



THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

AN COSANTÓIR



Óglaigh
na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



"ONE SHOT
ONE KILL"



MAY/JUNE 2023

UNITED STATES ARMY
SNIPER SCHOOL
EST. 1987

TEAMWORK & TENACITY

[STRENGTHEN THE NATION]

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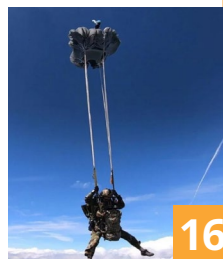
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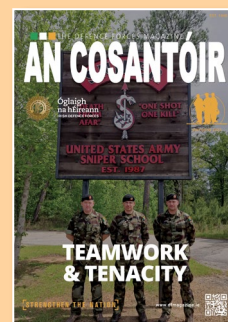
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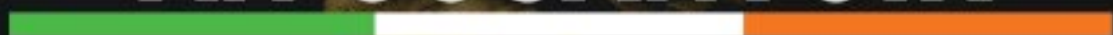
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Front Cover

By Lt Karl Johnston

Back Cover

By Cpl Eric Ryan

Editorial

Hello, and welcome to our third issue of 2023, our 83rd volume of the An Cosantóir magazine.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and will continue to enjoy reading all the other An Cosantóir magazines we will publish in 2023. As a team, we thrive on providing you with interesting and up-to-date content. If you have any ideas for the magazine or what something to be featured please email us at magazine@military.ie.

We are looking for contributors to the magazine, whether it be an article, photographs for our parade section, or even a charity event that you might be organising. We would be more than happy to feature the event in the An Cosantóir along with the GoFundMe link. Contributors are in with a chance of getting some cool prizes, so why not contribute?

Our Noticeboard page features an advertisement for our An Cosantóir photo competition, which will come with one of these prizes. Our Noticeboard also features an advertisement for the DFPP trainee technician scheme.

Our main feature this edition covers the 2023 International Sniper competition, the Irish Defence Forces took part in this gruelling challenge that tests the precision, skill, and teamwork of elite snipers from around the world. The competition which was held in Fort Benning and pitted some of the best snipers in the world against one another, challenging them to compete in a series of complex and demanding tasks that tested their abilities in a range of real-world scenarios. For the DF this competition represents an opportunity to showcase their skills and expertise of their elite snipers, and to learn from some of the best snipers in the world. The team of snipers selected to represent the Irish Defence Forces were among the best trained and most skilled in the country, with years of experience in a range of demanding environments. In this main feature Lt Karl Johnston gives us an overview of the event and we have an interview with members of the 2023 sniper team.

Strengthening Firefighting Capabilities, A Test of Courage and Skill: Firefighting is an essential force protection capability provided by the Corps of Engineers (COE), both domestically and overseas. The recent completion of the Basic Fire Fighting course by a group of dedicated soldiers marks a significant milestone in maintaining and enhancing this crucial capability. Lt Darren Fehilly takes us through this mentally and physically demanding course and explains how students will be equipped with the tactics and techniques to handle firefighting operations effectively both at home and overseas.

From pioneering leap to soaring heights a look back on the first Defence Forces freefall parachute jump, written by retired Col Tom Hodson, details the first DF freefall parachute jump, which took place in 1972. Hodson provides a background to his

experience with freefall parachuting in Ireland and internationally before discussing how he approached his superiors about introducing parachuting into the DF. The article provides an interesting insight into the early days of freefall parachuting and the introduction of the activity into the DF.

Surveillance and Airlift: Charting the future of Ireland's Maritime and Defence Air Operations is brought to us by Capt Declan Hickey. Surveillance and swift airlift capabilities cannot be overstated. At the forefront of these critical operations is 101 Sqn Air Corps operating out of No 1 Ops Wing. This unit plays a pivotal role in maritime defence, aerial surveillance and logistical support for various state agencies and the wider Defence Forces. With a proud history spanning over six decades the Sqn is now embarking on a new chapter in 2023, marked by the introduction of a state of the art aircraft that will revolutionize Air Corps capabilities.

