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ARMY RANGER WING 'SPECIAL'

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is not knowledge - but action”

Herbert Spencer, philosopher (1820 - 1903)

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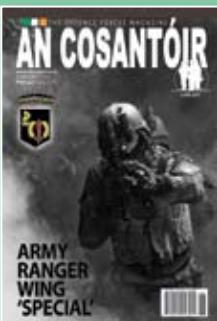
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Contents

VOLUME 77
Number 05
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CONTENTS



Sport



History

FEATURES



12 Forging A Special Operations Force
By Paul O'Brien



14 SOF Qualification Course
By Capt ARW



18 Using SOF to respond to Terrorism
By Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald

20 SOF: An Underutilised Tool in UN Peace Operations
Author's name withheld



26 Counter IED: training the trainers
By Lt Brian Clarke, BA, LLM, & 2/Lt John Nevin



28 "GO! GO! GO!" RDF FIBUA
By CQMS Michael Barrett RDF

REGULARS

- 6** On Parade
- 8** In Focus
- 10** Veterans News
- 22** Sport
- 25** Tac Aide
- 32** History
- 39** Gear Up
- 40** Notice-Board
- 41** Reviews
- 42** What I Do ...

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PRESENTS

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Front Cover

ARW team members training in Fort Davis, Cork in May 2017.
Photo by Armn Adam Murphy

For more Defence Forces photographs, checkout: www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine

Editorial

Hello and welcome to our Army Ranger Wing special edition for June. We have spent the last number of weeks working with the ARW to bring you a comprehensive number of articles covering topics like their founding, training, and fitness, as well as looking at their operational uses at home and abroad. At the outset I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who helped to make this special issue possible.

Meanwhile, as usual our popular *On Parade* features your photographs from around the DF and the military community. *In Focus* covers both ends of the island, starting with a piece about the 5th Listowel Military Tattoo, down south, and then *An Easter Monday to Remember at Rockhill House*, up north in Letterkenny. In our *Veterans News* slot we learn of our Irish brethren who fought with Australia in the Great War, and about the United Irish Ex-Services Association of Australia's (UIESAA) battle to have a monument built in Sydney in their honour. Our ARW features start with a look back at the unit's origins in *Forging A Special Operations Force (SOF)*, by author and military historian Paul O'Brien. Our front-cover feature looks at the *SOF Qualification Course* in detail and is written by a successful candidate. This is followed up by *Recommended Reading List for all SOFQ Candidates*, which is a comprehensive list of military books covering leadership, experiences and tactics.

Next we have two articles looking at the use of SOF: *Using SOF to Respond to Terrorism* refers to SOF being used on-island for ATCP tasks; and *SOF: An Underutilised Tool in UN Peace Operations* looks at SOF on peace-support operations overseas that may require specialised military elements to complete the mission. Our centrepiece features a fitness guide for SOFQ candidates to help with their training and recovery. Our features continue with *Counter IED: train the trainers*, written by students on a recent counter-IED instructor course conducted by the Ord Sch, DFTC. CQMS Michael Barrett RDF gives us a great look at RDF FIBUA training in "GO! GO! GO!" Staying with the RDF, Lt Col Gerry Maguire RDF briefs us on *Developing the Reserve*, which looks at continuous professional development (CPD) and professional military education (PME) programmes for reservists.

In the first of three history articles Paul O'Brien brings us back to 1920s Ireland to look at *The Auxiliary Division: British Special Forces during the Irish War of Independence*. This is followed by a story about German Special Forces in World War II: *Behind Enemy Lines: the Brandenburg Kommandos*.

Finally, Tom Burke brings us back 100 years to tell us how Ulster loyalists and Irish nationalists fought side by side to capture the village of Wijtschate and the Messines Ridge in June 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres, or Passchendaele as it became more commonly known.

Plus, we have our regular *Tac-Aide*, *Gear Up*, *Noticeboard*, *Reviews* and *What I Do* features.

Finally, check out our competitions and results on pages 11, 39 and 40.

Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald - Editor

80KM CONNEMARA HIKE IN AID OF BEAUMONT HOSPITAL

Jason Neary from Dundalk, and ten of his colleagues from the Irish army - all based in Gormanston Camp - are undertaking a 80km cross country hike through Connemara on 29th May to raise funds for the Stroke Unit in Beaumont Hospital. In 2011, Jason suffered a stroke at age 27, and spent several weeks in the care of the Unit. Six years on, Jason has made a full recovery and is once again 'fit for action!' He and his fellow soldiers want to support the Stroke Unit following Jason's experience and have devised this challenge, which will see them set off at midday and hike through the night to complete their challenge, while carrying 40kg packs.

Speaking about their plans, Jason says: "We will set out from Maam village and the plan is that we finish at Croagh Patrick some 15 hours later. The lads and I have been training hard for the challenge and are confident that we can complete the distance in this time. Our real objective will be to raise as much funds as we can for the Stroke Unit in Beaumont Hospital, where I was looked after so well."

If you would like to sponsor the lads, you can donate online at www.idonate.ie/80khike; call Beaumont Hospital Foundation on 01 809 2161 to make a donation by phone; or see www.beaumontfundraising.ie.

Back (l-r): Jason Neary, Conor Branigan, Brian Geraghty, Brian McCabe and Craig Ratchford. Front (l-r): Blain Cromie, John Agnew, Mark Gardiner and Gerard Hoey.





▲ C-IED INSTRUCTOR COURSE

Pictured are students and instructors on the C-IED Instructor Course that was held from 6th – 24th March 2017 in the Ordnance School, DFTC. The Class is pictured with OIC Ord Sch, Lt Col Ray Lane and instructors: Lt Fleming, Cpl Carr and Cpl Forsyth. Photo: Cpl Alan Carr, Ord Coy, DFTC



▲ 47TH CADET CLASS REUNION

Thirty members of 47th Cadet Class along with two of their instructors, Lt Col Pascal McCann (Retd) and Col Con McNamara (Retd) attended a reunion in Blarney, Co Cork to mark the 45th anniversary of their joining the DF as cadets on 6th April 1972. Photo: Lt Col Ger O'Halloran RDF Retd and courtesy of Col George Kerton Retd



▲ DIAGNOSTIC TECHNICIAN COURSE

The 1st Diagnostic Technician Course was run in the Transport School, DFTC from 30th January - 10th March 2017, where the 12 students (11 military and 1 civilian) were put through their paces by the instructors. The course involved multiple assessments, which had to be passed in order to progress, and all students were expected to do considerable study in their own time. These students will now bring their expertise on diagnostics back to their home units. Photo: Lt Áine McDonough, Tpt Sch, DFTC Tpt Gp



◀ SEARAIT TYWANG MEMORIAL RUN

On May 14th 2017, Armn Luke O'Neill completed the Searlait Tywang memorial half marathon (21.1km), in full kit (18.1kg). The event set up in 2016 by Searlait's parents Mairead and Paul after Searlait (5) passed away from Cancer. This is Luke's 2nd time competing in this event, where he raised over €1,500 for Aoibheanns Pink Tie. Photo: Sgt Karl Byrne

◀ 110 INF BN UNIFIL

The 110 Inf Bn UNIFIL deployed to South Lebanon in May 2017. The unit was formally established on Monday 13th March 2017 with 336 personnel drawn from across the Defence Forces. Minister for State with Responsibility for Defence, Mr Paul Kehoe TD inspected the 110 Inf Bn on the 5th May 2017 in Athlone Town. Photo: Cpl Colin Delany, 2 Bde HQ

◀ PTE ANDREW WICKHAM REMEMBERED

IUNVA members are pictured at the Andrew Wickham Memorial on the 7th May 2017 in Barntown, Co Wexford. Pte Andrew Wickham died while serving with 'A' Coy, 36 Inf Bn in the Congo in 1961. Photo: Patrick Hogan



▲ DEFENCE ATTACHE WEEK

Pictured are the 34 Defence Attachés with Defence Forces Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM and members of the General Staff. The purpose of the week was to update and inform Ireland's partner nations and is coordinated by the Defence Attaché Liaison Office (DALO) in McKee Bks. *Photo: Armn Adam Murphy*



▲ 45TH APPRENTICE CLASS REUNION

On Friday 19th May a class reunion took place at Casement Aerodrome for the 45th Apprentice Class. *Photo: Armn Jimmy D'Arcy, No 5 Sp Wing*



▲ D OPS VISITS EUTM MALI

D Ops recently visited Irish troops with a view to gaining a comprehensive brief of the work DF personnel are currently doing in EUTM Mali. Pictured L/R: Lt Col T Ging, Chief J4 EUTM Mali, Col D Dignam, D Ops and Lt Col B Norton, EO KTC and SNR IRCON9. *Photo: Comdt Niall Buckley (IE DF), EUTM - J1 OPS*



▲ THE BIMALIATON 22KM FUN RUN MALI

Four members of IRCON 9 EUTM Mali recently competed in the 1st Bimaliaton in Bamako. The Bimaliaton is a 22km fun run. Pictured L/R: Sgt C McChesney, CQMS A McCarthy, Lt G Rooney and Comdt N Buckley. *Photo: Comdt Niall Buckley (IE DF), EUTM - J1 OPS*



▲ VISIT OF HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES TO IRELAND

On the 12th May 2017, HRH The Prince of Wales accompanied by HRH the Duchess of Cornwall visited Glasnevin Cemetery and laid wreaths with Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Heather Humphries TD, at the Cross of Sacrifice and the Necrology Wall. Military Ceremonies accompanied both of the wreath laying and the VC Stone unveiling, along with a minute's silence, pipers lament, last post and reveille. On the day previous HRH The Prince of Wales visited the United Nations Training School Ireland (UNTSI) where he met international military service personnel and invited guests while being briefed and touring the location. *Photo: Armn Adam Murphy*

JIN FOCUS

Listowel Military Tattoo

BY CPL LEE COYLE PHOTOS BY CPL KELLY GALLAGHER

The military show season has begun and Listowel Military Tattoo is always one of the first and is highly recommended among enthusiasts. *An Cosantóir* was at hand to sample some of the displays and re-enactments, while also getting the chance to set up a stall to sell and familiarise people with our magazine.

This is the fifth annual Tattoo to be held and usually runs over the May bank holiday weekend. It always brings a large crowd of enthusiasts, historians, and like-minded military aficionados to the town. This year's event was dedicated to Captain John I. O'Sullivan, a native of Tralee, who was a helicopter pilot in the 174th Aviation Company, US Army, and was one of the most highly decorated combat pilots in US Army Aviation. His awards include a Distinguished Service Cross awarded for

actions during the Vietnam War, six Distinguished Flying Cross, five Purple Hearts, three Bronze Stars, and three Silver Stars.

Over the weekend of the Tattoo there was lots to see around the town including a replica Spitfire (built by members of the Listowel Men's Shed for last year's show), that sat proudly in the town square and was a great sight to see for motorists and people on foot as they came into the town. A Living History Park was set up just off the main square that was filled with different eras of militaria, from the middle ages to modern day, so there was lots to catch the imagination of all ages. Some great displays of Viking and Middle ages, showing aspects of life, with great staged fight scenes using swords and shields.

One of the main highlights of the show was a working Huey Helicopter that seen service in Vietnam, similar to what Captain John I. O'Sullivan would have flown during his career. The helicopter on loan from a private collector had flown over from England in the days previous. Its familiar sound became a great addition to the show, as it completed aerial flybys and demonstrations, which was an interesting sight and really added to the experience.

On the second day of the event, veterans from around the country and other nations held a parade and wreath laying ceremony with a special memorial service for Captain O'Sullivan. Invited Veterans from the US Army, who had served with him, spoke of their fondness and also told the

inevitable war stories of his heroics and his great leadership, which gave you a sense of connection to the man himself.

On the final day there was a performance from the Bombshell Belles, an acapella style group, who performed some popular music of the 40s and 50s. They serenaded the large crowd that had gathered in the town square. After their performance a battle re-enactment took place in the square against axis and allied forces.

The Listowel Military Tattoo is a very enjoyable festival that is a must for anybody with a military interest, with something to see and do over the whole weekend. The show closes with a Hanger Dance on the last night, with some people dressing in WWII period attire and accompanied by another entertaining performance by the Bombshell Belles. ■



An Easter Monday to Remember AT ROCKHILL HOUSE

BY THERESE MCKENNA OF
STORYBURST.ORG

It was truly an Easter Monday to remember at Rockhill House, Letterkenny, Co Donegal, as some 230 current and retired members of the Defence Forces gathered at their former garrison to enjoy a first glimpse of its revival – and to recall and celebrate times gone by.

The day was coordinated by retired Col Declan O'Carroll and organised by owners, the Molloy family, in recognition of Rockhill's proud military history. The Molloys were keen that the soldiers who served here should be the first to see how their former base is being transformed.

The renovation of the property to its former Georgian glory is now close to completion and Rockhill House is scheduled to open this June as an exclusive wedding and special events venue.

The day commenced with Mass celebrated by Fr Alan Ward CF in the new Orangerie. Fr Ward had travelled from Finner Camp as part of a significant delegation of serving DF members.

Young Manorcunningham singer, Amy Meehan, sang during the Mass and was joined on the recessional hymn, *How Great Thou Art*, by a rousing throng of male voices from the congregation. This was followed by a refrain played by two military pipers dressed in full regalia.

