diverse group of facilitators and instructors from NATO and PfP nations, specifically Ireland, the United States, the Netherlands,

and the Czech Republic. These facilitators brought a wealth of experience from Military Police and Gendarmerie organisations, offering critical insights from all aspects of policing. A key figure in the successful delivery of the course was CSM (OR9) Zdenek HANAK from MP COE, whose leadership and organisational expertise were instrumental in shaping the course content and guiding the instructional approach.

This multinational, multi-agency expertise provided students with a well-rounded understanding of how Military Police functions are performed across different nations and organisational contexts. The varied backgrounds of the facilitators underscored the importance of cross-functional collaboration, preparing students to lead effectively in NATO's complex, multinational operational settings.

#### Focused on NATO and MP Doctrine: Training Across the Five Core MP Functions

The course framework centres on NATO and MP doctrines, guiding operations in multinational settings. Training is organised around the five core Military Police functions:

1. Mobility Support Function



CSM Robert WOOD briefing his syndicate on their taskings

2. Security Function
3. Detention Function
4. Police Function
5. Stability Policing (SP) Function

These functions, which encompass everything from providing route security to maintaining public order in stability operations,

form the backbone of effective Military Policing in NATO missions. Throughout the course, participants applied these functions in multinational contexts, learning how each can contribute to cohesive and effective mission outcomes.

#### Building Cohesion Through Syndicate Work and Practical Exercises

Throughout the week, students engaged in syndicate work—small group collaborations that simulate the cross-functional, multinational teams they may work with in future deployments. Each syndicate tackled complex scenarios, requiring participants to bridge differences in doctrine, approach, and national regulations, helping them prepare for the intricacies of multinational command structures and operational priorities.

In one key exercise, each syndicate developed three separate courses of action for a hypothetical mission scenario, which were then presented to a "commander." This planning process required participants to consider NATO and MP doctrine, rules of engagement,

international regulations, and cultural factors that might influence operational dynamics. By anticipating these challenges, students learned essential skills for leading multinational teams under NATO command structures.

#### Considering the Legal and Cultural Landscape: Rules, Regulations, and Cross-Cultural Awareness

The course emphasised the importance of navigating a complex framework of regulations and agreements. Students were required to account for:



CS Trevor HOWARD DMP Branch participating in group work

- NATO Doctrine
- Military Police Doctrine
- International Regulations
- Rules of Engagement
- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)
- National Regulations
- Organisational Policies
- Cross-Cultural Awareness

These considerations—ranging from host-nation legalities to cultural nuances—are vital to ensuring that MP operations are

both effective and legally compliant when deployed in multinational settings.

#### Designing the Ready Mission Training Plan for Deployment Success

One of the culminating exercises was the creation of a Ready Mission Training Plan, a pre-deployment framework designed to prepare

units for multinational operations. This plan focused on practical training modules to help MP units seamlessly integrate into NATO missions, covering readiness, situational adaptability, and cross-cultural competence. This exercise highlighted the value

of mission-specific preparation that accounts for the multinational setting's unique challenges, ultimately reducing response time and enhancing operational effectiveness.

#### Conclusion: Shaping Future Leaders for NATO's Multinational Environment

The NATO Military Police Senior NCO Course is a foundational experience, equipping senior NCOs with critical tools to navigate and lead in NATO's diverse and demanding operational environments. Through rigorous planning exercises, cross-cultural engagement, and a focus on NATO doctrine, the course empowers participants to confidently lead integrated MP companies.

Graduates of this program return to their home nations with enhanced skills and an invaluable network of trusted allies across NATO and PfP nations. The course not only advances individual knowledge but

strengthens collective readiness, ensuring that NATO Military Police forces are well-prepared for the complexities of multinational operations—today and in the future.



# DF VALUES CHAMPIONS 2023



The Values Awards are presented on an annual basis to personnel nominated by their peers for espousing the DF values during the preceding calendar year. The nominations are examined by a selection panel, which is chaired by Assistant Chief of Staff, and its members are SNCOs drawn from three (3) services, and each formation. The panel secretary is an NCO drawn from Public Relations Branch. The person currently filling that role is Sgt Rena Kennedy. Sgt Kennedy was the brain child behind the values awards, and has worked tirelessly over the last decade to inculcate the awards into Defence Forces psyche, ensuring we recognise those that display our values during specific incidents, or in how they perform their day to day tasks/interactions. The selection panels task is to review all nominations, and recommend to the Defence Forces Board suitable recipients of an annual award, for the six (6) values categories and an overall values winner. At the 2024 awards ceremony, which saw those selected winners from 2023 awarded and recognised for their outstanding actions/contributions, and with their family/loved one present we were honoured to have Niall Quinn attend as guest speaker to present the awards alongside the Chief of Staff.



AB Sean Dineen pictured with his award for Moral Courage

## MORAL COURAGE

### AB Sean Dineen, NS

During recruit training in October 2023, AB Dineen intervened after an incident had occurred between two other recruits.

His actions were that of a positive bystander and was in keeping with the Values of Óglaigh na hÉireann. AB Dineen's intervention had the impact of creating a more positive group dynamic. As part of his induction training he had received a brief on interpersonal relations,

the Dignity Charter and on DF Values. He acted in accordance with upholding the Values, in particular, Moral Courage.



A/FSgt Mark Barker pictured with his award for Respect

## RESPECT

### A/FSgt Mark Barker, CIS Squadron AC

A/FSgt Barker fulfils the role of Admin Flight Sergeant and maintains a watchful eye for each individual's personal service matters with regard to duty pay, allowances, acting and substitution cases and does so for all peers, subordinates and superiors. All ranks within CIS Squadron trust his fairness and have confidence in his value of Respect for all individuals regardless of any biases. In the absence of an RSM A/FSgt Barker maintains unit morale, good order and discipline and continually reminds personnel of their own responsibilities towards the organisation and actively endeavours to maintain high standards within his unit. He is seen as forthright, direct but consistently respectful. He repeatedly demonstrates respect for others while highlighting areas for administrative improvement.



CQMS Deirdre O'Raw pictured with her award for Physical Courage

### PHYSICAL COURAGE

#### CQMS Deirdre O'Raw, DFHQ

CQMS O'Raw has been on a journey battling ovarian cancer and has been triumphant in the battle. She is now working with medical research teams to find definitive tests to diagnose ovarian cancer. Her story of courage through adversity and her teaching others of the signs and symptoms of this disease, her commitment to supporting other women is inspiring. I believe her Physical Courage to be outstanding.



Lt Dylan Cadogan pictured with his award for Integrity

### INTEGRITY

#### Lt Dylan Cadogan, 3 Inf Bn

Nominated for his actions during deployment to UNP 6-52 in October and November 2023, during a period of conflict between ISR & HZB which broke out leading to significant direct, indirect and aerial fire landing in very close proximity to the post. Despite being a young officer on his first tour of duty, he epitomised the value of Integrity throughout this period. The composed, considered and compassionate leadership he displayed during this dangerous period delivered mission success, ensured the safety of all personnel on the post and protected civilians under immediate threat of harm.

Some key examples include:

His fortitude during periods of Groundhog to ensure all incidents were accurately monitored and recorded.

Having the emotional intelligence to organise relief in place on the Post to those who required it.

### SELFLESSNESS

#### Fr Dan McCarthy

Fr Dan McCarthy exemplifies selflessness through his unwavering commitment to others. On a daily basis he devotes every ounce of his time to the service of those who serve alongside him at home



Rev Fr Dan McCarthy pictured with his award for Selflessness

or overseas. He is always available to those seeking guidance and he remains a pillar of support. His selflessness extends sacrificing personal time to help others. His selfless actions are not fuelled by recognition or reward rather they stem from a genuine desire to make a positive impact on those around him.

### LOYALTY

#### RSM Paul Jordan No 5 Sp Wing, ACHQ

Having joined the DF in 1985, RSM Jordan moved to the Air Corps in 2012 bringing with him a depth of experience and knowledge.

He constantly puts the needs of the organisation first and puts time and effort into his subordinates. He is fiercely loyal to his men and women and spends significant time formally teaching as well as informally mentoring every rank. RSM Jordan personifies loyalty, loyalty to his people, his Unit, his family, his profession, his organisation. "Over my 27 years' service he is the most impressive NCO I have had the pleasure to work with"

### OVERALL VALUES CHAMPION



RSM Alan O'Reilly pictured with his award for Loyalty, Respect, Selflessness, Physical Courage, Moral Courage & Integrity

#### RSM Alan O'Reilly DFTC HQ

RSM O'Reilly embodies all of the DF values and was instrumental in the change for good within the 27 Inf Bn. He puts the needs of the young men and women of the organisation to the forefront of his work. "A lot of people will never know what he did behind the scenes"

## THE UNDERGRADUATE AWARD

# ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE REWARDED



ARTICLE BY GNR JACK MURPHY, 1 BAR, RDF  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SGMN STEPHEN COOPER

In 2024 Signalman Stephen Cooper, a member of the Communications and Information Services (CIS) Corps, graduated from the South East Technological University (SETU) Carlow with a Distinction award in the Bachelor of Engineering (Military Communications Systems) programme. Significantly, his final year project titled "LIDAR Smart-Chair Navigator" has also achieved global recognition. This innovative project retrofits manual wheelchairs with autonomous capabilities. It uses LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) sensors for obstacle detection and avoidance, gesture and voice controls for intuitive operation and remote monitoring features to allow carers and family members to track and assist the wheelchair user from anywhere in the world. Sgmn Cooper's Smart Chair navigator will afford wheelchair users a more autonomous quality of life. His project captivated both the Global Undergraduate Awards (GUA) and the International Society of Automation (ISA) judges with its exceptional quality and innovative approach. The project was declared

the island of Ireland regional winner at the November 2024 summit of the GUA and ranked in the top 10% of engineering projects worldwide. Winners of this award are widely considered amongst the best aspiring specialists in their chosen fields. His successes continued when, in December 2024, his project also earned the 2024 ISA degree



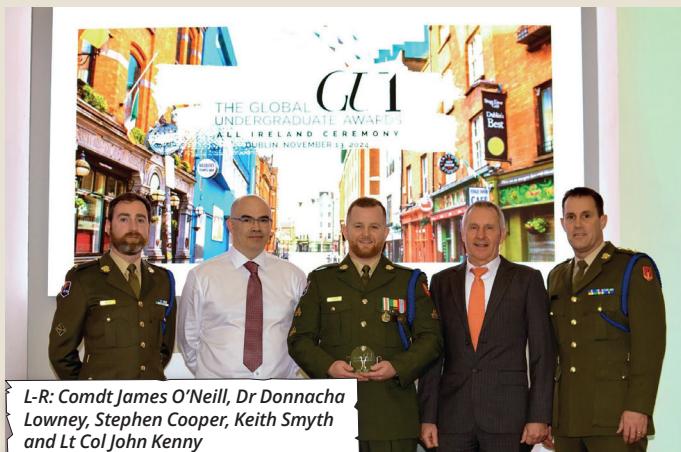
*The Graduation ceremony at SETU Carlow*

award which will be presented to him in Cork in January 2025. For Signalman Cooper, this is a magnificent personal achievement. His project selection was inspired by a desire to improve accessibility and independence for wheelchair users. "I wanted to address the challenges faced by individuals with mobility impairments by providing a solution that not only helps them navigate more freely but also gives their family members or carers the ability to remotely monitor and control the wheelchair if needs be. This added functionality enhances safety and peace of mind for both users and their support networks". When asked how the degree programme he studied assisted him in his project he said that "Computer Programming played a major role in developing the functionality of the LIDAR Smart-Chair Navigator, along with the practical skills such as using breadboards for prototyping and PCB (Printed Circuit Board) design. These modules also provided me with a strong understanding of how multiple sensors can work together, allowing for precise interaction and data sharing between different components within the one system."

