

THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

# AN COSANTÓIR



Óglaigh  
na hÉireann  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



**CHRISTMAS  
MESSAGES**

**PRESIDENTIAL  
INAUGURATION**

[DEFEND OUR STATE]





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## From the editor

— A/Editor Sgt Louise Kehoe

Hello and welcome to our sixth and final edition of 2025. We have some more great features in this edition. Throughout the year the Defence Forces have made 20% of their fleet fully electric, clocking over 1 million EV kilometres in a year. Pte Ben Donohue applied last-minute to *Traitors Ireland* after his wife suggested he'd be perfect for the show - surprisingly, he was accepted and quickly granted leave to participate. He recalls the experience as intense, challenging, and unforgettable. The 2025 Defence Forces Review, themed "Military Leadership Challenges in the Contemporary Operating Environment," explores how hybrid warfare, AI, and the post-truth era affect command. It features eleven peer-reviewed articles on topics from Decentralised Operations to leading Gen Z and Gen Alpha in the Post-Truth Era. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our contributors over the past twelve months. We hope you enjoy this edition of the *An Cosantóir* and enjoy the Christmas period. Nollaig shona daoibh go léir.

"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts." — Eleanor Roosevelt





# AN COSANTÓIR



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# PRESIDENT CATHERINE CONNOLLY

These sacrifices are deserving of the greatest recognition and I am so proud of all the members of our Defence Forces and of the families who support them.

We also remember, especially at this time, all those members of the Defence Forces who have tragically lost their lives while on duty at home or abroad, and all those who continue to miss them now. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha.

Agus dóibh siúd agaibh a bheidh scartha ó theaghlaigh agus ó chairde an Nollaig seo, tuigim agus admhaím an íobairt atá á déanamh agaibh ar son na síochána. Tá meas agus buíochas mhuintir na hÉireann libh.

And to those of you who will be separated from family and friends this Christmas, I understand and acknowledge the sacrifice that you are making in the name of peace, a sacrifice that is greatly appreciated by the people of Ireland.

At home, I am deeply grateful for the role that members of the Defence Forces continue to play at many ceremonial events across the country, including at the recent and memorable Inauguration Ceremony at Dublin Castle. Molaim sibh.

Mar fhocal scoir, I would like to commend all the members of Óglaigh na hÉireann for the positive contribution that you make to security in Ireland and to the furthering of peace across the globe.

I wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and a safe and peaceful New Year.

Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Daoibh.

**M**ar Uachtarán na hÉireann, ba mhaith liom beannachtaí croíúla a sheoladh do gach uile dhuine atá mar bhall d'Óglaigh na hÉireann agus a dteaghlaigh an Nollaig seo.

As President of Ireland, I would like to send my warmest greetings to each member of the Defence Forces, along with your families, during the Christmas season.

I am especially glad to have this first opportunity to do so, since being elected as the Tenth President of Ireland and as Supreme Commander of Óglaigh na hÉireann.

The Irish people take great pride in our Defence Forces over the years and their work is an enduring reminder of what is best in us as a people.

As a sovereign independent nation with a long and cherished tradition of neutrality, it is a matter of great distinction that we continue to hold the longest unbroken record of overseas service with the United Nations of any state, having first deployed to a UN peacekeeping mission in 1958.

In a world where the devastating consequences of war and conflict persist, the presence of members of Óglaigh na hÉireann brings much-needed hope in helping to create the conditions in which all people might hope to live in peace.

**Catherine Connolly**  
Uachtarán na hÉireann  
President of Ireland





# MINISTER FOR DEFENCE HELEN McENTEE

**A**s 2025 draws to a close, I want to extend my warmest Christmas wishes to all the women and men of Óglaigh na hÉireann, and to your families, whose support is so deeply valued.

I am deeply grateful for the service and dedication of the members of our Defence Forces, both at home and overseas. It is a privilege to write this Christmas message and to convey my appreciation, and that of the Government, for the work of our soldiers, sailors, and airmen and women.

I want to assure all personnel of the Government's gratitude and of our ongoing commitment to invest in the people of our Defence Forces and in the capabilities and facilities needed to support their vital roles.

Christmas is a time for family and friends, and it is also a time when our thoughts turn to those who cannot be with us. This year, my thoughts are with the members of the 127th Infantry Battalion serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. They continue a proud tradition of generations of Irish Defence Forces personnel who have served with distinction in the pursuit of peace.

I am thinking, too, of their families, the unseen heroes who, through their steadfast support over decades, have made Ireland's peacekeeping contribution possible.

As the UNIFIL mission nears its conclusion, we remember all who wore the UN's blue beret with pride, especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice for peace. Foremost among them in our memories is Private Seán Rooney, whose anniversary falls at this time and whose service will never be

forgotten.

This year saw the appointment of a new Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Rossa Mulcahy, following General Seán Clancy's appointment as Chair of the EU Military Committee. I wish them both every success and I look forward to working closely with Lieutenant General Mulcahy and the Defence Forces Board as we advance an ambitious programme.

Christmas is a moment for reflection and we can look back on significant progress during 2025. The Government has allocated record funding of €1.5 billion for defence in 2026, an 11% increase on 2025 and 35% since 2022, along with €1.7 billion in capital investment through the National Development Plan to 2030. These commitments demonstrate our determination to strengthen Ireland's defence capabilities and safeguard our people.

In 2025, capability improved across all three services, including €46.3 million for a new Headquarters and Training Centre for the Army Ranger Wing, delivery of the Air Corps' third Airbus 295 aircraft and the signing of a major contract for new towed sonar capability.

I am especially pleased by the establishment of the new Office of Veterans' Affairs, an important recognition of the exceptional contribution of our veterans, both at home and on peacekeeping missions around the world.

Finally, I want to wish all personnel of Óglaigh na hÉireann, and your loved ones, a very happy Christmas and a joyful New Year.

**Helen McEntee**

*Tánaiste and Minister for Defence*





# CHIEF OF STAFF LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROSSA MULCAHY

**A**s Chief of Staff, and on behalf of both the General Staff and the Defence Forces Board, I would like to extend season's greetings to you, the men and women of Óglaigh na hÉireann, and in particular to those of you who will be spending Christmas Day apart from your families, either on national defence tasks or duties, or on Peace Support Operations abroad.

Christmas allows us an opportunity to pause and reflect on what has occurred over the past year and also take time to consider the year ahead. As I reflect on the Defence Forces in 2025 and my first seven months in appointment, I am truly humbled to lead such a dedicated group of professional soldiers, sailors and aircrew. On a daily basis, your continued conduct across the State makes Ireland a safer place for its citizens and your commitment demonstrates that the Defence Forces will always be there when communities need us.

On the international stage, the resilience displayed by our peacekeepers, in very challenging circumstances, particularly in South Lebanon represents all that is great about those who serve in the Defence Forces. UNIFIL has been the bedrock of our overseas service for the last 5 decades. It will be a big loss to the Defence Forces as well as the people of Lebanon. However, I am acutely aware that our personnel are energised by new missions and want to test themselves in new environments and we've always succeeded and excelled in that regard. I envisage this enthusiasm and drive continuing. The world is becoming less secure and more volatile and I have no doubt the Defence Forces may be asked by Government to represent the State on new missions that may emerge. However, in the interim we can utilise the opportunity to transform and prepare Óglaigh na hÉireann for new challenges.

This is my first Christmas message to you as Chief of Staff. I look forward to continuing to meet as many of you as possible over the coming months and hearing from you about how together we can deliver our new vision of the Defence Forces as a joint, agile force that is fit for purpose and postured to defend our State. This means transforming our organisation,

valuing our personnel and defending our state. I want every member of the Defence Forces to feel part of this vision. To do this we must act with agility and maintain momentum. As new force structures and equipment come into service and new missions and roles are undertaken at home and overseas, the vision will become reality.

Our operations and training at home and abroad are only made possible by the unending support given to us by our families. This is especially the case at Christmas when you are separated from your loved ones. I can assure you that the General Staff and Defence Forces Board never take this support for granted. I would also like to avail of this opportunity to thank everyone who had a liaison role in support of our families, and those who organised events to show them our appreciation for their support to those of us who serve.

Finally, I want to welcome everyone who has enlisted during 2025 and is spending their first Christmas in uniform. You are our future and our most precious resource. Thank you for choosing to serve the State and its people, as a member of Óglaigh na hÉireann. We must sustain momentum and seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a modern Defence Forces. This will require our collective efforts and the experience of those currently serving is the essential ingredient to help shape Óglaigh na hÉireann for the future generations. It is my absolute privilege and honour to serve alongside you. Thank you for all your efforts and support this year.

I wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

*Nollag shona daoibh go léir.*

**Rossa Mulcahy**  
Lieutenant General  
Chief of Staff





# SECRETARY GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE JACQUI MCCRUM

**B**eannachtaí na Féile, As Christmas approaches, it's a time for reflection. 2025 has been a busy year, marked by significant change.

**In the last few weeks, President Connolly was inaugurated as Uachtarán na hÉireann and became the new Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces. We congratulate her on her election and wish her well during her term-of-office.**

Earlier in the year, the Tánaiste, Simon Harris TD, became our new Minister for Defence and, in mid-year, Lieutenant General Rossa Mulcahy, replaced General Seán Clancy as Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces when General Clancy took up his new role as Chair of the European Union Military Committee. We welcomed our new Minister for Defence, Helen McEntee in early December.

I want to express my gratitude to each of you for your continued commitment and excellent service. At this time, I am particularly mindful of those serving abroad and their families at home. Christmas, along with other family events, can be a challenging time for those away. I want to especially acknowledge the support of your families, without whom you wouldn't be able to do what you do to make the world a safer and better place for people less fortunate than us.

We learned recently that the UNIFIL mission is to come to an end. With over 40 years participation in UNIFIL, the Defence Forces and, by extension, the people of Ireland, have developed a special relationship and a strong bond with the people of Lebanon. This is another area of change that we will have to deal with over the coming year.

As the transformation of the Defence Forces continues, together we have made significant progress in a number of areas, including the removal of the blanket exemption from the Organisation of Working Time and the introduction of Professional Instructors Payment for Officers. The Tánaiste secured the continuation of the Pilots' Service Commitment Scheme and the extension of that scheme to Air Traffic Control Personnel.

Meanwhile, investment in the Defence Forces is continuing apace.

