THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

AN COSANTÓIR

Óglaigh na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

SEP/OCT 2026



INFANTRY SKILLS

CAPABILITY IN ACTION

10K RACE RESULTS

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From the editor

This year's summer was unforgettable, with clear skies for weeks and no rain. However, this also resulted in wildfires across the country, resulting in the Air Corps utilising their aerial firefighting capabilities to conduct 23 aerial firefighting missions to six locations around Ireland in the month of July alone. Also, in this edition Capt Curran and Sgt Maher take us through No. 3 Ops Wing's capabilities and challenges faced by personnel during a busy summer. As capabilities and personnel change, the basics remain the same, and a four-week training programme was required for 28 Inf Bn's winning platoon on the Infantry Skills Competition, Lt Bonner breaks down the weeks of training leading to 28 Inf Bn's second victory in a row. With articles on interoperability, unit pride and cultural change, this edition really shows the variety across the organisation, from the Naval Service working at sea to the City Battle Runs on the streets with 7 Inf Bn. And with much more throughout the edition, we hope you enjoy this issue of An Cosantóir.

"Óglaigh na hÉireann has been the people, is the people and will be the people. Our green uniform does not make us less people. It is a cloak of our service, a curtailer of our weaknesses, an amplifier of our strengths." — General Richard Mulcahy









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AERIAL FIREFIGHTING

ARTICLE BY CAPT SEÁN CURRAN &
SGT KEVIN MAHER



Photo by @kevinshieldsphotography_ie on Instagram

No. 3 Operations Wing provides an aerial firefighting service through its AW139 platform, equipped with an underslung firefighting 'bambi' bucket. Every year, as the summer months begin to heat up, the unit intensifies its efforts to hone its firefighting capabilities. Preparation for this includes training for pilots to handle the aircraft during water pick-ups and drop offs, in varying wind conditions as well as handling potential emergency scenarios that could present themselves. The rear aircrew also train in how to direct the pilots for a successful pickup, as the bucket is otherwise unseen to them. They then direct the pilots for the drop, assessing the most effective angles and taking into consideration the aircraft trajectory and wind velocity. There is also a unified effort in the hangar to consistently provide serviceable aircraft for each request. The demand on the aircraft and its operators is high, between the physical load bearing, and long hours involved in this type of operation. The technical crew are always planning ahead to ensure inspections and maintenance action are carried out in a timely manner, so that aircraft are always available for the next call that comes in.

This year, over the month of July alone, No. 3 operations Wing conducted 23 aerial firefighting missions to six locations around Ireland, dropping in excess of half a million litres of water. These fires were scattered across the country and included Killarney National Park Kerry, Slievenamon Tipperary, Kilclooney Waterford, Glencree and Brittas Bay Wicklow, and Glencullen Dublin. Many of these were in difficult to reach locations or required the sheer volume of water delivered by the AW139. In some cases, they were so dynamic that a helicopter was the best way to respond. For example, at certain stages these fires burned underground through root systems and presented themselves some distance from the fire line in an area difficult to see from the ground. The aerial perspective and manoeuvrability make it much easier to extinguish these 'hotspots' as they appear, preventing their rapid spread.

Technical Details

The SEI Industries Bambi Bucket is one of the most widely used aerial firefighting buckets in the world. Designed to be suspended beneath a helicopter using the helicopter's cargo hook, the bambi bucket allows the aircraft to deliver 1,225L of water in a single drop. The bambi bucket used by the Irish Air Corps has a gross weight of 1,300kg and when empty, the bucket weighs 70Kg.

The bambi bucket can be folded away neatly into a carry bag making this system ideal for the AW139 to transport as cargo when not in use. The bucket is made of a reinforced polyurethane-coated fabric shell, supported by lightweight aluminium battens and suspended by high strength cables attached to an aluminium control head.

An electrically operated dump valve, powered by the helicopters electrical system, allows the pilot to release the water accurately over the target area. These buckets have been in service with the Irish Air Corps since 2006.

Flying with the Bambi Bucket

Flying with any underslung load has its tricks to it, but few jobs require as much dynamic thinking as with firefighting. Firstly, there are a number of checks to be carried out before lifting with a bucket attached. These ensure that the bucket will function as intended, and that it can be jettisoned if it becomes stuck, swings, or otherwise moves in a hazardous manner.

Once airborne, there does not appear to be much noticeable difference in handling. However, it can feel restrictive when operating within imposed limits, such as angle of bank and speed, designed to maintain a safety margin for manoeuvre.

The approach to water is made slowly, but maintaining some forward speed, and requires finesse to ensure the bucket sinks fully. Things start to get tricky here as hovering over water sends

ripples away in all directions, giving the impression that you are moving. Over the water there is often a lack of nearby references to judge your actual movement, so you rely on what the crewman tells you. The spray from the water mists the area in front of you and at this level of concentration even the action of engaging the window wipers can strain the brain. Finally, the bucket fills, and the crewman calls "cleared to lift". Now the aircraft feels significantly heavier and takes to the air reluctantly, sometimes with an audible strain. This transition to forward flight is among the most critical moments as you scan ahead for obstacles and ease the aircraft into a suitable line towards the fire. The crewman starts a patter on the final run in and directs the pilots onto the fire line. The aircraft is slowed to a minimum safe speed and down to 100 feet. While every effort is made to avoid flying through smoke, it obscures much of your vision and the smell of it fills the air. The heat from the fire permeates the cabin. "5,4,3,2,1, DUMP DUMP DUMP.... Water Away" comes the call from the crewman, and the aircraft is immediately lighter making it easy to wheel away from the fire, down the hill and back to the water to do it all again.

Skill involved in achieving an accurate drop

An accurate water drop is a result of teamwork, experience and clear communication. With the rear cabin doors open, two aircrew members work from the back of the helicopter, where they have an unobstructed view of both the fire and bambi bucket suspended below.

Because the bucket is positioned beneath the aircraft belly, the pilots cannot physically see it or observe exactly where the water lands, relying instead on guidance from the rear crew throughout each approach. The aircrew direct the pilots onto the target, taking into account wind, terrain, smoke and the location of firefighters on the ground before giving the command to release the load.

After each drop, they immediately report the accuracy of the water placement and advise any corrections needed for the next run. To maintain a high level of concentration during long operational days, the two pilots and aircrew rotate roles throughout the mission helping to reduce fatigue.

Planning

There is always in the back of your mind the urgency associated with a probable threat to life and property, but accurate planning before leaving the ground is key to success. This involves surveying the area using multiple GIS sources, to ascertain the most appropriate water sources, and calculate the approximate time for a circuit of water collection and drop-off. It is also important to assess the maximum load of the aircraft and the fuel endurance on board. Depending on the location and nature of the fire, it may be necessary to lean towards either a greater endurance, or a higher bucket capacity. The latter is often preferred as it has greater effect, but reducing it may also limit the number of refuels required, therefore offering more operational time. Our crew remain flexible in their planning and seek areas in which they can change the bucket capacity manually, as well as refuel where required. This involves coordination with other support elements of the Air Corps, as well as external agencies.

Working with crews on the ground

While the helicopter and bambi bucket are the most visible parts of an aerial firefighting operation, success depends just as much on the teamwork between the aircrew and the firefighters on the ground. Every water drop is the result of close coordination between the helicopter crew, firefighters on the ground and the incident command team.

On the ground, firefighters work tirelessly with beaters, backpack sprayers and hand tools to contain the fires. Water drops are often placed just ahead of or alongside these crews to reduce the fire edge. Firefighters may also dig temporary water sources or extend existing ones to facilitate the bambi bucket pickup.

Ground crews continuously report on fire behaviour, wind changes and emerging hotspots using handheld radios. On large incidents a member of the helicopter crew may be deployed to the ground to work alongside the incident coordinators.

Conclusion

The high intensity of operations required this year tested the capability of No.3 Operations Wing, but its esprit de corps shone through and allowed safe and efficient delivery of aerial firefighting services. Lessons learned include the importance of accurate planning and real-time communication. These will feed into equipment lists and crew briefings for the future. In the meantime, we remain ready and able to provide assistance at any fire the country may face.











ONE TEAM, ON

28TH INFANTRY BATTALION'S INFANTRY SKILLS SUCCESS

ARTICLE BY LT LUKE BONNER



In September this year, 28 Inf Bn took part in the annual Infantry Skills Competition. I, Lt Luke Bonner, was Pl Comdr and Sgt Philip Conlon was Pl Sgt. As Pl Comdr and Pl Sgt, we had the privilege of leading the platoon throughout the preparation and competition. The eventual success was the result of a collective effort from all ranks, particularly given the demanding circumstances in which the training was conducted.



Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mulcahy and OC 28 Inf Bn Lt Col O'Shea pictured with the winning team Pln Cmdr Lt Luke Bonner and Pln Sgt Philip Conlon

The first week of our four-week training programme was largely taken up with Tests of Elementary Training (TOETs), covering the platoon level weapons, alongside the necessary administration. This phase provided an opportunity to establish and confirm the required individual standards before moving onto the more complex tactical training. However, the week also presented one of the first significant challenges of the competition preparation.

With the fundamentals established, the platoon could then move towards the central focus of the competition: the platoon attack.

The second week began by breaking down the platoon attack itself. Before training commenced, myself, the Pl Sgt and the Section NCOs came together for a standardisation talk. This was a particularly important stage of the preparation. Throughout our careers, we had all trained in different installations and environments, meaning that individual approaches, experiences and interpretations of particular skills and drills could differ.

For the platoon to operate effectively, it was very important that we were working from the same understanding. Standardisation therefore became a priority. We discussed the various skills and drills required and ensured that we were all on the same page before passing that knowledge down to the soldiers. Establishing that common standard among myself, the Pl Sgt and the NCO's gave us a consistent foundation from which to train the platoon.

Following the standardisation, the platoon was broken down into its organic sections. Rather than attempting to teach the entire attack as one large serial, we concentrated on each individual component and trained the details. The sections worked through the sequence progressively, covering everything from advancing to contact and the reaction to enemy fire, through to winning the firefight and the subsequent drills required. The training also incorporated casualty and prisoner-of-war drills, ensuring that soldiers understood their responsibilities beyond simply getting to the fire line and locating the enemy. This approach proved extremely beneficial. By concentrating on individual components, soldiers gained a much clearer understanding of their specific role within the platoon attack. Just as importantly, they began to understand the responsibilities of those around them.

A rifleman knowing their own task is essential but understanding how that task contributes to the actions of the section and platoon provides a much greater level of cohesion. The week therefore established an important principle for the remainder of the competition preparation, every soldier needed to understand not only what they were doing, but why they were doing it and how their actions affected those around them.

Week 3 was where the training ramped up exponentially. Longer days. More platoon attacks. Sorer bodies. After each attack, we came together for an open forum discussion in regard to how we thought it went. All ranks were given the

NE STANDARD

same platform to give their opinion. It was very beneficial. After weapons cleaning, a kit inspection took place. This was purely to standardise the layout, but also to minimise any snags when we were in the Glen. If there was a surprise kit inspection on the day, we would have had no issues. As the week went on, we grew more confident. We then had officers and Sgt's come down to mock assess us. This was done for two reasons. For feedback and to become comfortable in a testing environment.

Week 4 was range week. We are very lucky in 28th Bn where we have such facilities in-house. Sgt Harley and Sgt Neeson helped us massively, running the range for us, so Sgt Conlon and I could solely focus on the performance of the platoon. The Pl Sgt and I studied the shoot programme, as it wasn't a traditional competition shoot, such as the Brigade or All Army's. Some details were purposely vague, so it was open to interpretation. Therefore, through a little bit of trial and error, we created our game plans where we were accurate, comfortable, and within the shoot parameters.

On Monday 31st we travelled to the Glen. Tuesday was the Platoon Attack Day, with two platoon attacks for each unit. Our first attack was in Colliga Bog. We were given our aerial photograph. Battle prep commenced. Section IC's and 2IC's kicked straight into it, giving arcs, placing the GPMG's and helping with camo. My own nerves started to kick in if I'm honest. With all the training we had done, it came down to just 2 attacks. We finished the attack. We thought it was very good. Still room for improvement, however. We got back to Coolmoney Camp for lunch and a reorg before the next attack. During this, we sat down as a group and broke down what we did well in the attack, and what we could improve on. OC 28th Bn and OC A Coy then came over to give a few words of encouragement. It definitely worked.

We went out for the second attack. Colliga Bog again. A tricky area, due to the fact that it doesn't necessarily have linear ditch lines, perpendicular to each other. However, it didn't affect us. All personnel did what was required of them, and more. It was possibly the best performance we had put in since training began. Comms were efficient, command and control was great, and the rate of fire was aggressive. This gave us the momentum to go through the attack with plenty of time to spare, without sacrifice to anything else.

Wednesday was the shoot day in Cemetery Hill. Several stands were present, displaying the new IMBAS, comms systems and the DMR. It was then our time to fire. All weapons were checked by the Ordnance Staff. We then made our way down to the firing points.

LFTT staff and coordinators clearly explained each shoot to the teams. As long as we all performed how we did on the range in Finner, we were in with a fighting chance.