He also said that "it is an incredible honour to win both the Highly Commended Award and the Regional Winner Award from the GUA. The project highlighted the importance of advancing assistive



*L-R- Comdt James O'Neill, Dr Donnacha Lowney, Ciara Groome (Stephen's Girlfriend), Stephen Cooper, Martina Cooper (Stephen's mother), Keith Smyth and Lt Col John Kenny*



L-R: Comdt James O'Neill, Dr Donnacha Lowney, Stephen Cooper, Keith Smyth and Lt Col John Kenny

technologies to create a more inclusive world for wheelchair users."

Sgmn Cooper is part of the CIS Corps Trainee Technician Scheme studying in SETU and the CIS School in the Defence Forces Training Centre to be a technician of the CIS Corps on completion of the training. He said that he applied for the scheme because he always had a passion for technology and electronics, and wanted to challenge himself to see if he could turn that passion into a career.

The remarkable achievement of Sgmn Cooper followed the successes of two other CIS Corps SETU graduates who won the Microelectronics Industry Design Association (MIDAS) Ireland industry-led cluster 3rd Level Project Competition awards in their final year in SETU. Sgmn Mark Gaughran won in 2019 for his "Vehicle Breathalyzer & Safety Monitoring System" project and Corporal Craig Cooper won in 2022 for his "STEM (Solar Tracking and Energy Management System)" project.

These accomplishments underscore the significance of the academic collaboration between SETU and the Defence Forces in developing highly skilled personnel for critical roles within the Communications and Information Services (CIS) Corps and Ordnance Corps. The programmes were developed in collaboration between the two Corps and the university and provide a balance between the

technical specialist needs of those Corps and the academic requirements of the university while also contributing to the Defence Forces in a meaningful way.

The programmes are two options for technician training under the Defence Forces Trainee Technician Scheme (TTS). This scheme was introduced in 2002 to address identified deficiencies in technician numbers and to restore technician levels to establishment figures following the closure of the Army Apprentice School in the late 1990s.

As well as the schemes mentioned above, there are technician training schemes run through SOLAS for the Transport, Cavalry, Engineering Corps and the Printing Press. In addition the Air Corps provide the aircraft system technician programme accredited by Technological University Dublin (TUD) and the technician scheme for the Naval Service scheme which is accredited by the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI). The TTS scheme is available to personnel currently serving within the Defence Forces who have successfully passed General Service Enlistment training. The scheme provides personnel with the ability to expand on their opportunities to serve at home and overseas, and gives a qualification and a skillset to take with them upon retirement from the Defence Forces. TTS training is conducted

over a period of 4 years comprising both academic theory and hands-on practical work.

The successful partnerships between SETU, TUD, NMCI, SOLAS and the Defence Forces serve as a powerful example of the benefits of strong academic collaborations in enhancing the technical skills and expertise of military personnel. Coordinated by the Director of Training and Education (DJ7) in collaboration with Corps Directorates, the TTS has evolved into a vital component of the Defence Forces. The scheme stands as a testament to the Defence Forces' commitment to maintaining a skilled and adaptable workforce. The recent graduations underscore the programme's success in producing qualified technicians across a wide range of disciplines. As the Defence Forces navigate future developments, including the potential establishment of an Apprentice School, collaboration remains key. By fostering partnerships such as those mentioned and strategically investing in training programmes, and by allocating appropriate resources the Defence Forces aim to continue delivering specialist military capability in an ever-evolving technological landscape.

The Defence Forces continues to prioritise lifelong learning and professional development of its personnel. In addition to the technician programmes, Corps officer training for the CIS, Ordnance and Engineering Corps are accredited by SETU Carlow as Masters programmes in Communications Technology Management, Military Engineering Management, and Weapons, Ordnance, Munitions & Explosives respectively.

The requirement for external accreditation of management and leadership training is also recognised with Maynooth University accrediting officer and cadet leadership training and SETU Carlow accrediting NCO training through the BA in Leadership Management and Defence Studies and BA in Leadership Management and Defence Studies (Logistics) programmes.

Such an array of academic opportunities being offered by the Defence Forces for both its leaders and its technical personnel all contribute to the Defence Forces' commitment to continuous learning and professional development. The example of young enlisted personnel such as Cpl Cooper, Sgmn Cooper and Sgmn Gaughran being able to excel both as academics and as Defence Forces personnel will continue to assist in attracting and retaining young men and women into the Defence Forces now and into the future.



Sgmn Cooper demonstrating the use of the chair's controls

# EXERCISE SIEGE ENGINE

**ARTICLE BY CAPT PIERCE DALTON**  
**PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPT PIERCE DALTON**

In late June 2024, a 10 person Advanced Search Team (AST) from the Corps of Engineers took part in a European Defence Agency (EDA) Search Exercise hosted by the Cyprus National Guard - Ex SIEGE ENGINE. The participants in the exercise were formed into the Multinational Military Search Company (MMSC) consisting of over 100 "live exercise personnel" from 4 nations: Belgium, Cyprus, Ireland and Sweden.

This exercise was a continuation of the Military Search Capability Building (MSCB) Cat B project. The MSCB programme allows partner nations to develop and test their interoperability in new and challenging environments. Simply put a category A project is one with involvement of all 27 member states with each having the choice to 'opt out', a category B project is one which is planned by a small number of partner nations with the rest given a chance to 'opt in'.

The key objectives of this series of live exercises are to bolster and benchmark the capabilities of European forces to combat the evolving threat posed by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) across various military and counter-terrorism operations. Ex SIEGE ENGINE enhanced interoperability, coherence and resilience between contributing partner nations to the EDA MSCB Cat B Project. An additional objective of the exercise was to test military search and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel operating in desert like conditions. With average daily temperatures of 33°C and humidity over 80% the conditions were challenging for stewards wearing pants and a UBAC so it got interesting for the searchers when the TAC 6E suit weighing 15.5kg was required.

The exercise scenario centred around a fictional enemy with its roots in the Covid 19 pandemic, the extremist political party Defenders of Cyprus and the media organisation Trust, who together worked to spread disinformation and destabilise the government. Their campaign began with workers strikes & vandalism but culminated with home made explosive (HME) manufacture and assassinations.

The Irish contribution to the Exercise consisted of 14 personnel, 10 of which were live exercise personnel and 4 had supporting roles in: Logs, Exercise Control and stewarding of search serials.

#### Training and preparation:

The training phase for the Exercise began on 10th May when key stakeholders met in the School of Military Engineering (SME) to be briefed by Comdt Jane O'Neill who had assisted with planning the Exercise scenario and schedule. The key point on the agenda was for logistics staff to agree and commence a strategy to pool all necessary equipment in time for delivery to the NSRC for transport to Cyprus by the 101 Sqn of the Air Corps in the newly acquired Airbus C295W. On Monday 13th May the search team formed up in the SME to commence a 5 week training programme planned by the team IC Capt Donal Clare. This training period was designed to refresh

advanced search techniques and procedures while developing cohesion within the group drawn from the rival units of 1 Fd Engr Coy, Cork and 2 Fd Engr Coy, Athlone. Recent procurement efforts meant that numerous pieces of upgraded equipment were available to the team and upskilling was required to utilise the additional capabilities available. As well as refining existing skills, some new ones would be required to meet the demands of Ex Siege Engine. The Advanced Search Team moved to Collins Barracks to begin a Rope Intervention Search Access & Rescue (RISAR) course which would allow them to safely insert and extract searchers, medics or other specialists from terrain inaccessible on foot. This training consisted of four days covering the fundamentals rope work and working at height, followed by an exercise in the beautiful Ballykeefe Quarry, Co. Kilkenny. The exercise, co-ordinated by our instructor CQMS

Shane Barry, tested the team in preparing abseils and use of descent equipment such as the Petzel I'D and ASAP fall arrest device. To enable the ESSC team to operate in hazardous environments containing low 02 or hazardous gasses, they undertook a Working in Confined spaces (WICS) course, which taught the students to understand how to safely select, use, visually inspect and maintain confined space equipment including full working compressed air breathing apparatus. They learned how to enter and work safely in high risk confined spaces and react swiftly to an emergency.

A relatively recent addition to our capabilities is a pair of Remotely Operated Vehicles which enable Advanced Search teams to



maintain personal safety and improve the situational awareness to commanders. The pre deployment training focussed on improving operator skills for the two systems (Riddlr ROV & DJI Matrice UAS) and developing capability knowledge for the remainder of the team, allowing them to employ the assets efficiently and work within the constraints of their capabilities.



Pte Sean O'Connell (front) and Cpl Johnny Carroll survey the entrance to the building for signs of booby traps and a safe access point

Upon completion of the training phase the team began preparations for travel to Cyprus. Equipment and logs staff were transported to Cyprus via Malta thanks to AC 101 Squadron and NSRC. The remaining 12 personnel were transported with thanks to J4 and Lufthansa.

### WORKING AS PART OF THE MMSC

The MMSC and all its assets were based in the National Guard Training Camp (KEN) which is located 12km East of Pafos. The exercise locations were clustered around the south west portion of the island of Cyprus. The

variety of locations allowed for some very interesting and challenging scenarios which had to be carefully tackled by all teams. Throughout the exercise the Irish AST, callsign C1, worked with a variety of international personnel and gained valuable knowledge on the effective use of new assets such as Military Working Dogs (MWD) or attached EOD. The first task C1 received was a route search into an abandoned village at Sioskou. The challenges of this task included numerous vulnerable points, collapsed culverts and thick scrub to be traversed on isolation sweeps. The team worked well on this task and put their organic and attached assets to good use, discovering a Command Wire IED concealed in a culvert. This first experience working with a MWD was insightful for the team.

Following completion of the route search C1 were tasked to Lithrodontas on 23 JUN 24 to complete an incident search of a vehicle suspected to be booby trapped. Swedish EOD were attached to C1 to assist, with the availability of two ROVs, remote means were the most efficient method of gaining access to the car. Cpl Johnny Carroll showed the best aptitude for piloting the RIDDLER in training, so he was tasked to work with the Swedish ROV operator who was equipped with a PackBot. This was an excellent opportunity to contrast the capabilities of the two robots. The PackBot has superior manoeuvrability but the RIDDLER provided excellent visibility

and torque, provided by the array of cameras and greater weight respectively. 24 JUN 24 saw a pause in operations for C1 to attend a multinational "Non-Tac" day exercising rope work and rescue systems at a rockface at Hasampouilia, this training was co-ordinated by a Swedish Rope Master affectionately known as Steve-O.