In February, a new Defence Forces' Cadet School was opened at the Defence Forces Training Centre, providing a modern, purpose-built facility for training the future leaders of Óglaigh na hÉireann. This followed a €5 million contract for the upgrade of accommodation at Collins Barracks.

In April, the new €1.4 million helicopter hangar for the Athlone-based Emergency Aeromedical Service was opened. This will enable technicians to conduct the necessary inspections and safety checks to ensure that the Air Corps can continue to provide such a valuable service throughout the year.

Another milestone was the announcement in April of €46.3 million in funding for a new Headquarters and Training Centre for the Army Ranger Wing.

We also signed a multi-million-euro contract for the provision of towed sonar capability in June, which will allow the Naval Service to build a picture of our subsea, contributing to the important

task of protecting our critical underwater infrastructure. This is one of many strands of work being progressed to address the threats in our maritime domain together with the development of a Maritime Security Strategy.

In October, the Air Corps took delivery of the third and final Airbus C-295 aircraft, all of which have arrived in the last two years. This aircraft, in a dedicated Military Transport configuration, will provide a significant airlift and general utility capability to the Defence Forces. The State's investment of approximately €300 million in the three C-295 aircraft and associated costs represents the largest equipment acquisition project ever undertaken for the Defence Forces.

In addition, in mid-December the Air Corps will take delivery of a Dassault Falcon 6X strategic reach aircraft, which represents a significant enhancement of the State's strategic reach, transport, casualty transfer and broader utility capabilities and is further evidence of the government's ongoing commitment to enhancing the capabilities of our Defence Forces.

The record increase in capital funding of €1.7 billion allocated to Defence in the National Development Plan will ensure the ongoing transformation of our Defence Forces and strengthen Ireland's defence by increasing investment in our capabilities.

Throughout the year, I had the privilege and honour of being warmly welcomed to various events, including commissioning ceremonies, anniversaries, commemorations, launches and other occasions, including Camp Shamrock in Lebanon earlier this year. It is always a great privilege to speak with those I can meet in person, including the opportunity to also talk with your proud families and veterans.

As we celebrate this festive season, let us take a moment to reflect on the achievements of the past year. Through collaboration and commitment we have collectively delivered on very important milestones and objectives.

Nowhere was that collaboration more obvious than in the preparation of the Department of Defence and Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2025-2028, which will be a guiding plan for us in the coming years.

Thank you again and wishing you and your loved ones peace, happiness and health in the coming year.

**Jacqui McCrum**  
Secretary General Department of Defence





# HEAD CHAPLAIN FR PASCHAL HANRAHAN

*"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone."*

**I**t is truly an honour and a joy to be offered this opportunity to extend greetings to the women and men of Óglaigh na hÉireann and to your families and loved ones, as we prepare to celebrate Christmas 2025.

**The Christmas story is one of vulnerability and strength intertwined. The King of Kings entered our world not in a palace, but in a humble manger. He came not with an army, but with the gentle, all-powerful strength of love. In the person of Jesus, God sanctified our human condition—body, mind, and spirit.**

This truth speaks directly to us who serve in the Defence Forces. Our vocation demands immense physical endurance, mental fortitude, and spiritual resilience. We are entrusted with great responsibility, and we rightly focus on the readiness of our equipment and the sharpness of our skills. Yet, this Christmas, I wish to reflect on the most essential piece of equipment we have: our own humanity.

#### The Peace of Christ for Your Wellbeing

The angels announced to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10). They spoke into a night that was likely filled with the same anxieties and worries that can burden any heart, especially one that carries the weight of service.

Your mental and emotional wellbeing is of paramount importance. The peace that Christ brings is not the absence of struggle, but a profound sense of His abiding presence within it. Do not carry your burdens alone. In the camaraderie of your unit reach out to one another. Speak with a trusted comrade, the PSS, or your chaplain. Seeking help is a sign of wisdom and strength, a recognition that we are made for community and are stronger together.

#### Nourishing the Spirit for the Journey Ahead

Finally, in the silence of that Holy Night, we find the ultimate source of our strength: God Himself, who came to dwell among us. In the business of our duties

and our everyday lives finding time for a quiet prayer can connect us to the source of all life and hope. This Christmas, as you gaze upon the crib, see the Infant Jesus as a reminder that God holds your entire being—your body, your mind, and your spirit—in His loving hands. Cherish the gift of your health. Protect your wellbeing. Nourish your spirit.

To your families, who serve with you through their love and sacrifice, my prayer is that your homes be filled with the joy. I pray that the light that dawned in Bethlehem shines brightly in your hearts, guiding you, strengthening you, and granting you His perfect peace.

With every blessing for a holy and joyful Christmas.



*Fr. Paschal Hanrahan*

**Beannachtai n Nollag agus Siochán san AthBhliain!**

*An tAthair Paschal ÓhAnnracháin*



# REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN COMRADES

## A SOLDIER'S PRAYER

Lord, I ask for your grace  
and strength for this moment.

May I be diligent  
and honourable in all things;  
and show cheerfulness and courage  
in the face of hardship and danger.  
Be with me in my trials and struggles.

Watch over my comrades and friends.  
Be with my family, friends,  
and all who are special to me.

Lord, give me confidence in times of doubt,  
strength when I feel weak,  
hope when there are feeling of despair.

Guide me, direct me and support me  
today and always. Amen.

*Every saint has a past... every sinner has a future!*

Shrapnel Cross - St Patrick's Garrison Church, Cathal Brugha  
Barracks



Cpl Martin O'Brien



FS Eamonn Magner



Pte Mark Whelan



PO Kevin Morrison



Sgt (AR) Paul Ryan



Sgt Patrick Cullen

*We would like to remember our comrades that passed while in service in the past 12 months, we ask that you keep them in your thoughts. We would like to offer their friends and family our deepest sympathies and prayers.*

*May they rest in peace.*



# TAKING CHARGE: THE DEFENCE FORCES JOURNEY TOWARD A GREENER FUTURE 1 MILLION KMS LATER

BY COMDT DENIS O'BRIEN FLEET MANAGER, DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORT'S OFFICE.

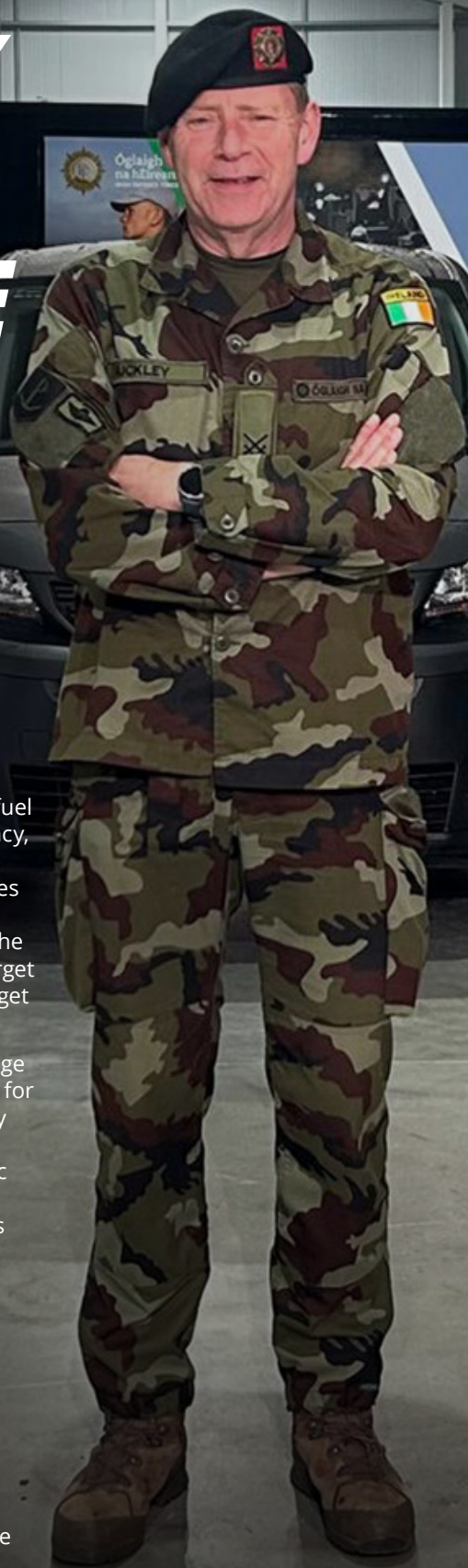
**T**he Defence Forces (DF) journey towards a more sustainable future has reached an important milestone. Today, one-fifth of the vehicle fleet is fully electric, and the EV component alone has now surpassed one million kilometres (Kms) in service in a single year. This remarkable achievement reflects the organisation's commitment to climate responsibility and carbon reduction.

In line with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and successive Climate Action Plans, the DF is legally mandated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its vehicle fleet in support of the national target of net zero emissions by 2050. While some operational exemptions apply, the DF continues to pursue a major reduction in fleet emissions from 2018 levels by 2030. This includes vehicle modernisation, implementing practical measures to

decarbonise vehicles, alternative fuel (HVO) program, improving efficiency, driver education and integrating low and zero-emission technologies wherever possible and in line with the DF Climate Action Plan 2023, the Tpt Corps is required to meet a target of 16% expenditure of capital budget projects on EV's.

Reaching 1,000,000 Kms of EV usage represents a significant milestone for any organisation, but for a military fleet, it underscores the maturity, reliability, and capability of electric transport to support operations. Every kilometre logged represents administrative movements, and routine journeys completed with zero exhaust emissions, demonstrating that EVs can meet DF requirements while advancing national climate objectives.

Rapid technological progress has made modern EVs more efficient, durable, and adaptable to daily Defence operations. Current EV models in service routinely achieve ranges exceeding 300 km per







charge, supported by a growing network of rapid charging stations across Defence installations and national routes.

Transitioning 20% of the fleet to electric power has required careful planning, targeted investment, and collaboration across the three Services. The first charging points were established in 2023 at Cork, Athlone, the Curragh, Baldonnel, and Haulbowline, forming the foundation of an expanding national network and the input of the Directorate of Engineering is noteworthy here. Plans are now underway for additional recharging hubs at 90 locations along key national routes, ensuring long-distance viability. These upgrades are removing “range anxiety” and reinforcing the DF progress toward a predominantly EV-powered administrative fleet.