A/OC 28 Inf Bn, Comdt John Martin, paid tribute to the camaraderie of those soldiers who had endured the best and worst of times together in Letterkenny. He also praised the work of the Molloy family in bringing life back to Rockhill House. *"I had the great privilege of leading B Coy out of Rockhill – a bittersweet thing on a sad day for us as soldiers."*

He continued: *"Down through the years for you who served here, the long hours, the unpredictability, the difficult circumstances and poor conditions, were all endured with good humour; with positive attitude; and with loyalty towards the organisation, the unit and each other. The comradeship and teamwork that existed is something we should not forget. Those are very important qualities and I pay tribute to you as soldiers and former soldiers of the 28th Battalion, the 24th Battalion, the 50th Battalion, and other units that are here today."*

Comdt Martin concluded: *"I'd like to pay tribute to John Molloy for the vision, the courage, the determination and energy that have gone into changing a location that was on the way down into one that is on the way up. Rockhill is now a going concern; beautifully restored and brought back to life in a manner that will enhance not just Letterkenny, but also the entire North-West. That is a significant achievement; we are delighted that you have done it; and we pay tribute to you for doing it."*

Rockhill General Manager Donal Cox said: *"The great depth of love that exists for Rockhill was very evident today. From early morning we all knew that a special day was in store as the regiments of soldiers began to arrive. I extend warm thanks to Father Alan and the Defence Forces in assisting to make the day possible - the first of many reunions at Rockhill."*

The day finished with tours of the house where former soldiers were able to see the transformation that had taken place. Many swapped tales of how day-to-day life was in the garrison – the boxes of just-churned butter and churns of fresh milk for the tea; the treat of thick jam sandwiches; the tricks with light switches to make a gullible comrade think the ghost of the Blue Lady was on the prowl; tours to Lebanon and beyond; and the night-time Troubles-era searches for a simple way home along the winding Border. ■

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VETERAN'S NEWS VETERAN'S NEWS VETERAN'S NEWS

The Irish Soldier in Australia

BY PADDY ARMSTRONG JP

It is a sad fact, particularly for those who remain behind, that Ireland has lost tens of thousands of its sons and daughters to migration, with many to Australia.

At the outbreak of the Great War 6,800 Irishmen living in Australia enlisted voluntarily in the Australian Imperial Force; this is almost the equivalent to the strength of seven wartime battalions. Of these, 970 died.

Meticulous records kept by the Australian Military Authority show these men, in order of numbers enlisting, came from: Antrim, Dublin, Cork, Down, Tipperary, Derry, Clare and Kerry.

One of these volunteers received the Victoria Cross, the highest award 'for gallantry in the face of the enemy'. Pte Martin O'Meara, originally from Tipperary, who served with the 1st Division (Australia), was awarded the VC for his actions in France in 1916. The medal citation states: *"During the fighting at Pozières, he displayed a total disregard for danger, repeatedly going out into no man's land to rescue wounded men and to carry up ammunition. He did this for four days."*

Martin died in Australia in 1935.

The United Irish Ex-Services Association of Australia (UIESAA) is currently seeking assistance from the Irish Government for a monument to be built in Sydney to honour these brave men who fought and died for their adopted

country. UIESAA has made many submissions to various authorities in Australia on this issue (see uiesaa.wordpress.com for submissions) and is continuing to raise funds for the project.

One interesting fact is that on the island of Ireland there are 25 Australian war graves and 18 Australian war memorials, yet Australia has none for its Irish soldiers.

UIESAA are hopeful the Irish Government will assist with their project and will discuss the matter with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

Patrick Armstrong, formally of the Royal Ulster Rifles, founded the UIESAA in 2005. It is a strictly non-sectarian, non-profit association, and receives no finance from government. Membership is open to any Irishman or woman who served in any Allied military force, reserves, cadets or Territorial Army unit. Although ostensibly an Irish outfit, UIESAA has Australian-born vets who identify with Ireland and the Irish race.

The Association marches in Sydney on St Patrick's Day and Anzac Day and currently has 40 members. In the 2017 ANZAC parade, UIESAA had the honour of being led by IUNVA member John O'Mahony, a Defence Forces veteran, who was wounded during a UN peacekeeping mission in South Lebanon in 1980. John travelled from Ireland to march on ANZAC Day.

Any Irish veteran who would like to make a trip to Sydney on or about 25th April any year can participate and march on ANZAC Day, so please bring your medals, headdress etc. Afterwards we meet up in the Gaelic Club for refreshments. ■

Pte Martin O'Meara, VC 16th Battalion. Photo: H12763/ Australian War Memorial



Pictured centre is Irish Defence Forces Veteran John O'Mahony.



UIESAA members at ANZAC Day, Sydney on 25th April 2017.

For more information email paddyarmstrong2015@gmail.com; visit [www.uiesaa.wordpress.com](http://uiesaa.wordpress.com); or contact UIESAA at PO Box 137, Darlinghurst, NSW 1300, Australia



John O'Mahony leads UIESAA members at ANZAC Day, Sydney.

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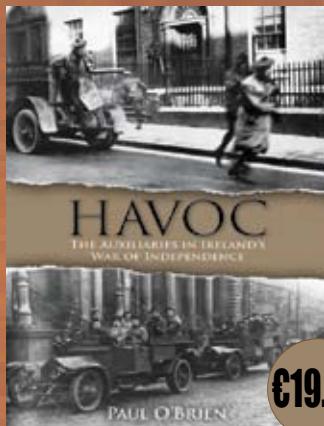
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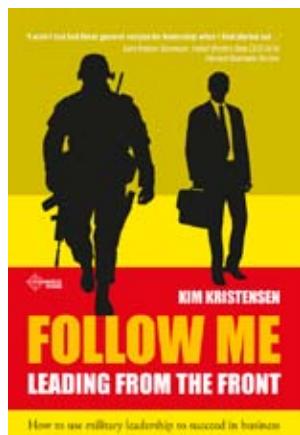
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FORGING A SPECIAL

BY PAUL O'BRIEN

Author and military historian Paul O'Brien was given unique access to interview a long serving member of the ARW.



During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a dramatic increase in international terrorism. The media, reporting on the hijacking of planes, assassinations and the 1972 Munich massacre in Germany, brought home the facts that with terrorism, there were no defined battle fronts, and that civilians were often caught up in the fray. However, in the latter years of the 1960s, it was events in the north of Ireland that found the Irish Defence Forces facing and adopting to a new and demanding period within its history.

In 1968, a number of Irish Defence Forces officers successfully completed a Conventional Ranger Training Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. Following this, plans were submitted to run a ranger course within the Defence Forces. In early July 1969, twelve Irish officers underwent and successfully passed the first Defence Forces Ranger Course in the Military College at the Curragh Camp in County Kildare.

Their objective as outlined in the Syl-

labus of Training stated, 'Using a fighting patrol as a mechanism of instruction, conduct sub unit level special operations in order to improve the personal confidence, leadership and navigation skills of the officer students.'

The completion of this first course coincided with the Civil Rights Campaign in the North, and with the subsequent escalating situation in the region, the Defence Forces utilised its newly trained officers to run ranger type training for Special Assault Groups (SAG) for officers and NCOs from all commands. Between late August and early December 1969, officers stationed in the Military College in the Curragh Camp trained a number of personnel in basic ranger patrolling skills.

In 1978 a presentation paper on international terrorism by Intelligence Section, AHQ identifying the threat to the country, submitted recommendations in relation to the establishment of a special unit. In the months that followed, the Chief of Staff carried out a feasibility study in

relation to costings, personnel, training, equipment etc.

In 1979, the unit was sanctioned by the Department of Defence, which was followed by the appointment of an OC and 2 I/C which took place in early 1980. Soon after, the first selection and training courses were initiated. The Irish Army Ranger Wing entered the international arena as covertly as it was created.

Officially designated 'Sciathan Fianóglach an Airm' which when translated is 'The Army Ranger Wing' with the Fianóglach linking the unit to the traditions of the elite and legendary Irish warriors of the 'Na Fianna'. On successful completion and passing out from the course, the newly qualified operators receive their 'Fianóglach' shoulder tab and the distinctive green beret of the ARW. The Fianóglach tab design is modelled on the US Ranger flash and was produced in 1970 by instructors on the first DF Ranger course. Personnel who serve in the ARW wear a flash with a red embroidered outline, this was in-

FORGING A SPECIAL

OPERATIONS FORCE



ARW members practising TTPs. An Cosantóir, April 1990,
photo Armn John Daly

troduced in the early 1980s to distinguish personnel from the old DF Ranger Course and members of the ARW. The Green Beret was subsequently introduced in 1989.

NATO defines special operations as 'military activities conducted by specially designated, organised, trained, and equipped forces, manned with select personnel, using unconventional tactics, techniques, and modes of employment'. The ARW fits that criteria.

Since its inception, the ARW have constantly revised their selection and assessment procedures and the present format which is in use since 2013 is called Special Operations Force Qualification Course (SOFQ).

The ARW are an integral part of the Irish Defence Forces and in being so, have to adapt to various roles. They include, Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance, Military Assistance and Counter-Terrorism.

Defensive operations include the protection of VIPs, counter insurgency, the training and conduct of specialist operations and delay operations. The unit is also an aid to the civil power and is involved

in counter-terrorist operations. As with similar SOF units throughout the world, the ARW have been trained to conduct counter-hijack operations, hostage rescue, airborne and seaborne interventions, search missions, pursuit, recapture of terrorist held objectives, close protection and contingency planning to counter-act planned terrorist or subversive threats.

The first overseas course that members of the ARW attended was an Anti-Terrorism Intervention Course ran by GIGN in Paris in 1981. Since then, the ARW has fostered a number of relationships with SOF and specialist counter-terrorism police units around the world and conducts regular exchanges and training courses.

The ARW have conducted a number of operational deployments both at home and abroad. The first operation conducted by the ARW was in Ballinmore in December 1983. The kidnapping of the prominent businessman, Don Tidy in December 1983 resulted in the ARW being despatched in

an aid to civil power. They were used as a Quick Reaction Force, providing over-watch, search teams and stop gaps.

Their first official overseas mission specifically for ARW personnel was in Somalia in 1993 as part of UNOSOM II. In 1999 they were deployed to East Timor under the mandate of the United Nations Security Council. They acted as a peace keeping force deployed to restore security in the region. In the aftermath of the Second Liberian War, elements of the ARW were deployed as part of peace keeping contingent with a mixed Irish-Swedish Force. In Chad in 2008, the ARW were part of the initial entry force that completed reconnaissance missions to select a safe operating base for the main Irish and Dutch peace keeping Force.

With the current threat of international terrorism there is a necessity for the Army Ranger Wing to continue to operate at a high level of proficiency at home and abroad in the protection of the state and its people. ■

OPERATIONS FORCE



BY CAPT ARW

A group of candidates stands at ease on the main square of Plunkett Barracks in the Curragh Camp on a blustery September evening. At each candidate's feet are two bulging bags which have been carefully packed with uniforms, equipment and supplies in accordance with the Joining Instructions for the course. As some discreetly look to their left and right they may catch a glimpse of someone they know or recognise, however they will not have met most of the other candidates. Did I pack my TAMs? Have I trained hard enough? Will I pass?

These are just some of the questions that are racing through their minds. The whispering amongst the ranks is silenced as the Directing Staff (DS) from the Army Ranger Wing (ARW) round the corner and approach the square. For many candidates it is the first time they have seen a Green Beret, let alone met a Ranger. As the DS approach the group, a candidate calls the Special Operations Force Qualification (SOFQ) course to attention... Some of them will be gone within hours, others will be there for decades.

The ARW has significantly revised its selection and assessment procedures for prospective unit members in recent years. The ARW Selection & Basic Skills courses have been replaced by a new single course combining the two, which is now called the ARW SOFQ Course. This article provides an overview of the new course and highlights

some recent trends and statistics.

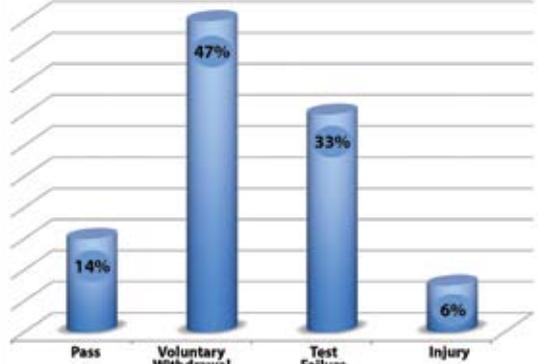
The target audience for the SOFQ course is still officers, NCOs and soldiers of the PDF who possess high levels of physical fitness, navigation skills, personal motivation and the aspiration to serve in the ARW. The SOFQ syllabus is designed to test and assess all aspects of the candidate's character, military skills, ability and general suitability to become a member of the ARW. It also provides the potential unit member with all the skills and knowledge necessary to function in the role of SOF Assault Team Operator on successful completion of the course.

The SOFQ course is 38 weeks long and is divided into 5 distinct modules: Module 1 Assessment & Evaluation; Module 2 Skills & Leadership; Module 3 SOF Tactics Techniques and Procedures (TTPs); Module 4 Counter Terrorism (CT) TTPs and Module 5 Continuation Training.

The objective of Module 1 is to assess the candidate's levels of physical fitness, motivation and suitability to progress onwards to SOFQ Modules 2-5. During Phase 1 of this Module, all candidates must pass a series of fitness assessments, map reading and individual navigation assessments, claustrophobia, water confidence and psychometric testing in order to progress to Phase 2 (an overview of these tests is published on the ARW IKON page). The candidate is then assessed further by a series of individual navigation exercises with set weights but unknown distances and completion times culminating in a 60km cross-country march, carrying a 65lb combat load. Officer candidates are also subjected to rigorous assessment of their planning and decision-making skills to assess suitability to achieve a command appointment in the ARW.

The pass rate for Module 1 in the last number of years has been approximately 20%. In 2016 however, the Module 1 pass rate was at its lowest at 14%. The graph below provides an overview of why candidates did not progress to Module 2 in 2016.