Capt Diarmuid Collins brings us our sports feature of the most recent Defence Forces adventure race and also talks about adventure racing within the DF. Recognizing the potential of adventure racing to complement and enhance military skills, the Defence Forces Adventure Racing club was established. As part of its development, the club organises the DF Adventure race, providing DF personnel with an opportunity to compete in an expedition style of adventure race.

In the origin, concept and treatments of PTSD by Melissa Martin, she discusses the origins of PTSD which can be traced back to the early 20th century, when it was initially referred to as "Shell Shock" during World One. However, PTSD is not exclusive to combat veterans but can affect individuals who have experienced various forms of trauma. While PTSD has gained recognition and diagnostic criteria in recent decades, it still poses many unanswered questions.

In our overseas current deployments map, Cpl Eric Ryan brings us a map of current Defence Forces overseas deployments with up-to-date personnel numbers for each mission location.

DF Sports and Clubs notifies all members of upcoming events along with information on some recent sporting events, it also shows some pictures from recent team or individual events.

As always, we have our regular features including PSS, continuing to provide vital mental health advice in 'Headspace and Timing'.

From the archives brings us back to an article "Reserves Are Fit to Fight" this article is about the very first RDF PTL course.

"You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated"
— Maya Angelou

Sgt John Rossiter – Editor

ON PARADE



The freshest batch of Photographers to enter the Air Corps.
Back L to R, Cpl Johnny Tuft, Tpr Ger Bryan, Pte Dean Corbally, A/M Cian O'Riordan
Front L to R, Pte Jason McCormack, A/M Steven Whitford, Pte Eoin Ryan



AC112 Departing UH Galway after a tasking, photo provided by Áine Forde



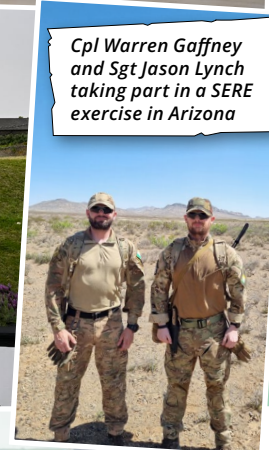
Recent Air Corps passing out parade in Baldonnel



Members of 3 Inf Bn undertaking unarmed combat training with Cpl Patrick Whelan



Naval Service recently hosted the Chiefs of European Navies Conference 2023



Cpl Warren Gaffney and Sgt Jason Lynch taking part in a SERE exercise in Arizona



Lt Col Fiacra Keyes receives a recognition award from Tipperary Peace Convention members, Martin Quinn, Guy Jones & John Shanahan, to recognize 65 years of unbroken peacekeeping services overseas



Recent visit to Fort Shannon Tarbert by the Artillery Club



Charity soccer event held in Camp FAOUAR 17 May 23. Organized by Pte Kylie Friel and Cpl Gary Heaney, 28 Inf Bn. All proceeds went to the Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust. The event was held in memory of Martin Duffy, formerly Club Secretary of Deelee Harps Donegal, Pte Kylie Friel's uncle. He was heavily involved in the club and mentor to 28 Inf Bn members associated with Deelee Harps.

ON PARADE



A collaboration of the Irish Military Vehicle Group, the Irish UN Living History Group and the 2 Inf Bn Association recently joined the family of the late Pte Seán Rooney, his mother Natasha and her parents Eugene & Rachel, brothers Eugene Jnr and John & Olga seen here in the NCO Mess Aiken Barracks Dundalk for a presentation of gifts and mementos



Lt Murphy on parade for the ministerial review of the 122 Inf Bn



Members of the 99th Cadet Class who recently travelled to Lourdes for the International Military Pilgrimage



Always getting the best shot, Sgt Paul Kealy on a recent AVS tasking



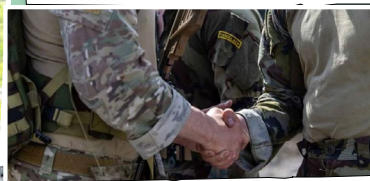
Lt's Kellegher and O'Neill meeting Paul O'Connell at the recent Leadership lunch held in Cork



CS Anthony O'Reilly presenting a cheque to the Oncology unit of Our Lady of Lourdes hospital in Drogheda. This money was raised from a recent event in Kosovo.