Once every unit had finished, all teams were called into a hallow square. It was results time. "And the winner of the Platoon Attack Competition 2026 is... Team number 4, 28th Infantry Battalion." That pause might have been for only a few seconds, but it felt like a lifetime. What a feeling it was when we were called out! A month of training, long days, sore bodies, sacrifices, was all worth it. The unit has now won it two years on the bounce. Hopefully, we make it three next year!

I would like to thank Sgt Dan Harley, Sgt Gary Lafferty and Sgt Matthew Neeson for assisting us throughout the training, giving us advice and helping out on the range. Also, to the Logs Staff in the unit, they were so helpful. And lastly to the platoon themselves, with a special mention to Sgt Philip Conlon. They're a credit to themselves, a credit to the unit and a credit to the Defence Forces. The professionalism and dedication were immense; morale was always at a high and were an absolute pleasure to work with.







INTEROPERABILITY AT SEA

Preparing the Naval Service for Multinational Operations

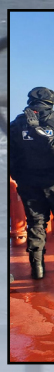


Naval Service PASSEX 2026

ARTICLE BY LT/CDR PAUL O'BRIEN
AND ENSIGN MARTIN MCHALE







Naval Service PASSEX 2026

The Naval Service is in a continuous cycle of training and operation with other International Navies. As a matter of routine, we conduct internal assessments of our own interoperability standards onboard all Naval Service ships. And, when available we conduct PASSEX's (Passing Exercises) with other Navies that are passing through our waters. Internally, the Naval Service unit FORST (Fleet Operational Readiness Standards & Training) are responsible for assessing the standards that we operate under with other Navies. Much of the doctrine and standards are linked to NATO and other international maritime standards. The current ITPP (Individually Tailored Partnership Programme) between Ireland and NATO aims to strengthen both the cooperation and the capability of the Naval Service to operate with NATO. Strategic Objective 2 of this programme states "The Irish Defence Forces are effective and extend their interoperability with those of NATO to include the widest achievable range of defence capabilities". The current ITPP includes milestones such as Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA), maritime search and rescue, tactical communications and the sharing of data with NATO.

FORST – SRET

FORST (Fleet Operational Readiness, Standards & Training) is a unit within Naval Operations Command which is tasked with the Generation, Maintenance and Evaluation of Operational Capability (GMEOC) within the Naval Service. FORST conduct SRET (Ship Readiness, Evaluation & Training) periods onboard Naval Service vessels annually. Over the course of 5 days, the aim is to evaluate an operational platform at sea, proving core naval and mariner skills with a view to creating a coherent unit capable of carrying out its assigned tasks effectively to the standards required in the operational environment.

The SRET process has been developed in line with the foundation of the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC), providing a structural framework for assessing the operational readiness and effectiveness of Naval Service platforms at sea. The process evaluates the ability of forces to generate and sustain the required operational capabilities across a range of maritime taskings and scenarios. It also provides a framework for assessing interoperability, ensuring that Naval Service units can operate effectively with national, multinational and joint partners through common procedures, communications and C2 arrangements. This approach provides confidence that Naval Platforms are not only individually capable but can


FORST SRET Damage Control Exercise


FORST SRET Casualty evacuation


FORST SRET Maritime Interdiction

integrate effectively as part of a wider maritime force to deliver coherent operational effects.

At sea, effective interoperability enables the Naval Service to communicate, share information and co-ordinate activities with partner nations, particularly during maritime security, surveillance, search and rescue (SAR), humanitarian assistance and peace support operations.

Interoperability also has the potential to provide access to capabilities that may not be organic to the Naval Service Fleet at present. Effective integration with partnerships, Maritime Patrol Aircraft and HELOs can significantly increase Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) and operational reach.

Mediterranean Deployments

Common standards and training processes facilitate the integration of Naval Service vessels into multinational exercises and deployments with minimal lead in time required, such as with the Mediterranean deployments (Operation Pontus, EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini) which took place between 2015 and 2023.

These deployments demonstrate an evolution from humanitarian SAR in Operation Pontus, through maritime security and counter-smuggling in Operation Sophia to counter-illicit arms trafficking in Operation Irini. The missions depended on interoperability with multinational naval forces through common communications, procedures, command & control, boarding practices and shared MSA.

Collectively, these deployments demonstrate that interoperability is fundamental to the Naval Services ability to contribute effectively to multinational maritime operations.

PASSEX

The ability to work with international partners at sea is a crucial skill required by all navies and one that is perishable without continual practice. L.É. SAMUEL BECKETT recently conducted a PASSEX with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessel TIDEFORCE and as an Officer Under Training (OUT) I was in a good position to observe and interact with several aspects of the manoeuvres scheduled for this exercise.

I had the pleasure of being able to attend a guided tour of the RFA TIDEFORCE the previous weekend and used my time to ask as many questions and see as much of the ship as I could. No two ships are the same nor are two crews the same and so there is always more to learn. Interoperability with foreign navies is a crucial step for the Irish Naval Service to expand its role from a constabulary naval service to a fully-fledged navy. Engaging with NATO and European partner navies with significant operational experience and Task Group operations, enables us to exercise these core skills upon the high seas.

Seamless standardised communication is key to executing the complex and high-risk manoeuvres involved during fleetwork, and is a key enabler of interoperability at sea for navies. If we cannot learn to talk with other navies, we cannot learn to work with them. Our recent PASSEX with RFA TIDEFORCE commenced with a communications check. L.É. SAMUEL BECKETTs communications branch transmitted coded signals, exercised morse code flashing skills in a real time scenario and one of the most crucial aspects of naval manoeuvres, receiving and transmitting fleetwork signals.

The Commanding Officer of RFA TIDEFORCE assumed the role of OCE (Officer Conducting Exercise) and as such promulgated a TABORD with exercise serials that included the granular details on manoeuvres, courses, speeds and formations in which the bridge team of P61 were to undertake in order to hone their ship handling skills. One such high risk manoeuvre is known as a RAS (Replenishment at Sea) approach. Each Officer of the Watch relies heavily on their bridge team to support them with the data and information to manoeuvre the ship safely alongside the replenishment vessel, at high speed and often battling pressure zones created in the water off the hull of the other vessel. Once “on station” replenishment operations can be simulated. Exercising with partner auxiliary ships and navies is a crucial part of interoperability for the Irish Navy, especially in the near future as the service gains new sensors and capabilities which will see further partnership to protect Irish and European waters from bad actors.

Continued Interoperability exercises open the door for future capability development such as transferring personnel, equipment, stores, and potentially fuel as the Naval Service evolves, developing new capabilities and improving our interoperability.


Naval Service PASSEX Manoeuvring EX 2026



MORE THAN JUST DRIVING

Transport in UNIFIL

ARTICLE BY CAPT JASON MANNIX, TRANSPORT OFFICER, 128 INF BN

When most people think of military transport, they might picture a convoy of trucks moving from A to B. In reality, Transport (Tpt) is far more than simply getting personnel and equipment from one location to another. Within an overseas deployment, Tpt is an essential operational capability that allows the Battalion to maintain freedom of movement, sustain its positions and respond to changing situations.

I am currently serving as the Transport Officer with the 128th Infantry Battalion on deployment with UNIFIL.

I joined the Defence Forces as a recruit with the 133 Recruit Pln in 2014, serving initially with 1 Cn Cois, 12 Inf Bn and 1 BAR. I subsequently deployed with the 111th Inf Bn to UNIFIL. Following my return, I successfully applied for the Cadetship in September 2018 and was commissioned as an officer in 2020 and posted to1 Bde Transport Company in Cork.

Having completed a degree in Business, I went on to serve briefly in PMS before taking up appointments as Platoon Commander with the 24th PNCO CSE and later as Adjutant with 1 Bde Ord Gp. Each appointment provided different experiences and responsibilities, but my time in Tpt gave me an appreciation of the specialist skills and capabilities that exist within military transport.

Transport on Overseas Service

On overseas service, Tpt plays a vital role in supporting the Bn's









operational output. The demands placed on the section are varied, and the team must be prepared to respond at short notice.

One of our key capabilities is G40, The Man 8x8 Recovery vehicle (The Beast) is maintained at 30 minutes' Notice to Move (NTM). Its primary role is the recovery of Bn vehicles, ensuring that vehicle breakdowns or incidents do not unnecessarily affect operational activity.

We also maintain G25 which is our SCANIA 6x6 truck with a water pod is another 10-minute NTM capability. G25 provides a fire prevention and response capability, using a water pod to support the Engineers in firefighting operations. This is an excellent example of the versatility required of military transport personnel. The same organisation that provides routine logistical support to the Bn can be required to provide an immediate operational response when circumstances change.

The DROPs Capability

Behind the day-to-day operation is a team of highly skilled drivers, supervised by Sgt Ronnie O'Connor. Our drivers are specialists in the operation of 8x8 DROPs trucks, a capability that is particularly important to sustain the Bn positions.

These vehicles conduct essential tasks including resupply of the outposts and ration resupply runs for the Bn. While these tasks may appear routine, they are fundamental to the continued operation of personnel deployed throughout the Bn's area of responsibility.

Operating heavy military vehicles in an overseas environment also requires a high degree of professionalism. Drivers must understand their vehicles, their equipment and the environment in which they operate. They are not simply vehicle operators; they are an important part of the Bn's logistical and operational capability.

Keeping the Fleet Operational

Our fitter team, under the supervision of Sgt Darragh Stafford, works to ensure that the Bn's vehicles remain serviceable and available for tasking. Their role is often conducted behind the scenes, but it is fundamental to the success of every movement and task undertaken by the Bn.

Sgt Stafford is also Advance Recovery qualified and operates the MAN 8x8 Recovery vehicle, commonly known within the team as "The Beast." Its capabilities have been put to good use during this deployment, including the recovery of MOWAGs and the lifting and movement of containers in support of the ongoing withdrawal process of IRISHPOLBATT.

These tasks demonstrate the breadth of capability contained within a relatively small Tpt team. From vehicle recovery and heavy lifting to fire response and routine resupply, there is rarely a typical day.

A Career in Transport

One of the things that continues to stand out to me about Tpt is the variety of opportunities it offers. It combines driving, vehicle maintenance, logistics, leadership and specialist qualifications, while also providing personnel with the opportunity to work in challenging environments both at home and overseas.

For anyone considering a career in the Defence Forces, Tpt offers an opportunity to develop skills that are both professionally rewarding and operationally important. Personnel can specialise in areas such as heavy vehicle driving, vehicle maintenance, recovery and logistics while also developing the leadership and teamwork skills expected throughout the Defence Forces.



THE FIRST RESERVE DEFENCE FORCES SENIOR NCO LOGISTICS COURSE

ARTICLE BY SGT NICHOLA KIERNAN, CAVALRY SCHOOL, DFTC



Q1 2026 saw the launch of the first Reserve Defence Force (RDF) Senior NCO Logistics Course. Prior to 2005 the FCA (along with the Slua Muirí) was the part-time arm of the Defence Forces. When these organisations disbanded in 2005, they were replaced with the RDF, a rebrand that was to see the force professionalise and modernise to better complement our PDF colleagues.

As the RDF found its feet a number of logistical courses were run, namely the RDF Junior NCO Logistics/Admin Course under a syllabus designed to provide the foundations of logistical knowledge to RDF NCOs working in stores. Paradoxically however, no Senior Logistic Course followed, and as the RDF had inherited FCA doctrine and regulation there was no requirement to have completed any course to be considered for promotion to Quartermaster within the Reserve.

The DF reorg of 2012 greatly cut back the number of Senior NCO appointments within the Reserve nationally, creating a surplus of Quartermasters serving without appointment in many geographic areas. With little chance of promotion and no regulatory requirement for course completion, the RDF Junior Logistics/Admin Course was run just once post-reorg, in 2013.

Roll forward to 2022 and to rehash General Bradley and his famous quote 'amateurs talk strategy, professionals talk logistics', it was becoming clear that to ensure the Reserve could "seamlessly train, operate and deploy" with the PDF as mandated, continue to provide its own logistical support when training independently, and to ensure compliance with the 2021 DF Professional Military Education (PME) strategy, that PME opportunities in the area of logistics needed to be afforded to Reserve members.

The Working Group

With the support of the Office of Reserve Affairs (ORA) a working group (WG) was stood up by D COS (Ops) in 2022. The focus of this WG was to produce a draft syllabus for an RDF Senior NCO Logistics Course, and to make recommendations to J4 & J7 for a course to qualify NCOs for promotion to the rank of CQMS and Naval Service equivalent.

The Working Group was led by Comdt (AR) Niall Costello (J4) and consisted of subject matter expert (SME) officers and NCOs working in the logistics sphere. The WG balanced comprehensive content with the need to ensure a reservist could complete the course without using an unreasonable amount of leave from their full-time employment or studies, while covering both DF policy and day-to-day content pertinent to the reservist's role as CQMS in a reserve context.

The WG examined and identified the competencies, skills and knowledge required to fulfil the role and provided content areas, delivery and assessment methods to be utilised to achieve the course objectives, all the while ensuring the alignment of the learning outcomes with PDF equivalent courses.

The result was a robust syllabus consisting of content extracted from the PDF Basic Logistician Course, and both PDF Junior and Senior Logs Courses, that affords students the same skill accreditation as their PDF counterparts.