SOFQ ZULU ONE MOD 1 - Candidate Overview



While injury is always a factor in the SOFQ process, voluntary withdrawal was the primary reason why candidates did not progress to Module 2 last year, followed closely by Test Failure. In order to be suc-

cessful, candidates must stay true to their reasons for being on SOFQ. It is tough, but remember: it is simply a means to an end... becoming an ARW SOF Operator is the goal.

At the commencement of Module 2, SOFQ candidates who are of private rank are then promoted to the rank of A/Cpl and are in receipt of ARW Allowances.

Modules 2 – 5 consist of further training and assessment in areas such as SOF weapons & marksmanship, Live Fire Tactical Training (LFTT), SOF Conventional & CT TTPs, combat water survival, SERE, communications & medical training. Candidates are awarded the 'Fianoglach' tab on successful completion of Module 3 and are assigned to the unit and awarded the distinctive ARW Green Beret on completion of Module 4. Candidates are also promoted to the rank of substantive Cpl on conclusion of this Module. During Module 5, SOFQ candidates receive further training in

military leadership as well as SRV Gunnery training.

On conclusion of the SOFQ course candidates are posted to an operational ARW task unit as an Assault Team Operator and can expect to undertake numerous further training in areas such as advanced medical skills, military freefall, combat diving and boat handling, close protection and advanced weapons skills.

The overall pass rate for the SOFQ course (Modules 1-5) is 15%. Of those candidates that pass, 40% are on their second (or more) attempt. There is no doubt that the SOFQ course is inherently tough. It is designed to test character, military skills and physical fitness over an extended period. However, all it takes to succeed is proper mental and physical preparation, coupled with personal motivation and a desire to serve in the ARW.

Log onto the ARW IKON page for more information on SOFQ Course Alpha-Two. ■



RECOMMENDED READING LIST

for all SOFQ Candidates

The development and the broadening of the mind is a critical aspect of a warrior's preparation for battle. As a potential candidate for the ARW selection course it is vital not only to prepare yourself physically but also mentally, and reading is a means for preparing for the future and for combat.

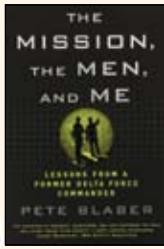
Practical experience, realistic training and formal education are indispensable for the development of first class soldiers and military leaders, as too is independent study. Reading enables a soldier to develop their per-

sonal and professional character. The recommended reading list for SOFQ Candidates consist of the following works, are all available through the Defence Forces Library or your local library, bookshop or on the internet.

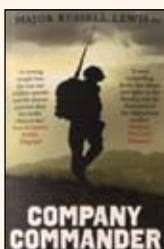
Although it is not mandatory that candidates read all or any of the books listed, however the books have been selected to develop your military knowledge and assist your mental preparation for the course. Commissioned officer candidates are recommended to read as wide a selection as possible to adequately prepare for the SOFQ Officer Assessment Phase on Module One.



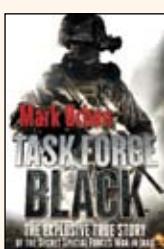
● **Spec Ops – Case studies in Special Operations Warfare Theory & Practice** by William H. McRaven analyses eight special operations that span from World War Two to the 1970s. McRaven who commands a US Navy Seal Team lists the essential principles for successful Spec Ops missions. This work is considered an instructive textbook that is closely studied by students of military strategy and tactics. *Presidio Press (June 1, 1996)* - €12.00 - ISBN: 978-0891416005



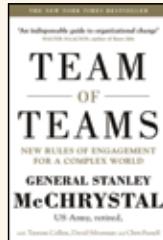
● **The Mission, the Men, and Me** written by Pete Blaber, a Delta Force Commander, is a work about the complexities of combat and leadership that can be applied to the difficulties of everyday business and our personal lives. *Caliber, reprint edition (September 7, 2010)* - €10.00 - ISBN: 978-0425236574



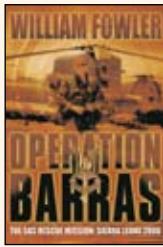
● Major Russell Lewis's book, **Company Commander**, retells the story of his six-month deployment in Afghanistan in 2008 when he commanded 200 soldiers of the British Parachute Regiment. Under continuous fire, this book captures what it's like to make decisions under pressure which may cost the lives of those under your command. *Virgin Books (August 1, 2013)* - €13.00 - ISBN: 978-0753540312



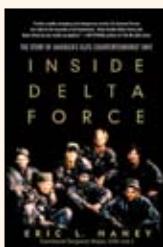
● **Task Force Black** by Mark Urban is an explosive true story of the Special Forces secret war in Iraq. When no WMDs were discovered the war quickly spiralled and operatives were faced with an insurgency that had to be confronted. *St. Martin's Griffin, reprint edition (June 5, 2012)* - €10.50 - ISBN: 978-1250006967



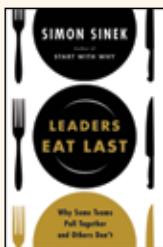
● **Team of Teams** written by General Stanley McChrystal is a work that teaches that conventional warfare against groups such as Al Qaeda in Iraq no longer works and that small compact specialist units are more suited for dealing with this new type of warfare. *Portfolio, 1st edition (May 12, 2015)* - €18.00 - ISBN: 978-1591847489



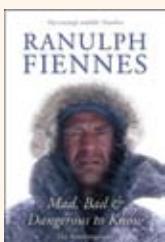
● **Operation Barras** tells the story of the SAS and Para rescue mission in Sierra Leone of a group of British soldiers held hostage in 2000. Written by William Fowler the book also explains the complex political situation within the country at that time. *Cassell, 2nd edition (April 1, 2007)* - € - ISBN: 978-0304366996



● **Inside Delta Force** by Eric L. Haney brings the reader inside America's elite counterterrorist unit. With little or no information about this unit in the public domain, the author provides the reader with an exclusive behind-the-scenes account. *Delacorte Press Books for Young Readers, revised edition (February 10, 2007)* - €7.50 - ISBN: 978-0385732529



● **Leaders Eat Last** by Simon Sinek is a book on the importance of leadership and how to apply it successfully. Sinek illustrates his ideas with fascinating true stories, from the military to manufacturing, from government to investment banking. He shows that leaders who are willing to eat last are rewarded with deeply loyal colleagues who will stop at nothing to advance their vision. *Portfolio Penguin (January 30, 2014)* - €8.50 - ISBN: 978-0670923168

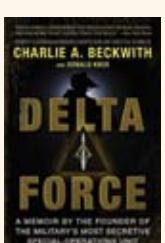


- **Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know** is an autobiography of Ranulph Fiennes. Having travelled throughout the world, this former soldier turned explorer tells of his exploits and adventures on his many quests. *Hodder, reprint edition (May 1, 2008)* - €12.00 - ISBN: 978-0340951699

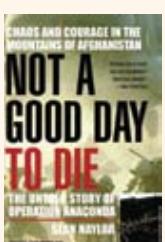


● **An Unsung Hero: Tom Crean - Antarctic Survivor** by Michael Smith is the story of the remarkable Tom Crean who ran away to sea aged 15 and played a memorable role in Antarctic exploration. He spent more time in the unexplored Antarctic than Scott or Shackleton, and was one of the few to serve and outlive both. Among the last to see Scott alive only 150 miles from the South Pole.

alive only 150 miles from the South Pole, Tom was in the search party that found the frozen body. *Collins Press (March 3, 2010) - £12.99 - ISBN: 978-1848890534*

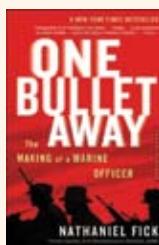


● **Delta Force: A Memoir by the Founder of the U.S. Military's Most Secretive Special-Operations Unit** by Charlie A Beckworth is the definitive insider's account of the US Army's most elite and secretive special-ops unit, written by the legendary founder and first commanding officer of Delta Force. *William Morrow Paperbacks, reprint edition (May 14, 2013)* - €8.20 - ISBN: 978-0062249692



● **Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda** by Sean Naylor. Award-winning combat reporter Sean Naylor reveals how close American forces came to disaster in Afghanistan against Al Qaeda in 2002 - after easily defeating the ragtag Taliban that had sheltered the ter-

rorist organisation behind the 9/11 attacks. *Caliber, reprint edition (March 7, 2006)* - €10.00 - ISBN: 978-0425207871



● Nathaniel Fick's **One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Officer** is a deeply thoughtful account of what it's like to fight on today's front lines, Fick reveals the crushing pressure on young leaders in combat. Split-second decisions might have national consequences or horrible immediate repercussions, but hesitation isn't an option. *One Bullet Away* never shrinks from blunt truths, but ultimately it is an inspiring account of mastering the art of war. *Mariner Books, reprint edition (September 7, 2006)* - €7.00 - ISBN: 978-0618773435



● Legionnaire: An Englishman in the French Foreign Legion by Simon Murray, who was 19 when he joined the French Foreign Legion. Inspired by the romantic myths of Beau Geste, he found himself in the ranks of one of the world's greatest and toughest fighting forces. He kept a unique diary of the hard living, harsh discipline, and the military tradition of 'March or Die' which he turned into this gripping book. *Pan Books, 2nd edition (February 2003) - £10.00 - ISBN: 978-0330485807*

By reading these books as well as others, it enables us to prepare for whatever is to come. The study of military history and leadership offers an inexpensive chance to learn from the experiences of others that will enable us to form a template for solving challenges that we will encounter in our profession. By reading, reflecting and learning we will increase our understanding of our history, the global situation and the enduring lessons of war.

Using SOF to respond to TERRORISM

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD PHOTOS BY SGT KARL BYRNE AND ARMN ADAM MURPHY

“Your ideal position is when you are present and not noticed.”

- Lt Col TE Lawrence, 1917

W arfare changes constantly and asymmetrical (unbalanced) warfare has become prevalent in today's conflicts; from small terrorist cells to large-scale militia forces with varying doctrines and agendas operating against conventional forces in urban and rural settings. These situations, where conventional forces can find themselves ill equipped and ill trained for a particular job, are when special operations forces (SOF) are tasked. In addition to these roles abroad however, many militaries also utilise their SOF units at home in a counter-terrorism role.

“We'd be foolish to think that we are immune from terrorism,” said Taoiseach Enda Kenny after he called a meeting to discuss Ireland's national security in the wake of terrorist attacks in Sweden and Germany.

On the 12th of April 2017, the Taoiseach told the Dáil: *“These are things that we cannot be distant from. We are a non-aligned, non-aggressive country, and though the threat is always present, it is not at a high level in Ireland and we try to keep it that way”*.

The government's White Paper on Defence (2015) states: *‘The threat to Ireland as a target of international terrorism remains under constant review, taking into account developing security threats, including identified common risks that arise for western democracies generally. The experiences in the USA on 11th September 2001 and subsequently in Madrid 2004, London 2005, Glasgow 2007, Stockholm 2010, Norway 2011, Brussels 2015, Paris 2015 and Tunisia 2015, not only provide stark examples of this uncertainty, but clearly indicate that these attacks might*



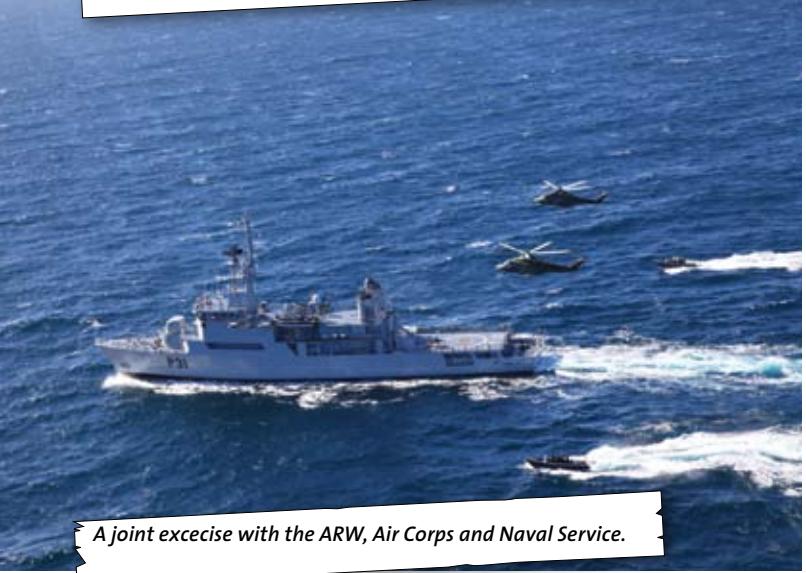
Irish ARW Special Operations Maritime Task Unit (SOMTU) team training as part of an Aid to Civil Power (ATCP) tasking.



Police and other emergency services assist an injured woman near the Manchester Arena, 22nd May 2017. Photo: Joel Goodman/LNP/REX/Shutterstock



Irish ARW teams training for on-island tasks in Aid to Civil Power (ATCP).



A joint exercise with the ARW, Air Corps and Naval Service.

inspire subsequent plots. The experience in other European countries has shown that the threat level can escalate rapidly and the source and intensity of that threat can dif-

sance (SR) and military assistance (MA).

These categories are defined by NATO doctrine as follows: DA is a *precise offensive operation conducted by SOF, which*

fer. A threat can also emerge suddenly as a result of factors that lie outside the control of government. Events such as these are a continuing concern.'

Although the Irish Government does not have a consolidated national counter-terrorism strategy, there are a range of counter-terrorism efforts being made by a number of government departments, as well as frontline agencies such as An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces in response to a potential terrorist attack.