Rite of passage, the newest members of the ARW passing through those famous ARW compound gates



An ARW operator receiving his tab after recently passing the SOF Q course



Arrival of the IPVs - Captain (NS) William Roberts, COS, An Tánaiste, Sec Gen DOD, Commander Tony O'Leary and Commander Thomas Hobbins



Pte Kylie Friel presenting the cup in Camp FAOUAR for the charity soccer tournament

ON PARADE



122 Inf Bn UNIFIL MRE exercise, troops performing contact drills



Recent charity event organised by Sgt Angela Aylmer of the 121 Inf Bn UNIFIL in aid of Limerick Treaty suicide prevention



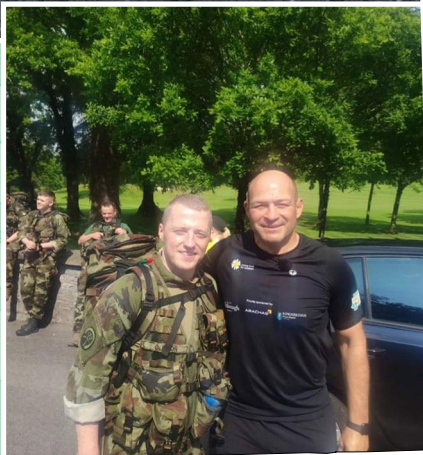
Enjoying the sun, members of the 7 Inf Bn on a recent outdoor Battle PT session



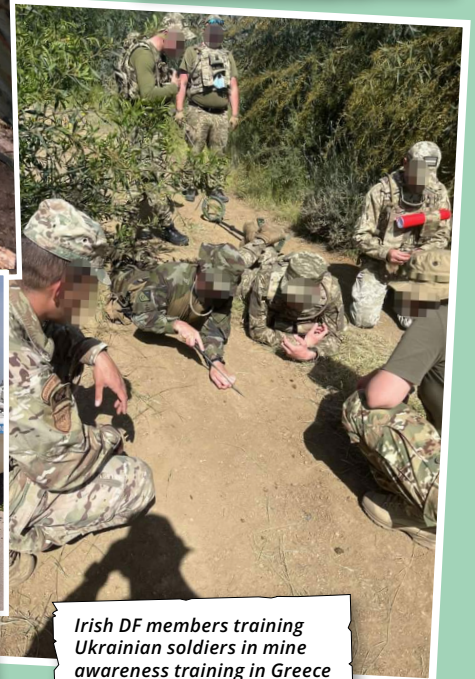
The 23 Potential NCO Course based in 1 BTC on a recent training exercise



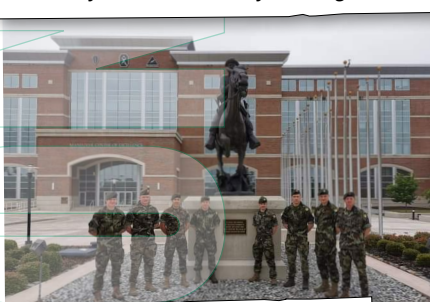
No 3 Ops Wing tackling fires in Northern Ireland alongside NI Fire and Rescue Services



Sgt John Gleeson 12 Inf Bn who recently walked with Rory Best on his charity challenge



Irish DF members training Ukrainian soldiers in mine awareness training in Greece



Members of the 1 ACS who recently competed in the Gainey cup in Fort Benning USA



Ord Section, 67 Inf Gp UNDOF were recently tasked to conduct crater analysis on a site where a rocket impacted the previous week. This was in support of an OGG led investigation, FRC QRF (IRCON) provided security for this operation.

ON PARADE



Members of 121 Inf Bn UNIFIL who ran another recent successful charity event



Recruits from the 62nd & 63rd platoons seen here during their first 24hr training exercise



Capt Chris Slattery (AR) 2 Bde CIS (AR) who made a recent trip to UNIFIL



23rd Pot NCO course based in 1 Bde BTC taking part in a Coy Comdrs challenge



Troops from the 7th 2-3* platoon based in the 7 Inf Bn marching with Rory Best



CQMS (Retd) Ken Sheridan receiving a presentation from Col Brownen, President of the DF Dive Gp



Lust for Life charity event ran in UNIFIL, seen here from L-R is BSM McDonnell, Sgt Turner, Bn Cdr Lt Col Murphy & DCO Comdt McDermott from 121 Inf Bn