Replacing internal combustion engines (ICE) with electric alternatives offers environmental and economic advantages. EVs produce no exhaust emissions, reduce local air pollution, and contribute to Ireland’s broader climate goals. They are also significantly more cost-effective to run, being up to 70% cheaper per Km than traditional diesel vehicles, while in the medium term requiring less maintenance due to fewer moving parts. Increased reliability and reduced downtime mean DF vehicles in future will spend more time on the road and less in workshops, improving productivity and value for money.

While the achievements to date are noteworthy, they represent only the beginning of the Defence Forces’ green transition. As Ireland works toward the national target of 30% electric vehicles by 2030, the DF will continue to evolve, expanding EV infrastructure and maintaining a commitment to sustainable operations. Every electric Km travelled reinforces this dedication not only to Defence, but to Ireland’s environmental future.

## Meet the Fleet

The Defence Forces remain fully committed to supporting the Government’s climate ambitions by transitioning the white fleet (admin fleet), where practicable, to energy-efficient and sustainable transport solutions. The current electric vehicle lineup includes:

### Kia e-Niro

- Motor: 150 kW (201 bhp)
- Battery: 64 kWh
- Range: up to 455 km
- AC Charge: 7.2 kW (0–100% in 9 hours)
- DC Fast Charge: up to 77 kW (10–80% in 45 minutes)
- Seats/Load: 5 seats, 451 L boot



### Kia EV6

- Motor: 168–239 kW (225–321 bhp)
- Battery: 77.4 kWh
- Range: up to 528 km
- AC Charge: 11 kW (0–100% in 7 hours)
- DC Fast Charge: up to 233 kW (10–80% in 18 minutes)
- Seats/Load: 5 seats, 480 L boot



### Hyundai IONIQ 5

- Motor: 168 kW
- Battery: 77 kWh
- Range: up to 480 km
- AC Charge: 11 kW (0–100% in 7 hours)
- DC Fast Charge: up to 200 kW (10–80% in 18 minutes)
- Seats/Load: 5 seats, 527 L boot



### Nissan e-NV200 (Van)

- Motor: 80 kW (109 bhp)
- Battery: 40 kWh
- Range: up to 200 km
- AC Charge: 6.6 kW (0–100% in 7 hours)
- DC Fast Charge: up to 50 kW (20–80% in 40 minutes)
- Seats/Load: 4.2 m³



### Peugeot e-Partner / e-Expert (Van)

- Motor: 100 kW (136 bhp)
- Battery: 50 kWh
- Range: 270–300 km
- AC Charge: 11 kW (0–100% in 5 hours)
- DC Fast Charge: up to 100 kW (10–80% in 30 minutes)
- Seats/Load: up to 1,000 kg



**A**s a Private in D Company, 7 Infantry Battalion, I've always sought new challenges and opportunities. When the Office of Reserve Affairs announced the pilot programme for Reservists at the Army Equitation School, I knew this would be a great opportunity and one I couldn't miss. Growing up in Sligo, I spent my youth helping on my uncle's farm and riding horses from the age of twelve. Though I never owned a horse, I gained experience through riding schools, showjumping, dressage and hunting. However, since moving to Dublin for work in 2014, opportunities to engage with horses had become rare. The pilot programme with the Equitation School opened a new pathway to serve in a role that blends my time in the DF with my love of horses.



*Pte Rugirok ready to present River Derg for inspection*

# FROM PATROLS TO PADDOCKS - ARMY RESERVE GROOMS COURSE

BY PTE GILLIAN COX, 7 INFANTRY BATTALION



*Pte Cox practising her skills in the Equitation School*



*The photo was taken at Cavan where Pte Clarke finished his show to assist as contributing to the Comdt Geoff Curran. The image is DHF.*

## The Equitation School Reserve Programme

The Army Equitation School Reserve Staff programme was established on a pilot basis in coordination with the Office of Reserve Affairs and with approval from DCOS Support. The programme was initiated as part of the RDF Regeneration and Development Plan which sees the modularisation of courses and the recognition and utilisation of Reservists' qualifications and skills. Successful

candidates would undertake duties alongside their Permanent colleagues, including grooming, yard work and ceremonial mounted duties. The role also offered the chance to support the team in its mission of "Promoting Ireland and the Irish Horse" at national and international equestrian events. To qualify, candidates had to be 3\* Privates or Corporals, recommended through the chain of command and committed to a two-year term with the School post-training. Previous horse experience was



desirable but not essential. I submitted my expression of interest, highlighting my civilian career in Electric Ireland, my equestrian background and my active participation in taskings with 7 Battalion, such as recruitment activity, Unit training, ceremonial and OpFor taskings. I was successful in my application, along with Pte Noel Prior and Pte Caoimhe Ruigrok.

## The Grooms Course

The South Eastern Technical University (SETU) accredited Groom's Course, worth 10 ECTS credits, was delivered over a series of weekends and a full-time training (FTT) block. It was a comprehensive blend of theory and practice, designed to prepare reservists for the demands of The Equitation School.

Early phases of the course placed a significant focus on establishing safe practices and routine. Participants learned essential yard skills including mucking out, bedding down, grooming techniques, fitting head collars, tying up horses safely and identifying potential hazards for both staff and horses. This foundation set the tone for a safety-first approach adopted for the duration of the course.

The course progressed with more technical and practical skills which included trimming, clipping, tack identification and fitting, alongside our first stable inspection. We then moved on to tack maintenance, fitting rugs, boots and bandages, feeding routines and our first lunging sessions — each contributing to growing confidence and competence around horses.

With core skills embedded, the training intensified with additional learning material including equine nutrition, anatomy and safe travelling procedures, turnout inspections and transport management. The latter stages of the course saw the start of riding lessons and introduced horse documentation and paddock management. Towards the end of the course, we covered veterinary lectures and practicals, including ailments, wound care and jumping exercises. Our FTT block brought key elements covered over the duration of the course together and culminated in inspections, duty groom understudy roles and examinations in riding, lunging and grooming theory, all designed to assess our readiness for service in the Equitation School.

## What next?

Participating in the Grooms Course has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my time in the DF Reserve. The course has allowed me to relearn past skills, develop new skills, and contribute to a unit that represents the Defence Forces and Ireland on the international stage.

The course has reignited a personal passion that I hope to carry forward for years to come. On behalf of the class, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lt Erin Crawford and all staff of The Equitation School for their time, commitment and dedication to ensuring this modularised program was a success.



Shown at the last show of the season in Noel Prior & Pte Gillian Cox attended the Grooms. They played a significant part in the success of the Eq Sch at the show, with Noel placing 1st and 2nd and also Lt Ruari placing 3rd place in the Grand Prix. The horse in the photo is the winner of the grand prix.

## Pte Noel Prior, 7 Inf Bn (Student):

*"I have always been interested in equine care and welfare, the opportunity to work with the school immediately captured my attention. The course was a chance to increase my knowledge and skill with horses. It was also a way to broaden my training and experience within the Reserve."*



## Pte Caoimhe Ruigrok 2 Bde Tpt Coy (Student):

*"The work of the School is interesting and varied, whether it be general yard duties, handling, clipping, or lunging horses, but all very much hands-on working with competition horses. In the coming months, the focus now shifts to developing a better understanding of the yard and routine and gaining a better knowledge of each of the horses in advance of the new season."*



## Col Oliver Dwyer, Director of Reserve:

*"Congratulations to both students and staff involved in making this course a success. The integration of Reservists into the Army Equitation School marks another milestone in the implementation of the RDF Regeneration and Development Plan – creating meaningful pathways for Reservists to train and serve alongside their Permanent colleagues in roles that reflect both operational need and individual preferences for their own career path."*



## Comdt Sharon Crean, 2IC Equitation School:

*"Completing a course of this nature, in your spare time in addition to the demands of professional and personal life is testament to the commitment of all involved. We are proud to welcome Reservists into the Equitation School, their backgrounds—whether in agriculture, equestrian sport, or civilian careers bring fresh perspectives and valuable skills that support and strengthen our team."*





# DEFENCE FORCES CONFERRING CEREMONIES

LT COL COLIN LAWLOR, DEFENCE FORCES REGISTRAR, J7 DFHQ

**To meet the demands of a rapidly changing operating environment, Defence Forces personnel need to be proficient in a wide array of military skills and competencies and must have the ability to operate complicated military technology. Continuous growth and development are paramount for Defence Forces personnel to ensure they can operate effectively on land, at sea, in the air, in cyberspace, and in space in response to Government taskings.**

Continuous growth and development have long been a hallmark of the Defence Forces' approach to training and education. Over the past 25 years, the Defence Forces have established long-standing and valued academic relationships with higher education institutions. All career courses delivered in the Military College on the Officer Professional Military Education pathway are accredited by Maynooth University,

from a Level 7 Diploma in Leadership Management and Defence Studies (LMDS) on completion of the Cadet Course, to a Level 9 Post Graduate Diploma for the Land Command and Staff Course, and Level 9 Master's for the completion of the Joint Command and Staff Course. Similarly, the Leadership Management and Defence Studies Programme for enlisted personnel is accredited by South East Technological University (SETU), ranging from Level 6 Higher Certificate to Level 7 BA in LMDS. Additionally, the Defence Forces and SETU co-deliver a variety of military-specific technical and master's programmes to meet the growing and complex academic needs of the technical corps.

## Maynooth University Graduations

Graduation Day is a special day for Defence Forces graduates and their families, as it formally marks the successful completion of an intense period of professional study and personal development.

On 30 October 2025, 130 officers graduated from Maynooth University:

- 36 members of the 100th Cadet Class graduated with a Level 7 Special Purpose Diploma in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies.
- 29 members of the 12th Potential Officers Class graduated with a Level 7 Special Purpose Diploma in Leadership Management and Contemporary Security.
- 45 members of the 7th and 8th Land Command and Staff Course graduated with a Level 8 Higher Diploma in Leadership, Defence and Contemporary Security.
- 20 members of the 7th Joint Command and Staff Course

graduated with a Level 9 Masters in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies.

The Military College graduation ceremony for the 7th and 8th Land Command and Staff Courses and 7th Joint Command and Staff Course was held on the morning of 30 October 2025 at Maynooth University. The event was presided over by Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Rossa Mulcahy and Dr Rory Finegan, Deputy Director, Centre for Military History and Strategic Studies, Maynooth University.