The Course - Block 1

The course was conducted between March and September and consisted of three blocks of Full-Time Training (FTT). Initially, twenty-three students presented to the Military Administration School (MAS) for an intense 14-day instruction period on logistics administration and protocol. The students were drawn from all brigades with the usual pre-course qualifying criteria of manual handling, medical, fitness test and personal weapons test as mandatory requirements to be accepted on the course.

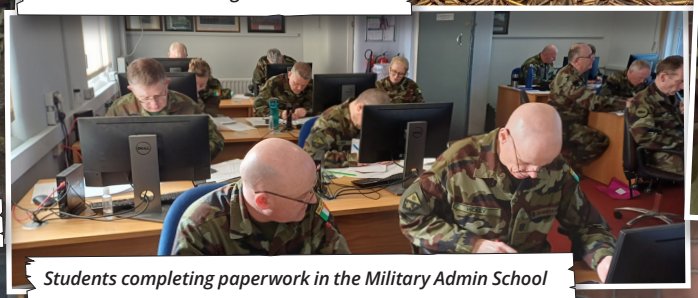
The instructors, consisting of both RDF and PDF staff, led by BQ McDonald (Maxi), were familiar faces to many. They passed on their knowledge of ration indenting, preparing range documents, the movement of stores and hazardous materials and various logistical and financial regulatory requirements. An intense general test confirmed our newly acquired knowledge on these topics.



Students practicing fire drills



Students at brass sorting line in Ordnance



Students completing paperwork in the Military Admin School



Students trying on IMBAS

BQ Billy Bohane in the Military College offered the course an opportunity to view the new Integrated Modular Body Armour Systems (IMBAS), giving us an appreciation of the impending logistical challenges around storing and issuing this new equipment.

However, it was the accountancy of ammunition, clothing forms and Boards of Survey protocols that were the primary focus of this block, followed by exams on the correct formatting of the necessary paperwork of these processes.

This was followed by Fire Warden and Energy Management modules conducted by the Engineering School with more exams ensuing, this time qualifying students as fire wardens and energy managers.

The block concluded with informative and thought-provoking seminars on Leadership, Culture and Governance delivered by BSM David O'Reilly, ending with one more exam on the Defence Forces Leadership Doctrine.

Block 2

Block two required presenting to McKee Barracks in June for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) training. CQMS Noel Murphy welcomed the students to the School of Catering and he and his team of instructors provided the students with unique insights into food preparation and food safety. To the fore of our training was the Quartermaster's role in ensuring troops, both in barracks and on the ground, were sustained in a safe and compliant manner to ensure they remained fit to continue with the Mission.

By the end of the three-day block twenty-two students went away with a level 2 qualification in HACCP and a glossy certificate to show.

Block 3

It was back to the Curragh in September for the final block of FTT, this time to the Ordnance School for training in ammunition handling. Sgt Luke Farrell took students through the safe handling of ammunition, the correct procedures for storing and transporting ammunition and provided a detailed and guided tour of the Ordnance Depot. The students then completed their final exam which required a 70% pass rate to secure an ammunition handling and safety skill. Capt Eoghan Dunne and the Ordnance School staff provided an impressive demonstration on detonators and explosive charges.

Conclusion and Acknowledgments

The course concluded on 11 September with twenty-two students completing and passing all modules. These students received the following skills upon completion of the course:

1. RDF Senior NCO Logistician.
2. Unit Fire Warden.
3. Energy Warden.
4. Energy Manager.
5. Unit Operational Safety Representative.
6. Ammunition Handler.
7. Food Safety.
8. Logistics Food Management.

Throughout the training year, a number of students requested permission to shadow their unit's CQMS outside of programme time (OPT) when available. This OPT afforded students the opportunity to develop their newly acquired skills in a practical manner, gaining experience with the Management Information System (MIF) and the Combat Service Support (CSS) functions of Manning, Arming, Fuelling, Fixing and Moving. The students of the 1st RDF Senior NCO Logistics Course would like to thank their OCs and Quartermasters for facilitating and providing them with these mentoring opportunities.

Of course, the course would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the instructors and staff of the Military Administration School, Engineering School, Catering School, Ordnance School and the Course OIC, Capt (AR) Neil Richardson. We hope you enjoyed delivering the course as much as we did participate. Our final thanks are to the dedicated logistics staff within the DFTC and McKee Barracks who provided the support required to deliver the course. With our newly acquired logistical eyes we appreciate the enormous work undertaken daily to support 'the Mission'.

THE DUBLIN BATTALION











81mm Det from the combined Sp Wpns shoot in Aug 26

12 MONTHS IN REVIEW

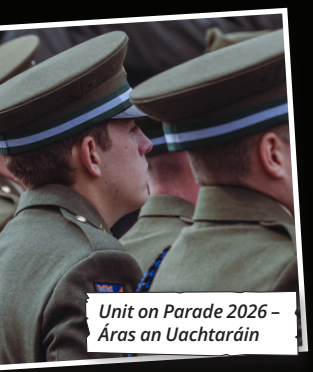
"The strength of the team is each individual member; the strength of each member is the team" **- Phil Jackson**

ARTICLE BY COMDT RICHIE BARBER
AND CAPT HARRY MANSFIELD

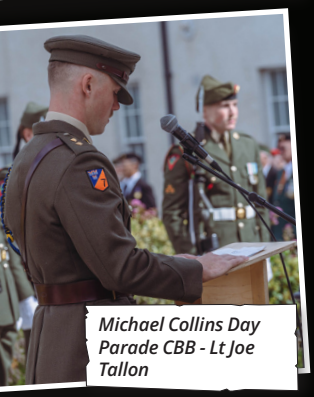
CONSULTATION AND PLANNING

In September 2025, OC 7 Inf Bn hosted the first unit "Pulse Check" in the Brew A coffee shop. This event was the first of a series of quarterly open floor meetings, attended by all ranks, in which personnel could have their voice heard on the direction of the unit. This platform provided a forum where different views and ideas could be shared in a setting that eliminated the distance between the operational and tactical level. The goal was to create direct communication between colleagues not working side-by-side daily, and the key to its success was the open mindedness with which both commanders and subordinates embraced the concept.

Unit CO, Lt Col Alan Courtney, outlined his vision for an active and high achieving unit, junior soldiers expressed their desire to develop their infantry skills, important topics like mental health were discussed and CQMS Grant even found the courage to admit "I don't know what a tracker mortgage is!" While these discussions often included plenty of humour, they proved highly valuable to the unit over the next year. Comdt Richie Barber chaired these Pulse checks in a professional manner, managing expectations and ensuring military discipline and the Values of Respect and Moral Courage were encouraged in equal measure.



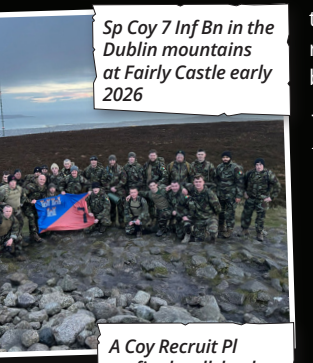
Unit on Parade 2026 – Áras an Uachtaráin



Michael Collins Day Parade CBB - Lt Joe Tallon



Members of 7 Inf Bn at Pearse's school on the first historical battle run



Sp Coy 7 Inf Bn in the Dublin mountains at Fairly Castle early 2026



A Coy Recruit Pl on final walk back through Dublin mountains before receiving their berets

Running in parallel was the development of a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis of unit capability, orchestrated by unit DCO, Comdt Ed McAuley, and actioned by the sub-unit commanders and the dedicated unit S7 staff. It was decided to prioritise the re-invigoration of the Sp Coy capabilities of Anti-Armour, Reconnaissance, HMG and 81mm Mortar, followed by Infantry Light Support Weapons, alongside a robust and varied weekly training programme.

CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

With boundaries and LOE defined, the unit got down to business; in collaboration with 27 Inf Bn the unit ran a Basic Infantry Recce course qualifying six soldiers, one NCO and one Officer in this skill. Next more than a dozen students completed a Javelin YE Cse, with one NCO and two Officers going on to complete the Instructor Cse in the IWW, and the unit attested more than 50 new Recruits into the organisation before the Christmas dinner! CQMS Charters deserves a special mention, not only for his contribution to unit morale that evening, but on every exercise, competition and event hosted by the unit throughout the year. In addition, each member received a Christmas card from the Battalion Commander as well as the families of personnel serving overseas to thank them for their hard work and make them realise they are all part of the wider Dublin Battalion family.

Induction training continued from January to June providing some of the four recently commissioned Lieutenants and four recently promoted Sgts their first opportunity to command a platoon, ably supported by a cast of new (and not so new...) Corporals. The unit ran a second Javelin YE course concurrently to qualify another dozen personnel and then made the most of a dry summer to light up the GOI (...figuratively of course if DFTC TIS are reading) with HMGs and 81mm Mortars fired by over 30 newly qualified students.

The contribution of personnel from across the organisation must be acknowledged and the willingness of units to share resources and collaborate to develop capability is a core strength of the Defence Forces. In that sphere 7 Inf Bn contributed to, and benefited from, courses and exercises in SERE, MOUT, LFTT, SDR, CBRN, Administration, Logistics, Transport...the list goes on. The unit saw more than 50 personnel prepare for, and complete career courses since this time last year.

TROOP PREPARATION

A key element from the unit "Pulse Checks" was the desire of soldiers to participate in the military training they joined the Infantry for, and to have pride in the job they do. Building soldiers' confidence and developing pride in 7 Inf Bn was the key tenet connecting all activities throughout the year.

Unit battle runs through the city, combined with visits to culturally and historically significant sites such as the Pearse Museum, Glasnevin Cemetery and the GPO, were a proving ground for the 30km Norwegian Foot March which 7 Inf Bn was the first Irish unit to complete. This challenge proved to be one of the most galvanising events personnel ever experienced with 81 people achieving the Norwegian Flash and the unit attaining the Unit Citation as the first DF unit to complete this challenge. The 16-week journey took place alongside courses, TRRs, duties, exercises, shooting and recce competitions and demonstrated willingness to do training runs outside working hours voluntarily to get the citation.

The unit ran an intra-battalion falling plates competition and competed in every military skill and sporting competition in the Defence Forces this year. We had successes with our PDF and RDF Novice Rifle teams in the DF Small Arms Competitions, with Capt Doran winning the All Army Marksman, as well as reaching the final of the Cunningham Cup, winning the 2 Bde Medical Services Cup, 2nd in the DF Recce competition and 3rd in the Infantry Platoon Attack competition.

However, it wasn't all about the mud, sweat and blood. The Dublin Battalion embraced and investigated its roots through a speaker series including Brent Pope, Pat Falvey and Emmet Kirwan who spoke about the importance of accents and identity, further instilling the Dublin Battalion with pride in where they are from and what they represent. Personnel also took part in a local initiative with the City of Dublin FET College in Rathmines, with over 20 achieving QQI Level 5 Awards in Communications and Personal and Professional Development over the last 2 years. The unit also conducted fundraisers around unit events with Damien Dempsey and Dan McCabe playing in the mess and raffles and auctions to raise funds for Archie's Army, ONE, Cancer charities, Croi and the Curragh Lourdes Fund. In addition, the unit hosted a Civilian Staff Appreciation Morning to show appreciation to the civilians working in the barracks and most recently held a Culture Fair that celebrated the diversity of backgrounds now represented within Cathal Brugha Barracks and to ensure personnel feel included and respected.

OUTPUT

All of this training and preparation had a clear purpose: delivering on operational and ceremonial taskings to the state at the highest standard. Whether it was the Inauguration of An tUachtarán Catherine Connolly or securing Druids Glen as part of OP FIANNA and support to Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU, 7 Inf Bn could have confidence that it was deploying personnel who are both competent and confident in their capabilities and responsibilities.



7 Inf Bn on return to CBB after a 14km night run to the 1916 site locations in Dublin City



Successful 7 Inf Bn GAA Team summer 2026

THE ENGINEER CORPS CONCENTRATION



2 PI constructing the launching nose for the Medium Girder Bridge (MGB)



Minewolf MW240 in operation during BAC task

Pte Malanga operates the MineWolf from the ICP

BY CAPT PJ DALTON AND COMDT RONAN KAVANAGH

Every year, the Corps of Engineers gathers its units for the Corps Concentration, an exercise designed to develop and maintain the full range of combat support roles the Corps provides to the Army. In early June, personnel from three Engineer Groups deployed to the Glen of Imaal to form a Close Support Engineer Company of approximately 120 personnel. Following collective training, the company conducted a 96-hour FTX, testing these skills within a conventional combined-arms scenario.

As a combat support arm, sappers rarely work alone. We deploy in support of manoeuvre units, depend on other Corps to move heavy equipment and must pass information quickly up and down the chain of command. An engineer unit is only useful if it arrives where it is needed, with the right equipment, and integrates into the commander's plan. The Corps Concentration provides an opportunity to test whether units that normally train separately can operate as one, and to identify friction points in training rather than on operations.