2 Bde Cav Sqn on a recent Captains Escort of Honour for President Michael D. Higgins



Crew of LÉ Samuel Beckett climbing Hungry Hill County Cork during some well-deserved R&R after their last patrol



Cadet School Novice Rifle and Falling Plates Winning Teams and Staff

STRENGTHENING FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES, A TEST OF COURAGE AND SKILL

BY LT DARREN FEHILLY

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LT FEHILLY & MARK POLLOCK



Students extracting a casualty from an overturned car



A student prepares to use the hydraulic snips in order to free the casualty



A student approaches a burning vehicle with the required breathing apparatus

Fire Fighting is a Force Protection capability which the Corps of Engineers (COE) provides at home and overseas. In line with the requirement to maintain this capability, a group of soldiers recently underwent the Basic Fire Fighting course. It is a physically and mentally demanding course which teaches students the tactics and techniques of firefighting operations.

The Corps of Engineers operate a full time fire service in the DFTC. They respond to a variety of incidents within the environs of the Curragh Camp, from road traffic collisions and building fires in the camp itself, to gorse fires on the Curragh Plains. The crew also provide an essential fire prevention function, checking Fire Detection and Alarm Systems (FDAS) throughout the camp.

There is also a fully manned fire crew deployed to UNIFIL tasked with providing a Fire Fighting capability in UNP 2-45. The crew also provides a rapid response to the IRISHPOLBATT platoon posts and the nearby French position UNP 6-41. The Fire crew have a full array of equipment and so can respond to incidents in the AO such as road traffic collisions or brush fires.

Located in Casement Aerodrome, 506 Sqn is the Air Corps firefighting unit. The Sqn have specialised equipment such as the Rosenbauer Panther 6x6 HRET (High Reach Extendable Turret) tender for aviation fuel fires, along with advanced training facilities such as Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) in which to conduct aviation specific training.

The Basic Fire Fighting course itself was conducted in the DFTC and Hacketstown Fire Training Centre, Co. Carlow. The course is composed of three modules; Basic Fire Fighting Skills, Breathing Apparatus (BA) Training & Road Traffic Collision (RTC) training respectively.

The course begins with the fundamentals of fire theory. Heat, Oxygen, and Fuel; remove one and the fire cannot be sustained. Water reduces heat energy so the fire can no longer burn. A fire blanket smothers the fire of its oxygen and also collapses the fire triangle. Finally, the

removal of fuel or allowing the fire to burn until there is no more fuel left leads to its starvation. Students take these principals out onto the fire ground as they commence practical drills.

The Fire Course is like all other DF courses where you start with the basics and you build from there, that famous saying of "crawl before you walk". First you learn to run out the hoses and charge them with water, empty them and roll them up and do

it all over again. This process will be repeated until a high level of proficiency is reached and it becomes muscle memory. Not long before things start to look sharp, as complexity is added to the orders. Make down to the

fire, breach and divide, two lengths each, two branches, number 5 locate the hydrant and get water back to into the tender. A number of scenario-based exercises were carried out, rotating command each time affording everyone the opportunity to be crew commander. Situations such as bonfires,



Students prepare the spinal board for casualty removal



Students preparing to deal with a Fire situation in Hacketstown Fire Station

Students working as a pair to deal with the Fire



domestic fires, and large gorse fires presented physically tough challenges which required dynamic problem solving as situations change and develop.

Weeks 6 and 7 were the Breathing Apparatus (BA) training module which took place in the Fire Training Centre located in Hacketstown Fire Station, Co. Carlow. The main facility is the 'hot house' which, for anyone who has been inside, will bring a smile to their face. "It's hot" is all anyone will say about the experience.

Entering the building in teams of two, it is so dark you cannot see your hand directly in front of your face. You don't know the layout of the building which compounds the disorientation.

A typical exercise would involve; Searching for a casualty while simultaneously dragging 30m of hose into the building, down a stairs, around a corner, up a ladder, snagging on every piece of furniture along the way. When you locate the casualty; check your contents gauge for how much air you have left. Pick up the casualty, turn around, back out exactly the way you came. Don't forget to un snag the hose from every piece of furniture on the way. Last door, see the light, into the open air, made it. "Change your cylinders and get back in there we still have casualties in there".