In his welcome address, Dr Finegan noted that it was "a great day for Maynooth University as the educational relationship with

Comdt Cathy Barrett and Lt Gen Rossa Mulcahy (DF COS)



Comdt Stephen Bunney and Lt Col Conor King (RACO Gen Secretary)



Cpl Abbi Stafford and Cpl Dawn Hannon





*Capt Charlene Kehoe and  
Lt Col Conor King*

the Defence Forces, which has evolved and developed over the years in delivering Professional Military Education as part of a Lifelong Learning journey for members of the Defence Forces; is for Maynooth University one of the proverbial jewels in the crown and a unique relationship for an Irish University”.

### The ceremony involved the presentation of Military College Graduation parchments and awards to Graduands.

The Director of Infantry Award for the best student on the 7th and 8th Land Command and Staff Courses, were presented to Captain Stephen Bunney and Captain Charlene Kehoe, respectively. The award, a perpetual trophy, is a sword which is kept on permanent display in the Infantry School. General Secretary of RACO, Lt Col Conor King, presented a poniard, a miniature replica of the Director of Infantry Sword to both award winners.

There are three awards associated with the Joint Command and Staff Course.

- An Gradam Tighde na bhForsaí Cosanta, the award for best research thesis.
- The second award, the Lt Col Seán Clancy Award, is a perpetual award presented to the student who has achieved the best Master's Degree.
- The Lt Gen Tadhg O'Neill award for the best military mark.

This year, Lt Cdr Donnchadh Cahalane swept the boards, winning all academic awards for his performance on the course, a remarkable achievement.

### South East Technological University Graduations

On 31st October 2025, the South East Technological University (SETU) conferred 182 Defence Forces personnel with academic awards at a ceremony at SETU's Carlow Campus. The awards ranged from Level 6 Higher Certificate to Level 9 Masters in the following programmes:

- Master of Engineering Ordnance, Munitions and Explosive Engineering
- Master of Science in Communication Technology Management



*Lt Cdr Donnchadh Cahalane and  
Lt Col Conor King*



*RSM James Scanlon and Sgt Dean Jones*

- Certificate in Software Defined Communication Systems
- Level 7 Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Management and Defence Studies (Logistics)
- Level 7 Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Management and Defence Studies
- Level 7 Minor Award in Arts in Leadership Management and Defence Studies
- Level 6 Higher Certificate in Arts in Leadership Management and Defence Studies

Addressing the graduates and their families, Professor Veronica Campbell, President of SETU, noted that:

“At SETU, it is our huge privilege to play our part in supporting the educational achievements of serving members, knowing that the ongoing upskilling and development of our Defence Forces are vital in creating and maintaining stability both nationally and globally”.

### Lt Gen Rossa Mulcahy, Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces stated:

“I am very proud of all our deserved graduates today. These awards are a culmination of what has been a very challenging and rewarding process. Lifelong learning is one of the key tenets of a career in the Defence Forces. The Defence Forces values and promotes educational opportunities and supports the concept of “lifelong learning” whereby personnel are encouraged to up-skill continuously so that they can adapt to the complex and challenging demands of military operations and deliver effective military capability.”



*Group shot SETU*

*Group Shot Maynooth*

### Conclusion

Training and education underpin the Defence Forces' efforts to transform into a modern, joint, and strategically aware organisation, as envisioned by the Commission on the Defence Forces (2022). Success in learning, along with the capacity to retain and apply acquired knowledge to military operations, is fundamentally connected to operational success. The conferring of over 300 Defence Forces personnel with academic awards during the Autumn conferring ceremonies provides the military capability to continue operating effectively while supporting organisational transformation.





BY PTE BEN DONOHUE

# MY JOURNEY ON TRAITORS IRELAND:

## A ROLLERCOASTER OF EMOTIONS

I'm Pte Ben Donohue and I'm currently serving as a plumber in the Engineers in the DFTC. I come from a military background and always wanted to join the Defence Forces so as soon as I turned 18, I applied. I completed my recruit training in Cathal Brugha Barracks in 2010, and I was posted to 2 Cav Sqn where I completed all my driving courses up to Mowag. I have four overseas missions, three to UNIFIL and one to UNDOF. In 2019 I completed my PNCO course, and was promoted to Cpl. I was serving overseas in UNIFIL as Section Commander when I got selected for the TTS Scheme, I dropped back to the rank of Pte and completed four years in college to become a qualified plumber.

My wife and I were watching the English version of the Traitors one night and she had suggested that I would do great on a show like that one. I then searched to see was there an Irish version of the show and I was disappointed to find that applications had closed. I decided I'd chance my arm and send them the 30 second video clip which was required to apply. I then received an e-mail back and was shocked to find out I had been accepted. Things happened very quick, I was told on a Friday I'd be starting to film on the Sunday. I contacted my CS straight away, who got permission for me to proceed with the show and also

granted me two weeks leave to partake.

I still can't believe it's been a few months since I left the castle and the intense game of deception that was Traitors Ireland. As one of the contestants on Season 1, I had the opportunity to experience something truly unique and unforgettable.

When I first received the call to participate in the show, I was both thrilled and nervous. I'd heard great things about the format, and I knew it would be a challenge like no other. Little did I know, it would push me to my limits and test my ability to trust others.

From the moment I arrived at Slane Castle, I knew I was in for a wild ride. Meeting the other contestants, 22 strangers from all walks of life, was exhilarating. We were all there for one reason: to win the €50,000 prize and be crowned the ultimate Faithful or Traitor.

The game was a blur of challenges, twists, and turns. I found myself as a Faithful, working alongside others to uncover the Traitors. My background as a soldier in the Irish Defence Forces definitely helped me navigate the mental side of the game. The discipline and resilience I learned in the forces served me well, and I was able to push myself to the limit.



Physically, the missions were also manageable thanks to my training. I was able to keep up with the demands of the game, which helped me make it to the final episode. I owe my time in the Defence Forces to why I did so well – it taught me how to work under pressure and stay focused.

However, things took a dramatic turn when I was blackmailed by the Traitors. I was torn, but ultimately, I decided to switch sides. It was a difficult decision, and I found it hard to adjust to my new role as a Traitor. I had to work hard to gain the trust of my new allies, and it was a challenge I wasn't sure I'd overcome.

One of the most surprising aspects of the show was the sense of camaraderie among contestants. Despite being in a competition, we formed genuine bonds and friendships. I particularly clicked with Nick, and our bromance was a highlight of the experience. We had each other's backs, and I think we both genuinely enjoyed each other's company. Of course, that made the betrayals and eliminations all the more gut-wrenching.

As a Traitor, I had to navigate the delicate balance of gaining trust while secretly working against the Faithful's. It was a tough task, but I enjoyed the strategic aspect of the game. In the end, my time as a Traitor came to an end, and I was banished in the final episode.

Looking back, I'd say my experience on Traitors Ireland was life-changing. I learned so much about myself and the people around me. The show was a true test of character, and I'm grateful to have been a part of it.

I was just one of 22 contestants, each with our own story and motivations. We were a diverse and dynamic group, and I think that added to the richness of the experience. Kelley, Oyin, and Vanessa ultimately won the game, and they deserved it – they were a formidable team.

The experience was unforgettable, and it's a show that resonates with the audience. It's a gripping, unpredictable ride that keeps you on the edge of your seat.





# CURRAGH FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE:

SUPPORTING FAMILIES  
IN THE COMMUNITY



**N**estled in the heart of the Curragh Camp, the Curragh Family Resource Centre (CFRC) has long been a cornerstone of support for families, individuals, and young people. Rooted in compassion and community spirit, the Centre provides vital services across four main pillars: **Therapeutic Support, Family Support, Youth Resilience, and Community Engagement.** Defence Forces families are prioritised in all areas of our work, recognising the unique challenges and strengths that come with military life. All our services, supports, and groups are provided free of charge and fully private and confidential.

What makes CFRC unique is not only our holistic approach to wellbeing, but also our enduring relationship with the Defence Forces Training Centre (DFTC). This partnership, through mentoring, fundraising, and community collaboration has ensured that the Centre continues to thrive, adapt, and meet the evolving needs of those it serves. Although we are based in the Curragh Camp, we are open to all member of the Defence Forces and their families.

## The Therapeutic Pillar: A Safe Space for Reflection and Renewal

At the core of CFRC's mission is the belief that everyone deserves access to safe, professional, and confidential therapeutic support. Life can bring unique challenges, from the stresses of life to the everyday struggles faced by families everywhere.

The Centre offers one-to-one systemic therapeutic sessions, child and adolescent therapy, and a range of therapeutic interventions tailored to children, young people, and adults. These services provide a space where individuals can explore their feelings, develop coping strategies, and begin to rebuild confidence.

As one member of the therapeutic team reflects:

*"Sometimes the bravest step someone can take is the first contact with us. From that moment, we can begin working together to find hope and healing."*





## The Family Support Pillar: Walking Beside Families

Families are at the heart of community life, and CFRC recognises the importance of supporting parents and caregivers in their vital role. The Family Support pillar provides guidance through, parent education sessions, practical advice, and early intervention when difficulties arise.

Workshops on communication and family wellbeing are delivered in a welcoming, non-judgemental environment. The Centre also offers one-to-one support for parents who may be struggling, helping them to build resilience and confidence.

One parent who participated in a recent programme shared:

"The support I received helped me feel less alone. It gave me tools to manage challenges and reminded me that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness."

By empowering families in this way, the Centre not only strengthens relationships within the home but also builds stronger, healthier communities.

## The Youth Resilience Pillar: Flourish Programme

Perhaps one of the most innovative aspects of CFRC's work is the Flourish Programme, designed specifically for young people aged 10 to 12. These pre-teen years can be both exciting and challenging, as children navigate changing friendships, new responsibilities, and the early stages of adolescence.

Flourish provides a structured, supportive environment where participants can build resilience, self-esteem, and problem-solving skills. Through group activities, creative projects, and team challenges, young people learn how to manage stress, express themselves, and support one another.

The coordinator explains: "Flourish is about giving children the confidence to know they can overcome challenges. It helps them discover their strengths and reminds them that they don't have to face testing times alone."

The programme has quickly become a cornerstone of CFRC's work, equipping the next generation with the tools to thrive in school, at home, and in their wider community.

## The Community Pillar: Connection at the Centre

While therapeutic services, family support, and youth programmes form the backbone of CFRC, the Community pillar ties everything together. The Centre is a vibrant hub where people of all ages come to connect, learn, and share experiences. Coffee mornings, workshops, and events foster a sense of belonging. By remaining closely connected to the people it serves, the Centre ensures its work is always relevant, accessible, and grounded in the real needs of families and individuals.