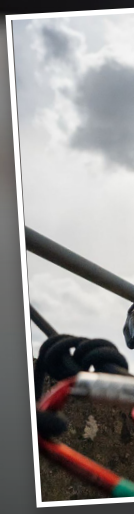
Building the Company

The exercise scenario, developed by the School of Military Engineering (SME) EXCON staff, involved engineer support to a combined-arms brigade-level advance to contact to clear an enemy battalion from the exercise area. 1 Bde Engr Gp acted as lead unit, staffing all Company HQ appointments and providing 1 Platoon. 2 Bde Engr Gp provided 2 Platoon, while DFTC Engr Gp provided Support Platoon. Each group brings its own equipment and established ways of working. Placing them under a single HQ provided an opportunity to improve standardisation and collective effectiveness.

Combat engineering is equipment intensive. The exercise therefore depended on moving personnel, plant and stores, much of it beyond the Corps' own transport resources. Trackway, CBRN equipment and bridging stores were moved with assistance from the Transport Corps, demonstrating the wider Defence Forces support required to generate an engineering effect. The exercise also saw the deployment of the new Software Defined Radio (SDR) suite and a SitaWare-enabled HQ. With platoons widely dispersed across separate task sites, reliable communications and a common operating picture were essential. Squadnet, Synaps and SitaWare Edge tablets enabled information to be shared rapidly by voice and data while maintaining situational awareness.

Bridging the Slaney

The company's main effort fell to 2 Platoon with the construction of a Medium Girder Bridge (MGB) across the River Slaney. Seskin Bridge was considered destroyed for exercise purposes, requiring an alternative crossing. The task demanded reconnaissance, design calculations and the coordinated movement of stores, personnel and machinery. Poor ground conditions following heavy rain and a complex site required adaptation to standard build



sequences and the deployment of trackway. Site preparation and bridge construction took 32 hours, resulting in an MLC 100(W)/70(T) crossing. The bridge opened a route in time for brigade vehicles to move to their Form Up Points. ensuring brigade mobility and tempo was maintained. An additional MGB kit, procured recently, included a walkway attachment, allowing dismounted troops to cross safely alongside vehicles and improving support to mixed mounted and dismounted forces.

Battlefield Area Clearance

1 Platoon's main task was a large Battlefield Area Clearance (BAC) operation with a real-world purpose: clearing the Anti-Armour Range to allow construction of new AFV mobility corridors for live firing. The 5.8-hectare area was cleared using a layered sequence of UAS survey and mapping, remote mechanical clearance with GCS-100 and MW240 UGVs, followed by physical search using magnetometers, metal detectors and ground penetrating radar. Contacts were marked for further investigation by the Engineer Specialist Search and Clearance Officer (ESSCO), with EOD available if required.

The clearance was completed in three days with no explosive threats found. The operation demonstrated the specialist skills that engineer platoons bring to the brigade, with remote plant, specialist detection equipment, trained searchers and EOD each contributing to a single clearance process.

The Support Platoon

DFTC's Support Platoon provided a broad range of capabilities, including two permanent, dug in, HMG firing points, the Engineer Company HQ using the new CBRN COLPRO system, a new timber deck for the Bailey Bridge at Coolmoney and a water point for brigade use. The final serial prior to ENDEX was the establishment of a CBRN Decontamination Site to decontaminate vehicles and personnel withdrawing following a CBRN incident. This integrated students from the 6 Inf Bn Coy Level CBRN Defence Specialist Course and the CBRN Survive to Function course, delivered by the SME for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The inclusion of international civilian medical professionals and weapons experts added complexity and realism, demonstrating that interoperability extends beyond military organisations and requires different organisations to understand their respective roles.

New Capability: Collective Protection

A highlight of the exercise was the deployment of the new CBRN Collective Protection (COLPRO) tentage. Four sets have recently been procured, each capable of supporting a Battalion or Brigade HQ in a CBRN environment. The systems use airtight tents, filtration, conditioning and positive pressure to prevent contaminated air entering and allow headquarters to continue operating. During the training week, instructors from I4S delivered introductory training to the company. The deployment of COLPRO, alongside training for Infantry Battalions with CBRN responsibility, demonstrates that acquiring new equipment is only the first step in developing capability; continued training and integration are required to make it operationally effective.

Conclusion

This year's concentration demonstrated what the army can achieve when its units train as one. The exercise focused on supporting the combined-arms brigade but also depended on Transport, CIS, Medical and Infantry personnel. Every task produced a tangible result: a cleared range, a usable crossing, improved training facilities and enhanced CBRN capability. More importantly, the exercise reinforced that interoperability is not a box to be ticked. It is developed through common procedures, shared understanding and repeated practice. The concentration provides an opportunity to identify friction between units and capabilities in training rather than on operations. Its value therefore extends beyond the individual tasks completed: it helps ensure that when engineers are called upon to support the wider Defence Forces, they can operate not as separate groups, but as one coherent capability.



Sgt Murphy prepares for a bridge recce



Capt Ryan conducting bridge recce from the water



Coy HQ inside CBRN COLPRO



HOBO's last operational mission clearing UNP 27 UNDOF

Clearing UNP 85, UNDOF

HOBO Battery Change

FIGHTING TODAY'S UNMANNED GROUND SYSTEM-ENABLED BATTLE

ARTICLE BY A. BEATTY AND E. O'BRIEN

A previous article argued the infantry section has already changed – that the military establishment's mindset and processes must follow. That was about aerial drones. This is the next problem, for most military capabilities. Unmanned Ground System (UGS) or ground drones now do the dangerous, heavy, exposed work that used to fall to soldiers: carrying the load, holding the line, crossing the gap and CASEVAC. They are common in Ukraine, at platoon and company level. This article is for everyone who will employ, move, maintain, buy or build UGS – and for the leaders who decide on their widespread adoption.

From EOD to the Front Line

Movement is now timed exposure: cross open ground and a clock starts; you can be hit within seconds of being seen. The grey zone – fifteen to thirty kilometres either side of the front – is no longer safe for massing or for moving materiel. Aerial drones cause most casualties. So the dangerous enabling tasks (reconnaissance, fire support, supply and recovery) must now be undertaken by UGS wherever possible.

UGS are often treated as science fiction. They're not. Ground robots have served since at least the 1940s, most recently in EOD – robots like WHEELBARROW, HOBO, REACHER and RIDDLER proved their worth decades ago. What changed in Ukraine is not the invention of UGS but that they have moved beyond specialist tasks into routine combat at platoon and company level. This is old technology evolving to meet new demands. Ireland has been doing this longer than most.

UGS are vehicles – costing upwards of €20,000 and they need motor technician fitters. They do the jobs that used to expose soldiers to fire.

Last-mile resupply. Logistics in the grey zone is lethal. UGS run ammunition, water and stores along routes the enemy can watch and strike – no medic is needed if it is hit. Payloads run from tens to hundreds of kilograms. Trucks take UGS to a release point; past that point the risk posed to human drivers is unacceptable. The UGS conducts the 'last-mile' (leg) resupply. On the worst axes in Ukraine, UGS now do 80–90% of resupply and CASEVAC.

CASEVAC. A stretcher party is desperately exposed to drones correcting fire and quickly becomes more casualties – the casualty draws a recovery team, the team draws more fire. Many veterans interviewed by the authors were wounded by mortar and FPV drones while stretcher-bearing. A UGS breaks that cycle as a less interesting target.

Support by fire. Armed UGS suppress, breach, ambush and have held key terrain in Ukraine. Why is a soldier still carrying a HMG, its tripod and ammunition forward by hand, when UGS can? UGS do not replace soldiers, though – they still need humans to reload and recover them and fitters to keep them running.

Human-Machine Teaming. Military engineering is the clearest proof that manned-unmanned teaming already works. It's not a future aspiration but established practice. Engineers already use UGS for the high-risk shaping tasks that expose soldiers: EOD, obstacle clearance, bridging and breaching. For a small force the prize is larger still. Remote breaching, route clearance and gap-crossing are capability we could otherwise never afford, because it usually comes bolted to heavy amour we'll never buy. Why man-handle a Bailey Bridge forward under observation when a UGS can do the dangerous part? Other UGS carry EW and air-defence suites, but they're costly and draw enemy UAS. The engineering model is the cheaper, more resilient path.

One-way attack (OWA) UGS. These are a distinct, cheap strike category. The idea is old: the German GOLIATH and French equivalents of the Second World War. It was twisted by ISIS' suicide VBIEDs. It has re-emerged to support assaults and hit outposts. UGS are lighter, cheaper, need no return trip and replace human assault.

UGS-control is difficult – harder on the ground than in the air. Radio links jam and can be intercepted. Fibre-optic control works for one-way UAS, but not for a ground platform that must cross terrain and return. You can't spool and recover kilometres of cable.

What junior and mid-ranking officers and NCOs need to change

UGS are generally not for infantry platoons to operate, but theirs to integrate. When drones arrive with a resupply: secure it, unload fast and send it back – do not bunch; a cluster on the forward line invites an FPV. Every NCO needs to know what a UGS can carry, where it can go and how to read ground for it: gradient, debris, soft soil, where it will tip or bog. Route assessment is now a section and platoon skill. It belongs in the tactical estimate. CIS should be working this problem now. To address the widespread adoption of UGS, motor technician fitter training must adapt to meet the needs of this UGS-enabled force.

What senior officers need to act on

Establishments must be reviewed, such as UGS held at company or equivalent level. The section has evolved; so has the company – support, transport and CASEVAC must follow.

Now two harder points. In warfighting, UGS lifespan lies between armoured vehicles and UAS – particularly where humans are dug-in and robotics do all the exposed resupply. Evolution-through-feedback quickens obsolescence. That lifespan does not fit a capital-equipment procurement cycle. This raises a sharper question – why only buy them? Ireland has the expertise to build simple UGS in-house: a prize for recruitment, retention, domestic industry, even the non-lethal aid we offer abroad.

UGS have been operating in military engineering roles for decades. Robot Workshops, the Ordnance Corps' centre of expertise in this area, can be utilised to support the widespread adoption within a UGS-enabled force. Arming UGS is the logical next step once the unarmed case is won.

Either way, PME must evolve – staff courses, and combat, CS and CSS training alike. It must reckon with the psychological dimension of human-machine combat: when the machine takes the risk, it changes how soldiers fight, hesitate and bond.

Conclusion

Ground drones do not replace infantry. They take on the most dangerous movement, the heaviest loads and the jobs that get soldiers killed – and they let a small force punch above its weight. For the private, that means working around a UGS without becoming a target. For the commander and 2I/C, planning with them as a standard enabler. For the senior officer, accepting that the company has already changed – and that we have a history and the workshops to lead this rather than follow. UGS technology is not a revolution but an evolution and the battlefield is not waiting.



ESSCO, Dok-ing and HMEE



Moving supplies is labour intensive and concentrates humans to exposure



Manual bridging is exceptionally challenging and vulnerable



Minewolf in Action



Light mobility and optionally crewed vehicles save lives

47TH DF AN COSANTÓIR 10K RUN RESULTS













MALE RESULTS

MALE RACE	
1st Place	Cpl Gavin Sweeney (31.28)
2nd Place	Comdt Garry Mulligan (33.27)
3rd Place	Sgt Stephen Butler (33.28)
O/35	
1st Place	Cpl Adam Courtney (35.06)
2nd Place	Pte Terence Garland (36.35)
3rd Place	Cpl Ryan O'Driscoll (36.26)
O/40	
1st Place	Sgt Michael Colohan (35.06)
2nd Place	CS Edward Casey (36.43)
3rd Place	Comdt Paul Conlon (37.28)
O/45	
1st Place	Pte Gary Walsh (35.32)
2nd Place	SCPO Cian McParland (37.04)
O/50	
1st Place	Pte Paul Buckley (37.53)
2nd Place	Col David Browne (38.18)
O/55	
1st Place	Sgt Decky Madden (40.10)
O/60	
1st Place	PO Patrick Murphy (53.40)
VETERAN	
1st Place	John Boylan (34.02)
GUEST	
1st Place	Garda Colm Turner (31.54)

FEMALE RESULTS

FEMALE RACE	
1st Place	Pte Nicole Moorehouse (36.53)
2nd Place	Tpr Christina Mandzyuk (41.49)
3rd Place	Cpl Shannon Thomas (42.56)
O/35	
1st Place	Pte Stacey Davitt (46.43)
2nd Place	Sgt Shelley Kehoe (46.45)
O/40	
1st Place	Pte Tina McKeever (46.56)
2nd Place	Comdt Claire Mortimer (47.53)
O/45	
1st Place	CQ Jackie Wykes (44.35)
VETERAN	
1st Place	Tara Kennedy (40.39)
GUEST	
1st Place	Garda Leanne Butler (39.57)

OTHER CATEGORIES (TEAM RESULTS)

MEN'S TEAM	
1st Place	27 Inf Bn
2nd Place	JITC
3rd Place	AC No 3 Ops Wing
WOMEN'S TEAM	
1st Place	DFHQ COS Div
LOADED MARCH WINNERS	
1st Place	7 Inf Bn
2nd Place	Cadet School
3rd Place	E Coy, 3 Inf Bn
LOADED MARCH INDIVIDUAL	
1st Place	(Male) Lt Luke Thompson (44.28)
2nd Place	(Female) Pte Louise Callaghan (54.54)
BLOCK WINNERS	
1st Place	28 Inf Bn (40.55)
Joint 2nd	3 Inf Bn & Cadet School (41.41)


AN COSANTÓIR
10KM RACE AND 5KM WALK
MY RUN RESULTS
#AnCosantóir10k

SNIPERFEST LITHUANIA - 2026

ARTICLE BY SGT HEALY

SniperFest is an international sniper competition organised annually by the Lithuanian Armed Forces and is widely recognised as one of NATO's premier sniper events. This year's competition marked the sixteenth consecutive running of SniperFest and, for the first time, the Irish Defence Forces were represented on the firing line.