You wonder how it could be enjoyable, but every person left the training ground each day with a smile and a sense of accomplishment having overcome difficult and challenging conditions.

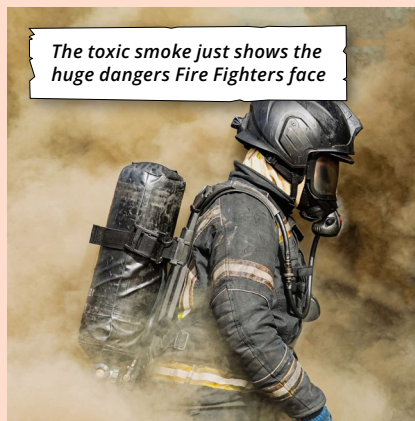
The content covered during the course, the instructional delivery and the methodologies by all instructors is to be

commended for the BA course. However a special mention and thanks must go to the external instructors provided by the Fire Training Centre. Station Officer Eddie Coleman, and

Sub Station Officer Franny Corcoran bring a wealth of knowledge, built up over long careers in Carlow Fire Service. They based their instruction on real world examples of what does and does not work. How to operate safely whilst in the risk area and to keep your team safe. This knowledge is invaluable, and the Defence Forces is grateful to have their input year on year.

Road Traffic Collision (RTC) training is the final module covered on the course. An insightful week into the construction of vehicles, the nature of vehicle collisions, and how complex a rescue from a vehicle can be. A systematic approach is applied to every incident. Overall scene safety is heavily emphasised to keep the fire crew and casualties safe from any further harm. Fighting a vehicle fire is done in BA due to the toxic nature of

The toxic smoke just shows the huge dangers Fire Fighters face

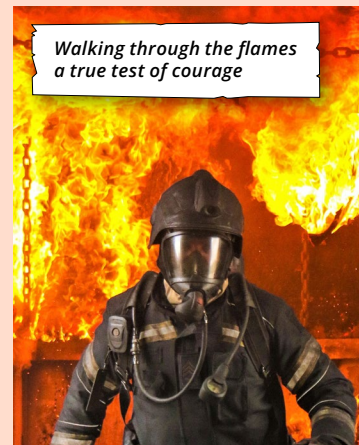


the fumes that may be released from combusting materials in a vehicle. Students must be confident using the extensive inventory of tools such as; glass hammers, hydraulic snips, spreaders, rams, hooligan bars. Training on the equipment provides the unique opportunity

to surgically deconstruct vehicles as your day job on a Tuesday morning! The Techniques of stabilization, glass management, door removal, roof cutaway, availing of creative use of all the previously mentioned tools. The training centred on live exercises, call outs to overturned and t-boned vehicles strewn around the Curragh Camp. These exercises challenged the students to problem solve under pressure to safely extract entrapped, often distraught, casualties.

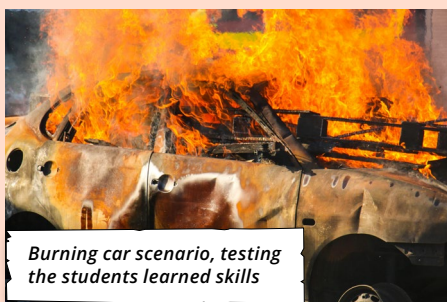
Successful completion of this course allows soldiers to serve on the fire crew at home and overseas. Further training opportunities and specialisation in areas such as Breathing Apparatus Instructor or as Road Traffic Collision Instructor are available and highly encouraged. These courses take place in the UK, training with fire service personnel from all over Ireland & the UK. The Corps of Engineers continues to enhance its firefighting capability. The Corps has recently procured two new Scania/HPMP fire tenders, one based in the DFTC and one deployed to UNIFIL. The tenders have enhanced the Fire Fighting capabilities of the Corps. The Compressed Air and Foam System (CAFS) on the new tender allows for

Walking through the flames a true test of courage



the crew to rapidly gain control of a fire and stop its spread. There is a full suite of powerful modern hydraulic and 'e-draulic' (battery powered hydraulic) equipment such as spreaders and snips, as well as rams for use at road traffic collisions. Through the purchase of modern equipment coupled with continued professional development, firefighting remains a fundamental capability of the Corps of Engineers.