## Partnership with the Defence Forces Training Centre

The partnership between CFRC and the Defence Forces Training Centre is both longstanding and invaluable. The DFTC has provided continuous support through fundraising efforts, mentoring, and community collaboration.

Whether through charity events, awareness campaigns, or the direct involvement of Defence Forces personnel as role models and mentors for young people, the partnership strengthens the link between military and civilian life in the Curragh.

For many families connected to the Defence Forces, CFRC provides a vital layer of support, complementing the resilience already fostered within military life. The presence of Defence Forces mentors in youth programmes, for example, has inspired young participants and given them relatable role models.

Moreover, fundraising initiatives led by the DFTC have enabled the Centre to expand initiatives and reach more families. This financial and moral support underscores the shared commitment to building a resilient and inclusive community.

As one committee representative reflects:

"Our partnership with the Defence Forces Training Centre is a cornerstone of our success. Their commitment demonstrates what can be achieved when community and military work side by side."

## Looking Ahead: Together We Flourish

The work of the Curragh Family Resource Centre continues to grow in impact, guided by its four pillars and strengthened by its partnerships. The combination of therapeutic support, family guidance, youth resilience, and community connection create a powerful foundation for wellbeing.

With the ongoing support of the Defence Forces Training Centre, the Centre is well placed to continue meeting challenges head-on, while adapting to the needs of future generations.

At its heart, CFRC is about people, families who find support, young people who discover resilience, individuals who heal, and communities who come together. It is a place where compassion and strength meet, ensuring that everyone has the chance not just to cope, but to flourish.

## Contact the Curragh Family Resource Centre:

1 Griffith Road, The Curragh, Co. Kildare, Ireland R56 EH93 & McSwiney Road, Curragh Camp, Co. Kildare R56 AH02

+353 45 456883 (general) & +353 45 441635 (therapeutic)

info@curraghfrfc.ie



# PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

**O**n 11 November 2025, Catherine Connolly was inaugurated as the 10th President of Ireland at Dublin Castle. The Defence Forces provided full ceremonial honours, including a 21-gun salute, military band performances, a guard of honour, and an Air Corps flypast. In her address, she pledged to build a “republic worthy of its name,” emphasising climate action, the Irish language and inclusion.

The ceremony marked a new chapter in Irish politics, with President Connolly setting out to bring greater diversity, critical thinking and community engagement to the largely ceremonial presidency. She also vowed to prioritise the Irish language in the presidential residence, and to value every citizen’s voice in her tenure.









# THE DEFENCE FORCES REVIEW 2025

*MILITARY LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES  
IN THE CONTEMPORARY OPERATING  
ENVIRONMENT*



**T**he Defence Forces Review is the annual professional military journal of the Irish Defence Forces. It provides a forum for military and civilian authors to explore defence and security-related topics close to their hearts. By challenging themselves to research, prepare, and publish a peer-reviewed academic paper, the authors are significantly contributing to their personal professional development and to scholarly discourse on matters relevant to the Defence Forces. Early each year, a call for papers is issued, inviting potential authors from all services and ranks, and from both military and civilian backgrounds, to submit thought-provoking articles aligned with a specified theme. This year's theme was "Military Leadership Challenges in the Contemporary Operating Environment." Specifically, authors were encouraged to critically examine the impact that hybrid warfare, artificial intelligence (AI), and the post-truth world have on military leaders' ability to operate and command.

While the nature of war does not change, its character is evolving, shaped by technological, economic, cultural, and societal changes. The return of war to Europe and



shifting global and political alignments are challenging and testing the Rules-Based International Order. Ireland's security and defence environment is not immune to such challenges, and malign actors will continue to threaten our way of life using a variety of sophisticated means below the threshold of armed conflict. As a result of this reality,





BUSINESS  
SCHOOL

Óglaigh  
na hÉireann  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

ce

Beyond the JOC."

Comdt Simon Keenan - "Fog, Friction, Fragmentation: Military Decision-Making in an Age of Mosaic Warfare."

Dr Brendan Flynn - "The Return of (Maritime) Hybrid Warfare as a Leadership Challenge for European Democracies like Ireland."

Comdt Killian Doyle - "From Bayonets to Bits and Bytes: Leadership in the Information Environment."

## Panel 2 - Developing Future Leaders

Lt Col Brian Cahill - "Simulating Complexity: Urban Operations, Cognitive Load & Wargaming in the Contemporary Operating Environment."

Brig Gen Brendan McGuinness and Cpl Yvonne Kearney - "How Can Coaching and Mentoring Support DF Personnel in Dealing with Redesigning and Transforming the Force in a Complex World?"

Sgt Stephen McCabe - "Bridging the Generational Gap: Leading Gen Z and Gen Alpha in the Post-Truth Era."

Comdt Tadhg O'Donoghue - "Harnessing the Power of Story: Inoculating the Force against 'Grey-Zone' Effects."

this year's Review attracted articles covering topics such as decentralising joint operations centres, coaching and mentoring for leaders, wargaming for urban operations, decision-making in the age of mosaic warfare, and leading and educating Generation Z in the post-truth environment. To select from the large volume of submissions, the Defence Forces collaborated with Dublin City University to edit and publish eleven excellent articles. The 2025 edition was edited by the Army's Lt Col Gavin Egerton and Comdt Kenneth O'Rourke in close collaboration with DCU's Dr Ken McDonagh and Dr Eleanor Leah Williams. A thoroughly enjoyable event was held recently at DCU's Business School to launch the review, during which many of the contributors presented their papers to a diverse audience of military and academic leaders and students, who then engaged in panel discussions. The audience was also addressed by Maj Gen (retd) Michael Beary DSM, who delivered the keynote speech.

There were two themed panels where some of the contributors presented on their articles:

## Panel 1 - Leadership and Decision Making

BSM Shane McEneaney - "Leadership without Location: Commanding the Contemporary Operating Environment





BY LT COL STEPHEN MOLUMPHY

*EU Operations Headquarters: Working together in a multinational environment with military staff from all European Union countries (April 2025)*

# STRATEGIC PLANNER FOR EUMAM UKRAINE IN THE EU MILITARY HEADQUARTERS, BRUSSELS

## Work experience POV:

In July 2024 I moved with my wife and four kids to Brussels, Belgium to start a new appointment in the EU military operational headquarters that is titled the 'Military Planning and Concept Capability' or simply MPCC!

My appointment is the primary strategic planner in J5 on the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) to Ukraine, and which has led to one of the most challenging, interesting and rewarding periods in my career. The MPCC operate at the military-strategic level, one down from the political-strategic level and therefore provides planning support to the planning process at this political-strategic level and other EU bodies as appropriate. My chief tasks include contributing to the Strategic Reviews/Assessments of Ukraine, conducting trips to different parts of Ukraine at specific periods and in particular, leading the Strategic Planning Groups for several Ukraine planning taskings, most significantly the EUMAM Ukraine Mission Plan. From a working perspective, my previous two years in the Command and Staff School, first as an instructor and later as course coordinator has benefited me enormously in my appointment. In my opinion, the Command and Staff School in the Military College equips its graduates with the relevant planning skills to work seamlessly in an EU or NATO headquarters and contribute effectively at the operational and strategic level.

## But what exactly is EUMAM UKRAINE?

EUMAM Ukraine was established on 17 October 2022 and launched on 15 November 2022. As of 30 September 2025, EUMAM has trained 84,000 Ukrainian soldiers (equivalent of 15 combat brigades) in 2000 training modules (TM) conducted on EU soil. In addition to training conducted by EUMAM's subordinated Commands, the Combined Arms Training Command (CAT-C) in Poland and the Special Training

Command (ST-C) in Germany, and 16 other Member States hosted TM on their soil. EUMAM provides training for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and internal security forces, such as the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU), the State Border Guard Service Ukraine (SBGSU) and the National Police (NPU) operating under the operational command of the AFU. At the core of EUMAM's mandate are UA's needs, which are dictated by the situation on the battlefield. EUMAM's flexible, scalable and modular approach allows the mission to adapt and quickly respond to training requests. Over the last mandate, the mission has not only broadened its training audience to include internal security forces, but also expanded training efforts to maritime and air domains. The strengthening of instructional quality by the mission resulted in multiplying the effect on AFU's overall combat effectiveness. In the land domain, EUMAM's main effort focused on individual and collective training, leadership and specialist training. In the air domain, Ukrainian pilots, having completed their F-16 and Mirage 2000-5 training, allowed the UA F-16s to operate in combat since August 2024 and Mirage 2000-5s since February 2025. While in the maritime domain, EUMAM trained approximately 2000 UA soldiers in 9 Member States highlighting the vast scope of military training provided by the EU.

While not expressed perhaps as much as it should be, the EU and its Member States are at the forefront of international efforts to support Ukraine. The EU have so far mobilised almost EUR 164.8 billion of assistance to Ukraine and its people. This includes over EUR 63.2 billion of military support, including EUR 6.1 billion through the European Peace Facility. EUMAM has become the largest provider of military training to Ukraine, a key partner for NATO and a model of a particularly effective military CSDP mission. EUMAM is highly



*Lt Col Stephen Molumphy (J5 MPCC) and Capt Jordan Corrigan (J3 MPCC) outside St. Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv, Ukraine.*





*Brussels hurling and camogie team competing in the European Hurling Championship in Copenhagen, Denmark in May 2025.*



*Lt Col Stephen Molumphy and his wife Niamh playing in Zurich, Switzerland with Brussels Camogie and hurling club in September 2024*



*Molumphy family- June 2025.*



*Jack, Fionn and Katie who won the U9, U11 and U13 Gaelic Football Tournament with Brussels in Maastricht, Netherlands in October 2025.*



*Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) Basic Recruit Training*

appreciated by Ukrainian political and military authorities, who praise the high quality of EU training, which also serves as an incentive for Ukraine's recruitment and mobilisation efforts. The mission has become a solid pillar of EU overall military support to Ukraine.