The ARW, the Defence Forces military counter-terrorism unit, is prepared to conduct special operations both at home and abroad. On-island special operations are primarily in support of aid to the civil power (ATCP) tasks, such as counter-terrorism operations when requested by An Garda Síochána, while off-island special operations conform to the NATO standard SOF roles: direct action (DA), special reconna-

is limited in scope and duration in order to seize, destroy, disrupt, capture, exploit, recover, or damage high-value or high-payoff targets; SR is conducted by SOF to support the collection of a commander's priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) by employing unique capabilities or joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (JISR) assets; MA is a broad category of measures and activities that support and influence critical friendly assets through organising training, advising, mentoring, or the conduct of combined operations.

While the ARW is capable of conducting these SOF specific roles in an overseas context, the unit's primary function at home is to provide an on-island counter-terrorism response. Potential tasks for the ARW include: anti-hijack operations; hostage rescue; airborne and seaborne interventions; search operations; specialist tasks on land or at sea; pursuit operations; recapture of terrorist-held objectives; VIP security/close protection; and contingency planning to counter terrorist/subversive threats.

In order to prepare for counter-terrorism operations at home, the ARW trains its personnel in combat marksmanship (CMMS), Close Quarter Battle (CQB), CQB Hostage Rescue (CQB-HR), as well as medical and communications skills, to name but a few. Training at home is enhanced further by its members attending courses and training exchanges abroad with other foreign SOF and police units in an effort to maintain international best practices.

After the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellet DSM said: *"We don't know what's around the corner; what challenges might face us. We are an instrument of government to respond to its priorities. The biggest challenge is to ensure our force is ready, usable, and adaptable for the unknown. National security has become increasingly complex, requiring a different type of military; one ready for different types of work."*

As we go to print there was a terrorist attack by a suspected suicide bomber at an Ariana Grande concert at the Manchester Arena on 22nd May 2017, which has left 22 dead and 59 injured including some children.

Now more than ever there is a need to invest in military forces in order to ensure their counter-terrorism units are equipped and trained to the highest levels. The ARW is no different in this regard. ■



An Underutilised Tool in UN Peace Operations

AUTHOR'S NAME WITHHELD



Dutch SOF with MINUSMA in Northern Mali.



Canadian SOF providing military assistance in Iraq.

Peace operations require specialised military elements, such as SOF or SF, to perform high value tasks involving the judicious use of force that will contribute decisively towards the successful achievement of the mission's mandate. These types of operations are known as special operations and are defined by the UN Special Forces Manual as 'military activities conducted by specifically designated, organised, trained and equipped forces, manned with selected personnel using unconventional tactics, techniques, and courses of action'.

To date however, the UN has been slow to embrace the employment of SOF in their operations, unlike other peacekeeping organisations such as the EU or NATO. Although these organisations are dissimilar to one another in certain ways, their employment of SOF should be mirrored. NATO for example has completely recognised the capabilities afforded by SOF units and is leading the way with regards force generation, standardisation, and integration of a number of international contributors. Lessons learned in recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, have shaped the way SOF 'do business'. So much so that many countries utilise their SOF units as instruments of foreign policy to reinforce capacity-building in fragile states, especially to make them more resilient against terrorism and violent extremism.

The practical application of SOF units in peace operations is immense. They are habitually associated with the intelligence process and are deployable in a number of ways to gather information, which is an integral part of the peacekeeping process. In MINUSMA (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali) for example, the need for HUMINT (Human Intelligence) from the field was one of the key reasons for deploying a Dutch SOF unit to access areas where it was difficult to collect crucial information about the mission mandate implementation and force protection.

SOF units are best suited to conduct environmental reconnaissance and threat

assessment during peace operations, as they are trained and skilled in special reconnaissance (SR). Discreet and highly mobile SOF units can cover great distances in specialised vehicles, while increased fire-power, mobility and training allows them to travel in smaller groups. This minimises the impact on the population of volatile areas compared to large conventional forces arriving on mass.

A SOF unit's long range SR capability also allows them to conduct static surveillance operations from overt or covert observation posts (OPs), minimising intrusion on the local population. From these OPs, SOF teams can photograph and gather information on potential adversaries and peace process spoilers. Apart from their limited use in MINUSMA however, SOF units have rarely been utilised in this role in any great significance by the UN in recent years.

SOF personnel are also trained to carry out direct action (DA) missions. When deployed with the UN these specialised tasks can include hostage rescue operations (HRO). There have been multiple incidents that have involved the kidnapping of UN soldiers in the past across a number of missions. For example, in August 2014, forty-five UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) soldiers from Fiji were captured from their UN post in Syria and taken hostage by the Al Qaeda affiliated Al-Nusra Front (ANF). The Fijians were held captive for two weeks and held for ransom for a number of ANF demands. They were subsequently released unharmed on 11th September 2014. It is still unclear why ANF released the hostages, however had they not, a HRO would have been difficult to launch considering there is no SOF unit deployed with UNDOF. A SOF HRO capability should be considered as part of force protection measures in peace operations that are exposed to the threat of kidnapping in order to save lives.

HROs by SOF units have also been necessary in the past for the protection of civilians, as demonstrated in Janu-

ary 2004 by the Irish Army Ranger Wing (ARW) in UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia). The ARW successfully rescued 35 beaten captives that were being held by Government of Liberia forces during a raid operation. This incident demonstrates the necessity for highly skilled SOF in any peace operation where the protection of civilians may become an issue.

SOF units are also especially trained and equipped to conduct personnel recovery operations (PRO). These operations are an essential military function used to recover personnel when they have become isolated or separated from their unit.

Another capability provided by SOF is military assistance (MA). MA is defined as 'a broad category of measures and activities that support and influence friendly assets through organised training, advising, mentoring, or the conduct of combined operations'. SOF teams are generally suited for this type of task given their small unit structures and broad skill-sets. The use of SOF in this role is an example of how they can be utilised at the other end of the spectrum of peacekeeping during the peacebuilding phase, by professionally training local military and police to maintain the peace themselves.

Finally, SOF units are generally readily deployable at short notice and are therefore suited for hasty peace operations. Their logistical footprint is generally quite small and their personnel are robust and suited for hasty deployments. Insertion methods such as parachuting and boatmanship also affords SOF a unique capability to quickly gain access to an area, by overt, discreet or covert means.

SOF units bring a wide range of capabilities to the peacekeeping equation given their ability to conduct highly flexible SR, DA and MA missions in challenging environments. Nevertheless, the employment of SOF in UN peace operations to date is lacking. If the UN wishes to overcome the challenges of 21st century peace operations, it should endeavour to enhance its use of this 'underutilised tool'. ■

ARW SUSTAINABLE FUNCTION PROGRAMME

BY ARW S&C COACH

The ARW Sustainable Function Programme (SFP) is designed to help ARW candidates to prepare properly for the demands of the SOFQ process. The SFP emphasises physical preparation for SOFQ MOD 1 – Assessment & Selection. SOFQ MOD 1 is designed to select candidates who have the potential for further training in the SOFQ process. It is both physically and mentally demanding with a high attrition rate. However, with the correct preparation any motivated Soldier, Sailor or Airman can pass SOFQ MOD 1 and put him/herself in the position to continue through the SOFQ modules. A word of caution, this is an extended strenuous period of physical training. Candidates should be injury free and reasonably fit before commencing the programme.

"We must prepare as we are going to compete in the Olympics, without knowing when or what event we are competing in"

Every operational member of the ARW is unique, as each is trained to perform a task that is vital to the successful completion of the mission. The physical demands of the unpredictable nature of service in the ARW requires that Unit members maintain an excellent standard of physical fitness, be adaptable and face challenges head on. Physical fitness is a critical attribute for an ARW Operator. Therefore, the physical demands placed on ARW candidates during the SOFQ process reflect the actual job demands.

THE SUSTAINABLE FUNCTION PROGRAMME

The ARW SFP is 15 weeks in total. It is recommended that candidates achieve a minimum Grade 4 on the DF Annual Fitness Assessment before commencing this programme. The following table provides an overview of the SFP. The full programme can be found in the next edition of *Connect* with a detailed description of the exercises on the ARW IKON home page.

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
WK 1	FC	FC	FC	FC	RD	RD	RD
WK 2-5	TD	TD	TD	TD	TD	RD	RD
WK 6	FC	FC	FC	FC	RD	RD	RD
WK 7-8	TD	TD	TD	TD	TD	HD	RD
WK 9 & 12	TD	TD	TD	TD	HD	HD	RD
WK 10-11	TD	TD	TD	TD	TD	HD	RD
WK 13	TD	TD	TD	HD	HD	HD	RD
WK 14	FC	FC	FC	FC	RD	RD	RD
WK 15	TA	TA	TA	TA	RD	TD	<i>SOFQ MOD 1</i>

FC = Fitness Check / RD = Recovery Day / TD = Training Day / HD = Hills Day / TA = Taper Day

TIME TO GET STARTED - THE ARW SFP HAS FOUR DISTINCT STAGES:

Stage 1 (Weeks 1-6): This is the initial preparation phase to prepare the body and mind for stage 2. Stage 1 concentrates on improving the candidate's mobility, core strength and general conditioning. The training sessions are structured to ensure maximum recovery. This allows physical adaptations to the exercise stimulus to take place. Completion of Stage 1 is essential for the less fit candidate. This helps mitigate against the risk of injury. Those candidates who are of a higher level of fitness can progress to week 4 of the SFP after completing the fitness check.

Stage 2 (Weeks 7-12): This is the core stage of the SFP. It is here that the hard work takes place and physical and mental robustness is developed in advance of SOFQ MOD 1. Stage 2 incorporates two, three week phases. Both phases culminate with a demanding training week with training days involving two training sessions and two hill days in the training week. Completion of stage two is essential to progress onto stage 3.

Stage 3 (Week 13): This is the most demanding week in the training with three hill days. This stage should be completed with caution. Elements of this training week can either be removed or reduced in

duration and or intensity if the candidate feels that injury is likely. However, this week helps the candidate develop his/her resilience and confidence in anticipation for SOFQ MOD 1.

Stage 4 (Week 14-15): Stage 4 is the culmination of the SFP. In this stage, the candidate completes a fitness check and a prolonged taper. This taper is essential to ensure that the candidate is in optimal physical condition commencing SOFQ MOD 1. Remember, your aim is to peak on the Endurance! (the culminating test, 60km over mountainous terrain carrying 60lb +, while averaging 4km/hr)

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCE OF SUCCESS:

Attend the SOFQ Prep & Orientation Course

This course is conducted annually in May/June. It is one week in duration and gives the SOFQ candidate an excellent insight into the SOFQ process and operational service in the ARW. The weeks training concentrates on developing the candidate's ability to navigate in mountain terrain both in day and night and in all weather conditions. Heavy emphasis is also put on the candidate's physical and mental preparation in advance of SOFQ. This tuition is provided by ARW Task Unit Members and ARW Strength & Conditioning coaches in co-operation with DF Physiotherapy.

Talk to your Commander

Time is the number one reason why many candidates do not complete the SFP. Talk to your commander and explain the demands of the programme. In many instances, Commanders may facilitate the completion of elements of the SFP during duty hours. Explain to your commander that most voluntary withdrawals from SOFQ MOD 1 can be attributed to candidates NOT preparing adequately and emphasise the importance of fully completing the SFP.

Train as a group

The SFP and process involved in preparing for SOFQ MOD 1 is very demanding on the candidate. During this period, and while on SOFQ, it is very difficult to maintain a work-life balance. If several candidates from your unit are intending on participating in SOFQ MOD 1 then group training is strongly advised. Talk to your Unit PTI and ask for assistance in conducting the training sessions for the group. Where possible try to conduct your hill training days in a group for safety reasons.

Use Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) to monitor training load:

RPE on the Borg Scale is an excellent tool for monitoring training load (this is explained fully in the Tactical Athlete Conditioning Programme on the ARW IKON Site). Consistently high training loads without adequate recovery will lead to injury. The RPE allows the candidate to monitor his/her training loads, thus reducing the risk of injury.

Some advice from the Physio

DF Physiotherapy has been working closely with the ARW over the past 12 months in an effort to understand, measure, adapt to and inform on elements of training to ensure optimal performance and injury prevention.

From this experience, some of the key learning points from DF Physiotherapy for SOFQ Candidates would be to re-iterate the need to prepare adequately for the level of strenuous physical activity involved. The Sustainable Function Programme offers an excellent and measured approach to building resilience for undertaking the SOFQ Course.

From an injury prevention perspective, continue to remember to train smart and train hard! There are times when the training you are undertaking may lead to an unexpected recovery period, where your body needs time to heal from injury or illness. This will never be convenient! Recognise this challenge and face it head-on by being proactive in seeking treatment where needed.

Remember that recovery is a time where your body is improving, in order to become better, stronger, faster for the next challenge. The Taper Days of the SFP are an excellent example of added recovery in order to allow your body to be at its best for SOFQ.

Keep an eye out for the Tactical Athlete Conditioning Programme Injury Prevention module which will help identify areas of your movement chain that are sub-optimal. The module will equip you with the necessary information and tools in order to improve your movement and avoid injury, so that you can train harder and for longer. This can be found on the ARW ICON page. Best of luck to all Candidates!



Final thoughts: On completion of SOFQ, successful candidates can look forward to entering the ARW High Performance Support Programme where dedicated Strength & Conditioning Coaches work in co-operation with staff from the Institute of Sport Ireland and DF Physio Service in order to support the needs of the Tactical Athlete. Keep an eye on the ARW IKON page for more updated information and training programmes. ■



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GOTWA DRILL

While on patrol, it is sometimes necessary for a team or unit to split up for a short period of time in order for them to achieve their mission. This may happen when a small recce party needs to move in to assess the suitability of an FRV or an ambush position. It can be quite difficult for the commander on the ground to co-ordinate this movement and even more so at night and on unfamiliar ground. The commander however can utilise the GOTWA Drill to ensure all parties are sufficiently briefed prior to departure.