Burning car scenario, testing the students learned skills



Fire crew battles to extinguish the blaze at Hacketstown Fire Station

THE 2023 INTERNATIONAL SNIPER COMPETITION

BY LT KARL JOHNSTON

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LT KARL JOHNSTON



The DF team during an event in Fort Benning

As the top placing teams in the Defence Forces 2022 International Sniper Competition, 27th Infantry Battalion and the Army Ranger Wing (ARW) secured the Irish Defence Forces Sniper's most highly coveted prize, competing in the US Army International Sniper Competition (USISC) in Fort Benning, Georgia. Conducted annually at the US Army Sniper School, the USISC is the world's premier sniper competition. 35 3-man teams from around the world are tested in every aspect of the sniper skillset with events focusing on navigation, stealth infiltration and exfiltration, observation, target identification, team communication, fire control, physical endurance and long-range shooting over distances ranging from close quarter combat to 1200 metre engagements against static and moving targets. This competition is conducted over a period of 72 hours, during which teams will engage in numerous events by day and night. With the added strain of minimal rest and quick turn-around times to refit, teams are pushed to physical and mental extremes.

Fort Benning (since renamed Fort Moore), located in Georgia, is home to over 50,000 US Army personnel, their families and civilian support staff. Containing the US Army's Maneuver Centre of Excellence comprising the Infantry, Armour and Ranger Schools. The conducting unit for the USISC, the Army Sniper School, was formed in 1986 and is the longest established Sniper School in the history of the US Army with more than 300 soldiers attempting the 7-week course each year with the hopes of earning the coveted title of Army Sniper.

In January of this year, the 27 Inf Bn team consisting of Team Leader Cpl Colin McQuaid, Sniper Cpl Kyle Erasmus and Spotter Cpl Mark Fitzpatrick began an intense training programme designed and overseen by their coach, Sgt Stephen Flanagan. Based heavily off lessons learned from previous team's experiences, with contributions from Sniper Instructors across the Defence Forces and the Infantry Weapons Wing, each training evolution was meticulously planned to ensure the team arrived ready for any scenario

that the US Army Sniper School instructor staff could devise. Beginning in Q4 2022, and increasing in intensity from January 2023, the comprehensive training block would see the 27 Inf Bn team training 5 days every week, focusing on target indication & identification, judging distance, long range shooting and close in battle practices with rifle and pistol. In addition, the team spent long hours practicing navigation techniques and enhancing physical fitness under the guidance of 27 Inf Bn PTI Sgt Ian Woods. Paramount to success, the ability to operate when mentally and physically drained, and with little to no rest, is a key feature of Sniper competitions both at home and abroad, and a high standard of physical fitness would ensure the team was best prepared for this

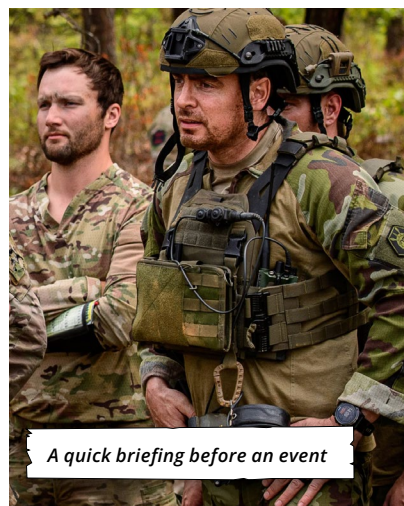
guaranteed aspect of the USISC. With the USISC requiring teams to operate in a 3-man format, different to the Irish Sniper & Spotter concept, the team would have to develop their own tactics, techniques and procedures and developing effective communication between team members was critical to success.