As the exercise scenario unfolded and evidence of concerning enemy capability and intent was uncovered, a major operation to search the suspected HQ of Trust was planned, this operation saw a



Pte Sean O'Connell cutting his way into the TRUST HQ

Belgian AST, Cypriot EOD and Intermediate Search Team (IST), Irish AST and two MWDs under the command of an Irish Search Advisor to conduct a search of a large Ex military compound on the outskirts of Lithrodontas. This site was known to house a HQ and primary training area of the terrorist group Trust, the location was confirmed to be booby trapped so a high threat search was required. The Irish AST now under the command of Sgt Chris Hurley was tasked to search a cluster of buildings on the outskirts of the camp, suspected of

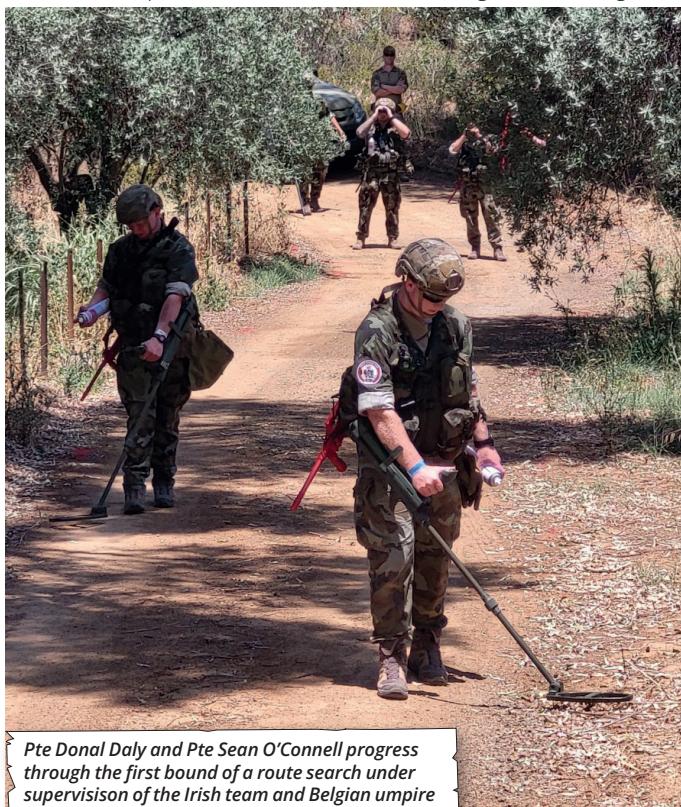
housing the HQ. While conducting an isolation sweep of the building they suspected of housing the HQ Pte Sean O'Connell and Cpl Niall Conlon discovered a well concealed tripwire linked to a bounding fragmentation mine. The find was reported, marked and handed over to Cypriot EOD who conducted a deliberate initiation of the mine. This find confirmed the building to be of significance to the enemy so the search recommenced immediately. To gain access to the building it was decided to use a hook & line set to open a door from a safe distance. The main door the building was not booby trapped, following an appropriate "soak time" two members of the team cautiously entered and it became apparent that Ex Con had been very busy preparing



Team photo w Ambassador and D Eng



this HQ. An overwhelming array of maps, schedules, correspondence and a printed recipe thought to describe HME manufacture, which was revealed to be a harmless recipe for chocolate chip cookies by a Cypriot translator. Once the room had been confirmed free of Booby Traps the dress state was reduced from Level 3 (TAC 6E suit & Helmet cw Ballistic Visor) to Level 1 (Body Armour and Helmet) and the test of Technical Exploitation of the sea of material began. The Intelligence



was quickly interpreted to reveal the likely location of a long term weapons hide in an overgrown area to be searched by the Cypriot IST. This search also saw the Belgian AST uncover a HME lab and conduct an efficient CASEVAC of a soldier injured by a Booby Trap.

The final task completed by C1 was a defensive venue search of Markideio theatre in Paphos.

This type of search is conducted in advance of a venue's use for high profile events which may be attended by the targets of the enemy such as political leaders or diplomats. Such venues pose opportune terrain for a broad range of attacks so the defensive venue search is a countermeasure used to detect any devices or resources intended for use in an attack. Following the initial search, the venue must remain a safe and sterile environment for the duration of its use. This theatre was scheduled to host a planning conference between the MMSC and Cypriot National Guard. C1 conducted a Threat Assessment, Vulnerability Assessment, Orders session and a detailed search of the venue before handing it over to Cypriot Police to secure until completion of the conference.

### LESSONS LEARNED



The team and support staff unanimously agreed that the short but intense experience was hugely beneficial and educational. The team returned home with confidence in their abilities of Advanced Search and full of ideas for further improvement to our capabilities. The experience working with mixed nationalities as part of the same operational unit allowed C1 to demonstrate Irish TTPs and contrast them with teams from different backgrounds. Most procedural differences could be traced back to the environment in which each country's search capability was developed.

The opportunity to work with MWD and handlers was one of the key talking points after the Exercise but the challenges and cost of this capability were also well recognised.

One point of similarity between the four participating nations was the equipment suites in use. The common use of detectors produced by Valon and Orion, Hook & line sets produced by Allen proved that the equipment available to our Advanced Search teams is on par with our peer nations.

The benefit of having EOD and Advanced Search capabilities within the same unit became apparent from working with Swedish EOD and Demining Centre (SWEDEC) personnel. The intimate understanding of the two capabilities and responsibilities was apparent and impressive, the proximity certainly bred interoperability which would serve as a good target for our Ordnance and Engineer Corps.



# ICMD 33<sup>RD</sup> AND 34<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEERING YO'S

ARTICLE BY CAPT OISÍN DUFF  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPT OISÍN DUFF

Students prepare charges for a Low Order attempt on a 84mm round

**O**n the 30th October 2023, the 33rd and 34th Engineering YOs began the 1st Joint ICMD (Intermediate Conventional Munitions Disposal) course ran in the Ordnance school in the DFTC. This course is designed to qualify operators to a Conventional Munitions Disposal (CMD) standard of Level 2. Where a line officer will have received training in CMD level 1, certain blinds, and misfires, this raises that qualification to level 2 Intermediate Conventional Munitions. This allows Engineer Officers to dispose of munitions in service within DF up to the size of a 120mm mortar.



Students down range prepping charges for conventional munitions disposal



Student prepares an SM-EOD 33 for disposal attempt on a 60mm Illum Mortar round

This course saw the Engineer YOs benefit from the professionalism and expertise of the Ordnance Corps, the primary agency within the DF with responsibility for EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal). This is enjoyed due to the memorandum of understanding between both Corps, that allows for the marriage of search expertise with expertise in safe munitions disposal. Engineer officers that train in ICMD will be qualified to dispose of unexploded Ordnance (UXO) that may be found during Engineer Specialist Search & Clearance (ESSC) operations. Being that the primary responsibility for search lies with the Corps of Engineers, this makes good sense and allows for progressive skill and knowledge share between Corps.

The 7-week course introduces the students to the philosophy of CMD, to the wide array of ammunition in and out of service in the DF and to the conduct of dealing with a tasking or disposal operation. The philosophy of CMD creates a priority list for operators to keep in the forefront of their minds; Save Life, Preservation of Property, Identify the Item of Ordnance and Return to Normality.

This being the first Joint ICMD course, three Divers from the Naval Diving Section joined the course bringing with them vast experience and a completely fresh perspective on CMD. This served to only add to the enjoyment of the course but also the collective learning and skill-share on the course. This inclusion meant that by December 6th, 14 students gained qualification in ICMD after two weeks of assessments.

The first five weeks of the course consisted of theoretical learning and introduction to the employment of CMD tools such as incendiary torches and explosive cutting tape (ECT). Learning to use these tools offered aids in the safe disposal of munitions and offer alternative ways to rendering munitions safe. Coupling this new skill with learning the extent and range of munitions out in the world, by learning how to classify munitions with a view to positively identifying the type and series along with the hazards associated with it.

Students are then challenged to marry the newfound skills and employ them in CMD scenario taskings, where a student may find themselves meeting a member of the public who has come upon a likely UXO or munition. The student is tested to manage the scenario from a public safety point of view along with performing an RSP (Render Safe Procedure) not before correctly classifying and identifying the munition and the hazards associated with it. These scenarios ranged from encountering UXOs found in public spaces to countermining blind mortar bombs in the Glen of Imaal, to test knowledge, composure, and drills in dealing with conventional munitions.

The reality of these taskings allowed students to employ both low order and high order techniques learned throughout the seven weeks. Low order aims to deflagrate the energetic material at a slow rate such that it does not detonate and form an explosion; in cases where high order was possible and safe, this meant using an appropriate counter-charge to initiate and destroy the munition.

After 254 sticks of PETN and 63 tasks, 14 new ICMD operators were qualified. Sincere thanks must be given to the Ordnance School, the admin staff and not least two Captains who instructed us. Along with the ever-professional team in the Ammunition Depot and the Ammunition Examiners course for sharing their knowledge and expertise in munitions. This course exemplified the importance and benefits of knowledge-share between Corps and across services within the DF.



Results of an SM-EOD 20 on a 60mm Illum Mortar



Drone shot of High Order attempt on a 120mm Illum Mortar in GOI

# LEADING THE WAY

## ARMY RESERVE WELCOMES THIRTEEN NEWLY COMMISSIONED OFFICERS



ARTICLE BY LT LORCÁN PRICE

The 06th Army Reserve Potential Officer course concluded in November 2024 and saw thirteen new officers commissioned to Reserve Units in 1 Brigade, 2 Brigade and DFTC.

The course commenced following a thorough selection process consisting of nomination, file review and interviews for applicants from across the country. The successful applicants were drawn from Infantry, Transport, Artillery, Cavalry and Military Police units bringing a diverse range of skills and perspectives to the class. The students began training at the Cadet School in September 2023.



Through a combination of classroom-based learning, practical activities, distance learning and full-time training, the course was designed to develop students' character, competence, and capacity to function as junior leaders in the Defence Forces.

The course started with platoon level tactics moving quickly to a 72-hour exercise in the Glen of Imaal in November 2023 designed to assess students on platoon level offensive operations. The tempo and robust nature of this training came as a shock to some students less familiar with infantry operations, however the class soon gelled into a cohesive team as students enhanced the skills needed to take up leadership roles and command appointments in a tactical environment.

The training was physically demanding, emphasising the need to effectively employ skills and abilities in a pressurised environment. Crawling through wet fields and trenches in cold, wet weather, synonymous with the Wicklow Mountains in November, quickly contributed to building bonds of camaraderie and friendship amongst the class.