Hosted at the Lithuanian Land Forces Training Centre in Rukla, the competition brought together more than 100 teams from NATO member states, partner nations, the Lithuanian Armed Forces, police sniper units and civilian competitors. The event is designed to strengthen military interoperability, promote the exchange of tactical knowledge and evaluate the capabilities of sniper teams in realistic operational scenarios. Beyond identifying the strongest teams, SniperFest provides a valuable opportunity to share tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), compare training methods and reinforce the professionalism of the international sniper community.

Representing Ireland was a three-man team consisting of an NCO from the Ordnance Corps, a Private from the 27th Infantry Battalion and Team Captain from the Infantry Weapons Wing (IWW). Representing the Defence Forces on the international stage is always an honour, particularly knowing we would become the first Irish team to compete at SniperFest.

Preparation began several months before the competition. Training focused on every aspect of sniper capability, including observation, target detection, judging distance, precision marksmanship, communication and sniper dialogue. While individual skill is essential, competitions such as SniperFest place an even greater emphasis on teamwork, communication and the ability to make sound decisions under pressure. Every training serial was designed









to ensure the team could operate efficiently and confidently when faced with unfamiliar scenarios and strict time constraints.

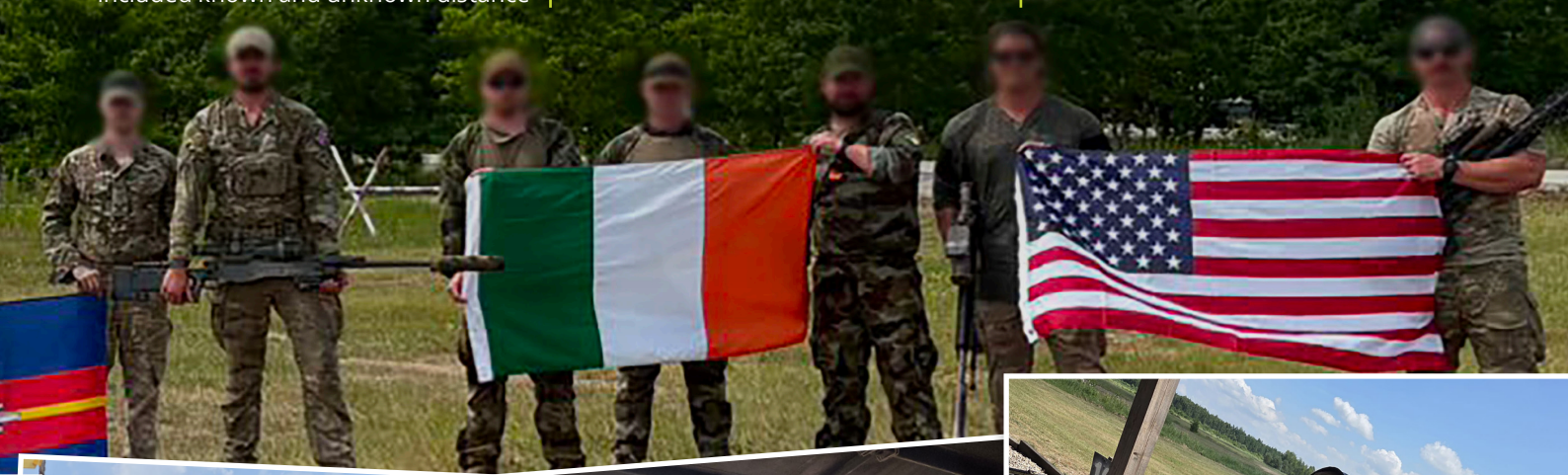
One of the defining strengths of the Defence Forces sniper community is its willingness to support those representing Ireland abroad. Once the invitation to compete was received, the Infantry Weapons Wing, together with experienced members of the wider sniper community, organised a series of dedicated training days. Knowledge, experience and lessons learned were openly shared to ensure we were as well prepared as possible. This collaborative approach reflects the professionalism that exists throughout the Defence Forces sniper community and highlights the pride taken in representing Ireland on the international stage.

The competition itself was conducted over three demanding days and featured eleven challenging stages designed to test every aspect of a sniper team's capability. These included known and unknown distance engagements, long-range precision shooting beyond one kilometre, moving target engagements, observation and target detection exercises, and physically demanding stress shoots. Each stage required rapid decision making, effective communication and attention to detail while operating under physical fatigue and time pressure. With scores often separated by only a single point, every observation, every correction and every shot counted.

Competing alongside some of the world's best military and law enforcement sniper teams provided an invaluable learning experience. It offered the opportunity to compare equipment, techniques and procedures while gaining insight into how other nations approach sniper training and employment. Equally important, it reinforced confidence in the standard of training delivered within the Defence Forces and demonstrated that Irish sniper teams are capable of competing at the highest international level.

After three highly competitive days, our team finished 14th overall and placed as the 5th highest-ranked European nation. The final standings were exceptionally close, with only a handful of points separating many of the leading teams, highlighting the demanding nature of the competition and the importance of consistency throughout every stage.

Representing Ireland at SniperFest 2026 was an unforgettable experience and a significant milestone for the Defence Forces. More than just a competition, SniperFest is an opportunity to strengthen international military relationships, exchange professional knowledge and continually improve operational capability. For our team, it was a chance to test ourselves against some of the finest sniper teams in the world, proudly represent the Defence Forces and contribute to the continued reputation of the Irish sniper community on the international stage.









LEADING BEYOND THE FRONT LINE

Military Leadership in the Age of the Transparent Battlefield

ARTICLE BY SGT MAJ DAVID O'REILLY

For centuries, military leadership has been synonymous with physical presence. From Wellington at Waterloo to Irish officers and NCOs leading patrols in Lebanon, the profession of arms has traditionally valued leaders who share risk, demonstrate courage visibly, and inspire through personal example. The enduring principle of "leading from the front" remains deeply embedded within military culture because it builds trust, reinforces legitimacy, and strengthens cohesion.

However, the character of warfare is evolving. The proliferation of unmanned aerial systems (UAS), commercial satellite imagery, artificial intelligence, electronic surveillance, and social media has created what many commentators describe as a transparent battlefield an operational environment in which concealment is increasingly difficult and where leaders, formations, and headquarters can be detected, tracked, and targeted with unprecedented speed. Recent analysis of operations in Ukraine highlights how persistent surveillance and drone-enabled reconnaissance have fundamentally altered assumptions about battlefield sanctuary and freedom of movement.

For military leaders, this development presents a significant challenge. If physical visibility increases vulnerability, how can leaders continue to inspire confidence, influence, exercise command, and maintain cohesion? More fundamentally, is the transparent battlefield truly rendering traditional leadership obsolete, or is the concept being overstated?

The wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and in Lebanon have demonstrated that the battlefield is no longer defined solely by firepower and manoeuvre. It is increasingly characterised by persistent observation and rapid information dissemination. Every movement leaves a digital signature, every decision may be scrutinised in real time, and every mistake can achieve strategic consequences within minutes.





The End of the Traditional Front Line

Recent conflicts have demonstrated that modern battlefields are saturated with sensors and unmanned systems capable of detecting and striking targets at unprecedented ranges. NATO has acknowledged that drones have fundamentally altered the character of warfare and are now a decisive battlefield capability. The traditional image of a commander moving freely among troops may become increasingly difficult to sustain. Command vehicles, headquarters, and even individual leaders generate identifiable signatures that can be detected and rapidly targeted. The concentration of leadership at a single location may expose entire organisations to unnecessary risk. This does not mean that courageous leadership is obsolete. Rather, it means that courage may increasingly be expressed through informed decision-making, disciplined risk management, and mission command rather than physical exposure.

From Presence to Influence

Historically, leadership relied heavily on direct personal interaction. Future leaders may need to develop new methods of influence that do not depend upon constant physical presence. Digital communication, distributed command systems, and autonomous technologies will allow leaders to remain connected to their organisations without being physically co-located with them. However, technology alone cannot replace trust. Trust remains the foundation of military effectiveness. The challenge will be maintaining cohesion, morale, and professional relationships when leaders and subordinates are geographically dispersed. Leaders must therefore become more deliberate in communicating intent, reinforcing values, and building command climates that function even when direct supervision is impossible.

In essence, leadership will shift from controlling actions to influencing outcomes.

Mission Command Becomes Essential

The transparent battlefield reinforces the importance of Mission Command. If leaders cannot be physically present at every decisive point, subordinate commanders must possess the authority, competence, and confidence to act independently. Modern doctrine increasingly recognises the need for decentralised execution and rapid adaptation. Recent doctrinal developments addressing persistent observation emphasise operating with smaller signatures and empowering lower levels to act when communications are disrupted.

Future leaders must therefore invest more heavily in developing critical thinking, ethical judgement, and decision-making at all ranks. Success will belong to organisations where intent is clearly



understood and initiative is encouraged.

The leader who attempts to centrally control every action may find themselves overwhelmed by information and unable to respond at the speed required by modern operations.

The Cognitive Burden of Leadership

NATO's work on cognitive warfare highlights the growing significance of information influence and perception management. The cognitive domain is increasingly viewed as a battlespace in which narratives, trust, and legitimacy become operationally important factors. Ironically, the transparent battlefield may create a new form of uncertainty. While leaders possess access to unprecedented quantities of data, more information does not necessarily produce better decisions. The growing integration of sensors, artificial intelligence, and networked systems risks creating information overload, decision paralysis, and excessive dependence on technology. Analysts have warned that leaders may have access to more information than at any time in military history while simultaneously struggling to determine what information is most relevant.

Future military leaders must therefore develop what might be described as cognitive resilience—the ability to filter information, maintain situational awareness, and make timely decisions despite ambiguity. The challenge will not be obtaining information; it will be understanding it.

Leadership Under Constant Scrutiny

Transparency extends beyond the battlefield. Modern military leaders operate under continuous observation from political leaders, media organisations, adversaries, and the public. Actions once witnessed only by a small number of participants can now become global events within minutes. Social media, open-source intelligence, and emerging information technologies ensure that leadership decisions may be scrutinised in real time.

This environment demands higher standards of professionalism, accountability, and ethical conduct than ever before. NATO has identified the cognitive domain as an increasingly contested battlespace where perception and influence are critical to operational success.

Future leaders must therefore become equally proficient in managing information effects as they are in managing combat operations.

Training Adaptations for Future Leaders

If military organisations are to prepare leaders for transparent battlefields, leadership development must evolve.

1. Train for Mission Command Earlier

Professional military education should place greater emphasis on decision-making under uncertainty. Junior leaders need opportunities to interpret commander's intent, exercise initiative, and accept calculated risk. Tactical exercises should deliberately degrade communications and deny access to higher headquarters to foster independent judgement.

Future leaders must become comfortable operating without continuous guidance.

2. Develop Cognitive Resilience

The future challenge will not be information scarcity but information excess. Training should expose leaders to large volumes of competing data, contradictory reports, and rapidly changing operational scenarios. Decision-making exercises should focus on prioritisation, analysis, and maintaining clarity under cognitive stress. Military education should incorporate concepts such as critical thinking, systems thinking, and decision science alongside traditional command and staff processes.

3. Integrate Technology and Leadership Education

Future commanders must understand both the capabilities and limitations of emerging technologies. Leader development programmes should include practical exposure to drones, artificial intelligence, electronic warfare, cyber operations, and open-source intelligence. Understanding these systems will enable leaders to make informed operational decisions while avoiding technological overdependence. Leaders should become critical users of technology rather than passive consumers of information.

4. Expand Adaptive Leadership Training

The future operating environment will remain volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Military education should place greater emphasis on Adaptability Quotient (AQ), encouraging leaders to learn rapidly, embrace change, and operate effectively in unfamiliar environments. Exercises should reward innovation and adaptation rather than strict procedural compliance.

The leader who can adjust fastest may prove more valuable than the leader who possesses the most information.

5. Strengthen Ethical Decision-Making

In an era of constant observation, ethical leadership becomes a combat capability. Future leaders must understand that tactical decisions may generate strategic consequences. Professional military education should incorporate realistic ethical dilemmas involving information operations, AI-enabled systems, civilian interaction, and strategic communication.

Trust remains the foundation of military legitimacy.

6. Emphasise Distributed Leadership

Leadership development should move beyond the assumption that responsibility resides primarily with commanders. Every soldier, NCO, and officer should be prepared to lead when circumstances require. Distributed operations demand distributed leadership. The organisations that thrive will be those where initiative, trust, and competence exist at every level.