Arriving at Fort Benning late on 3rd April, the team along with colleagues from the ARW, fresh from their participation at the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Sniper Competition, began an intense 3 day work up on the base's incredible ranges, familiarizing with US weapons and equipment under the watchful eye of two of the original Sniper

School founders and legendary stalwarts of the international Sniper Community Jim Harris and Butch Cady. In addition, the teams acclimatised with morning physical training sessions (temperatures at Fort Benning during the competition would reach up to 28 degrees Celsius!). During these familiarisation events, the team experienced the highly impressive "Marathon" target system for the first time. Consisting of a



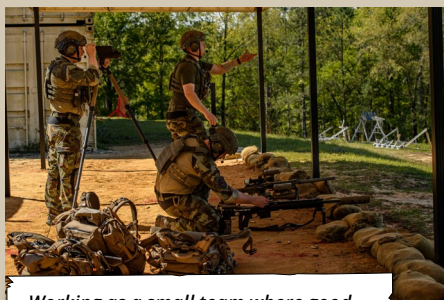
The team standing at the school sign getting ready to start the competition



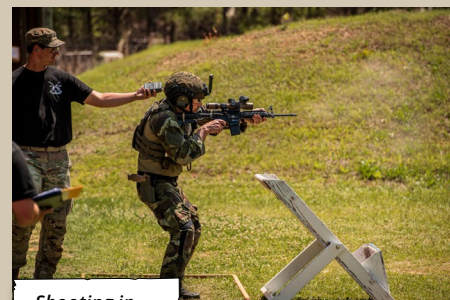
A quick briefing before an event



The team at the shooting range perfecting their skills



Working as a small team where good communication was the key to success



Shooting in a timed event

mobile armoured unit with an attached man sized target, the Marathon targets can be pre-programmed to move along a patrol route, react to fire by advancing towards the shooter or withdrawing and can even "revive" other target units once they are downed by competitors fire, by moving to the location of a neutralised system. Only when a critically hit or a "kill" shot is registered on the system will it stay down.

USISC 2023 began at 0300hrs on 10th April with a stealth infiltration to conduct a close target reconnaissance on enemy forces located in an urban training facility. Surveillance drones and an enemy hunter force equipped with thermal imaging devices made team movement incredibly difficult with most teams compromised by enemy aerial surveillance. Both Irish teams successfully gathered the necessary information and extracted from the area without being observed by enemy personnel during the 4-hour task. Following this event, teams moved onto 3 further events during the day, "Boys in the Lab", testing the team's ability to solve problems, identify targets and create firing solutions. "Know your Limits" required teams to engage targets at various distances and make the difficult decision to stop and bank scores, or gamble and continue with increasingly difficult targets at the risk of losing everything should they miss. Daytime events on Day 1 concluded with the "Puzzles" event, Team

Leaders (TL) were required to complete increasingly difficult problems to reveal target locations, which the TL would then have to guide his shooters on to, at distances up to 1200m! Weather conditions on Day 1 were favourable, however a gusting wind created difficulty at stages. As Day 1 came to a close and the teams prepared for night events, the 27 Inf Bn team held firm at 9th place.

After a hot meal, a refit of equipment for night operations and no time to rest, Day 2 began at 0030hrs with 2-night shoots. Beginning with "Minute of Angle", a multi target quick engagement scenario simulating a compromise by a large enemy force, teams engaged from within buildings located on the impressive Burroughs Range training facility. The second night shoot "Airport Lounge" required teams to engage rifle targets at ranges of up to 800m, after which the team move to and engage close-in pistol targets. During daylight on Day 2, there were 3 further events beginning with "Group In", during which the team completed a 2.2 mile run carrying all equipment. Teams could decide to carry additional weighted ammunition boxed of up to 30lbs each, each ammunition box

carried would afford the team 1 x round of ammunition in the competition's final shoot. Both Irish teams completed this task in blistering heat within the allotted time and secured the maximum of 4 rounds of ammunition available. The excellent "Two Gun" event was a solo run by the TL, requiring him to transition between his primary (rifle) and secondary (pistol) weapon systems on a close quarter battle range. Our 27th Inf Bn TL, Cpl Colin McQuaid recorded an impressive result as the satisfactory sound of rounds impacting steel targets rang out across Krilling range as bleachers full of spectators watched on. To finish Day 2, teams completed the "Know your Offset" shoot, a combination of very close and long-range engagements by all 3 team members and "Mystery Box", during which the Shooter and Spotter engaged long range targets enabling the TL to close with and engage close in pistol targets with each successful long-range hit.