The GOTWA Drill is a quick reference contingency planning format that can be given prior to an operation during orders or while on the operation itself. It is as follows:

G – GOING (Where am I going?)

O – OTHERS (Who am I taking with me)

T – TIME (Time of my return)

W – WHAT (What to do if I do not return)

A – ACTIONS ON (Actions On Attack/Lost Comms/ CASEVAC)

Example Scenario – An ambush patrol has secured an FRV and has established all round cover. After a 10-minute listen and watch, the patrol commander gathers a recce party and prepares to move forward to site an ambush position. After the recce party have checked their equipment and are ready to move out, the commander issues the GOTWA to the patrol 2IC as follows.

G – ‘I am going to site and secure the ambush position approximately 250m North of this position.’

O – ‘I am taking Cpl Murphy, Cpl Smyth, Cpl McDermott, Pte Lynch, Pte Hoey, Pte McCarty and Pte Clarke with me.’

T – ‘It’s 0235 now, I will be back by 0400.’

W – If I do not return by then, try establish contact with us over comms. If you can’t get us on comms, send a patrol to try re-establish contact with us. If you have not found us by 0530, set up the ambush and carry on with the mission. ■

Once the ambush is complete, move to our 24 RV and wait for us there. If we don’t arrive, follow our Emergency Plan of Action (EPA) and withdraw out of the area.’

A – ‘Action on contact: we will withdraw to the West and try to break contact. If you can, provide fire support. We will RV with you at ERV 1 as discussed earlier. Action on Lost Comms: Wait until 0400 and then send a patrol to try re-establish contact. If you can’t find us by 0530, carry on with the mission as we discussed.’

‘Any questions?’

At this point it is a good idea to recap on your ‘near and far recognition signals’ for the patrol and finally conduct a comms check just before you depart. ■



COUNTER IED

training the trainers

BY LT BRIAN CLARKE, BA, LLM, AND 2/LT JOHN NEVIN
PHOTOS BY CPL LEE COYLE

In March 2017, 40 students completed the intensive three-week 7th Counter-IED Instructor Course with the Ordnance School, in the DFTC. This course is aimed at equipping prospective instructors with a comprehensive knowledge of IEDs, C-IED principles and TTPs (tactics, techniques, and procedures) so that they can educate other Defence Forces personnel in C-IED.



The wide-ranging course included advanced training on drills such as the searching of vulnerable points for vehicle and dismounted patrols; systematic searching using the 5s & 25s system; introduction to weapons intelligence; a power-of-explosives demonstration; counter-IED strategies; group work on the construction of inert IEDs; an IED emplacement exercise; ground sign training; and a multi-vehicle, IED-focused, training exercise.

Since January 2012, all newly-commissioned army officers have completed the C-IED instructor course as part of their PCPSC (Platoon Commanders Peace Support Course), which they undergo soon after being commissioned, and the majority of students on this course were officers from the 11th PCPSC; the remainder were NCOs from various units throughout the Defence Forces.

The IED threat is something that the Defence Forces has become all too familiar with over the last number of decades. Along the border with Northern Ireland, during 'the Troubles', which ran from 1968 to 1998, the Defence Forces, in conjunction with their colleagues in An Garda Síochána, played a vital role in maintaining internal security. Through joint operations the Defence Forces assisted gardaí with vehicle checkpoints (VCPs), border patrols, and searches for caches of paramilitary weapons and explosives.

Between 1969 and 1994 Dublin alone experienced tens of IED incidents. However, with the development of a relative peace in Northern Ireland since 1998, the IED in Ireland has moved from the hands of subversive paramilitary groups and into the hands of hard-line criminal gangs. In 2013, for instance, Defence Forces EOD teams responded to 250 call outs of which 80 were found to be viable IEDs. Even while the 7th Counter IED Instructor course was on-going, EOD teams disposed of three viable IEDs around the country.

On overseas deployments IEDs have been, and remain, a reality for our troops, and several have lost their lives to IEDs while serving with UN peacekeeping missions including three killed in an incident on March 21st 1989 while serving in Lebanon with UNIFIL. In 2008, a roadside IED, again in Lebanon, detonated injuring two soldiers travelling in a soft-skinned vehicle.

In 2013, a Defence Forces patrol on duty with UNDOF on the Golan Heights between Syria and Israel came under small-arms fire. During the incident an Irish APC was hit by a blast, which sheared off one of the wheels and injured troops inside the vehicle.

In Afghanistan Irish troops are deployed with ISAF, playing a key role in instructing the Afghan army and police force in IED disposal, and in the development of ISAF's C-IED strategy.

The C-IED instructor course comprised lectures on the pillars and principles of C-IED in conjunction with practical demonstrations of the drills required to operate in a high-threat IED environment. This combination of theoretical and practical elements helped to foster a greater understanding of the role of C-IED and the degree of flexibility that is required in applying C-IED principles to

an operational situation. The course included a series of assessments in which the prospective instructor had to demonstrate their knowledge of what they had learned and their ability to teach the subject.

Another key aim of the course was to broaden the individual's understanding of the history of IEDs and their evolution. This was achieved through syndicate presentations given by the students, who were given a key IED event, such as the Oklahoma City bombing, to research and present to the class. This exercise generated much discussion and gave the class a greater sense of the capabilities and simplicity of IEDs.

At all times the C-IED staff of the Ordnance School sought to highlight the real-life application of the lessons being learned on the course. Presentations from Defence Forces personnel who have experienced the IED threat first hand and critical analysis of current IED situations being faced by coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq helped achieve this level of realism, which was evident in every aspect of the course.

The course also created an environment in which students could question or offer opinions on the skills, drills, and principles being taught. This level of student engagement developed a positive mindset towards C-IED and encouraged in-depth discussions of the topic. The points raised in these discussions were important as they were included in a detailed lessons-learned report that will be used in the continuous development of the course into the future and in the development of C-IED as an all-arms skill in the Defence Forces.

The 7th C-IED Instructors Course was thoroughly enjoyed by all and on completion of the course the commandant of the Ordnance School, Lt Col Raymond Lane, certified the students as C-IED instructors. Going back to their units, this batch of newly-qualified instructors will act as the future torch bearers for C-IED education throughout the Defence Forces, bringing with them a wealth of knowledge and skills to further enhance the force protection of Irish troops against the IED threat at home and on overseas deployment. ■

About the authors

Lt Brian Clarke BA, LLM: Prior to joining the Defence Forces, Lt Clarke completed a masters of law in Peace Support Operations, International Humanitarian Law and Conflict at NUI Galway. He is serving with 2 Brigade Artillery Regiment.

2/Lt John Nevin: Prior to commissioning 2/Lt Nevin had nine years previous service in the Defence Forces, completing two overseas missions, with UNIFIL (2013) and UNDOF (2015). He has also completed a diploma in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies with NUI Maynooth. He is serving with 1 Armoured Cavalry Squadron.



REPORT AND PHOTOS
BY CQMS (RDF) MICHAEL
BARRETT, 7 INF BN

The Defence Forces maintains several locations for the purpose of FIBUA (fighting in built-up areas) training. This type of training requires buildings and urban obstacles and the DFTC's Multi-Training Facility (MTF) in the Curragh contains these.

It was here that a composite platoon of 7 Inf Bn troops conducted a Young Entry FIBUA course from 18th – 21st April 2017. The course was attended by 24 students, all corporals or privates. Of these, 21 were RDF and three were PDF. The team of instructors were all PDF NCOs from 7 Inf Bn, led by Sgt Wayne Eastwood.

The first day of the course involved learning the basics of non-tactical climbing over walls and up onto buildings by hand and foot, progressing to the use of specialist assault ladders. Once the basics were learnt, the difficulty was augmented by the troops having to wear their battle kit, including body armour, and carrying platoon-level weapons.

Other skills developed included the effective use of assault ladders and heavy specialist tools for gaining forceful entry through locked doors and windows.

But an even clearer requirement of FIBUA quickly became clear to all: sheer raw physical exertion. Carrying the platoon's combat equipment and ladders, along with battle kit, weapons, ammo and water through buildings, up and over walls and other high obstacles, requires immense physical effort.

By the evening of the final day, the course had conducted numerous gruelling attacks. Key appointments had been shared among the students, giving them an understanding of various roles and responsibilities.

As dusk fell there were still two more components of the course to be completed: a night platoon attack on enemy-held buildings, and a company ammunition re-supply mission, which required moving ammo boxes and heavy stores in darkness almost 100m over, under and through obstacles to a predetermined point.

The FIBUA course in the MTF is an intense physical experience, and although only a few days in duration it is a strenuous course to complete for both PDF and RDF personnel. It is certainly the most physically challenging course



for RDF soldiers and a

high grade in a recent fitness test would certainly be of benefit for future applicants. It is certainly a course that all RDF infantry troops should aspire to undergo. ■

The course then progressed to a more tactical phase, using practiced infantry skills to advance over obstacles and enter buildings using fire-and-manoeuvre. This was when the platoon began to realise just how exhausting FIBUA can be; carrying personal battle kit, body armour, ammo, tools, water and weapons, and taking all this weight over walls, through windows, up ladders and through assorted obstacles.

By the second and third day of the course, the platoon had conducted numerous platoon-in-attack drills on a string of buildings within the MTF. Some of these attacks were up to an hour in duration and required large amounts of pyrotechnics while moving from building to building, and from room to room, clearing the enemy.

Indeed, the requirement for a large expenditure of pyrotechnic ammunition emerged as a characteristic of the FIBUA training; each rifleman in the platoon had to carry ten Steyr magazines, adding more weight to already heavy battle kit.



DEVELOPING THE RESERVE

BY LT COL (RDF) GERRY MAGUIRE, SSO RDFTE, HQ DFTC
PHOTOS BY SGT (RDF) MICK MULLIGAN, OTW, INF SCH



Lt Noel Carey with two members of A Coy 35 Inf Bn in Jadotville

Continuous professional development (CPD) and professional military education (PME) are important platforms used in developing the single-force concept (SFC) as part of the creation of a viable and effective Defence Forces reserve. Regular CPD events have been delivered by the Military College since the reorganisation of the RDF in 2013, with the objective of increasing the military skills of officers and NCOs to allow them perform more effectively as part of the regular unit they are assigned to. The attendance of significant numbers of reservists at these events indicates the strong desire among reservists to improve their military knowledge and skills.

In late 2016 it was proposed that reserve leader CPD should be developed by the staging of a military history case study of a relevant DF operation. A combined DFTC G7 and Military College team selected the Siege of Jadotville, which involved A Coy, 35 Inf Bn, in the Congo in 1961, as a suitable subject as it was a company-level operation, the sub-unit level that many reserve officers and NCOs operate at and therefore the most relevant to their military experiences and understanding. A proposal for the project was approved by J7 in early 2017 and planning began.

Comdt Lar Joye RDF, a curator at the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), Collins Bks, Dublin, was contacted for his specialist knowledge and advice. It was decided that a number of selected guest speakers were required to achieve the desired objective of properly examining and understanding the Jadotville operation. Comdt Joye used his contacts to request the attendance of Declan Power, former member of the Defence Forces and author of the book *The Siege at Jadotville: The Irish Army's Forgotten Battle*, which was the basis for the recent successful Netflix film on the operation, and Capt Noel Carey (retd), who had been a platoon commander with A Coy, 35 Inf Bn. Both men kindly agreed to attend.

It was decided to stage the event in the NMI, where the experience of the attendees could be further developed by hands-on access to military vehicles and equipment of the period.

The auditorium in the NMI has a capacity of 65 seats and places were allocated to all formations accordingly. With many RDF events, confirming attendance numbers can be difficult, and it was with great delight that nominations for all places were received by the Officer Training Wing (OTW), Military College.

DEVELOPING THE RESERVE

Lt Niall Stringer RDF and Sgt Michael Mulligan RDF, both OTW, arranged a programme, rations and transport for the event, which was scheduled for Saturday 11th March.

On the day of the event Lt Stringer opened the registration at 1000hrs and soon all 65 seats were filled by RDF personnel from DFHQ, 1 Bde, 2 Bde, DFTC and the Naval Service Reserve.

ACOS Brig Gen Peter O'Halloran delivered the opening address and a leadership presentation. This was followed by a very interesting presentation by Declan Power who skilfully described the world strategic picture in 1961 and

DFTC G7. This will assist in the future delivery of relevant courses and CPD.

This military history case study proved a great success and was received very positively by all involved. It is intended to build on this success with a similar event in 2018. I would like to acknowledge and thank the support and assistance of GOC DFTC Brig Gen Joseph Mulligan; Col M Dawson (D Inf); Comdt D Slattery (OC OTW); Lt Col D Harrington (J7); Lt Col C Dwyer (D PRB); Comdt C King; Capt J Tynan; and RDF Comdt I Conlon (G7 DFTC). A special word of thanks is due to Comdt Joye, Lt Stringer, Sgt

Members of the RDF and NSR visiting Collins Bks, Dublin as part of their continuous professional development (CPD) and professional military education (PME) programs.



set the tone for the more tactical presentation by Capt Carey.

The attendees broke for lunch at 1300hrs during which they were broken down into smaller groups for a tour of the Museum's relevant items, guided by Comdt Joye.

With everyone suitably refreshed after the lunch break it was the turn of Capt Carey to relate his experiences during the action at Jadotville. The old saying that 'you could have heard a pin drop' rang true for this presentation. Capt Carey spoke very honestly and sometimes humorously and it was with great disappointment that the event soon ran out of time as a message over the speaker system announced that the NMI was closing for the day at 17:00hrs.