Conclusion

The future of military leadership will not be defined by the abandonment of traditional leadership principles but by their adaptation to a new operational reality. The transparent battlefield challenges long-held assumptions about leading from the front, command presence, and battlefield influence. Yet the enduring requirements of leadership trust, courage, integrity, competence, and purpose remain unchanged. What will change is how those qualities are expressed. Tomorrow's military leader may not always stand at the front of a formation or beside the leading vehicle. Instead, they will lead through intent, trust, adaptability, and professional mastery within a distributed and highly observable environment. In the age of transparency, effective leadership will no longer be measured by where a leader stands, but by how successfully they enable others to act.

References available upon request to the editor.



EMBEDDING CULTURAL CHANGE ON THE POTENTIAL NCO COURSE

ARTICLE BY CAPT JOE EVERETT

The Potential NCO Course is conducted annually in Q1 in 1 BTC. The course offers an important opportunity to translate the Defence Forces' cultural change priorities into daily practice for prospective students seeking to make the jump from Private to Corporal. Conducted over 20 weeks in three modules, the course develops a Private soldier into a Corporal capable of commanding a section across the spectrum of military operations. Cultural change is treated not as a separate lesson, but as a leadership behaviour to be demonstrated, practiced and reinforced throughout the 20 weeks' training.

The approach adopted for the Potential NCO Course in 1 BTC reflects the 2025 Value Our People Survey. It deliberately preserves the strengths identified by personnel who participated in the survey: teamwork, camaraderie, friendship, pride in service and a strong sense of purpose. At the same time, it addresses concerns around overwork, feeling undervalued, resistance to change and work-life balance. 1 BTC Instructor Cadre continue to model the culture expected of future NCOs: professional, respectful, inclusive, well organised and attentive to the welfare of individuals. This while also remaining underpinned by the DF values.

Throughout the course, soldiers are afforded additional time at home through remote working, for example, undertaking a full instructional table on unmanned vehicles and elements of Military Instructor Training on the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment. Suitable academic and reflective tasks are completed away from 1 Brigade Training Centre, giving students greater flexibility without reducing the required standard. Moodle has been a force multiplier throughout the course in terms of allowing students complete formative assessments from home while also affording flexibility to instructors who can grade the same assessments from home also. Communication between staff and students has also improved over previous courses through the use of Moodle, with the ability to upload training programmes and announcements to the course with relative ease.

Travel time is also factored into the programme on Mondays and Fridays. This practical adjustment acknowledges the demands placed on personnel and their families, supports modern ways of working and demonstrates that operational effectiveness and reasonable flexibility can coexist. The same principle applies to staff. Instructors are rostered and afforded time off to ensure that working patterns remain aligned with the Working Time Directive. Protecting rest, managing hours and sharing the instructional burden make delivery of tuition more sustainable. It also provides students with a visible example of responsible people management. The students on the course learn that care for subordinates includes planning workloads, recognising pressure and taking timely action rather than waiting for welfare problems to emerge.

Cultural change is also advanced through participation, recognition and shared responsibility. Healthy competition between sections is encouraged during physical training, generating motivation, identity and camaraderie while keeping improvement and teamwork at the centre. Student appointments, peer instruction and decision-making exercises progressively increase responsibility. Constructive debriefs, regular feedback and opportunities for reflection encourage students to identify their own learning needs, speak honestly about performance and act on advice. This is especially through of the major command appointments throughout the course. Strong performance and improvement are recognised, while shortcomings are corrected consistently and respectfully.

These measures support the formal training objectives: developing leadership and instructor skills, preparing students mentally, morally and physically for the rank of Corporal, applying the Military Decision-Making Process, and promoting respect, loyalty, selflessness, courage and integrity. Ethical conduct and care for individual soldiers are not simply discussed; they are embedded in how the course is scheduled, led and assessed throughout the demanding 20-week training cycle.

Ultimately, the course demonstrates that cultural change does not mean lowering military standards. It means achieving them through leadership that listens, communicates clearly, recognises effort, safeguards wellbeing and remains accountable. By experiencing this approach across all three modules, students are better prepared to reproduce it within their own sections and will be in a strong position to reproduce it in their home units. The result at the conclusion of the Potential NCO course is not only a qualified Corporal, but a junior leader equipped to strengthen trust, performance and culture across the Defence Forces.











VETERANS

A PROUD DAY AT THE IRISH EMBASSY IN LONDON

ARTICLE BY MICHAEL THOMPSON - DEPUTY WELFARE OFFICER IUNVA

UN Veteran Anthony Smalle was born in 1950. He enlisted in the Defence Forces on 12th September 1972, and served in 4 Inf Bn in Cork, 12 Inf Bn in Limerick and in 28 Inf Bn in County Donegal. He served one tour of duty with the United Nations with Number 1 Platoon, A Company 25 Infantry Group from 15th October 1973 to 9th May 1974. On 23rd Oct 1973, the main body of the unit travelled to Cyprus. The unit redeployed to Cairo via RAF Akrotiri on 31st Oct 1973 following the Yom Kippur War between Israel and its Arab neighbours. After completing six years' service, Anthony left the Defence Forces on 11 Sep 1978, and he emigrated to the UK.

Every June, members of the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) travel to London (under the umbrella group of Na Fianna history Society) to participate in the Combined Irish Regiments Parade at the Cenotaph. The annual event brings together serving and former members of the Irish Defence Forces, along with veterans of disbanded associations, in a fitting act of remembrance and comradeship.

This year's visit was particularly special as it provided an opportunity to honour Anthony Smalle with the presentation of his long-awaited United Nations Peacekeepers Medal. The story began through Ms Nessa Parkinson, an Associate Member of IUNVA Post Dublin and niece of the late Comdt Tony Roe, a respected member of Post 1. Nessa, who works as a Supervisor in Accommodation in London, met Anthony while at work. During a conversation, Anthony spoke of his service in the Defence Forces and his overseas deployments to Cyprus and the Sinai following the Yom Kippur War. After showing Nessa his medal, it became apparent that he had not received his UN Peacekeepers Medal as Anthony had left before the medal was introduced in 1989.

Nessa contacted IUNVA seeking assistance and enquires were immediately made through the Defence Forces Ceremonial Section. Arrangements were made to secure the medal for Anthony and to arrange an appropriate presentation ceremony. IUNVA extends its sincere thanks to the Ceremonial Section for its invaluable assistance in ensuring that this deserving veteran received the recognition he has earned through his service.



As part of the annual London visit, IUNVA members traditionally attend the Irish Embassy to meet with the Irish Ambassador. Through Second Secretary Ms Fionnula Egan, enquires were made to determine whether Ambassador Martin Fraser would be willing to present the medal personally. The Ambassador graciously agreed, and arrangements were made for Anthony and his family to attend a special ceremony at the Embassy on Friday 12th June 2026.

The ceremony was attended by IUNVA members and retired members of the Defence Forces who had travelled to London for the parade weekend. Prior to the presentation, IUNVA National Vice President John Murray and Michael Thompson briefed the Ambassador on Anthony's military service and the background to the award.

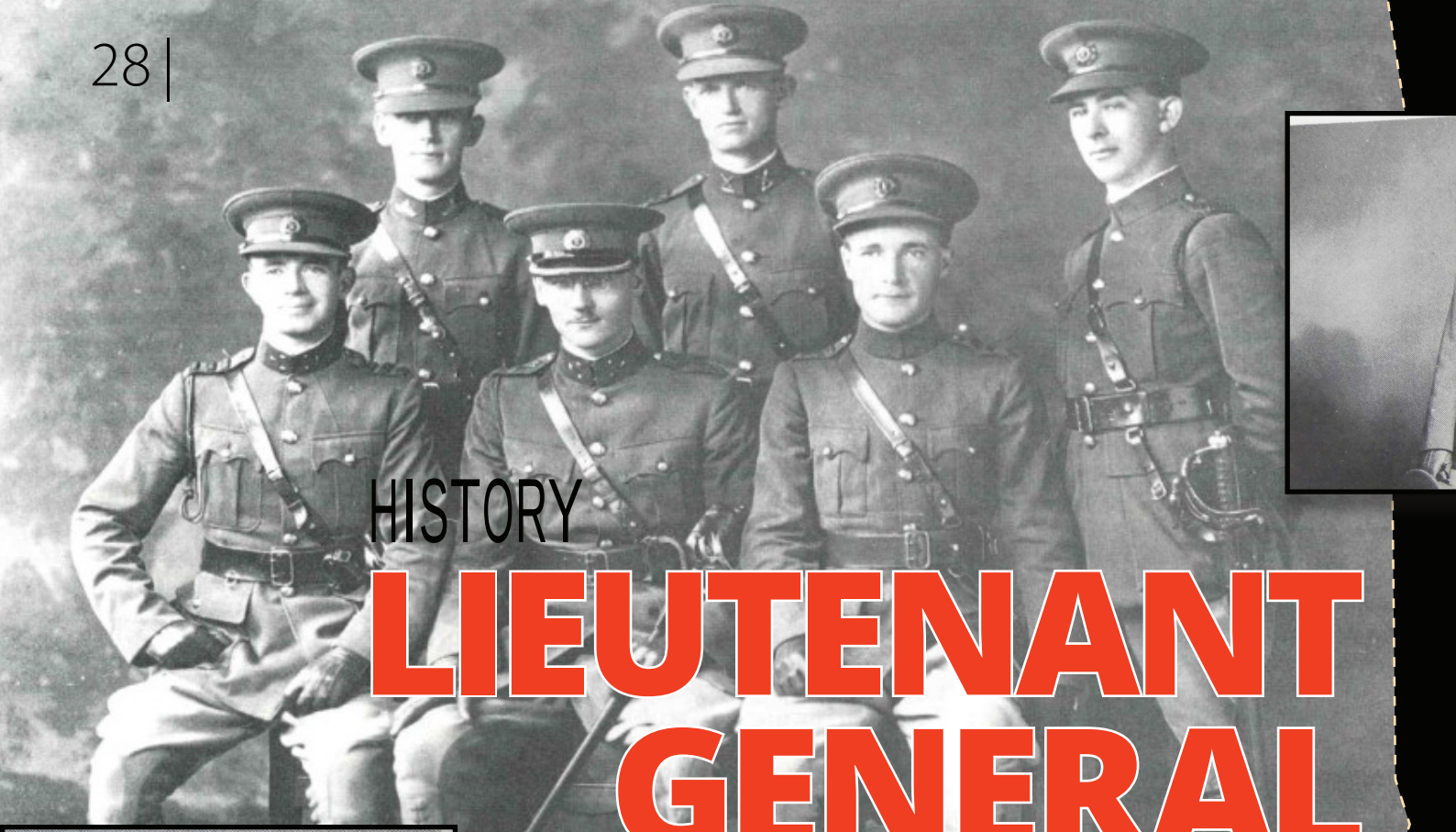
Ambassador Fraser warmly welcomed all those present to the Embassy. He spoke about the importance of the annual visit to London and the significance of the Combined Irish Regiments Parade. He thanked veterans for their service to Ireland, both at home and overseas missions throughout the years and acknowledging the sacrifices and commitment of all who had served.

Michael Thompson outlined Anthony's military career and overseas service before Ambassador Fraser formally presented and pinned the United Nations Peacekeepers Medal on Anthony's jacket.

The ceremony also provided an opportunity for IUNVA to make presentations to Ambassador Fraser. John Murray presented the Ambassador with a framed copy of The Soldier's Poem and wished him every success in his forthcoming appointment as Ireland's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York.

On behalf of IUNVA, Michael Dillon of Post 1 presented Ambassador Fraser with an IUNVA plaque as a token of appreciation for his support and hospitality.

The event was a fitting example of the camaraderie, dedication and commitment that continue to characterise the veteran's community. Most importantly, it ensured that a deserving veteran received the recognition he had earned through his service to peace under the United Nations Flag.



HISTORY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL M.J. COSTELLO

ARTICLE BY PTE TERRY O'REILLY





MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL J. COSTELLO (left) WITH STAFF IN MAP EXERCISE, c. 1944

Michael Joseph Costello was born on 4 July 1904 in Cloughjordan to a family with a long tradition of teaching. His godfather was Thomas McDonagh who was later one of the leaders of the Easter Rising. Three of his siblings died during the influenza pandemic in 1917. Receiving his own schooling from the Christian Brothers in Nenagh, Costello briefly became a correspondent for the Midland Tribune aged sixteen but joined the Old IRA after his father was arrested by the Black and Tans. He participated in the War of Independence as an intelligence officer in north Tipperary. Costello joined the National Army in 1922 and at the outbreak of the Civil War was based in Portlaoise as a Lieutenant; his commanding officer was the popular Colonel-Commandant Austin MacCurtain (23), 'a man for whom [Costello] had great admiration' who was then Intelligence Officer for the Third Southern Command.

In July 1922, a unit of Republicans ambushed a National Army column near Abbeyleix. MacCurtain led a unit from Portlaoise that included Costello, that were ambushed by the Republican party, killing MacCurtain and Colonel-Commandant Sean Collison. Costello and another officer turned the ambush and he personally captured seventeen Republicans. General Michael Collins arrived in Portlaoise shortly afterwards; Costello was struck by 'his capacity to extract information from all the people he was talking to and cross examining.' Collins quickly made the decision to fill MacCurtain's appointment by promoting Costello to Colonel-Commandant at the tender age of eighteen. He was subsequently modest with regard to this by noting that many young people were appointed to important positions at this time.