In tandem with the emerging esprit de corps, was the development of leadership qualities which were to form a large part of every aspect of the training on the course. Significant emphasis was placed on the need to transform into leaders by "making a decision" and taking responsibility for that decision and its consequences.

The concept and reality of 'leadership' was a major theme throughout

the Potential Officer course. The class explored the theoretical element of leadership within civilian settings and within the Defence Forces, as well as the practical application of leading troops in a variety of scenarios. Sgt Nichola Kiernan led the class through a thorough series of modules on leadership, utilising her considerable expertise on the topic.

The honing of skills necessary to be effective leaders was done considering the important principles set out in our Defence Forces Values and Ethos. Every activity undertaken during the course required students to put into practice the leadership lessons imparted by our instructors.

An example of applying theory to practice was evident during the Range Management block of the course. A Range Control Officer (RCO) is responsible for the safety of all persons on the range, firers on the firing point, instructor staff and civilians who may be in the danger area. Values such as integrity, respect, and moral courage, combined with the requirements of leadership are critical in discharging the serious responsibility involved in conducting live firing of weapons on the range. Students were challenged by various scenarios where they were required to demonstrate that they understood the crucial steps that must be undertaken to protect the safety of all personnel on the range. RCO training brought home the lesson that becoming a leader in the Defence Forces means taking accountability for your actions in directing personnel under your command.



Back Row: Sgt Nichola Kiernan (Instr/Admin), Capt Martin McCloskey, Capt Lindsey McGuire, Capt Edmund Mulvey (Instr), Lt Patrick Boyce (Instr), Capt Fergal Fitzgerald (Instr), Lt Cian Lynch, Lt Aisling Akraribhan, Lt Joseph O'Neill, Lt Christian Roche, Lt Michael Ward, Capt Neil Richardson (Instr), Sgt Michael Mulligan (Instr/Admin), Lt Alan Connolly, Lt Ross Wiley, 2/Lt Andrew McDunphy  
Front Row: Lt Stephen Hughes, Lt Thomas Dernigan, Lt Lorcan Price, Lt Dylan Henrion, Lt Michael Ward, Capt Niall O'Gorman (Course Commander), Lt David Fahey, Lt Steven Moran



On the completion of Range Management, the focus quickly turned to refreshing our day and night nav skills which took place in the Curragh and Wicklow Mountains. This was followed by our Patrol assessments which took place in the Slieve Bloom Mountains and saw further examples of leadership skills being put into practice where students gained firsthand experience leading attached exercise troops while under the pressure of holding a command appointment. Students learned that leaders must influence, communicate, and collaborate effectively with the personnel under their command in order to achieve the mission.

The course empowered students to develop their own style of leadership guided by the in-depth information contained in the Defence Forces Leadership Doctrine. Students were encouraged to see that developing as leaders was a journey that takes dedication and commitment, but that through a process grounded in the DF Leadership Doctrine, students would develop and mature as well informed and capable leaders.

No complex organisation can operate without an effective system of administration. Students on the course soon gained an appreciation of various crucial administrative tasks junior leaders must perform. The adage of "you cannot spell officer without spelling office" became a reality as students prepared OPORDS, risk assessments and training programmes. Students built up a detailed picture of the less visible but vital tasks that officers must perform to ensure the efficient running of training.

Throughout all aspects of the course, ranging from leading a platoon



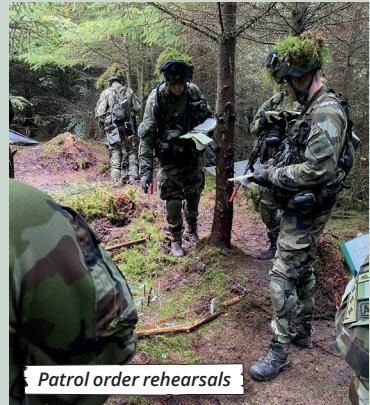
**A visit to Leinster House**

in attack to completing ammunition diaries, students were given the opportunity to live our Defence Forces values of respect, loyalty, selflessness, physical courage, moral courage, and integrity. To develop as junior leaders, students were required to demonstrate the skills and knowledge gained during the course by leading and collaborating in syndicates with fellow students.

November's commissioning ceremony for the students of the 06th Army Reserve Potential Officer Course was the culmination of hard work, study, and dedication by the class. The course was an opportunity for the students to build on existing skills and discover new abilities in a challenging and rewarding environment.

Capt Niall Stringer as Course Commander, and his team of instructors showed dedication and patience as they led the students through a rigorous and demanding course which tested both physical and intellectual abilities. The thirteen newly commissioned officers now take up their appointments in units across the country at an exciting and challenging time for the Reserve and the wider Defence Forces. The Reserve is now witnessing a significant expansion in recruitment and activity which will make demands on all members of the organisation in terms of time and commitment. Combining service in the Reserve with civilian life is only possible with the support and encouragement of families and friends, who play a vital part in allowing the organisation to flourish.

The spirit of volunteerism that underpins the Reserve is a source of justified pride for members of the organisation, students of 06 Army Reserve Potential Officer course look forward with optimism and pride to serving the people of Ireland and playing their part in continuing the noble tradition of the profession of arms in Ireland.



**Patrol order rehearsals**



**Section & Platoon battle drills**



**Range Management block**

# PEOPLE OF THE DF

## NAME:

LISA O' HALLORAN

## YEAR JOINED:

2002

## CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT:

CLINICAL MIDWIFE MANAGER



Welcoming a new arrival on the labour ward

### CAN YOU GIVE ME A DESCRIPTION OF YOUR CAREER SO FAR?

I enlisted in the Army Reserve in 2002 and completed my recruit training in Cavan, the following year I completed my 2-3\* training. I applied for and was recommended for my Potential NCO course in 2005. I completed it in Custume Barracks, Athlone. This was my first in depth experience of tactical training. I loved the physical challenge.

Further to my Potential NCO course I have also competed weapons courses, including the GPMG SF, Rifle Marksmanship, M203, Grenade and HK USP.

As a member of the falling plates shooting team, we won the All-Army competition in 2019. I wouldn't have considered myself to be a naturally good shot, but I was extremely fortunate to get the opportunity to train, and gain experience and knowledge from instructors in the unit.

I have been extremely lucky to have the opportunity to take part in other courses within the Defence Forces. I completed An Campa Gaeilge, a training course in the Gaeltacht promoting the use of the Irish language. I also play football with the Defence Forces ladies football team.



Completing I.T.s fitness test part 3

As an NCO, I instructed primarily on recruit training and 2-3\* courses. I particularly enjoyed instructing on recruit training. It afforded me an opportunity to develop my skills as a leader and observe over a period of time the progress the students made.

I was commissioned as an Officer in 2021, and since my commissioning I have been platoon commander for 2 recruit platoons. This brings many different challenges than those I had as an NCO. While the roles are very different and can be

## RANK:

LIEUTENANT

## CURRENT UNIT:

1 CN COIS (A.R.)



challenging,

I am very much enjoying these and continue to develop as an Officer. My current role is Recruit Liaison Officer in 1 Cn Cois.

### WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO JOIN THE RDF?

I initially joined after a recruitment talk at my school. I enjoyed the mix of physical training, weapons and tactical training. It was so different to anything I had ever experienced. I have had a hugely positive experience over 20 years. I have learned so much, and I look forward to what the next few years will bring.

### WHAT WAS YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT IN THE RDF?

Without doubt, being commissioned as an Officer in the Army Reserve after a very robust but rewarding course. I knew the course was going to be challenging when I applied. There was a huge amount of work involved, which formed a strong level of teamwork from the start that continued throughout the course. One of the most difficult experiences I have had throughout my Defence Forces career was when my father passed away while I was a student on the PO Course. During this very difficult time, it was the strength and support of my comrades that helped me through and kept my morale high. It proved to me that the bonds built within the Defence Forces are so unique and everlasting. Some of my strongest friendships have been built within the Defence Forces.



Members of the Army Reserve taking part in DF Ladies Football 7's Galway, 2024

### WHAT IS YOUR CIVILIAN JOB AND HOW DO YOU BALANCE THIS WITH YOUR RDF COMMITMENTS?

I am a registered general nurse and registered midwife. I work in University Hospital Galway as a Clinical Midwife Manager on the Labour Ward. My work involves caring for women throughout their pregnancy, managing complications that may occur, and providing care throughout labour and delivery. My job is stressful at times, but it is incredibly rewarding.

It can be challenging to balance both work and Defence Forces commitments, but I think it's important to make time for what you enjoy. Planning is extremely important for me to be able to balance both. I am also fortunate to have supportive colleagues in my civilian role who support my active involvement with the Army Reserve.

There have been times where I haven't been able to commit to both work and the Defence Forces. This is due to the time constraints

concerned with both. While it is disappointing, the ability to maintain a good balance is vitally important and I am very fortunate that I love my civilian employment as a midwife.

My career in the Defence Forces complements my work as a clinical manager. Leadership traits taught with the Defence Forces can be utilised in many civilian employments. A key aspect of leadership includes supervision, direction and mentorship. I would feel my experience in both healthcare and the Defence Forces complement each other.



Flag Officer, Galway City St. Patrick's Day Parade

### WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AND GOALS FOR THE FUTURE?

In my civilian work, I hope to be privileged enough to continue caring for expectant mothers to ensure they continue to receive the highest level of healthcare.

As I continue my career in the Defence Forces, I would hope to further develop serving and potential members of the Army Reserve to enable them to achieve all their goals while maintaining and promoting its values.

Personally, I hope to be able to continue playing football and camogie. I play football with my local club Killannin. I play corner back, and last year I was extremely fortunate to captain the team when we won the county championship final. My proudest moment in sport was toggling out in the blue & white jersey of Killannin alongside my niece, Lydia. I play camogie with Maigh Cuilin, and last year we won the Junior final.

My goal is to someday complete the Galway Bay Swim both as a relay team member and an individual. This is an annual swim from Aughinish in Co. Clare to Salthill Co. Galway, covering an approximate 13km distance. I always enjoyed swimming, but it's only in recent years that I have taken on long distance swims. I completed the Defence Forces Open Water swim camp, where we had the opportunity to expand our strengths by completing several tough swims in lakes, rivers and sea. The week of training concluded with a 3.2km river swim, which was a swim distance I never thought I would be capable of, however following the training and support from all instructors I successfully completed the swim and felt an incredible sense of achievement.

### WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE TOOLS THE DF HAS GIVEN TO YOU?

Throughout my training in the Defence Forces, I have been fortunate to develop many transferable skills, including teamwork, communication and leadership. Each of these skills are required in both my civilian and military roles, and any experience gained in one area is beneficial to the other.



On parade as part of the centenary celebrations in Dún Uí Mhaolíosa

Working as a manager in the HSE, my leadership skills are tested on a regular basis. I must be able to communicate with staff from different backgrounds and ensure patient safety remains paramount.