## Experience in Ukraine

The most rewarding experience work related were the frequent work trips to Ukraine and interactions with the Ukrainian military including several of the military Training Centres (TC's) and Training Areas (TAs). These TC's included the Ukrainian Unmanned Systems Forces, Land Forces and Air Assault forces. Their method of instruction for military training and the course syllabi used were very impressive. The high standard of training was achieved by keeping the lessons simple, constant repetition and a very high number of live firing practices. This was enhanced, understandably, by the incredible subject matter expertise held by the Ukrainian military instructors. For example, witnessing how military skills to shoot down drones or clear trenches were taught to recruits highlighted the invaluable lessons learnt that could be adopted by the Irish Defence Forces. Similarly how a UAV TC trains soldiers with no previous UAV experience to be accomplished drone pilots and fulfilling roles such as reconnaissance pilot, bomber pilot or fighter pilot. This experience convinced me of the importance to engage heavily with the EU military lessons learnt opportunities arising from this conflict that is already being availed of by many Member States.

## Family experience POV:

Since moving to Brussels, my wife and children have loved the experience. Three of my kids, Jack (11), Fionn (9), Katie (6) attend one of the four European Schools in Brussels. Here they have lessons in Irish, English and French in addition to the core subjects. Overall it has been a fantastic experience for them to interact with students from all European countries in a multilingual and multicultural setting where they promote European identity. It has also given them a much better appreciation and motivation to speak Irish as all other children use their native language to interact with each other in addition to speaking English.

Outside of school, the children have been involved in the Brussels Comhaltas Irish music classes, Inter Brussels soccer club and the Brussels GAA juvenile club. Over the past year they have played in hurling and Gaelic tournaments in The Hague and Maastricht in the Netherlands, and also in Brussels. This club also served as an excellent social scene to meet other Irish people and children from other nationalities who took up GAA. My wife and I also came out of retirement and joined the adult camogie and hurling Brussels teams which was a great experience! I was unaware that over a hundred GAA clubs exist in over 22 European countries and each year they meet in different European capitals to compete for the European trophy. One experience which stands out was playing in a hurling competition in Vienna in 34deg's temperature with the Brussels hurling team against a German hurling team from Cologne and speaking German to their full-back about hurling! Something I never would have imagined happening.

## Overall, the past year and a half has been a fantastic experience for my family and myself.

The weather is nice and sunny (from an Irish perspective) and we have visited many different countries throughout Europe since arriving in summer 2024, using the transport infrastructure in all directions. From a work point of view, it has been challenging as a strategic planner on the Ukraine desk but very rewarding work with military contributions submitted being acted upon in real time at the military-strategic level and political-strategic level. The highlight for me is interacting with the resilient and impressive Ukrainian military in Ukraine and in particular observing and learning how they conduct training. For example, observing recruit training and the methods of instruction included in the exercises to make it more realistic such as drones, use of VR and conducting back-briefs using recorded video footage. Looking forward, in July 2026 we will return back to Ireland and will leave with very fond memories of our time spent here in Brussels.



# FINDING THE HERO OF THE WILD GEESE

PATRICK SARSFIELD

BY LT COL CONOR GOREY

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE SARSFIELD HOMECOMING PROJECT/ DR LOÏC GUYON

## A Soldier of Ireland and Europe

**F**ew names in Irish military history inspire as much admiration as Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan. His defiance during the Williamite Wars and his leadership at Limerick made him a symbol of Irish courage and loyalty.

During the Williamite-Jacobite War from 1689 to 1691 Sarsfield rose through King James II's Jacobite army and became famed for his daring raid on William of Orange's siege train at Ballyneety in 1690, an operation that contributed to save Limerick from capture.

Two years later he negotiated the Treaty of Limerick, allowing Irish troops to depart honourably for France. Around 12,000 soldiers and families followed him in the Flight of the Wild Geese, forming the Irish Brigades in French service. For the Defence Forces today, this legacy remains central to our European heritage: Ireland's service abroad began long before the modern era.

## From Limerick to Landen

In 1693, Sarsfield served as Maréchal de Camp (Major General) under the Duke of Luxembourg at the Battle of Landen (Neerwinden) in present-day Belgium. Sarsfield led his cavalry through heavy fire while covering the French advance. Sarsfield was gravely wounded and in the following days was evacuated along with thousands of other wounded to the town of Huy, 32km south of Landen.

"Sarsfield's story reminds us that loyalty, leadership, and service beyond borders are values still lived by Irish soldiers today." — Gen Seán Clancy, CEUMC

Legend long held that he died on the battlefield, uttering the romantic last words "Oh that this were for Ireland." Yet nineteenth-century poets, not eyewitnesses, created that line. The truth, rediscovered through painstaking research, shows Sarsfield died nearly two weeks later in Huy and was laid to rest there.





## Unravelling a 330-Year-Old Mystery

Revealing that truth has demanded an exceptional level of historical detective work. Dr Loïc Guyon, Honorary Consul of France and Head of French Studies at Mary Immaculate College, began the 'Sarsfield Homecoming Project' in 2020 with a single aim: to verify on the basis of empirical evidence, not legend, where Ireland's hero fell and lies buried.

Working almost single-handedly at first, he examined archival maps, parish registers and 17th-century correspondence across four countries. Over several years, he compared hundreds of documents produced in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Versailles, Huy, Liège and Namur, including some kept at the Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes and in the French National Library. Each record was painstakingly translated, cross-checked, and dated to reconstruct the final days of Patrick Sarsfield.

What emerged was not a myth, but a meticulous historical reality. The diaries of the Marquis de Dangeau confirmed that Sarsfield had been "dangerously wounded" at the Battle of Landen and died days later in Huy. Parish death registers from Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse, a now partially demolished church in the heart of Huy, listed two unnamed French officers buried on 8 and 12 August 1693. After having established the exact timeframe of Sarsfield's death based on various contemporary reports, Dr Guyon realised that one of those two officers, interred inside the church, was almost certainly Patrick Sarsfield.



Reconstructing the site was a feat of historical geography. Using 18th and 19th century cadastral maps, architectural studies, and early photographs, Dr Guyon pinpointed the footprint of the old church, now beneath a terraced house on Avenue des Fossés, a modest urban plot. He then brought together a consortium of experts: comprising of Aegis Archaeology Ltd. of Limerick, French forensic anthropologist Dr Caroline Laforest, and Belgian geneticists Prof. Maarten Larmuseau and Noah Gaens from the University of Leuven. What began as one historian's quest grew into a trans-European mission linking academics, diplomats, and volunteers under a single banner: Bring Sarsfield Home.

## The Search in Huy

Excavations by Frank Coyne of Aegis Archaeology Ltd and forensic anthropologist Dr Caroline Laforest began in 2023. Early trenches yielded several 16th to 18th century burials but the major phase, completed in October 2025, uncovered a disturbed grave beneath cobblestones containing a coffin outline, pottery shards and the skeletal remains of a tall, powerfully-built male.

At around 1.86 m (6 ft 1 in), the remains match a description of Sarsfield as "of prodigious size." The bones show strong musculature and an age at death under 40, consistent with Sarsfield. A skull and mandible have been sent to the University of Leuven for DNA testing, with results expected early 2026.

## Commemoration and Connection

The project's reach has extended far beyond archaeology. More than 400 donors have contributed, and RTÉ is producing a documentary on the search. Among its most touching stories is that of Alexandria Fitzgerald, a Limerick student who fund-raised passionately for the project before her untimely passing in 2024.

Her family and school community continue to support the effort in her name, symbolising how new generations keep the past alive. You can contribute at their GoFundMe

<https://gofund.me/1a1d8fd9>

***"The Sarsfield Homecoming Project's educational dimension and its ability to bring communities together have always been essential to me" — Dr Loïc Guyon, Project Director***

In October 2025, Sgt Dave O'Brien and Pte James Fleming, soldiers from the 12th Infantry Battalion based in Sarsfield Barracks



deployed to assist with the excavations. On 23 October 2025, General Seán Clancy, Chair of the EU Military Committee, visited the site. Speaking after the visit, he reflected: "Commemorating courage and sacrifice is not only about the past; it is about understanding who we are as a nation today."

The French Ambassador to Ireland H.E. Céline Place added that the search was "embodies the enduring ties between France and Ireland, which are so deeply rooted in history"

For Dr Guyon, "while the ultimate goal is to repatriate the remains of this Irish hero to where they belong, another aim of the project has always been to revive people's interest in an important part of Limerick's history, and beyond it, of Ireland's and Europe's history."

## Awaiting Homecoming

If DNA results confirm the identity, plans will begin to repatriate Patrick Sarsfield to Ireland, an event certain to capture the national imagination. The Defence Forces could play a leading ceremonial role, connecting today's soldiers with their seventeenth-century predecessors of the Wild Geese.

Until confirmation arrives, the excavation continues, a story of scholarship, persistence, and pride. Three hundred years on, Sarsfield's courage still unites Ireland and Europe.





Engineer Corps block competing in the race

# A RACE TO DESIGN

## COMPETITION TO DESIGN THE 10K RACE T-SHIRT

Every year the An Cosantóir Office begins planning for the 10k race around 6 months before the race, in April. One of the earliest decisions to be made is the design of the tshirt. The race tshirt in 2024 received a lot of positive commentary, having been designed by Cpl Martin Bennett and Armn Sam Gibney of the An Cosantóir Office. This year, we decided to open it up to members of the DF and the public to submit their ideas. We were overwhelmed with the response, receiving over 30 submissions, with a great variety of colours, patterns and designs!

The long list was narrowed down to the final 3 with the overall winner being Capt John Mc Candless from 28 Inf Bn AR. The final design used for the race incorporated elements from the joint second place designs including a map of the race route and Ogham script.

Challenges encountered included matching colours and fonts from designs created with AI into a design that was usable by the manufacturer, but with some help from Cpl Eric Ryan from the An Cosantóir Office utilising his graphic design skills we finalised the design and feedback was very positive following the results being announced!



Joint second place: Pte Ruairí Fry, 12th Inf Bn (AR)



The winning submission by Capt John Mc Candless, 28 Inf Bn (AR)



Joint second place: Comdt Shane Walsh



Final tshirt design





# "AT HOME IN IRELAND"

ARTICLE BY MS CÉCILE CHEMIN  
- SENIOR ARCHIVIST MILITARY  
ARCHIVES & DIRECTOR  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MS  
CÉCILE CHEMIN

## MILITARY ARCHIVES REPRESENTED AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY

*The Policy Makers – L-R: Elise, Stéphane and Cécile*

**O**n the occasion of Bastille Day this year, friends, partners, and members of the French community were welcomed to the Résidence de France (53 Ailesbury Road), which has recently reopened following extensive renovations.