Colonel Costello retained his rank after the Civil War when he was appointed National Army Director of Intelligence from 1924 until July 1926. He then participated in the Military Mission to the United States by attending the US Army Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. He graduated with distinction which led to a recommendation that he attend the even more prestigious War College, then being attended by Major Dwight Eisenhower. Appointed to the Defence Plans Division on his return, Costello was also editor of the army magazine An t-Óglách, which he reformatted as a military academic journal. Costello was appointed Director of Training in 1931 and Commandant of the Military College in 1932, where he 'produced a first-class Military Instructional Institution turning out many high quality officers with Command and Staff ability, which proved so vital in the ensuing Emergency years.' Nicknamed





'the boy colonel' his lectures were packed to capacity with audiences including government ministers.

Costello was appointed Assistant Chief of Staff in 1937 until the outbreak of war in September 1939, when he was appointed O/C Southern Command. Mindful of the success of An t-Óglách as a means of disseminating training material, Costello was instrumental in founding An Cosantóir in 1940.

In early 1941 Costello became commander of the newly raised First 'Thunderbolt' Division with the rank of Major-General. This formation was primarily responsible for the defence of the south coast of Ireland at a time when the threat of invasion was very real. In Costello's words; 'Given the inadequate armament and signal equipment of the forces, training concentrated on attaining superiority over a potential invader in night operations with small forces expected to yield capture of enemy arms and ammunition, in cross country mobility and in marksmanship and the use of mines and explosives generally. The platoons made silent advances during dark nights over difficult and unknown country.' All units in the division were required to regularly carry out thirty mile marches and in 1944, one of Costello's units carried out a 44-mile march carrying 40-pound packs in eleven hours which was later recognised as a world record for a speed march carried out under peacetime conditions. To quote a contemporary: 'he was a soldiers general, strict but fair, and above all consistent, dependable and competent. He might – indeed probably would – lead you into danger and even death, but it would be on the basis of well-judged and calculated risks. Therefore, one would not hesitate to follow his lead.'

With the end of The Emergency in 1945, the First Division was demobilised and Costello promoted to Lieutenant General. He then took early retirement to take up the post of General Manager of the Irish Sugar Company [Cómlucht Siúicre Eireann]. Formed in 1933 as a state-controlled company, the company then comprised 720 full time staff in four factories and had been bedevilled with chronic industrial unrest from the outset. Costello quickly formed works councils and safety committees and introduced measures that made it possible for workers to follow a career path to key positions. Demobilised army officers were recruited to reorganise the company transport system. 'The General' (as Costello continued to be known) pioneered soil testing and lime production and under his direction, Irish Sugar branched out into crop production on peat land, manufacture of agricultural machinery and processed foods. Another innovation was Irish Sugar's purchase of Ireland's first electronic computer in 1957. By the time Costello retired in 1966, the Sugar Company was a thriving concern with over five thousand staff. There had been no strikes during his twenty years as General Manager.

In retirement, 'The General' continued to lecture extensively on business organisation and agriculture and held many appointments including vice president of the Military History Society of Ireland.

Following a heart attack, Costello died on 20 October 1986, aged 82. He was buried in Clontarf with full military honours. His obituary in An Cosantóir described him as 'one of the most outstandingly able officers the Army has produced.'

On the 17 Sept 2026 a centenary event took place in Pearse Officers' Mess to mark the Military Mission to the United States of America in 1926. Family members of the six officers that travelled gathered in the Mess, along with members of the DF Board, officials from DoD, academics, historians, published authors and a wide array of DF personnel.

The six principal members of the Mission were Major General Hugh MacNeill, Colonel Michael Costello, Major Joseph Dunne, Captain Patrick Berry, Lieutenant Seán Collins-Powell and 2nd Lieutenant Charles Trodden. The two main objectives of the Mission were to make a general study of the United States National Defence Act in operation and of the United States military system, while particularly focusing on their military education. This included tours of observation and inspection and knowledge development opportunities for the Officers in three of the principal American Army Schools: Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (General Services School), Fort Benning, Georgia (Infantry School), and Fort Sill, Oklahoma (Field Artillery School).



This mission laid the foundations for the establishment of the Military College, which would ultimately train thousands of DF personnel over the years, owing thanks to those personnel that went on the original mission in 1926.



The afternoon in Pearse Officers' Mess heard speeches from the Commandant of the Military College, Col Prendergast, the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Mulcahy and Dr Michael Kennedy from the Royal Irish Academy. The day culminated with a tree planting ceremony in the mess gardens.



PEOPLE OF THE DF

NAME:
KATE O'LEARY

RANK:
PO/SEA

SERVICE:
NAVAL SERVICE

CURRENT ROLE:
BOSUN ONBOARD P71 LÉ AOIBHINN





Can you give me a brief description of your career so far?

I joined the Naval Service in April 2007 and completed recruit training before beginning my career in the Seaman's Division. My first ship was LÉ Aisling P23, where I served for four years and gained valuable experience in life at sea and the different responsibilities of the Seaman's Division. I was promoted to L/SEA in 2013 and went on to complete two Mediterranean trips onboard LÉ Eithne and LÉ James Joyce. In 2022, I was promoted to PO/SEA, which allowed me to take on greater responsibility and develop my leadership skills. In April 2024, I took up the role of Bosun onboard LÉ Aoibhinn P71, where I am currently serving. Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to work with great people, develop my skills and take part in a wide variety of operations.

What made you decide to join the DF and the Naval Service?

I decided to join the Naval Service after seeing a poster advertising for general recruitment. I decided to give it a go, and to this day I still believe it was one of the best choices I have ever made. At the time, I probably didn't realise where the career would take me or how many opportunities I would have. Since joining, I have gained a huge amount of experience, travelled, met great people and progressed through the ranks. Looking back now, I am very happy that I made that decision.

What was your proudest moment so far in the DF?

My proudest moments so far have been the Mediterranean trips onboard LÉ Eithne and LÉ James Joyce. Being involved in such a rewarding role made me feel extremely proud to be part of the Naval Service. The trips were challenging, but they demonstrated the importance of teamwork and showed what can be achieved when everyone onboard works together. They are experiences that have stayed with me throughout my career and are something I will always be proud to have been part of.

What was your most challenging moment so far?

There have been many challenging moments throughout my career, particularly when working at sea where conditions and situations can change very quickly. Taking on more responsibility as I progressed through the ranks has also challenged me to develop as a leader. Becoming Bosun meant being responsible for ensuring that the crew are properly trained, briefed and prepared for the different evolutions we carry out. I have learned that staying calm, communicating clearly and trusting the people around you are extremely important when dealing with challenging situations.



Can you give me a brief description of a typical day in your job?

A typical day starts at around 7am and involves preparing for any deck evolutions

that may be required onboard the ship. This includes daily boat checks, cleaning stations, organising the watch system, training and briefing crew members and ensuring that all safety procedures are followed. I also make sure that deck and safety equipment is certified and ready for use. As part of the Seaman's Division, we are responsible for boat operations, berthing the ship, anchoring, towing, fisheries protection, gunnery and any other requirements on deck. Every day can be different, so we always have to be prepared for whatever is required.

What advice would you give to someone about to embark on a career in the Naval Service?

My advice would be to give it a go and don't be afraid or think that you can't do it. It is a very rewarding career and there are plenty of opportunities to learn, develop and progress. There will be challenging days, but they are often the days you learn the most from. Listen to the people around you, ask questions and take every opportunity that comes your way. Work hard, be a good team member and don't be afraid to push yourself outside your comfort zone.

What do you enjoy the most about your role?

The part I enjoy most is working together as a team. When you have a good bunch of people working together, the days go by much quicker and even difficult jobs become easier. Onboard a ship, everyone has their own responsibilities, but ultimately we depend on one another. I really enjoy that sense of teamwork and camaraderie. I also enjoy being able to pass on my experience to other crew members and seeing people develop their skills and confidence.

What are your goals for the future?

My main goal for the future is to continue progressing in my career and get promoted to CPO/SEA (Coxswain). I would also like to become the first female Coxswain within the Naval Service. It would be a very proud achievement for me after everything I have experienced since joining in 2007. I want to continue developing my leadership skills, knowledge and experience so that I am ready to take that next step when the opportunity comes.

What is your favourite quote?

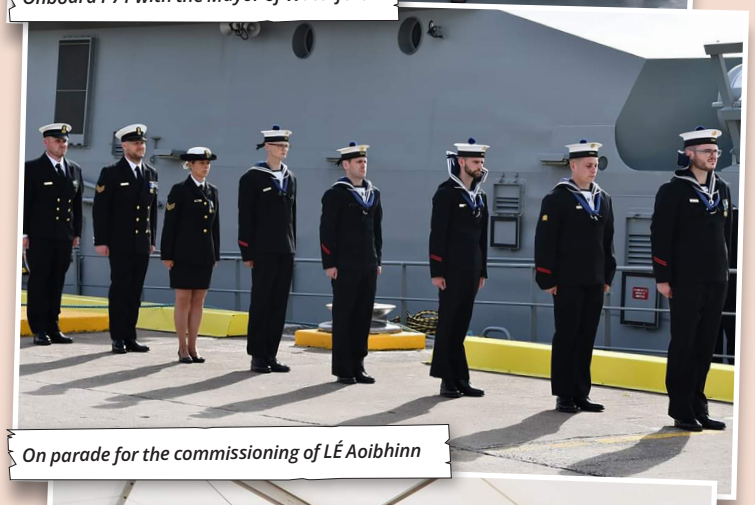
It's not really a quote, but a motto we have onboard our ship that I think sums up our attitude and the importance of teamwork: 'SMALLER CREW, STRONGER TEAM.'

What advice would you give to your 18-year-old self?

I would tell my 18-year-old self to believe in yourself, take every opportunity that comes your way and don't be afraid to challenge yourself. You won't always know what is ahead of you, but that is part of the journey. Listen to advice, learn from the people around you and don't let fear stop you from trying something new. There will be difficult days along the way, but keep going and trust yourself. Looking back, joining the Naval Service opened up opportunities and experiences that I could never have imagined at 18.



Onboard P71 with the Mayor of Waterford



On parade for the commissioning of LÉ Aoibhinn



LÉ Aoibhinn commissioning 2024 with my partner and his parents



ON PARADE



Congratulations to the pilot EMT course who recently graduated from National Ambulance Service College in Tullamore



Students and instructors from the 84mm young entry course ran in 6 Inf Bn



Members of the DF Parachute Team pictured before a jump at the Bray Air Show



Members of Naval Service Class Bravo pictured at their passing out parade in Haulbowline



Naval Service members pictured after giving blood for World Blood Donor Day



A member of the 9-10th 2-3 Star course in 7 Inf Bn firing the SRAAW at an enemy position during an exercise in Gormanston Camp. Photo by Pte Daniel Tully





"Members of the Equestrian School pictured after having great success at the RDS Horse Show in August" A superb result for the Defence Forces Equitation School as Lt Michaelí Byrne and MSH Claregalway claimed an outstanding 4th place in the CSIO5* €1 million Rolex Grand Prix of Ireland



128 Inf Bn MP Section





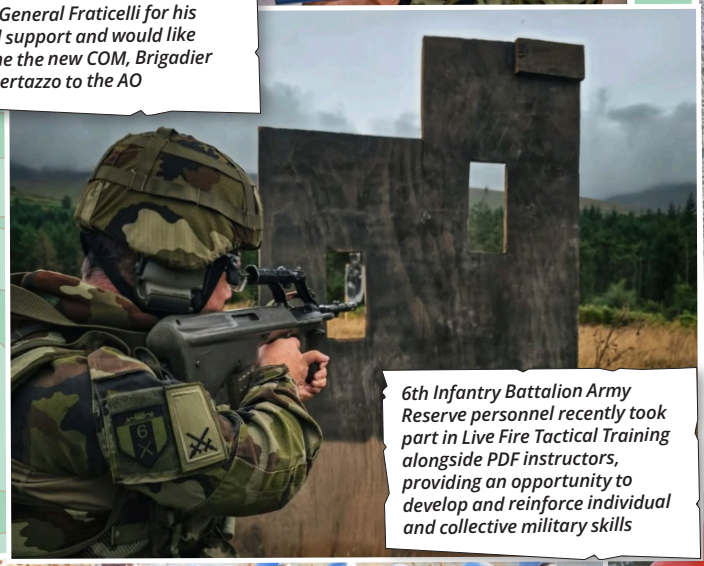
ON PARADE



OC IRISHPOLBATT Lt Col Carroll visited Sector West (SW) HQ to attend the Transfer of Authority of the SW COM. IRISHPOLBATT would like to thank Brigadier General Fraticelli for his continued support and would like to welcome the new COM, Brigadier General Bertazzo to the AO



A Children's Day was organised by IRISHPOLBATT, UNIFIL CIMIC teams in Ayn Ibil on the 15th of August