The ability to mentor junior midwives is something I really enjoy and the instruction methods I have learned from the Defence Forces are utilised here. Decision making and quick analysis are tools used by both organisations and truly complement each other. My training in the Defence Forces, especially on the potential officer course, required me to work and make decisions under pressure. I think this has been of huge benefit to me in my healthcare role.

I think being an effective leader requires a long list of qualities, but above all leading by example and mutual respect are crucial.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 18-YEAR-OLD SELF?

Believe in yourself, work hard, and remember what is important to you. I would advise anyone considering joining the Army Reserve to go for it. Take on the challenge, take on every opportunity that comes your way, and enjoy the experience.



DF Ladies football vs Northern Ireland Fire Service, Armagh 2024

### WHAT OPPORTUNITIES HAS THE RDF GIVEN TO YOU?

With its vast range of courses available to members of the Army Reserve, I have been very fortunate to be able to develop my skills in leadership, physical fitness, public speaking and an opportunity to meet and work with some fantastic people from various walks of life. This has given me a deep appreciation of the skills others have, and I have met some lifelong friends as a result of my career in the Army Reserve.

# DEFENCE FORCES RUGBY



ARTICLE BY COMDT NIALL WILCOX  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COMDT NIALL WILCOX

DF Mens Rugby vs Dutch Military Rugby  
Team 13 Nov 24 Corinthians RFC

Rugby has been embedded in the Defence Forces since the formation of the organisation. Several notable events, personnel and matches have been covered in previous editions of this publication. I would encourage readers to delve into the An Cosantóir archives to read about these memorable events such as the 4 Western Bde participation in the Akatiri 10s Competition in Cyprus or the Naval Service's 10-day tour to America to play the Washington Irish and the US Naval Academy.



Ciaran Fitzgerald and Neville Furlong  
former DF Rugby Players

DF Rugby has expanded significantly on an international scale especially since the 1980's. Driving this expansion was the result of the hard work

of several personnel but a mention must go to Col (Retd) JJ O'Reilly of Bective RFC, one of the many stalwarts of DF Rugby, who was a player, manager, coach and then chairperson and director of DF Rugby through the 1970's and 1980's. The first match against the French Armed Forces was in 1986 and the rivalry has continued to this day. The DF, captained by former Capt Liam Toland, beat the French for the first time (on home soil) in 2008, keeping the opposition scoreless in Cill Dara RFC. Most notably, the DF played UK opposition for the first time in 2003, against the Royal Navy. Since then, DF Rugby has established regular fixtures against UK opposition. They played the RAF for the first time in 2011 in the Sportsground in Galway and the UK Armed Forces for the first time in 2024 away in Aldershot, UK. Another milestone was the 2015 fixture against the 1st Royal Irish Regiment, played in Monkstown RFC, the first fixture against a UK unit based on the island.

The key annual fixtures in the DF Rugby calendar are The Gordon Wood Memorial Trophy (vs An Garda Síochána), the Hooker Regan 7s Tournament and the representative fixtures against the French Armed Forces, UK Armed Forces, Royal Navy and RAF. DF Rugby's intent in 2025 is to re-ignite the fire of the once fiercely competitive Inter-Bde tournament. This article will highlight some notable personnel of the sport, recent events and an outline of 2025.

## A WELL REPRESENTED ORGANISATION

DF Rugby has a rich history of contributing notable players to Irish rugby both nationally and at provincial level. Possibly the most well-known or notable person is former Army Capt Ciaran Fitzgerald, the former Ireland Captain who played 25 times for his country and also captained the British & Irish Lions on their 1983 tour to South Africa. Another well-known personality is former Army Captain, Liam Toland, who played in the back row for Munster, Leinster and was capped by Ireland A. Of course, it would not be a DF Rugby article without mentioning the great Captain Neville Furlong, who was capped twice for Ireland and who famously (confirmed by Wikipedia!) scored the last four-point try in an international match, and against New Zealand of all teams! On the women's side, Comdt Sue Ramsbottom, the legendary Laois footballer, earned 3 caps for the Irish Women's side and was involved in the 1998 Women's World Cup competition held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Another notable player is Col Jayne Lawlor who played with Ireland and Leinster.



Combined Forces Team  
vs French Armed Forces

## RECENT EVENTS

The 4th Military Rugby World Cup, held in France in September 2023, was the second Military Rugby World Cup that DF Rugby have participated in. The Irish side were grouped with the French Armed Forces, Romania and UK Armed Forces and ultimately won a bronze medal in the tournament.

A full article of the 4th Military Rugby World Cup tournament was covered extensively by Comdt Rory McCann, former Director and stalwart of DF Rugby, in the An Cosantóir Sep/Oct 2023 edition. The DF were pitted against New Zealand, Uzbekistan, Fiji, Australia and Tonga. The Irish side beat Tonga to secure a place in the Trophy Competition.

This most recent competition has given the sport a much needed boost as the Men's side now shift their focus to preparing for competing in the 5th Military Rugby World Cup which is due to be held in Australia in 2027.



DF Mens Rugby vs French Armed Forces

of the normal comfort zone, it proved to be a valuable event in terms of learning and of course, networking. The Men's tournament saw the DF play the USA, French Armed Forces, the Dutch Military and South Korea. Conditions favoured those more adept to 7s rugby and the DF side, captained by Lt Idris Rqibi, earned 3 losses and a draw (to The Dutch). The eventual winners of this competition were the USA. A notable mention must go to Pte Dylan Foley who put in a stellar performance throughout the competition. The Women's tournament saw the DF play the USA, French Armed Forces and The Dutch Military. The DF side, captained by Pte Chloe Farrell, earned 2 losses and a then a brilliant win against the Dutch in the bronze medal game. Their player of the tournament was Lt Saoirse O'Reilly who plays with the Ireland Women's 7s team. Her jinking runs and quick feet left the spectating crowd in awe as she crossed the try line on several occasions.

More recently, the Men's side played in an historic occasion in Corinthians RFC on 13 Nov 2024. DF Rugby hosted the Dutch Military Rugby Team for the first time on Irish soil. The Dutch proved stiff opposition in the first 30 minutes with both sides' defences proving impenetrable. On the 30 minute mark, the DF began to control possession more and with the forwards putting in the hard yards, the backs were facilitated with excellent go forward ball which led to some well worked tries off the back of some well executed moves. The DF finished the game with 44-0 victory. The Player of the Match award went to Cadet Iarlaith Morrin-Laheen, who took the time out of his busy schedule to put in an impressive performance in the second-row.



DF Rugby at 2nd Military Challenge Rugby 7s Comp Amsterdam

## DF WOMEN'S RUGBY

In 2003, Lt Col Johnny Molloy decided to start a DF Women's Rugby Team and he approached then Capt Jayne Lawlor to join him in this endeavour. Following a rigorous recruitment process and a number of training sessions, the team played their first match versus An Garda Síochána in 2004, winning that game. Over the next number of years the team played the AGS on an annual basis as well as playing a number of University and Club teams. A highlight for the team was when they hosted and played the Army Westpoint Women's Rugby Team in 2005 winning a very tight match in front of a very large crowd in Newbridge RFC.

Perhaps the most momentous occasion was the first international Women's Rugby fixture in which a Combined Forces Team (DF and AGS) played the French Armed Forces on 08th March 2019 in Wanderers RFC, Dublin. The Combined Forces, captained by Comdt Niamh Ní Dhroma, were eventual winners after a hard fought match, with Niamh herself crossing the whitewash twice. This rivalry was resumed in 2024 in Malahide RFC, when the French Armed Forces returned and ultimately beat the Combined Forces Team, captained by Lt Meabh O'Brien, in a very tight game.

In June 2024, DF Rugby participated in the 2nd Military Challenge Rugby 7s tournament held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The DF competed with a Men's and Women's team and although the competition was slightly outside

The DF Women's side have several players who have or continue to represent the provinces and national side. Comdt Niamh Ní Dhroma and Capt Elaine Anthony have played with both Leinster and Ireland. Niamh has also, along with Lt Meabh O'Brien and Lt Saoirse O'Reilly, represented the Irish Women's U18 7s team. Lt O'Brien has also represented Leinster and the Irish Women's 7s team. Pte Caoimhe Molloy of the DFTC currently on the Leinster and Irish Wolfhounds squad, with Leinster winning the Interpro's in 2024.

DF Women's Rugby has grown from strength to strength. The side are currently preparing to compete in the Women's Military Rugby World Cup which is due to take place in the UK in August 2025. This article doubles as a calling notice for this event! DF Women's Rugby are seeking those who wish to either give rugby a try or want to get back into the sport! Full details of how to get in touch will be included at the end of this article. The Women's side have a packed schedule of training and matches over the next few months in preparation for this milestone event in women's rugby.



DF Womens Rugby vs Army West Point Womens Rugby Newbridge RFC

## DF RUGBY - THE HERE AND NOW

The current President of DF Rugby is the ACOS, Brig Gen Rossa Mulcahy. He is assisted by the Director of DF Rugby, Lt Col Bernard Behan, and the Co-Chairpersons, Lt Col Damian Carroll (men's) and Col Jayne Lawlor (women's).

The 2025 season with kicked off on 29 January 2025 with the annual Gordon Wood Memorial Trophy fixture for both men's and women's rugby against the AGS which was played in Templemore, Co. Tipperary this year. There are several training camps and fixtures scheduled for the rest of the season to ensure the sport builds on the momentum gathered from the previous few years. It is envisaged that an Inter-Bde competition will be held in March and the Hooker Regan 7s Tournament held in May.

There are plans to develop DF Rugby in 2025 by becoming affiliated with 3rd Level Institutions to tap into Reserve Defence Forces potential. Additionally, planning is underway to develop the DFTC Sports Pavilion with office and storage space and potentially convert one of the playing pitches to a 4G pitch for use by all sport. Another exciting development is the formation of a DF Rugby Refereeing panel, headed by Comdt John Quinn. DF Rugby has already provided rugby referees to the 4th Military Rugby World Cup and the 2nd Military Challenge Rugby 7s Tournament. Any personnel interested in becoming a rugby referee or who has rugby refereeing experience should get in touch by contacting Comdt Quinn.

DF Rugby welcomes all personnel of any playing or non-playing ability to join up and see what the fuss is all about! Contact details are available on the CONNECT App.



DF Mens Rugby vs 1st Royal Irish Regt Monkstown RFC

# GENAD COURSE



ARTICLE BY LT CDR ÓRLAITH GALLAGHER  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LT CDR ÓRLAITH GALLAGHER

## WHY I WENT ON THE COURSE?

In 2023, I deployed to UNIFIL, Lebanon with the 122 Inf Bn, as the S4, Logistics Officer. Shortly after deploying, I completed the NATO Gender Focal Point Course (online) and I then supported the Battalion Gender Advisor in his role. In October 2024, when war broke out in the region, I became hyper aware of the importance of the gender perspective in operations. The families that remained were mainly those without the means to flee north towards Beirut. Women and children, in particular, were suddenly very vulnerable due to the sudden breakdown of the society in which they lived. This increased vulnerability was further highlighted by the UN who reported Conflict Related Sexual Violence

(CRSV) associated with gender and sexual orientation on both sides of the conflict between Israel and Gaza.