Capt Carey's presentation was recorded by Lisa Dolan of Military Archives so that his personal experiences could be preserved. The event was also used for a survey of students of past PME achievements by RDF Comdt I Conlon,

Mulligan and Cpl F Nolan (TVMS), for all their work in the background on the day, and to the officers of all formations who supported this event with their attendance and good wishes. ■



Capt Noel Carey Retd, a platoon commander with A Coy, 35 Inf Bn in the Congo, discussing his experience in Jadotville.

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The Auxiliary Division: BRITISH SPECIAL FORCES DURING THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

BY PAUL O'BRIEN MA



Members of the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary. (National Museum of Ireland)

During the Irish War of Independence, the rank-and-file of the RIC and Dublin Metropolitan Police bore the brunt of attacks by the IRA. In a short period of time a campaign of intimidation and violence against policemen and their families had forced many officers to resign.

In the aftermath of the Great War and the Versailles peace talks in 1919, the British Empire found itself overstretched by ever-increasing demands to police its interests in places such as Germany, the Middle East, India and Ireland. The government was concerned that the unrest in Ireland would have a domino effect and spread to Britain's other colonies, where the authorities were unprepared and underequipped to deal with the large number of nationalist movements demanding independence, and the possibility of the violent and bloody insurrections that might occur.

In Ireland the government had been depending on the civil administration based in Dublin Castle and the RIC to deal with the situation. As unrest in Ireland intensified, Sir Winston Churchill suggested establishing a gendarmerie to restore law and order and in July 1920 a new, specialist force, the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary (ADRIC), was raised. This force, comprised solely of ex-military officers, was assigned a tough and dangerous mission by Prime Minister David Lloyd George to take the fight to the IRA. (The Auxiliary Division is distinct from the RIC Special Reserve, also established in 1920, who became known as

the Black and Tans because of their mixed military/police uniforms. However, the name Black and Tans is sometimes incorrectly used to cover both groups.)

Rather than aligning the new force with the army, it was decided to incorporate them into the police, with the new recruits being called temporary cadets. It was envisaged that the Auxiliary Division was to be maintained as an autonomous force and was to be deployed into areas where the IRA was most active, with the mission to 'find, fix and destroy'.

The first recruits arrived at the North Wall Dock, Dublin, from where they were transferred to Hare Park at the Curragh Camp in County Kildare. Here they underwent a brief, inadequate training course on the rudimentary skills of policing. They also received a refresher course in weapons training, consisting of firing and bombing practice, for which they provided their own instructors.

Later headquartered at Beggars Bush Bks, Dublin, the unit was equipped with up-to-date weaponry and an array of vehicles for rapid insertion into areas of operations.

By the end of August 1920, 15 companies had been formed and four



Auxiliaries searching civilians on Amiens Street, Dublin. (Michael Curren)

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were immediately deployed to areas of considerable insurgent activity in counties Dublin, Kilkenny, Cork and Galway. In total there were to be 21 companies, each numbering between forty to 80 temporary cadets, organized along military lines, and deployed as an elite body to seek out and eliminate the IRA.

Realising that IRA intelligence had infiltrated the police, the ADRIC established their own intelligence units to gather information on republican operatives. Utilising their military skills, they began a violent counter-insurgency campaign with raids on IRA safe houses and the lifting of suspects. Their aggressive tactics alienated the population and their actions and techniques were often questioned in the House of Commons, bringing condemnation from both sides of the House.

'Q' Coy and other Auxiliaries pose for photos after the attack on their base at the London and North Western Railway Hotel, Dublin, 11th April 1921. (National Library of Ireland)



The funeral cortège of one of the victims of Michael Collins's squad on its way to Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, 26th November 1920. T/Cadets form an escort while other police officers form guard of honour. (Ernest McCall)



Depot Commandant Auxiliaries Division Adjutant WF Martinson, CO 'L' Coy ADRIC, in April 1921. (R Porter Collection)

The insurgents hit back with ambushes against ADRIC patrols and the assassination of cadets, both on and off duty. An attack on a motorised ADRIC unit at Kilmichael, County Cork, by Tom Barry and his Flying Column resulted in the annihilation of the patrol. Retaliation by Crown forces for such attacks was brutal, with the houses of locals being destroyed and the destruction of local industrial and agricultural infrastructure, which was, in many cases, sanctioned by the authorities.

The very nature of counter-insurgency warfare found the ADRIC operating in a hostile environment with little or no support from the local population, who referred to them as 'the Auxies'. The pressures of operating under such austere conditions often resulted in Auxiliary units taking out their frustrations on the local populace, as can be seen with the burning of Cork City after an IRA ambush in the vicinity.

The force was involved in numerous operations throughout the country and was also accused of conducting black operations resulting in the killing of high-value targets.

Two companies of Auxiliaries responded to the IRA's major attack on the Custom House, Dublin, in May 1921. A fierce gun battle commenced and the building caught fire. The IRA force tried to shoot its way out, with some being killed. In the aftermath of the operation over 100 members of the IRA were arrested and imprisoned, leading to a shortage of trained and experienced volunteers to continue the fight against the British in the capital.

Although smaller operations continued to take place, the British authorities in Ireland believed that the republican campaign was nearing an end as the lack of experienced manpower, weapons and munitions was having a detrimental effect on the organisation.

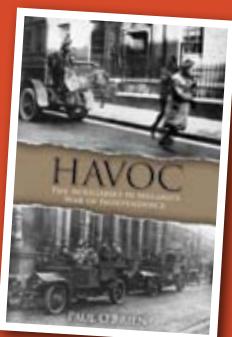
Initial talks between the two sides resulted in a ceasefire and later to the peace talks that gave Ireland its 'Free State' status.

One of the conditions for the cessation of hostilities was that the recruitment of cadets into the Auxiliary Division of the RIC would cease and operations would be suspended. The British government agreed and the force was disbanded in early 1922, with many officers looking to Palestine and its new gendarmerie for further employment and adventure.

Special Forces can be defined as groups that conduct military operations using specially selected, trained and equipped personnel, employing unconventional tactics, techniques and modes of operation. During World War Two Winston Churchill requested 'specially trained troops of the hunter class, who can develop a reign of terror down the enemy coast.' The resulting Royal Marine Commandos are considered by many to be the prototype for modern Special Forces. However, the Auxiliaries, formed after an earlier request by Churchill in 1920, have a valid claim to be considered the 20th Century's first Special Forces unit.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Paul O'Brien is a military historian who works for the Office of Public works at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. A regular contributor to *An Cosantóir* he is also the author of ten books, and has written extensively on the military strategy of the 1916 Rising as well as the British Army in Ireland. His latest book *Havoc: The Auxiliaries in Ireland's War of Independence* is reviewed on page 37. Two of his books, *Blood on the Streets* and *Crossfire*, were turned into the critically acclaimed drama-documentary *A Terrible Beauty*. He lives in Santry, Dublin with his wife Marian and daughter Bláthnaid and their two cats.



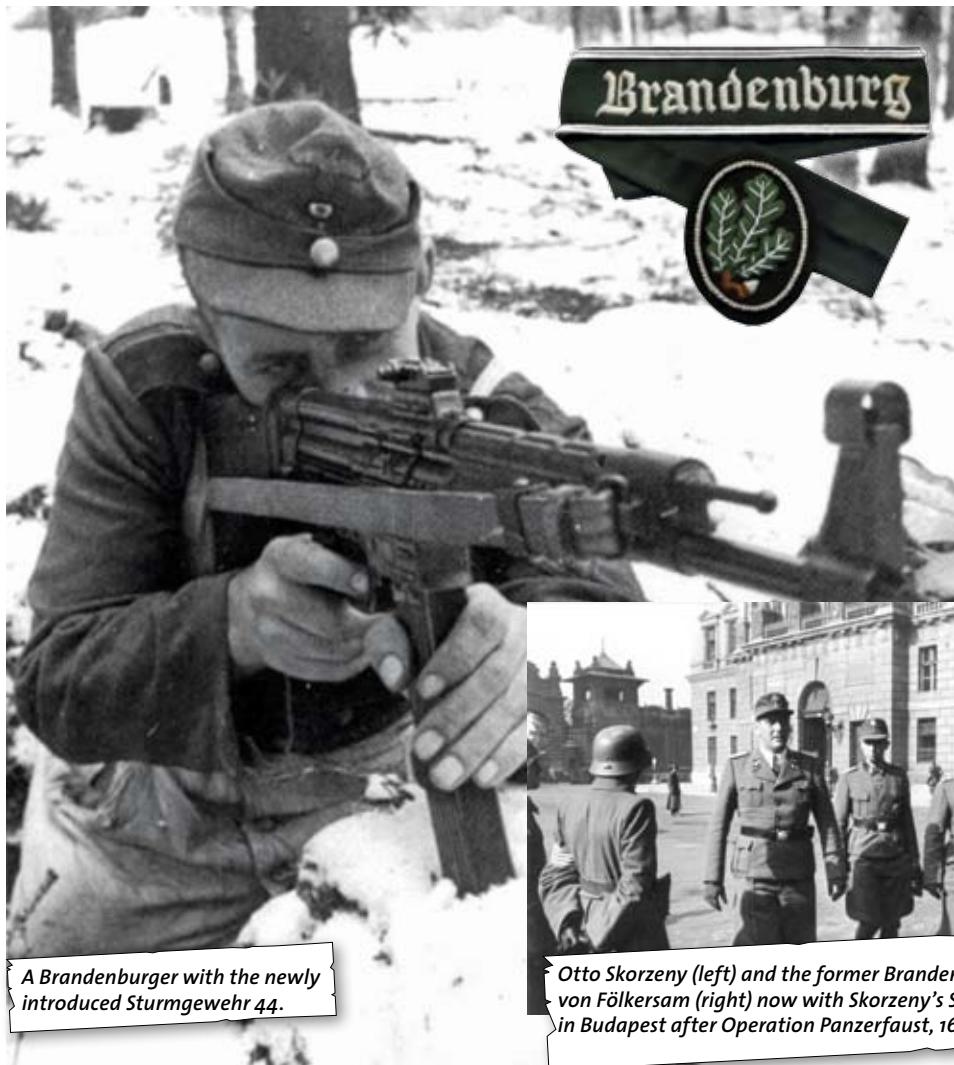
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BEHIND ENEMY LINES

- the Brandenburg Kommandos -

BY PAUL O'BRIEN MA



another, lesser known, group of specialists: the Brandenburg Kommandos.

Originally formed to operate as a section of military intelligence (*Abwehr*), the unit was the brainchild of Captain Theodor von Hippel. Examining the tactics used by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War, Hippel proposed that similar small units trained in sabotage and fluent in foreign languages could operate behind enemy lines, wreaking havoc with the enemy's logistic and communication lines. Initially Hippel's idea met resistance but with the support of his section chief, Helmuth Groscurth, the Army General Staff gave the green light for the formation of 'a company of saboteurs for the west'.



During World War II, the Allies formed many specialist units in order to hit back at Axis strongholds in Europe, North Africa and the Mediterranean. Special Forces units such as the Special Air Service (SAS), the Long-Range Desert Group (LRDG), the Rangers and the Commandos blasted their way into the

history books with tales of daring-do. However, unknown to many the German army had, since the rearmament of their forces in the 1930s, also championed such specialist units and deployed them in many of their campaigns. While the ruthlessness of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) and the bravery of the Fallschirmjäger are well known, there was

Recruitment into the Brandenburgers, like that of the intelligence service, was strictly on a volunteer basis, as in the event of capture they would be treated as spies and executed. Typical recruits were college educated, had civilian occupations before the war, were self-sufficient, mature for their age, self-confident, proficient in languages, and nonconformist. The unit was

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formed into four companies, based on the linguistic skills of its agents.

Training was conducted at Quenzgut, an estate along the Quenzsees, a lake just west of the city of Brandenburg. Classes included swimming, the customs and traditions of potential mission regions, languages, communications, explosives, field-craft, terrain and map reading, weapons, small-unit and individual combat techniques, and infiltration methods such as glider, parachute or fast boat.

Brandenburg units were considered part of the spearhead and were to be deployed in advance of the main force as small commando units to penetrate into enemy territory and conduct both sabotage and anti-sabotage operations. Their skills were so proficient that they could work freely amongst enemy troops, countermanding orders, redirecting military convoys, disrupting communications and reporting intelligence information back to Axis command.

As Germany prepared to invade Poland in 1939, commando units, some dressed as Polish soldiers and others in civilian attire, were dropped behind enemy lines. Units consisting of Polish-speaking Silesians and

support of conventional German forces. Dressed in civilian attire, commandos were inserted by glider into Denmark where they secured primary road and river crossings near the border, enabling motorised infantry brigades to advance into the country. Others, dressed in Danish military uniforms, secured the Great Belt Bridge. A month later they assisted Alpine units as they invaded Norway. In Holland and Belgium they secured bridges and waterways, preventing the lowlands from being flooded, which would have prevented the deployment of German armoured units. In these operations, 42 out of 61 objectives were secured, resulting in Wilhelm Keitel, chief of staff of the German High Command, stating that the force fought 'outstandingly well.' Of the 600 men who participated in these operations, 75 received Iron Cross commendations from Adolf Hitler.

They then turned their attention to the Balkans, participating in Operation Marita, where units took and held the strategically important bridge over the Vardar, as well as securing the gorge on the River Danube that forms part of the boundary between Serbia

and Romania, providing Axis forces with a clear line of advance.

As the invasion of the Soviet Union commenced in June 1941, Brandenburg Kommandos dressed in Russian uniforms secured vital and strategic locations as well as essential oil fields in advance of regular forces.

In order to capture the Dvina Bridge in

Daugavpils, Brandenburgers commandeered a Soviet truck and bluffed their way onto the bridge, overpowered the guards and managed to hold the position against counter-attacks by Russian forces.