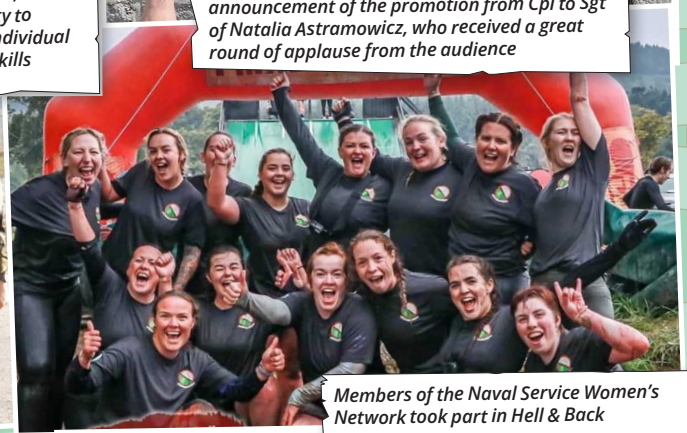
6th Infantry Battattalion Army Reserve personnel recently took part in Live Fire Tactical Training alongside PDF instructors, providing an opportunity to develop and reinforce individual and collective military skills



The No 1 Band held a public concert in Collins Bks Museum, made all the more special with the announcement of the promotion from Cpl to Sgt of Natalia Astramowicz, who received a great round of applause from the audience



IRISHPOLBATT held a medal parade in UNP 2-45 on the 15th of August. Soldiers from the Polish Contingent received promotions whilst members from all three troop contributing nations received commemorative medals in recognition of their service



Members of the Naval Service Women's Network took part in Hell & Back



Members of the Cavalry Corps on parade for Cavalry Memorial Day in UNP 2-45 Lebanon

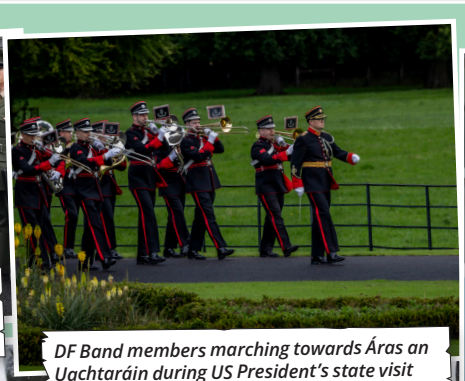


Members of 2 BAR pictured after a shoot in The Glen of Imaal

ON PARADE



Reservist Potential NCOs on parade in Custume Barracks for weekend 1 of the 07th AR PNCO Course



DF Band members marching towards Áras an Uachtaráin during US President's state visit



Recruits from 6 Inf Bn took on Training Fitness Assessment Week, putting their physical fitness, determination and teamwork to the test as they continue their training



Congratulations to 28 Inf Bn members Sgt McLaughlin, Cpl Melaugh and Pte Doherty on winning the GAA Masters All-Ireland, beating Dublin in the final. The Donegal team is managed by former member Eddie Crawford



National services day in Trinity College Dublin. L-R Robert Burke 2 Bde MPC (AR), Mick Byrne Civil Defence, formerly of 2 MPC (AR)



150 Recruits and families were present in the JITC for the induction of the 14th, 15th and 16th Recruit Platoons



7th Inf Bn took on the Infantry Skills Competition, putting in a massive effort both in the lead-up and on the day



Finner Camp was delighted to welcome members of the 28 Inf Bn Association back to the camp for a coffee morning and wreath laying ceremony in honour of deceased members



Army No. 1 Band, conducted by Capt John Carpenter, leads the march-past during the GOC 2 Bde's inspection of McKee Barracks



Members of McKee Barracks Company pictured after GOC 2 Bde's inspection

ON PARADE



EU Political & Security Committee visit to Baldonnel



Lt Col Andrew Burke EO HR Branch J1 presenting the new rank markings to Cpl Scanlan on promotion

1 Cn Cois completed a shooting and fitness competition. The inaugural Liam Mellows Tactical Games. spearheaded by Sgt John Tarpey, were designed to bring everyone together in competitive spirit but also improve weapons handling and increase the skillset with personal weapons. For more images visit 1 Cn Cois' space on the Connect app





The 46th Recruit Platoon 28 Inf Bn picture after completing 13 weeks of training and earning their two stars



Soldiers of IRISHPOLBATT assist the local town of Debel with a donation of a new garbage truck for the community. The previously used garbage truck was irreparably destroyed during recent hostilities in the region, leaving the people of Debel facing a serious sanitary crisis



Members of the 01st Air Corps PNCO Course pictured at their passing out parade



DF Veterans march onto the square in McKee Barracks for National Veteran's Day



A special moment for Irish Navy Rugby After winning the inaugural Fr. Des Campion Memorial Cup. More than just silverware, this cup carries a special meaning for the Naval Service family and everyone who knew Fr. Des



Members of the AFV LFTT Range Controlling Officers' Course ran in the Cavalry School DFTC



Members of the Air Corps provided a Guard of Honour at Áras an Uachtaráin in October

SPORTS & CLUBS



DEFENCE FORCES MOUNTAINERRING

The last few weeks for DFAM have been all about intensive training and focused preparation for the Reeve & Rescue competition, held in Croke Park on the 19th of September. Two DFAM members were selected to be part of an interoperability team alongside colleagues from AGS and DFB. Over the course of the event, the teams tackled six demanding scenarios designed to really test both hands-on rescue skills and technical know-how. The competition wasn't just about performance under pressure. It was also a great chance to strengthen teamwork and communication across the different organisations.

DF DIVE GROUP

Since May, the DFDG has maintained a busy programme of diving and training activities. The group participated in two dive rallies organised by Dive Ireland: The Southeast Rally, hosted by Hook Dive Club, where members enjoyed excellent diving conditions off the Wexford coast, and the West Rally at Kilcummin Pier in Mayo, hosted by Gráinne Uaile Dive Club. More recently, the DFDG conducted its Advanced Dive Camp, operating out of Cork. The camp gave attendees the opportunity to further develop their skills while gaining experience in advanced dive planning, wreck diving and operating in strong tidal conditions. The DFDG has also continued to provide support to the wider DF community, most recently assisting 3 Inf Bn with a bridge jump in Blessington. These activities highlight the DFDG's continued commitment to developing and maintaining diving skills, supporting its members, and contributing to organised diving and water-based activities across the Defence Forces.



DEFENCE FORCES HURLING

There is plenty to look forward to on the Defence Forces hurling calendar over the coming weeks. On 29 October, the Inter-Brigade Hurling Competition Finals will take place alongside the Camogie Finals at Faithful Fields, Offaly, bringing together teams from across the Defence Forces for what promises to be a competitive day of action. The DF hurlers will then turn their attention to two upcoming fixtures, taking on AIB on 5 November at O'Loughlin Gaels, Kilkenny, before facing An Garda Síochána on 18 November, with the venue still to be confirmed. For further information on Defence Forces hurling, contact Stephen Molumphy at **Stephen.molumphy@defenceforces.ie.**

DEFENCE FORCES SOCCER

September was another busy month for Defence Forces Soccer, with the annual DF Women's Network 5-a-side Football Competition providing plenty of quality football and strong competition throughout the day.







The final saw DFTC take on the Equitation School, with the Equitation School coming out on top to claim the title. Congratulations to the winners and to all the teams who participated and helped make the event such a success. A big thank you also goes to 3 Inf Bn for hosting the competition, with particular thanks to the Gym Staff and Logs Staff for their assistance in organising and supporting the event.

On the men's side, despite some delays to this year's competition, attention is now turning towards what promises to be an exciting conclusion. DFTC, 7 Inf Bn, Air Corps, 28 Inf Bn and Collins Barracks all remain in contention as the competition progresses towards the semi-final stages, with each hoping to get their hands on the trophy for 2026.

The DF Men's International Team also returns to action this month as preparations continue for the Kentish Cup, which takes place in France in November.

This follows a productive period of development over the summer, with successful FAI grassroots coaching and referee development courses taking place during June and July. Defence Forces Soccer has also continued its involvement with Irish international teams and UEFA coaching development programmes, delivering workshops focused on resilience, team development and communication.

With domestic competitions reaching their closing stages and international fixtures on the horizon, there is plenty to look forward to for Defence Forces Soccer over the coming months.

DF RUGBY

On Saturday 29th of August 2026, the DF Men's Rugby Team played the Dutch Military Rugby Team (The Dutch Lions) in University Limerick Sports Pavilion. This was the 3rd encounter between the teams who established this playing rivalry back in 2024. The sides first met in Galway in November 2024 after developing the relationship at the CISM 2nd Military Challenge Rugby 7s Competition in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in June of that year. The DF Men's Rugby Team have been victorious in the two encounters between the teams to date.

A small crowd of locals and DF personnel had gathered to watch the encounter on a mainly dry and overcast day in Limerick. The game kicked off at 1430hrs, preceded by the National Anthems and the introduction of the teams, by their respective Captains, to both the Dutch Chief of Mission, Major General Gertjan KOOIJ, and to the DF Rugby Representative, Colonel Jayne LAWLOR.

The first half proved to be a bruising encounter, with the Dutch Team coming out of the blocks with ferocious physicality and intent. Their speed of play took the DF Team by surprise and by the 20-minute mark, the Dutch side had scored two tries. As the half progressed, the DF side had matched the physicality and began to take control, scoring 3 tries in relatively quick succession to put them 17-12 up at the break.

The halftime team talk from the coaches and the Team Captain, Pte Thomas Sheehan, put a solid game plan in place for the 2nd half whether the DF side slowed the pace down and took control at the set piece. Another two tries in the 2nd half capped off a 29-12 win for the DF Team in the end.

The Player of the Match Award went to A/R Diego Mark-Smith with a barnstorming performance at No.8 and two tries to his name.

DF Rugby are grateful for the support received by DF PRB, CMU Ops, 12 Inf Bn, 1 Bde CIS Coy, 1 Bde Tpt Gp and 2 Bde Tpt Gp for this international military fixture. A huge thank you must also go to the DF Rugby Referees who facilitated the match: Lt (AR) Joe Gleeson, Sgt Gavin McLoughlin and Lt (AR) Michael Ward.

If you or anyone you know is interested in joining DF Rugby (Men's and Women's), please reach out to Comdt Niall Wilcox (Men's Team) or Comdt Sarah O'Regan (Women's Team). Contact details are provided below this article

Comdt Niall Wilcox: extension 2681 or email
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Comdt Sarah O'Regan: extension 1716 or email
sarah.oregan@defenceforces.ie







FROM THE ARCHIVES

AN COSANTÓIR VOLUME 68 NUMBER 07, JUL/AUG 2008



The team use a spotting scope and their rifle sight to judge the distance to the target. Note both are wearing a modified combat jacket for snipers with extra pockets and straps for carrying essential equipment.

RIGHT ON TARGET

In June, the Defence Forces took part for the first time in an International Sniper Competition and won. Here Captain Conor O'Shea (3 Inf Bn and Team Captain) brief us on how the Irish team beat some of the best sharpshooters in the world…

The 3rd International Sniper Competition took place from June 9th-13th at the Land Warfare Centre, Kvarn, Sweden. The Defence Forces received an invitation to participate in the competition primarily due to the very strong showing over the past three years in the Canadian International Sniper Competition. Our four-man team included: Coy Sgt Mark McEnaney (IWW and Team Coach), two members of the ARW (one shooter and one spotter) and myself as Team Captain.

In this year's competition, there were 11 teams: Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, France, Spain, Poland, Ireland, Belgium and three teams form Sweden. The competition was held on the training area adjoining the Swedish military base in Kvarn. This is a huge area over 100km^2 consisting of gallery and field firing ranges set in general training area. In essence, a massive Glen of Imaal!

The competition itself was divided into two sections - sniper skills and marksmanship skills. The sniper skills involved testing the competing teams in observation (identifying selected targets over different terrain), judging distance (correctly gauging the range to a target), map reading and aerial photography and stalking (using the terrain and camouflage to gain a good shooting position on a target). These are basic sniping skills and the Irish team were the overall winners.

The marksmanship section involved a variety of shoots on both gallery ranges and field ranges. Again our team performed very well again, coming third overall. They had to engage targets at a variety of distances up to 1,000m. Though they were at a slight disadvantage, as our shooter used the AI92 Accuracy International .308 calibre rifle, while most of the other competitors used the larger .338 calibre. The larger calibre gives a flatter trajectory and longer range. However our shooter was well able to compete with the higher-powered weapons.

On the final day, the Irish were leading the field, but with four shoots and a stalk to complete, a total of 200 points was still up for grabs. In the stalk, each team had to get into a shooting position (usually by crawling) close enough to an OP, fire on a target and record a message printed on a board. This had to be done within ninety minutes over 1,000m of ground. The Irish scored 95% in the stalk.

In the four final shoots, each team had to engage targets, again up to 1,000m. Commonly termed as 'unknown distance' shoots, both the shooter and spotter had to work together using a spotting scope or their rifle's telescopic sight to accurately judge the correct distance to the target in order to hit it. With their stalk score and by achieving the highest combined mark over the four final shoots, the Irish reined supreme.

We had little time to celebrate our success as transport left the base for Stockholm Airport in the early hours of the following morning. However, with a bag full of crystal, the journey didn't seem that long.

Aside from winning the competition and enhancing our sniping profile on the international stage, the competition was of huge benefit with regard to information sharing and knowledge gathered, which will be of a huge benefit to the Defence Forces in the future. Friendships were forged and contacts made that will pay dividends when it comes to future sniper competitions and overseas deployments.■



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