## WHY IS THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE NECESSARY IN MILITARY OPERATIONS?

NATO defines the Gender Perspective as the ability to detect if and when men, women, boys and girls are being affected differently by a situation due to their gender. Incorporating the gender perspective into all aspects of military operations, including planning and training, acts as a force multiplier and increases situational awareness because it incorporates a more diverse view of a situation and the associated issues. This enables military commanders to have a more whole operational picture, which is essential in the decision making process.

The UN reported that sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism amid deepening political and security crises, across the world. They recognise that armed conflicts are exacerbated by both state and non-state actors who target vulnerable groups like displaced, refugee and migrant women and girls, with rape, gang rape and abductions.

It should be noted that gender is not just women and girls. In the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the risk of being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation remains extant for the women and children who make up the vast majority of the 5 million internally displaced persons and 6 million refugees in third countries. However, in 2023, the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine documented that men and boys reported 62% of cases of conflict related sexual violence against civilians and prisoners of war.

The United Nations has also acknowledged that the





2025 marks the 25th Anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325. There will be a number of events, presentations and learning opportunities across the Defence Forces throughout the year in to celebrate this milestone.

### COURSE PASSED!

The course is arduous and in-depth with syndicate and individual tasks in the evening. It required agile thinking of me and my fellow students in the analysis of complex situations, especially so, when the scenario Commander did not buy-in to the importance of the gender perspective in military operations. Whilst challenging, it was also extremely enjoyable and the bonus of peer to peer learning resulted in a more holistic developmental experience.

impact of CRSV may continue to be a reality in regions post-conflict. In the Western Balkans it is difficult for survivors of CRSV to get both protection and justice. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is differing legislation across the regions meaning survivors are treated differently. In Republika Srpska, court fees are imposed on survivors who lose civil proceedings for compensation. This causes re-victimisation and negatively affects their financial situation, thereby resulting in a deterrent effect on the pursuit of justice. This highlights the importance on continued monitoring and input by the international community and organisations, in bringing conflict regions to a position of stability post-conflict.

### THE COURSE

The NATO Gender Advisor Course is a two-week residential course at the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM), near Stockholm in Sweden. The course aims to enable students to perform successfully as a Gender Advisor in a peacetime HQ as well as in crisis establishments at strategic, operational and tactical levels. The course provides the students with a background of frameworks and guidelines regulating gender in military operations as well as the skills and competence required to act in an advisory role both in a national and international context.

### WHAT IS THE DF DOING IN THIS AREA?

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women Peace and Security (WPS) was adopted in 2000. The binding commitments of this resolution strive toward the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision making processes around issues related to peace and security; for protection from gender-based violence and the implementation of gender perspectives in all peace making and peace building strategies.

Ireland launched its Third National Action Plan (2019-2024) on Women Peace and Security on 21 June 2019. This comes to a conclusion this year and has been reviewed. The next National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS is currently being drafted by government. Once the recommendations and actions from the NAP are available the DF will design our own DF Action Plan. This Plan will also include any relevant recommendations and tasks from the CODF Report, IRG Report and the Strategic Framework and will form the basis for the WPS agenda in the DF for the next four years.

In addition, Ireland are currently the Vice Chair on the WPS CHODs and are due to take over from Jamaica in Jun 2025. Furthermore, 2025 is the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, which was the first global for policy framework to recognise gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for achieving gender equality. It also elevated its significance by calling on governments to apply it to all their policies and programmes.

Having successfully passed the course, I am now part of a growing network of Gender Advisors across the Defence Forces. I am currently working on recruitment in DF HQ and I routinely use my Gender Advisor skills in the DF force generation effort. I hope to work closely with the DF Gender Advisor so the Defence Forces can further develop gender mainstreaming and the gender perspective in operations both at home, and in particular, when deployed in volatile areas of operation.



# DESERTERS OF THE IRISH DEFENCE FORCES DURING WWII

## MUNDANE MOTIVATIONS TO DESERT

ARTICLE BY CAPT CÍAN HARTE

This article is the third in a series exploring the controversial topic of Irish Defence Forces soldiers who deserted the organisation to join the British Army during WWII. This specific article explores why certain men opted first to desert the Defence Forces focussing on some of the primary source material for their accounts.

**"We were fed up working in the bog...we were supposed to be soldiering"**

Motivations to enlist in the British Army as an Irishman is a question as old and debated as the first Irishman to don the red coat. Motivations for Irishmen to join the British Army in general and not just specific to the period in question ranged from loyalty to Britain and having a familial tradition in entering the services to more mundane economic incentives such as shelter, food, steady wages, and career prospects to the idealism of youth – adventure and travel. I do not intend to add to this much debated and antiquated question but rather to analyse whether any of the above factors influenced the decision-making of the would-be deserters. In determining motivation, getting as close to a contemporary opinion as possible is imperative and not to retrospectively label motivations to individuals.

In many ways, the high rate of enlistment of volunteers from Éire was merely a continuation of the tendency for Irishmen to seek a career in the British Army - the Second World War, therefore, being no different. But such a historical trend cannot tell the whole story about the exceptional case of the deserters for they were merely the second generation of Irishmen who could exert their unique 'ancient valour', in the words of Winston Churchill, via swearing an oath not to a King but to their newly formed state. They were already in the uniform of an armed force and had their enthusiasm for all things military somewhat satiated. While their decision to desert should not be taken entirely out of the context of the Irish soldiery tradition of joining the British Army, their unique circumstances and the unique period in question should serve as the principal contextual factors within which this question needs to be answered for many who continued the trend of joining the British Army did so having never served with the Irish Defence Forces.

It is essential to let those who did the deed voice their thoughts. We are inevitably disadvantaged in this approach by a lack of primary oral evidence. Nevertheless, what remains of their assertions are detailed

partially below, wherein some common motives emerge, albeit these cannot be absorbed verbatim for a variety of reasons. The passage of time carries no favours for the researcher. The disadvantages and obstacles inherent even in oral evidence gathered many decades after the events are highlighted acutely by the issue of Catholics in Northern Ireland or instance who had served in WWII wearing the uniform of the British Army. As Neil Richardson noted of Northern Catholics during the Troubles: 'Basically, out of fear of militant republicans and nationalists, many veterans began to make up excuses for why they had enlisted, and this went a long way towards giving the impression that no Irishmen fought the war because he felt that it was simply the right thing to do'. This is a classic example of how original motivations can be altered by post-war political developments.

**One of the main lines of thought to pursue is not to assume that every volunteer was politicised and their national identity and politics overburdened and over-influenced their decision-making processes when juxtaposed against other aspects of their life - socioeconomic motivations, for example.**

There are many reasons put forward by scholars, historians, contemporary thinkers, and policymakers in their attempt to explain the causation of desertion during this time. One of the primary purposes of my book, therefore, was to determine if there was a common thread of causation that pushed and pulled so many Irish soldiers to desert and join the British Army. While we may be able to answer why men deserted from the Irish Army by looking at factors such as conditions service members endured during the Emergency – it is an entirely different question, although remaining inextricably linked – to answer why they would join the British Army thereafter. Therefore, it is essential to separate the two somewhat when conducting analysis.

However, answering the first part of the question above does not necessarily answer the second, for not all deserters joined the British Army. The causes are varied and personal in explaining why men first deserted. The local newspapers are full of deserter stories during the Emergency – men caught in Ireland by MPs or Gardaí and thus (at least captured beforehand) did not join the British Army. Reasons given in courthouses throughout Éire at the time vary from a requirement to look after their land to a determination to see loved ones.

A number of those accused of desertion stated in court that they had



been too ill to report for duty. Joseph Maguire of Balscadden denied deserting when caught and stated he had been too ill to return to the army after leaving. Pat O'Shea of Rath had undergone an operation for appendicitis. He said he was "not feeling well enough" to return to service. Denis McCarthy of Main Street Bagenalstown stated how: "I was suffering from neuritis" and got a 12-month exemption but was arrested two weeks after at his home. "I am not a deserter, but an absentee", he declared in court.

Other reasons for desertion were personal life crises, such as Private James Barrett of Athlone, who was accused of having not reported for a call-up of reservists (having been a member of the old IRA and subsequently joined the National Army). On the day he was to report for service, his wife had given birth to twins who, shortly after, had sadly died. His wife had also entered a nervous breakdown because of this. Despite the acute personal circumstances, Private Barrett was still handed over to a military escort. Richard Cleary, residing at Emly, Co. Tipperary, was captured as a deserter. When brought before a local courthouse before being handed over to military authorities, he stated he had deserted because he was "suffering from a serious disease" and his wife and child were helpless. They were "on the side of the road" with nowhere to go.<sup>[ix]</sup> Thomas Kelly of Levitstown, Co. Kildare stated he had "trouble at home" and could not return to the army.

A common excuse of those dragged into the courts over being a deserter was those who claimed they were needed at home for the harvest. Edward Farrelly of Trim stated he had "some land and was looking after the crops". Private Dermot Buckley was asked in the courthouse why he wanted to get out of the army, to which he replied, because "my brother would not look after the farm for me". His defence solicitor exclaimed in court that "butter was as important as guns". I "just took a notion" replied Private Michael Dolan of Barnaderg, Co. Galway when asked by the Justice as to why he did not report for duty.

The lack of granting of leave to see loved ones and family members was a recurring issue, with soldiers absenting themselves if not granted. Private Owen Boylan of Durhamstown, Co. Meath, as early as October 1939, is one example. Having his weekend leave refused to bring his wife home (who he claimed had no money for a fare), stated in court how he "walked out the gate in full uniform, went home with my wife and have been absent since". Matthew McCabe of Walshetown, Ballymurphy was brought before his local courthouse for desertion. He stated that he had been given three months' leave and was awaiting to be recalled (the truthfulness of this statement was not questioned). The local Garda sergeant, however, chimed in with more pertinent details in that Matthew had recently got married, inferring that he would rather stay at home with his new wife than return to

military service. Thomas Walsh of Cabra, Dublin, alongside a group of young members of the Construction Corps absented themselves because they were "homesick". Thomas had robbed a bicycle on route home but did not cycle all the way home for "his mother would be vexed". Michael Mulvihill had deserted to look after his mother, who was sick and "had none but him". Three young men appeared in court, all from the Carraroe district of Spiddal in Co. Galway. One had stated he had recently gotten married, overstayed his welcome, and "re-volunteered" in court. One of the men, interestingly, could not be identified and spoke no words in court. The garda who arrested him was unsure it was him, and the Army officer did not recognise him. Thomas Gallagher of Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, absented himself on Christmas Day and stole a bike on his way home but was picked up by Guards in LeCarrow, Co. Roscommon. He stated that he "wanted to go home to see" his "wife", who he claimed was sick. An exciting back-and-forth erupted between Private Gallagher and the Military Officer sent to court. Gallagher admitted to being in the British Army before. Lt Herbert declared that he deserted to "join the British Army". Private Gallagher replied, "You're mistaken, Lt Herbert, they tried to prove that at the court-martial, and they failed". Private Gallagher had been confined to barracks over the Christmas break after his detention for attempted desertion had ended. Private Dominick Farrell of the 2nd Infantry Battalion, Dublin, was slightly different; however, while being

interrogated in November of 1941 by intelligence officers of the Irish Army, he spoke of how he had developed poor health and thought his health would improve by joining the British Army. Dominick had been captured by Military Police while home on leave from the British military.