The celebration featured a special exhibition entitled "At Home in Ireland", showcasing the work of photographer Conor McCabe. This exhibition celebrated 25 French nationals residing in Ireland: farmers, artists, engineers, doctors, chefs, journalists, educators, and one archivist (!), highlighting the diverse and valuable contributions of the French community, and celebrating the enduring bonds between France and Ireland.

It was a true privilege to participate. Representing the Military Archives is always an honour, and it was particularly gratifying to see so many familiar faces in attendance, including several in uniform.

I was especially pleased to share our portrait with Elise Martin-Vignerte (policy advisor and lawyer) and Stéphane Duclot (Director of Service - Limerick City and County Council).

I extend my sincere thanks to Her Excellency Céline Place, Ambassadrice of France in Ireland, for her kind invitation and for the eloquence and thoughtfulness of her remarks on the day.

Warm thanks are also due to those who brought this event to life, particularly Conor McCabe for his remarkable photography, as well as Jeanne Vidberg, Lucile Mazauric, Olga Bourderau, and many others behind the scenes.



*Exhibition panel*



*Résidence de France / French Embassy, Dublin*



*Céline Place, French Ambassador to Ireland*



# DF HOSTS GLOBAL WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY CHOD NETWORK

## MEETING MARKS 25 YEARS OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 AND THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS) AGENDA

**T**he Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, Lieutenant General Rossa Mulcahy, on Thursday, 23 October 2025, hosted the Executive Committee of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) Network at McKee Barracks, Dublin.

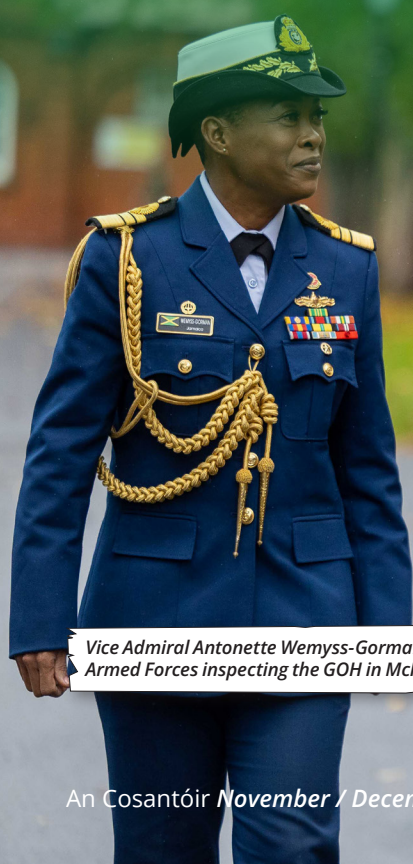
This event marked the first blended (in-person and virtual) meeting of the Executive Committee in over five years, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The meeting was attended by representatives from across the globe, including Vice Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Lieutenant General Jimmy Larida, representing General Romeo Brawner, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

During his opening address, Lt Gen Mulcahy welcomed

participants and emphasised the importance of continued collaboration in advancing the WPS agenda.

"As Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and Chair of the WPS CHODs Network, I want to thank all members for their ongoing commitment to the WPS agenda. The strength of this network lies in the active participation of its members, and today's discussions highlight how collaboration can drive progress on inclusion and gender perspectives within armed forces globally," he said.

Lt Gen Mulcahy also welcomed the Armed Forces of the Philippines as the newest member of the Executive Committee, and congratulated the Kenyan Defence Forces, represented by Major General Joyce Sitienei, on assuming the role of Deputy Chair. He expressed appreciation for the outgoing Ex-Officio, Vice Admiral Antonette Wemyss-Gorman, Chief of Defence Staff of the Jamaican Defence



Vice Admiral Antonette Wemyss-Gorman, CHOD Jamaican Armed Forces inspecting the GOH in McKee



Forces, for her leadership and continued engagement with the network.

Acknowledging the contribution of former Ex-Officio member General Michael Claesson, Chief of Defence of the Swedish Armed Forces, Lt Gen Mulcahy recognised Sweden's early leadership role in the WPS CHODs Network and its continued commitment to advancing gender perspectives across global defence cooperation.

The Executive Committee discussed a number of key agenda items, including the establishment of a Senior Gender Advisors Group and the drafting of a joint international statement addressing the global pushback against the WPS agenda and highlighting violations of women's and girls' rights in conflict settings.

In the afternoon session, representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ms Jolene Quinn and Ms Kate Collins, delivered a presentation on the influence of the WPS agenda in shaping Ireland's foreign policy. This was followed by an open forum focused on increasing female participation within armed forces.

Concluding the meeting, Lt Gen Mulcahy thanked attendees for their participation and reaffirmed the Defence Forces' commitment to promoting gender equality within military institutions and operations.

"As we mark 25 years of the WPS agenda, collaboration between armed forces worldwide remains vital. I encourage members to continue sharing best practices and experiences, and to contribute to the development of the network's initiatives, including the WPS CHODs website and future joint statements," he said.

In addition, The Defence Forces marked the occasion of the 25th Anniversary on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security agenda with a high-level meeting held in Cathal Brugha Barracks

This Security Council Resolution and the Women, Peace and Security agenda recognise that during conflict situations women and girls and other vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by violence and conflict and that their security needs must be considered during all phases of operational planning. The key pillars associated with Women, Peace and Security are the Protection of vulnerable groups, including women and children, the Prevention of violence, particularly sexual violence in conflict situations, and the Promotion of Participation of women in all phases of conflict including peacebuilding.

This conference brought together speakers from across the spectrum of Irish society including the governmental, academic, Civil Society and military representatives.

The Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces also launched the Fourth Defence Forces Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security at the conference. This iteration of the Defence Forces Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security has been developed by continuing the work of the three previous Action Plans, developing the concepts laid out by its predecessors and it builds upon their success. The Action Plan gives the Defence Forces an opportunity to formalise the previously mentioned, commitments made and objects set for it relating to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

The Defence Forces are proud to stand among those committed to the principles of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. This event marks a commitment to continue building on the work we have done through our longstanding tradition of peacekeeping and our partnerships both domestically and with international organisations like the UN.



Major General Joyce Sitienei, Kenyan Defence Forces, at the conference in McKee Bks



Lt Gen Mulcahy, COS Irish Defence Forces, Col Jayne Lawlor, DF Inclusion Officer and Major General Joyce Sitienei



Briefing in Cathal Brugha Barracks marking 25 years of UNSCR 1325





# CHILD AID

BY SGT (RETD) MICK DUNDON



The full climbing team and the local parish priest

**CHILDAID.ie**  
Making a world fit for children

Childaid is run by a 5 man board of directors, including CS (Retd) Dermot Higgins and CS (Retd) Graham Tobin (AR), all of whom are volunteers. Childaid was founded by members of the Irish Defence Forces and friends who had first-hand experience of the dire conditions experienced by children in the slums of East Africa, especially Kenya & Rwanda. On their return to Ireland, these individuals collectively decided that they wanted to 'get off the fence' and do something constructive to help those who most need assistance. In order to bring focus to their efforts, and to ensure transparency and accountability, Child Aid Ltd. was registered on 8th February 2001 and was listed as a charity with the Revenue Commissioners in Ireland. Active members of the charity include Sgt (Retd) Gerry O'Brien, CQ (Retd) Nigel Cadogan and the author Sgt (Retd) Mick Dundon, with many other ex members of the DF participating in fundraising walks.

## Our Mission

Childaid's mission is the eradication of extreme poverty, disease and hunger for children in the developing world, while ensuring that each child has the essential means to a productive life.

## Goals and Objectives

The Goals & Objectives of Childaid are aligned strongly with the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the set of internationally agreed upon targets for reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women by 2015.

The Millennium Development Goals are:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Childaid believes strongly in all the MDG's. However, Childaid's Mission shows that our work is focused on Goals 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6.

By aligning our development initiatives with the MDG's we can ensure that we make best use of our donor's money in addressing the real needs of the developing world in a way consistent with international best practise.

If the world achieves the MDGs, more than 500 million people will be lifted out of poverty. A further 250 million will no longer suffer from hunger. 30 million children and two million mothers who might reasonably have been expected to die will be saved.

The world has made significant progress in achieving many of the Goals. Between 1990 and 2002 average overall incomes increased by approximately 21 percent. The number of people in extreme poverty declined by an estimated 130 million! Child mortality rates fell from 103 deaths per 1,000 live births a year to 88. Life expectancy rose from 63 years to nearly 65 years. An additional 8 percent of the developing world's people received access to water. And an additional 15 percent acquired access to improved sanitation services.



Retired members of the DFTC reaching Gilman's point, one of the three official points of the summit of Kilimanjaro





Pat and some of the children at the orphanage in Moshi

Sub-Saharan Africa is the epicentre of crisis, with continuing food insecurity, a rise of extreme poverty, stunningly high child and maternal mortality, and large numbers of people living in slums, and a widespread shortfall for most of the MDGs.

### OUR ETHOS AND VALUES

The following principles guide us in our efforts:

- The Millennium Development Goals form the foundation of our objectives.
- We seek to co-ordinate our activities with other reputable and experienced agencies to ensure efficient and effective delivery of aid.
- Development is a long-term process.
- Aid and charity is NOT the long-term answer for the Developing World. We believe in creating a long-term self-sufficiency in our donor countries.
- We must address the causes, as well as the symptoms, of extreme hunger, poverty and disease.

### HOW WE ARE FUNDED

To date, the majority of donations are raised by volunteer trekkers who take part in sponsored treks organised to Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania & Mt. Everest Base Camp in Nepal. Annually, Childaid organises 4 - 5 such treks.

In addition, many supporters of Childaid freely give their time and energy to organise and run local fundraising initiatives such as sponsored cycles, race nights, pub-quizzes and sponsored Sky-dives!

Through the Irish Government's overseas Development Fund programme, Childaid has received co-funding for a number of our projects.

### OUR PROJECTS



1

ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER



2

ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION



3

PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN



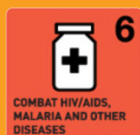
4

REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY



5

IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH



6

COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES



7

ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



8

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT



UN Millennium Development Goals

We focus our activities in the following areas:

- Building education & welfare infrastructure e.g. schools, clinics, orphanages
- Health & Welfare projects for children & mothers
- Support for children with disabilities
- Addressing the nutritional needs of undernourished children
- Skills training leading to economic independence
- Orphanage and hospice care

The majority of our activities are concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa, as this is the area most in need of assistance. In addition, we have supported some projects in Nepal, The Lebanon, Liberia, Uganda, Zambia and Ireland.