The unit went on to operate in Persia, Afghanistan and India. They also carried out commando-type operations against Allied supply lines in North Africa, Egypt, Libya

and Tunisia.

In August 1942, Adrian von Fölkersam was tasked with seizing and securing the vital Maikop oilfields in Russia. This mission would require the Brandenburg Kommandos to penetrate farther into enemy territory than any other German unit had done before. These oil fields had to be captured intact as the petroleum was vital for the German war effort. It would require stealth and cunning to achieve the mission.

Von Fölkersam devised a plan to get through the Russian defences. He disguised his unit as NKVD (Russian secret police) and using Soviet trucks managed to pass through Red Army front lines undetected. Coming across fleeing Russian troops, von Fölkersam improvised. Rallying the retreating Russians, he persuaded them to return to duty and then joined his convoy up with them, using them as cover to penetrate further behind enemy lines without being challenged, allowing him to secure the oil fields and accomplish his mission.

The unit continued assisting regular German military units throughout the war until the tide turned against Germany. In 1944 it was decided that the specialists were no longer needed and some were transferred to infantry units and fought on the Eastern Front while others were assigned to the Grossdeutschland Division. They were involved in fierce fighting near Memel on the Eastern Front and suffered heavy casualties as they withdrew from the battle via ferry to Pillau.

As World War II came to its bloody conclusion, many Brandenburg Kommandos surrendered to British forces at Schleswig-Holstien in May 1945. Others, trained in the skills of evasion, managed to evade capture and disappear. Many enlisted in the French Foreign Legion where their skills, honed behind the lines on the battlefields of Europe and North Africa, would soon be used by the French in Indo-China against a new enemy, the Viet Cong. A brutal and unrelenting war of counter-insurgency was about to be unleashed and the Brandenburgers, donning a different uniform, would fight in what was to be their final campaign. ■



Oberstleutnant Wilhelm Walther, the first Brandenburger to win the Knight's Cross. Walther and his men, disguised in Dutch uniforms, captured an important bridge over the Meuse River in Holland, on 10th May 1940.

ethnic Germans seized key access points and strategic positions before the arrival of regular German army units. The success of this mission gave further impetus for their use in the coming Blitzkrieg that was about to be unleashed on Western Europe.

In April 1940, as combat operations in the west commenced, Brandenburg units participated in numerous missions in

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THE BATTLE OF WIJTSCHATE

June 1917

BY TOM BURKE

At 0310hrs on 7th June 1917, 100 years ago this year, Ulster loyalists and Irish nationalists fought side by side to capture the German-occupied Flemish village of Wijtschate, or, as the men called it, 'Whitesheet'. Some believed this battle presented an opportunity for reconciliation between the Unionist and Nationalist traditions in Ireland. The thinking was that if Irishmen could fight and die together, surely they could live together.

The symbolism of these Irishmen fighting side by side was not lost on some Nationalist politicians. In December 1916, Willie Redmond MP, who served as a major in the 6th Royal Irish Regiment, wrote to his friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:

"There are a great many Irishmen today who feel that out of this war we should try to build up a new Ireland. The trouble is, men are so timid about meeting each other half way. It would be a fine memorial to the men who have died so splen-

didly, if we could, over their graves build a bridge between north and south."

Ever since his appointment as GOC of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in late December 1915, General Sir Douglas Haig had ambitions for breaking out of the Ypres Salient, which had come about by default following the end of the War of Movement in late 1914 and the end of the Second Battle of Ypres in May 1915.

There were sound strategic reasons for his breakout ambitions. A sweep north-east from Ypres to the Belgian coast, with the objective of capturing the German-held Belgian ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge, from which German U Boats were operating and inflicting massive losses on Allied shipping, would offer far better strategic gains to the BEF than a sweep north of the Somme facing well-fortified German-occupied villages beyond which was of little or no strategic value.

Total British Merchant Navy shipping losses in January 1917 were 49 ships (153,666 tons). In February, losses had more than doubled amounting to 105 ships (313,486 tons). By April losses had risen to 450 ships (1,365,912 tons); losses so severe that First Sea-Lord Admiral Sir John Jellico informed Haig that 'if the army cannot get the Belgian ports, the Navy cannot hold the Channel and the war is lost'. Moreover, the capture of the railhead at Roulers (now Roeselare) would cut the German supply line to their armies in Flanders.

The failure of the Somme offensive in November 1916 and the Nivelle offensive in April 1917 gave Haig an opportunity to implement his breakout plan in the summer of 1917. However, before any major advances out of Ypres towards Ostend, Zeebrugge or Roulers could be made, the Wijtschate and Messines Ridge, behind

which German artillery was a real threat to the breakout, had to be taken first.

The battle, or series of sub-battles, to break out from the Ypres salient in the summer and autumn of 1917 was officially referred to as the Third Battle of Ypres, or later simply as Passchendaele.

If Passchendaele was a three-act stage drama, then the Battle of Wijtschate and Messines would be Act One, Scene One.

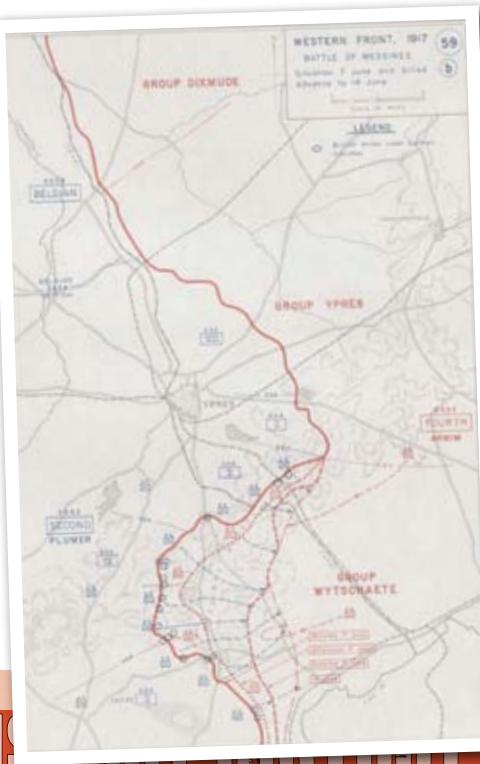
The task to take Wijtschate and Messines Ridge in June 1917 was handed to the Second Army in Flanders under the command of General Sir Herbert Plumer. The ruined villages of Wijtschate and Messines were assigned to the Second Army's IX Corps, comprising the 19th (Western), the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions. The northern end of the ridge was assigned to X Corps and the southern end was to II ANZAC Corps.

Placing the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions side by side in the order of attack on Wijtschate was no coincidence. Essentially the placement was one of several initiatives taken by the War Office in an attempt to stem the fall in British Army recruitment in Ireland.

In late September 1916, Adjutant General to the Forces Sir Nevil Macready stated that Irish infantry units were 17,194 men below strength. Between August 1914 and August 1916, recruitment in Ireland had dropped from 50,107 to 9,323, and by February 1917 it had fallen further, to



General Sir Herbert Plumer, commander of the British Second Army. Photo: Imperial War Museum



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British artillery during the Battle of Messines.



Royal Dublin Fusiliers celebrating their victory at Wijtschate, June 1917. Photo: Imperial War Museum

8,178. It was hoped that the existence of an almost totally Irish Corps would fill the depleting ranks of the Irish regiments from the abundance of Irishmen available for recruitment. Up to a point, the idea may have worked, as although the overall trend in recruiting was downward the rate of decline had slowed going into 1917.

Relationships between the men from the 16th and 36th Divisions varied. Old animosities did not disappear in Flanders; they were simply set aside. However, there were men like Rev John Redmond, a Church of Ireland chaplain attached to the 9th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who saw the battle as an opportunity for Irish reconciliation. He noted in his diary:

"It was impressive to see what a feeling of security before the battle the Ulster Division had in having the 16th Irish on our left flank and that the 16th Division had in having our Ulster Division on their right flank. This feeling of goodwill and confidence between the two divisions had been growing for some time. I wish the entire north and south that they represent, could participate in the same spirit."

Major JC Boyle from a field company of engineers attached to the Ulster Division noted the political significance of his men working with men from the

under German strong points along the ridge, coupled with an unprecedented artillery and machine-gun barrage, gave the Irish troops a relatively easy run in to take Wijtschate using new infantry assault tactics learned from the failures at the Somme.

The 16th (Irish) suffered 1,183 casualties (134 dead) and the 36th (Ulster) suffered 1,119 casualties (164) dead. An estimate of German dead from units facing the Irish divisions amounted to 2,444, while the number of prisoners taken came to 39 officers and 1,882 other ranks. Overall, Second Army casualties on 7th June were fewer than 11,000, whereas German losses were estimated to be almost 20,000, of which half were missing.

Major Willie Redmond MP was killed in the attack on Wijtschate. So too was a young officer in his battalion, Lieut Michael Wall, aged 19 from Carrick Hill near Malahide, County Dublin. Michael had been with the 6th Royal Irish Regiment for 228 days at the front. Michael was devoted to his mother as his regular letters to her from the front testify. She kept all his letters and his cap badge. His teacher in St Joseph's CBS in Fairview, Brother O'Farrell, had predicted that Michael would turn out to be a fine man, but sadly God did not spare him as O'Farrell had wished.

Munster Fusiliers in consolidating a strong point after Wijtschate was taken:

"Number 1 Section I found had not been able to start work owing to hostile shelling. Lt Thorne was just starting them in conjunction with 16th Division Royal Munster Fusiliers. So Ulster and the South of Ireland consolidate a position. The Orange and Green working together and blended well."

Through months of meticulous planning, training and preparation, the battle to take the Wijtschate – Messines Ridge was successful. The explosion of 19 mines in as many seconds

He was a bright young man on his way to University College Dublin when war broke out. He liked his Irish Times and his pipe. He had no time for the politics or ideology of Sinn Féin and like many young men at the outbreak of the war, he was smitten, almost seduced, by the thought of adventure in a foreign land. The war was just a means to fulfil that quest for adventure.

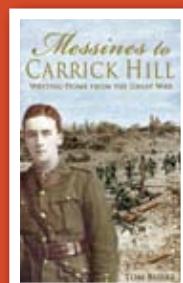
Within weeks of his arrival in Flanders, however, Michael realised he had made a mistake. He became disillusioned and angry at those back in Ireland who were not with him in mind and body but there was no way out.

His death at Wijtschate deprived him of his future. He would never have the opportunity of loving a woman, perhaps having children or telling his grandchildren about the day his regiment took Wijtschate from the Germans.

He was buried in Kemmel Chateau Military Cemetery where Fr P Wrafter SJ offered prayers over his grave.

Michael's death and the deaths of all those other young men – be they Irish or Prussian – deprived the world of great potential. Willie Redmond's death deprived Ireland of a reconciliatory voice at a time when it was needed. What could these men have contributed to a post-war Ireland and Europe had they lived? Tragically we will never know. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Tom Burke was a member of the committee behind the Island of Ireland Peace Park in Messines, which opened in 1998. In August 2004, he was awarded an MBE for his contribution to the Northern Ireland peace process. He has contributed to several publications and was a consultant on several TV and radio documentaries on Ireland's participation in WWI. Tom's current book, *Messines to Carrick Hill: Writing home from the Great War* is reviewed on page 37.





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COMPETITION

For a chance to win a SOG Mac V Tool, sponsored by Team-Alpha.ie answer the following question:

How much is the 5.11 A.T.A.C Shield 8" Black on team-alpha.ie?

Send your answer along with your name, address & contact number to An Cosantóir's address or by email to subs@military.ie by the 19th June 2017. Winner will be the first correct entry drawn. **Last month's winner was:** Mark Whelan, Dublin 4.



NOTICEBOARD

IRISH MILITARY SEMINAR 9TH – 11TH JUNE

Kildare County Council's Decade of Commemorations Committee, in association with Ireland's Military Story, Merrion Press and June Fest, will host the inaugural Irish Military Seminar, 9-11 June in the Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge, Co Kildare.

Co. Kildare's association with the military spans many centuries and continues to the present time. The aim of the seminar is to look at all aspects of Irish military history, drawing chiefly on events and personnel from within our nation's past. Participants will include: Helen Litton, John Dorney, Lar Joye, Dan Harvey, James Durney, Declan Power, Justin Horgan, Dr. Helene O'Keeffe and Maurice O'Keeffe, Wesley Bourke, Kenneth Dawson, UN Peacekeepers and Vietnam Veterans. Display by Irish Military Vehicles Group and Farrell & Nephew Bookstore.

Sunday with the Co Kildare Federation of Local History Groups: Massacre at Mullaghmast; A Game of Thrones. Visit to the Rath of Mullaghmast with archaeologist Noel Dunne, with a Griese Youth Theatre performance and refreshments in Burtown House.

Topics: 1798 Rebellion; The Fenians; American Civil War; Thomas Ashe (100th Anniversary of his death); Civil War in Dublin; WWI and WWII; Luftwaffe POWs; Jadotville, the Congo and Beyond; Vietnam War.

Free Admission to Seminar (minimal cost for field trip): booking essential:

boxoffice@riverbank.ie/045 448327

Contact: cil dara2016@gmail.com or localhistory@kildarecoco.ie 045 448350 or 087 9871046

This is part of the Creative Ireland initiative - Creative Kildare 2017.



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Last month's winner of the PROTAC €50 Voucher was Hugh Simpson, Athlone. Closing date is 19th June 2017.

WORD SEARCH

Irish Military Seminar

CROSS OFF THE WORDS IN THE LIST AS YOU FIND THEM.

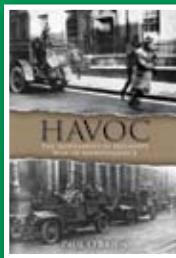
Word searches are fun, they also bring benefits you may not realise and can play an important role in keeping you mentally fit.