One interesting story of somebody who was granted leave to visit his sick mother was that of Daniel O'Sullivan of Tragumna, Skibbereen, Co. Cork. His father, as the paper claimed, had fought with Buffalo Bill and was one of 17 survivors of Custer's Last Stand and a veteran of the US-Cuban War. Private O'Sullivan had not returned from leave when his leave had ended. He had been posted to Gormston, Co. Meath.

For some young men, the domineering or caring mother was at the fault of some soldiers being labelled as deserters or absentees. Thomas Kelly of Porthall, Co. Donegal had signed up for the army only for his mother not to allow him to return to the military.

'The defendant said he had received the forms, filled them up, but his mother would not let him go, and she had burned the communications'. 'Soldiers Say They Can't Read English' ran a sub-heading in the Connacht Tribune detailing how two young men from Spiddal, Co. Galway when called up for service claimed in court they couldn't understand the summoning. Private John Goff of Rathmines, Dublin, of the 2nd Field Battery was brought before a Dublin district court for the charge of desertion. Having been described as not a very 'warlike looking boy' by the Justice, the defendant stated he had deserted because he had been posted to Mullingar, which he described as a 'terrible town', but that 'Castleblayney was all right' – having been posted to that area previously. The prosecutor replied, "That is a good advertisement for the tourist association". John was

merely 16 and underage, and his mother in court was informed to present his birth certificate to get him discharged.

**The above primary accounts reveal some of the more human and mundane reasons that will always play a role in men wishing to leave or desert from the military, whether during peacetime or wartime. While they apply to some of those men on the blacklist, and the accounts are at times fascinating to read – they do not grant sufficient insight into the unique reasons why many men left during the Emergency period in particular.**

The number of desertions is vast for such a small military, indicating that there may be overarching causes/strong feelings to uncover that may guide one to a general all-encompassing answer. Alternatively, there may remain no simple answer to this question, and there may be as many reasons as deserters. As with any study attempting to generalise thousands of individuals into a short sentence, explanations are a seemingly fulsome endeavour, for all the soldiers were unique individuals with unique identities and unique personal circumstances. Nevertheless, to isolate a common thread of reasoning behind the question of Defence Forces soldiers seeking military adventure in the British Army will be specifically analysed in the next article.



# BOOK REVIEW

## ATLAS OF THE IRISH CIVIL WAR

**Publisher:** Cork University Press (2024)

**Editors:** Hélène O'Keeffe, John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, John Borgonovo and Mike Murphy

**ISBN:** 9781782055921

**Reviewed By** Dr Rory Finegan

The publication by Cork University Press of the "Atlas of the Great Irish Famine," and "Atlas of the Irish Revolution," are in the realm highly significant in their contribution to Irish Historical studies, because of the breadth, and depth of topics examined by a multitude of highly regarded Historians and writers. The latest publication in this series "Atlas of the Irish Civil War," completes this trilogy and has eminently maintained the superb standard of its predecessors. It is a genuine *Magnum Opus*.

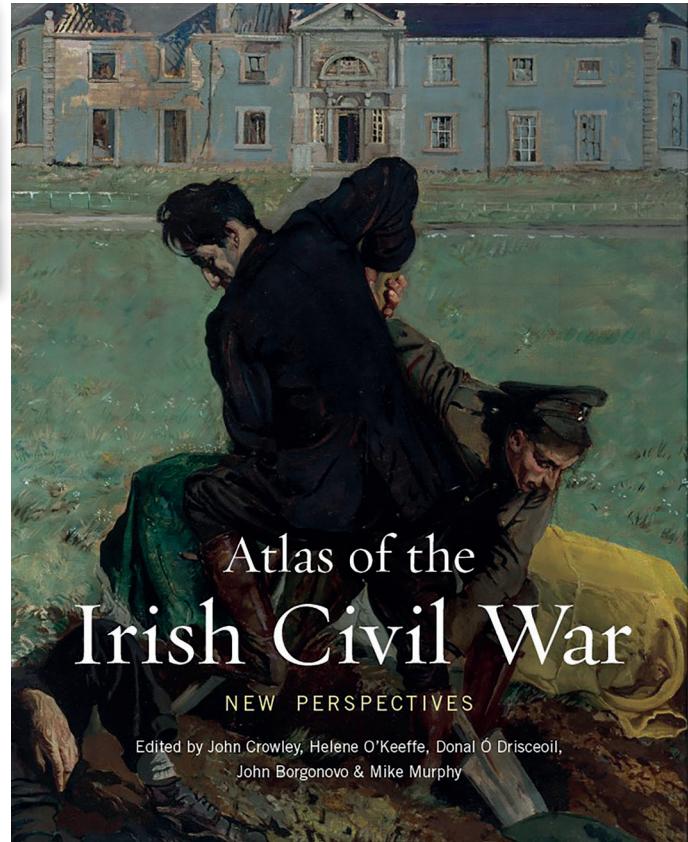
Previous works on the Irish Revolutionary period tend to only briefly discuss The Civil War, such as in Moody and Martin's 'The Course of Irish History' (2011) or focus on key events such as the outbreak of conflict or the death of Collins, as in Foster's 'The Oxford History of Ireland' (1989). It is not just the overall histories that fail to discuss The Civil War in detail, but this observation also applies to military histories of Ireland or the Irish soldier. Bartlett and Jeffrey's otherwise excellent 'A Military History of Ireland' (1996) allows only a few lines on The Civil War, with the same for Bredin's 'A History of the Irish Soldier' (1987). Even works that discuss Civil Wars tend to focus on Ireland post 1969, such as in Walter's 'How Civil Wars Start and How To Stop Them' (2022).

From an Irish Defence Forces Professional Military Education (PME) perspective it appears seldom that The Civil War is included as a case study in any counterinsurgency campaign, as most focus is placed on The War of Independence or the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'. It is this latest work that completes the "Atlas Trilogy" which fundamentally addresses this arguable lacuna in examining this traumatic period and as Diarmaid Ferriter has noted to 'confront' the silences around this most contested period in the birth of our nation and how "many drank from the well of 1922 for decades afterwards, but often privately and silently."

Though the deaths during The Civil War, at around 1,600, are comparatively small when compared to the likes of the contemporary Finnish Civil War, context remains all important as resonates throughout the work. When writing about the War of Independence, the Historian Charles Townshend states that "ideas and attitudes are as relevant as legal definitions and statistical indices" and that "the domestic context is obviously crucial to understanding the war". This observation can equally apply to The Civil War and as Clifford poignantly noted in a 2023 Cork Examiner commemorative piece on the Civil War that "years fail to cover over the senseless waste of young lives."

Where this complementary volume really resonates along with its predecessors is in the superbly generated maps contained therein, allied to a plethora of previously unassessed photographs and contemporary documents. This review doesn't allow a complete overview of this Atlas such is the depth and variety contained therein. But there is a wonderful analysis of how the Civil War impinged on Arts and Culture and how as part of the propaganda war fought by both sides, the "Cartoon War" played such a crucial role. Indeed Grace Gifford, widow of Joseph Plunkett executed in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising was a gifted and subversive artist for Anti-Treaty cartoons directed at the Free State Government.

Professor Terence Dooley of Maynooth University (MU) provides one of the most interesting contributions in this work in addressing the destruction of the "Big Houses" of the Anglo-Irish Aristocracy, many of which were destroyed amidst the crucible of violence and counter-violence perpetrated by all sides during the revolutionary period. He notes that during the Civil War such burnings dwarfed the destruction during the preceding War of Independence. These arson attacks during the revolutionary years were not always as straightforward as it might appear, and while ostensibly many of the burnings were



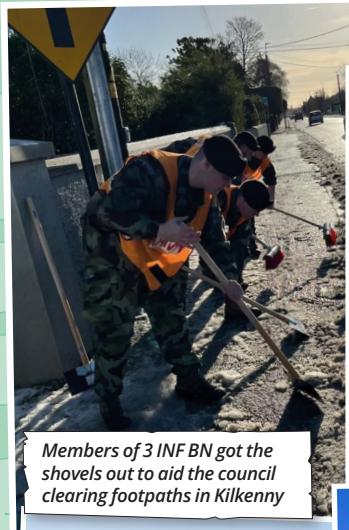
associated with political upheaval, many of them equally coalesced around local agrarian disputes. There were mirrored in long standing local enmities and often petty hatreds, where the mantle of republicanism was a convenient cloak for many arsonists. In essence, this in effect created "micro social revolution" throughout the country. The 1923 Land Act introduced by Agricultural Minister Patrick Hogan gave the nascent state under the aegis of the Irish Land Commission the power to compulsorily acquire lands belonging to the former landlord class for redistribution, in effect hastening the end of the "longer revolution" that had begun with the Land War of 1879.

A significant contribution of this work is the role of women activists, the vast majority of Cumann na mBan were irrevocably and unrelentingly opposed to the Treaty and for which they suffered considerable opprobrium. They were in many respects subsequently airbrushed from the history of the Revolutionary period, this work 'resets' their critical role both on the Anti-Treaty and Pro-Treaty divide. Indeed, the legacy of the Cumann na mBan split is vital to acknowledge in our remembering of the Irish Civil War, as it was a war not only of brother against brother, but also as Mary McAuliffe of UCD has poignantly noted, of sister against sister. In this regard Laura McAtackney's article on Graffiti of the Women in Kilmainham Jail is particularly poignant.

While no side of the conflict had a monopoly of violence one of the most disturbing and traumatic examinations is on the use of violence by the Free State Government especially in Kerry during the "Terror Month," of March 1923 that witnessed the Ballyseedy Massacre outside Tralee and other related extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the nascent Free State army.

Sean Enright's article on the "Execution Policy" is simply chilling. The use of execution by the Irish Free State in the Civil War was relatively harsh compared to the recent British record. In contrast with 81 official executions by the Irish Free State government, the British had executed 24 IRA volunteers during the 1919-21 conflict. In January 1923 alone 34 are executed. W.B Yeats in his poem "Meditations in Time of Civil War" spoke of how "we had fed the heart on fantasies; the heart's grown brutal from the fare."