Much of the work of Childaid is based in and around an area of Nairobi known as the Mukuru slum.

### DONATIONS

If you would like to make a donation, either once off or on-going, towards the valuable work of Child Aid in Africa, you can use one of the following methods or alternatively please contact us at [childaid.ie@gmail.com](mailto:childaid.ie@gmail.com).

To Donate Online click our link to [idonate](#) charity page and follow the simple steps on their page:

### Donating By Cheque:

Cheques should be made payable to ChildAid.ie and posted to the address below:

Childaid,  
Plunkett Chambers,  
21-23 Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork, Ireland.

# idonate

### Donate By Direct Transfer Payment:

If you would like to make a direct transfer payment, our bank account details are as follows:

Bank of Ireland,  
South Mall,  
Cork Sort Code: 90 - 27 - 6  
Account Number: 75434102

Branch: Bank of Ireland, Bantry Co Cork  
Sort Code: 90 - 26 - 02  
Account Number: 77491100

### Donate By Standing Order:

Please use our Standing Order Mandate to set up your standing order.

No donation is too small. What might seem like very little can go a long way in the developing world. From as little as €4 a week can put a child through secondary school. You can rest assured that your donation will go directly to where it can be of use.

### UPCOMING ADVENTURES 2026

Kilimanjaro upcoming events March and September 2026

The Experience of a lifetime, on top of KILIMANJARO, BOOKINGS NOW OPEN

Mt Kenya January 2026

Mt Everest Base Camp April 2026

Carrauntoohil 2026

Glendalough 2026

Ingles Camino 2026

Ferrol to Santiago



An Orphanage and clinic partly funded by Child Aid locate in the town of Moshi



# PSS - PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS:

## CARING FOR OURSELVES, EACH OTHER, AND OUR MILITARY FAMILY

BY LT COL JOHN MARTIN, OIC PERSONNEL SUPPORT SERVICE

**I**t is hard to believe that we are fast approaching another Christmas! Signalling the end of another year and with a bit of luck allowing us all a bit of time to rest, and to reflect, and to spend some time with the people in our lives that mean the most to us. But just like everything else, it is better to be prepared and to approach the season with at least a modicum of caution to ensure that we get to the other side healthier and happier and maybe just a bit more tired! In the next few paragraphs, I would like to point to a few issues and to mention a few supports that are available to everyone over the course of the Christmas period.

I suppose the first and most obvious thing to mention is money and all the pressure that begins to pile on from as early as OCTOBER to start spending. Of course, there is nothing wrong with wanting to buy the best presents we can afford and to provide the

best entertainment and food that we can. But the constant bombardment of retail messaging can cause us problems, raising expectations in all of us to an unrealistic level, in children and also in adults. The best thing we can do is to establish a realistic budget for our spending as early as we can and to stick to it as best we can. Our constant concern should be to avoid borrowing beyond our abilities, or borrowing from the wrong people, or allowing ourselves to lose control of the credit card. You can access the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission at [ccpc.ie](http://ccpc.ie) for up-to-date advice on all things related to your finances, including budgeting, credit cards and loans, and up to date consumer advice. Your local PSS team is always available to help you find the best advice and information in your local area.

Another area for discussion is alcohol. Of course, Christmas is always associated with celebration and a few drinks! And why not? A glass of wine or two with



our food, or a few beers with our friends when we are out are all part of our culture and our traditions. We associate it with having a good time, with sharing stories and songs, with meeting up with people we haven't seen all year and is a positive and healthy part of our lives. The downside of course is when enjoyment turns to abuse. While this is true all year round, it is especially so at Christmas, when we can be convinced that the normal rules don't apply, and that we can behave differently than we normally would. The truth is that alcohol abuse can damage us in many ways, in our relationships, our self-respect, our financial situation and our most dear and precious relationships. It is good practice to prepare ourselves and to get the right information about alcohol in advance of the Christmas period. Setting limits in advance and deciding on a safe and sustainable pattern of behaviour will help us to get the most out of Christmas while protecting ourselves effectively. It's a good idea to visit [drinkaware.ie](http://drinkaware.ie) in advance. It is a super resource which allows us to get a clear picture of our drinking habits, to get super general information and to access tools for helping us to keep alcohol in the right place for Christmas.

Christmas is not always a happy time for everybody. Some of us will be struggling in the middle of all the fun and excitement and celebrations. The cause may be mental health problems, health issues, relationships, finances or different life events. Any of these may affect our ability to enjoy Christmas as much as we would like to. It is a great idea to check in with anyone of our friends or family who may be having a tough time. We should never underestimate the value of a simple phone call, or a short visit, in helping people feel better and stronger. The LENA by INSPIRE confidential counselling service is available to all our military people throughout the year and especially at the Christmas period. The service is also available to our spouses and partners, and to any of our children over the age of 18 who are living at home. The number to call is 1800 817 433. The LENA by INSPIRE Support Hub is a super free resource available at [lenasupporthub.com](http://lenasupporthub.com). You can access mental health

tools and information that can be of assistance in planning your Christmas. Your PSS team can provide you with direct support and will help you access other services that are suited to your needs in a safe and confidential manner.

This is the time of year when our thoughts will always turn to our Defence Forces colleagues who will be spending Christmas away from home. We think especially of the people in our battalion in UNIFIL in SOUTH LEBANON, or those of us deployed in so many other places throughout the world. Many of us will be engaged in security and other duties over Christmas and the Naval Service will continue to maintain a vital presence at sea. It is a great opportunity to show just what being in the military family is all about. I would ask everyone to take a few minutes to check in with your colleagues who are away from home and to make sure that their families are doing well. Any kind and considerate words, or simple gestures like helping with the shopping or putting up the tree, will always be appreciated and remembered.

Your Personnel Support Service (PSS) are trained military people and senior occupational social workers, available in all locations within the Defence Forces. Our services are available to all military people and to their families all year round. Please feel free to contact your local PSS team at any time, to get some support advice, information or guidance, or just to say hello. Your information will be treated in confidence, and you can access services safely and with peace of mind.

Whatever Christmas means to you and to your family, I hope that it is a time of joy and rest, of meaning and of fun. On behalf of all the team in the Personnel Support Service I would like to wish everyone happiness, success and peace in 2026. Finally, if anything that you have read in this article has caused upset, or if you would simply like more information on any of the points made, then please feel free to contact us at [pss@defenceforces.ie](mailto:pss@defenceforces.ie). And remember that the Samaritans are always available at 116 123. God bless us all and may he protect you, your comrades and your families, this Christmas and always.



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[hubsupport@inspirewellbeing.org](mailto:hubsupport@inspirewellbeing.org)





# ON PARADE

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES FROM MEMBERS CURRENTLY SERVING OVERSEAS. THEY WOULD ALL LIKE TO WISH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THEM IN THE NEW YEAR.



Comdt Brian Lane, Flight Sgt Denise English



POLCON OF-4, Lt Col Mark Lennon



Tpr Sweeney, Tpr Moore, Tpr English, Tpr Gould (Santa)



Wishing all our friends and families a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in 2026, from all members of 41 IRCON EUFOR, based in Bosnia & Herzegovina - Nollaig Shona Daoibh!!



Tpr Doherty, Tpr McCabe, Tpr Murphy, Tpr Moore



Coy Sgt Martin Tynan, Comdt Kevin Kenny



# ON PARADE



CQMS Glen Campbell, Force Protection PI members



Sgmn Spillane



Pte Redmond



Cpl Clive Harris, Pre Corey Jinks, Pte Eugene Burke, Cpl James Gavin



Capt Briain Minihane, Capt Maurice Harnett, Capt Ciara Carroll, Capt Ben Moran



From the Irish Contingent (IRCON) deployed in EUROCOPRS, FRANCE where we are serving in the Force Headquarters (FHQ) of the European Union's (EU) Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC), we would like to wish our extended family and friends at home in Ireland a peaceful and a joyful Christmas, Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année agus Nollaig Shona Daoibh



# FROM THE ARCHIVES

AN COSANTÓIR VOLUME 71, ISSUE 10, DECEMBER 2011

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## PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF: MAXWELL PHOTOGRAPHY, ARMN PADDY REILLY (105 SQN)  
& ARMN NEVILLE COUGHLAN

**O**n 11 November 2011, Michael D Higgins became the ninth President of Ireland following a ceremony in Dublin Castle. Almost 300 members of the Defence Forces took part in the Presidential Inauguration Ceremony.

The Defence Forces involvement will included a Motorcycle Escort of Honour, a Guard of Honour, a 21 Gun Salute, an Air Corp Fly Past and the Combined Bands of the Defence Forces. The Guard of Honour was drawn from the 5 Inf Bn, McKee Bks, the 21 Gun Salute was drawn from the 4 Fd Arty Reg, Columb Bks Mullingar and the Escort of Honour was drawn from the 2 Cav Sqn from Cathal Brugha Bks.

### The president-elect made the following declaration:

In the presence of Almighty God, I, Michael D. Higgins, do solemnly and sincerely promise and declare that I will maintain the Constitution of Ireland and uphold its laws, that I will fulfil my duties faithfully and conscientiously in accordance with the Constitution and the law, and that I will dedicate my abilities to the service and welfare of the people of Ireland. May God direct and sustain me.

Article 13.4 of the 1937 Constitution of Ireland provides that "The supreme command of the Defence Forces is hereby vested in the President."



Capt Emmett Harney (5 Inf Bn) invites the President to inspect the Guard of Honour



The GOHs Snr NCO Coy Sgt Ciaran Scully (5 Inf Bn) is ready for inspection



The President is flanked by his aide-de-camp Col Michael McMahon and Capt Emmett Harney







The President takes his salute as the GOH marches past.



The 21 Gun Salute performed by the 4 Fd Art Reg in Collins Bks, Dublin



The Combined Bands of the Defence Forces play in St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle



The President is flanked by former presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese



Our new President Michael D. Higgins, Mrs Sabina Higgins, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD and An Tanaiste Eamon Gilmore TD with members of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps in after the presidential inauguration in Dublin Castle



*Happy Christmas*  
and best wishes for 2026  
from An Cosantóir