K	P	J	A	E	L	L	I	V	T	O	D	A	J	Z
A	M	E	R	I	C	A	N	I	U	Q	E	Z	L	I
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HAVOC: THE AUXILIARIES IN IRELAND'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Author: Paul O'Brien
Publisher: Collins Press (April 2017) www.collinspress.ie
ISBN: 978-1848893061
Pages: 224
Price: €19.99 PB / €2.30 eBook



The latest work from military historian, author and regular contributor to *An Cosantóir*, Paul O'Brien, is a detailed look at one of the most feared and reviled units to fight in Ireland during the War of Independence; the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

With the escalation of violence in early 1920, the British government were forced to bolster its police force with the recruitment of new personnel who became known as the Black and Tans. However, this was not enough to curb the insurgency which was spreading throughout the country. In July 1920 a new force, comprised of former soldiers, were formed and given the title, Auxiliaries. Trained for swift, surgical assaults and sent into a war zone with little or no understanding of the conflict or the locals, the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary found themselves fighting for their lives in a counter-insurgency campaign that left a lasting legacy in Ireland which is still evident today.

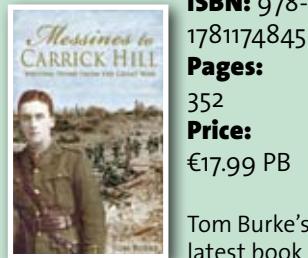
Similar books on this period look at the well known personalities or list names of participants, but O'Brien's work takes the reader out on patrol. Ambushes, counter ambushes, intelligence gathering, Black Ops, and interrogations are just some of the daily scenarios experienced by the Auxiliaries. Violence and killing are an every day occurrence, and staying alive and completing your tour of duty is uppermost on everyone's mind.

The author examines the unit and looks at them as an early form of Special Forces. Formed at the suggestion of Winston Churchill, known for his support for such specialists, some consider the Auxiliaries the world's first anti-terrorist unit while others see them as forerunners of the SAS or the Commandos.

O'Brien provides a balanced account of their origins and operations without glossing over the brutal details of fighting a counter-insurgency campaign. Controversial from the outset, this is an excellent read and one that will take you back in time to the havoc, which was the Irish War of Independence. **WF**

MESSINES TO CARRICK HILL: WRITING HOME FROM THE GREAT WAR

Author: Tom Burke
Publisher: The Mercier Press Ltd (May 2017) www.mercierpress.ie



Messines to Carrick Hill: Writing home from the Great War is written from original letters sent home by a young 19-year-old Irish officer of the 6th Royal Irish Regiment. 2nd Lt Michael Wall from Carrick Hill, Malahide, Co Dublin was educated by the Christian Brothers in Dublin.

The young Irishman left for the adventure of a world at war, his letters bring a reality to entrenched battles of Messines Ridge, with a unique insight into the realities of war. *Messines to Carrick Hill: Writing home from the Great War* presents an account of the origin, preparations and successful execution of the battle to take Wijtschate on 7th June 1917 in which the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions played a pivotal role. Tom offers an insight into the contentious subject of remembrance of the First World War in Ireland in the late 1920s.

Read Tom Burke's article *The Battle of Wijtschate June 1917* on page 36/37 of this issue. **WF**

SPECIAL UNITS & FLASHBANG BY DOM ANDRÉ

www.flashbang-mag.com

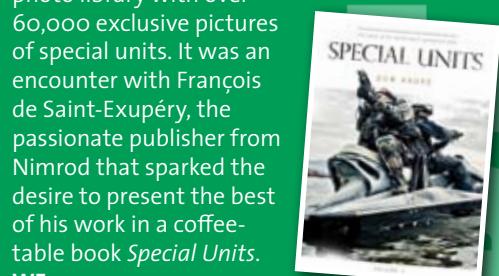
Dom André's huge coffee-table book is an exclusive photographic and editorial journey into some of the most operational units, and translated in both English and French. Dom has been traveling around the world for

ten years, photographing elite military and law enforcement units. In January 2013, he launched his own publication *Flashbang* to showcase the life and work of some of these units.

Special Units was then made possible in 2016 by a *Kickstarter*, that had 445 backers who pledged €54,866 to help bring the project to life. Backers also received a set of 14 exclusive bookmarks with 28 visuals (one for each unit) that are not published in the book.

This art book contains 28 chapters, one for each unit that is photographed. Both *Special Units* and *Flashbang* are required reading for a modern take on specialist units both military and law enforcement, both products are also an action photographers dream and show how high the bar has been set by Dom André.

About the Author: During his military service at the French Airborne School (mil para badge #528314) Dom came across the three passions that would follow him for the rest of his professional life: photography, scuba diving and elite units. After designing catalogues and brochures for brands or suppliers of tactical equipment, his photos were published in a couple of magazines like *RAIDS - Police Pro* and *Pro Sécurité in France*, *K-Isom* in Germany and *Special Ops* in Poland. He is now the owner, photographer and editor of *Flashbang*, building up a unique photo library with over 60,000 exclusive pictures of special units. It was an encounter with François de Saint-Exupéry, the passionate publisher from Nimrod that sparked the desire to present the best of his work in a coffee-table book *Special Units*. **WF**



NAME
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UNIT
SPECIAL OPERATIONS
MARITIME TASK UNIT (SOTU),
ARMY RANGER WING (ARW)

What inspired you to join the ARW?

I always had an interest in the outdoors and hunting when I was younger, so I suppose those aspects of my personality pushed me in a military direction. I decided that if given half the chance to join the army I would, with full focus on attempting selection after recruit training. Like all teenagers, sports and other distractions took over my teenage years and I pushed the army career towards the back of my mind. I had worked for a couple of years in the building trade and then one day in university, 18 months into a degree, I applied for general enlistment and was successful. I was based in an infantry battalion in the 1st Brigade, where I completed my recruit and 2-3 star training. 14 months later I went on the Special Operations Forces Qualification (SOFQ) Course.

What challenges did you encounter in your preparation for the SOFQ Course? Physical challenges are probably the most obvious answer here but anyone who is in the mind-set of passing SOFQ relishes the physical challenges, as exhausting as they may be. In my opinion the mental side is the most overlooked aspect of preparation by candidates. In a battalion there are a lot of personalities, who either intentionally or unintentionally can make SOFQ a very intimidating topic for young soldiers. For me this had a small bit of an effect on my confidence, as so many experienced and higher ranks had failed. The other challenge I faced was time to train, especially in the hills. I took a lot of annual leave to train, as it wasn't always possible to get into the hills for navigation training through my unit, not due to the lack of support from my NCOs though.

What were your expectations prior to SOFQ? How did those expectations compare in reality? I completed the ARW Prelims prior to SOFQ and found it very beneficial. It gives a good insight into the unit and offers candidates guidance, which will help them pass SOFQ. I didn't have any expectations, so don't worry about things out of your control; what you can control is your physical and mental state. Arrive on the first day of SOFQ in peak condition and let the rest take its course.

Can you tell us about SOFQ Modules 2-5?

Every aspect of your character and your existing military skillset will be tested thoroughly. It's a massive learning curve. It's roughly 8 months until you are assigned to a Special Operations Task Unit (SOTU), which covers a broad range of skills. From weapons handling, marksmanship, abseiling, heli-casting, boat-casting, conventional green role

assessments, long-range recce, direct actions, advanced medical, counter terrorism and more. It's tough and unforgiving, everyday you are being tested physically and mentally. When you're presented with the Green Beret and assigned to your team, it's worth it.

A team leader with 20 years of experience said to us at the end: *"the feeling of putting on the beret for the first time never leaves you".* He

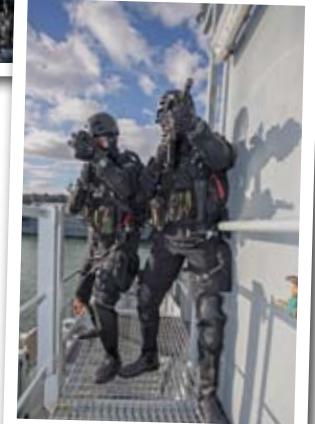
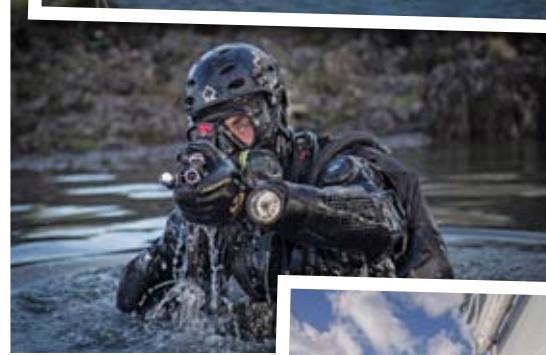
was right, I'd do it again in the morning if I had to.

What about your post-SOFQ Course development?

After SOFQ there is a period of up-skilling, where you are assigned to your SOTU and team. In my case this was maritime and there were many other skills to be learned from care and maintenance of the dive equipment to boat handling, surface operations and more. I then completed my Combat Divers course and Advanced O2 course. Outside of the maritime specific role there are other skills like close protection, driving, static-line parachuting and an opportunity to do some AFF (Advanced Free-Fall) parachuting. You can also specialise in areas such as medical and sniping.

Service in the ARW requires enormous commitment and can be very physically and mentally demanding, not to mention the risk of injury. Why do you still do it?

Yes it is demanding and an enormous commitment. I'm sure there are very few other people in the country working as hard or putting themselves at as much risk as you are in their day to day job. There is a myth (which discourages soldiers) that the ARW operator never sees their family and it is exactly that - a myth. I do it because of the bond, because of the respect and pride everyone has, not for each other but for the unit itself, for the beret on their head and the tab on their shoulder. ■





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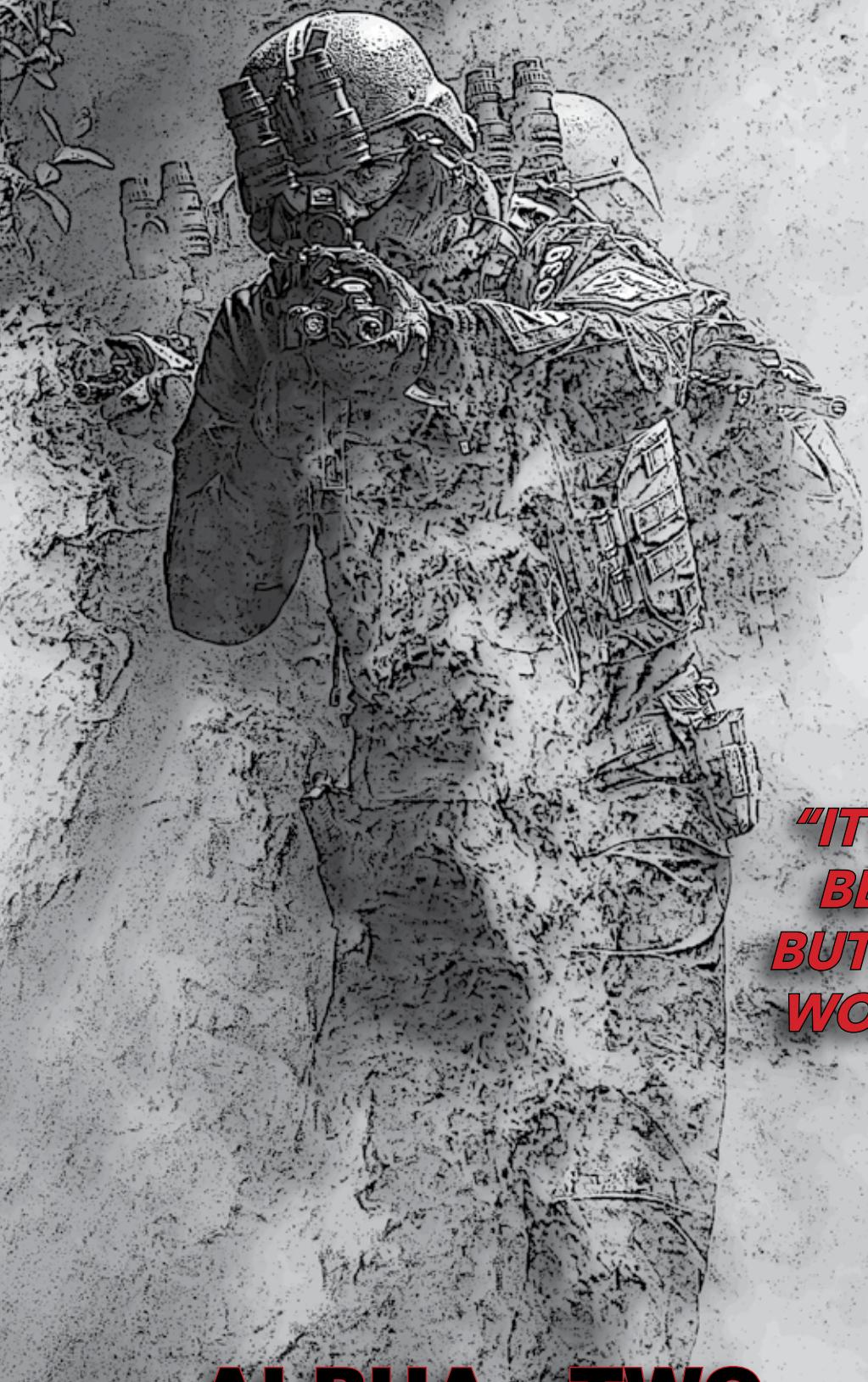
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ALPHA - TWO
ARW SOF QUALIFICATION COURSE (MOD 1)
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APPLICATIONS THROUGH CHAIN OF COMMAND