# ON PARADE



Members of 3 INF BN got the shovels out to aid the council clearing footpaths in Kilkenny



3 INF BN Transport Platoon were busy with ATCA during the cold spell in January



DF Members assisting Cork County Council with the snow plough



Members of 125 INF BN UNIFIL continue to train and put their skills to use in Lebanon



Members of 125 INF BN UNIFIL conducting a route clearance



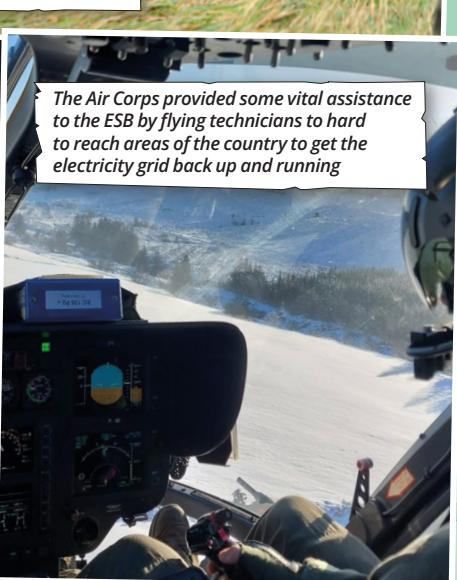
Recruits from the Air Corps put through their paces in a battle PT



A birds eye view of the snowy terrain

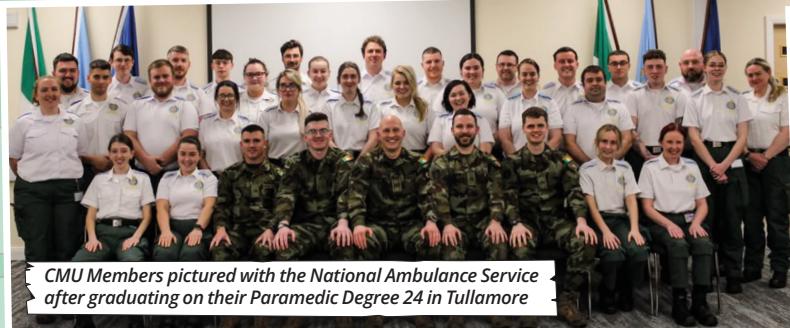


Air Corps helicopter crews busy with ATCP tasks



The Air Corps provided some vital assistance to the ESB by flying technicians to hard to reach areas of the country to get the electricity grid back up and running

# ON PARADE



CMU Members pictured with the National Ambulance Service after graduating on their Paramedic Degree 24 in Tullamore



Views across Dublin Bay as LÉ Aoibhinn takes off on a morning patrol (Image provided by @johnnies.journeys on Instagram)



On Wednesday 15JAN25 the Defence Forces School of Music welcomed their newest member. Captain Mary Walsh was commissioned at a ceremony in McKee Bks presided over by DCOS (Sp) Maj Gen Adrian Ó Murchú. Captain Walsh is a native of Tubbercurry Co. Sligo and a graduate of the MTU Cork School of Music. She will be posted as a staff officer to DFSM HQ in Cathal Brugha Bks. Back row L to R: Capt Tom Kelly (Army No. 1 Band), Capt Ben Jacob (Band 1 Bde), Capt John Carpenter (Band 2 Bde), Capt Willie Chester (DFSM HQ) Front row L to R: Comdt Fergal Carroll (DFSM HQ), Capt Mary Walsh, Lt Col Margaret Bannister (D DFSM)



Deputy Chief of Staff (Sp) Maj Gen Adrian Ó Murchú presenting Comdt Fiachra Lambe, Central Medical Unit, with his Membership of the Faculty of Military Medicine of Ireland (MFMMI), after Comdt Lambe's successful completion of the Military Medicine Specialist Training Programme



Members of the 2-3\* course in 3 Inf Bn preparing for one of their 96 hour exercise's



Snipers from 1 Cn Cois during unit training



A sniper from 1 Cn Cois prepares to take a shot



A small but important ceremony was held at the community memorial at the Green Bridge Mullingar in memory & honour of the "Columb Barracks Family" L-R retired Gunners of the 4 FAR - Lt Col Mick Dolan, Comdt Denis McCormack, Gnr Tommy Archibald, Cpl Gerry O Connor, Lt Col Damian Power (still serving) Regt Sgt Major Noel O Callaghan & Cpl Noel Clyne

# Defence Forces

# SPORTS & CLUBS

- Adventure Racing
- Diving/Sub Aqua
- Kayaking
- Mountaineering
- Parachuting
- Sailing
- Angling
- Athletics
- Basketball
- Boxing
- Clay Pigeon
- GAA Football - Men/Women
- GAA Hurling
- GAA Camogie
- Golf
- Martial Arts/BJJ
- Orienteering
- Rowing
- Rugby - Men/Women
- Soccer - Men/Women
- Triathlon
- Shooting

---

For more information contact your BDE rep

OR

[internalcomms@military.ie](mailto:internalcomms@military.ie)





# FROM THE ARCHIVES

AN COSANTÓIR VOLUME 70 ISSUE 09, NOV/DEC 2010

# Raising the Standard

**RDF Young Officers Course**  
**by Lt David Fitzgerald**

In late 2009, advertisements for the 4th RDF Infantry Young Officers (YOs) Course began appearing in Reserve units across the country. Those of us who successfully applied for the course assembled in the Officer Training Wing (OTW), DFTC, in February 2010 to be briefed on the course, which was to start in July.

After briefings on fitness, administration and field assessments, we left the Curragh aware that we would be in for a challenging few months as it was made clear that physical and mental fitness would be crucial.

The RDF Infantry YOs course, first conducted in 2005, has been a major driving force in improving standards throughout the Reserve. Students who passed the initial courses were key to the RDF integration pilot programme and have helped disseminate knowledge of current tactical techniques and practices throughout the ranks of the RDF. Designed to mirror its

PDF counterpart as closely as possible, given the time limits inherent in RDF courses, the course has become increasingly important in RDF officer development in recent years.

Run by the OTW in conjunction with the Reserve Defence Force Training Authority (RDFTA), the course is undoubtedly the most demanding open to reservists today. The course is a mixture of distance-learning, three training weekends and a two-week tactical bloc, and students are assessed through two written general tests, a practical navigation test and field assessment. The training weekends covered subjects like intelligence; human resources; command and staff relationships; battalion-level combat service support (CSS) tasks; TAMs and reports; and revision of the orders and combat estimate processes.

Given that much of the RDF's tactical experience is at platoon-level and below,



learning how higher echelons operate was of invaluable use on the two-weeks tactical bloc. While the training weekends were highly informative, the real challenge came the tactical bloc, which contained three exercises of 72-, 24- and 48-hours respectively.

On arrival on the Saturday we went straight into our battle preparation drills. We would be linking up with the PDF YOs course the next day to participate in the defensive phase of their tactical assessment. Since the PDF YOs had been working together for weeks at this point (and in fact were just finishing their offensive operations phase when we formed up) it would be a challenge to get ourselves up to speed and ready to operate alongside our PDF counterparts so quickly!

Immediately on arrival in the rest-and-refit area in Kilcoran, Co Tipperary, we got to work. As exercise platoon commander I went straight into a brief with the company commander and received a 'frago' (fragmentary order) for a company-in-attack at night. Within the hour I was off on the company commander's recce while our platoon got to work building the model for company orders. (Perhaps surprisingly, chalk dust and moss were highly important tools throughout the course, as we rehearsed preparation and delivery of orders again and again).

In Kilcoran, we could see just how important a good model was to the delivery of orders, as it made the task of describing how a full company would move by TCV (Truck) and by foot to capture an objective in darkness. From my perspective, participating in the company commander's orders was a great experience as I got to see how the various company-level appointments, from company sergeant to company 2/ic to company commander worked together to co-ordinate operations and accomplish the mission.

For the attack itself, we reinforced the main assault group and the weapons platoon, while platoon HQ was involved in shadowing company HQ, which was another great learning experience. As soon as the last company objective had been taken the company transitioned into defensive operations and began digging in for a perimeter-in-defence. The RDF platoon was given its own sector to defend and here we got to apply the knowledge we had gained about higher echelons and CSS as we had to deal with the issuing of defensive stores,



ammunition and hot rations, all the while working with the company commander to site trenches.

For most of us, participating in a defensive exercise on this scale was a new experience, and digging trenches after a night of marching, crawling and running across Kilworth was certainly a new mental and physical challenge! Throughout the dig-in phase, physical fitness and good personal admin were crucial, even with the benefit of relatively benign weather.

After two days of defensive routine we withdrew from our trenches under cover of darkness to our pick-up point, along a route identified by our clearance patrol. While the distance to the pick-up-point was relatively short, we received a salutary lesson in how slowly a company moves over rough terrain on a dark, wet night, and all of us were extremely glad to be able to take off our backpacks once we reached the end of the move. There was no time for a break though, and after a quick breakfast we returned to the dig-in site to fill in the now-waterlogged trenches before heading back to the Curragh, where we cleaned weapons, unpacked equipment and dried all our kit.

Getting this done both well and quickly was crucial as we knew we were heading back out onto the ground the next morning and that the sooner everything was squared away the sooner we would get some rest.

The next day was spent revising our platoon-in-attack drills on the Curragh plains followed by night patrolling and in-harbour routine on Semaphore Hill in stormy conditions. After spending the following morning chasing the 'enemy' we

were glad to see the inside of the camp again and to see our programme of training consisting of a weekend full of lectures in clean, dry lecture halls!

The final phase of the course was a 48-hour patrolling exercise in the Glen of Imaal, augmented by exercise troops from 65 Reserve Infantry Battalion. While initially an unknown quantity, these troops' enthusiasm, fitness and ability would make our time in command appointments much easier than anticipated.

Our patrolling phase coincided with a firepower demonstration in the Glen, which gave added realism to the experience: trying to give orders while a 105mm battery was firing was certainly a new experience for this infantryman. This final phase involved two days of harbour routine, patrolling and ambushes, and culminated in an overnight tab from Stranahely Woods to a holding area, from where we launched an attack on an enemy position located in a farm complex.

This final operation combined all the skills we had honed during the last few months - from extracting and delivering orders on a model (in this case based on recce reports and sketches) to battle prep, night navigation, co-ordinating organic fire support, and clearing buildings - and was a fitting end to a tough few days and weeks.

The YOs course was a great learning experience for all who took part, and we finished with a much deeper understanding of how to extract and deliver orders, how to make best use of the combat estimate process and the TAMs,



and how to operate at a high tempo for prolonged periods. From patrolling to offence, to defence, each of us greatly improved our skills as platoon commanders and will hopefully bring those skills back to help improve the standard of training throughout the RDF.

Thanks to our instructors - Capt Jack Fahy, Lts Seán Coffey and Mark Brislane, and Sgt Maj Christy Bourke (who looked after much of the admin behind the scenes) on the RDF side, and Lts Gareth O'Neill, Luke Foley and Rory Quinlan on the PDF side. Everyone came off the course with a much-enhanced skill set.

Every YOs course run so far has had unfulfilled capacity, and there is no reason why every lieutenant in the RDF should not complete the course. The next course will be run in 2012 and interested candidates should start their training today. ■





[www.military.ie](http://www.military.ie)

STRENGTHEN  
THE NATION