The 3rd and final day began once again with 2-night events. The first was "Retro", requiring teams to move to an urban complex and engage multiple steel targets at long range finishing with a close-in pistol engagement by the TL. The

second was "Exfil", during which teams extracted from a "safe house", engaging multiple close in targets simulating an advancing enemy after which teams were hunted by an enemy force as they moved through a number of checkpoints to the safety of a pickup point.

Covering ground at an impressive rate and showcasing high levels of physical fitness, the 27 Inf Bn team reached the pickup point placing in the top 5 fastest teams. The final competition event "The General" consisted of multiple moving targets utilising the impressive, robotic Marathon target system. Teams had to identify a high value target using the rounds they had won during the "Group In" event.

Despite extreme temperatures, little to no rest, unfamiliar environments, and foreign weapons, the 27 Inf Bn team placed 2nd International and 11th overall, with the ARW team placing 16th out of 35 of the best Sniper teams from around the world. Their team spirit, communication, enthusiasm, and "craic" they brought to each event was the talk of the school instructor staff throughout and at the closing banquet event hosted by the Army Sniper Association. Defence Forces participation at the USISC once again highlighted the world class shooters produced by the Irish Defence Forces on the International Stage.



Cpl Fitzpatrick reflecting after the event



The team getting ready to start one of the events

US ARMY INTERNATIONAL SNIPER COMPETITION



L-R Cpl Fitzpatrick, Cpl Erasmus, Cpl McQuaid

INTERVIEW BY SGT JOHN ROSSITER
PHOTOS BY CPL COLIN MCQUAID

Congratulations to Cpl Colin McQuaid, Cpl Kyle Erasmus and Cpl Mark Fitzpatrick who represented the Defence Forces in the 2023 USISC in Fort Benning recently.

Here we speak to Colin & Mark about the competition and being a sniper in the DF.

Can you explain what your roles were within the team for this competition?

Colin: The team for the Fort Benning competition was made-up of a Team Leader (TL) which was myself, a spotter (Cpl Fitzpatrick) and a sniper (Cpl Erasmus). TL is a fairly recent position developed by the US Army to meet the demands of their overseas deployments. It provides the opportunity for a more senior sniper to bring his/her experience to the team and spreads the workload and increases effectiveness of a sniper team as a whole and the extra rifle provides a vast increase in survivability for the team. The old saying is two heads are better than one, and in the world of sniping three is better than two. As TL I had several responsibilities, including but not limited to command-and-control, target identification and prioritisation, ensuring that each team member understood the mission and their responsibilities, also team security as I carried the only assault rifle on the team.

Mark: My role in the team was Spotter. I was mainly responsible for observation and the actions of the Sniper thus providing him with accurate information from target description to range calls, wind data and atmospheric. I was also responsible for navigation, team administration and other tasks.



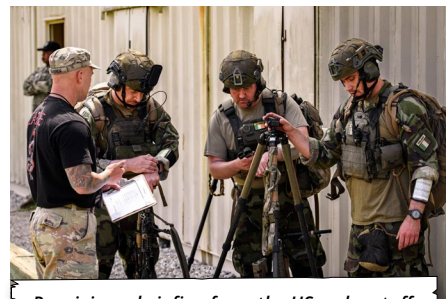
Cpl McQuaid rehearsing his drills

Colin you were the team leader for this competition - how challenging was this role for you?

Colin: This was a very challenging role as I had a lot of different responsibilities, not only was I responsible

for my own performance but also the performance of the team as a whole. As TL my team was looking to me to provide direction and motivation to keep the team engaged, luckily this was not an issue at all as my teammates were highly motivated from the beginning and maintained a high level of professionalism throughout.

The competition involved a high level of mental and physical stress and as TL I needed the ability to step back and overlook the team's performance and adjust as needed even if I was tired and hurting myself. Not being used to the terrain and borrowed equipment from the US Army we had to think outside of the box to stay competitive.



Receiving a briefing from the US cadre staff

What event did you guys enjoy the most and why?

Colin: The event I enjoyed the most was the stalk as my TL skills were truly tested during this tasking. I had to receive the mission brief, maps coordinates, targets, boundaries etc from the US Army cadre staff at approximately 03:00hrs on the Monday morning of the competition. After briefing my team about our mission and ensuring that they knew it inside out, I had to then ensure that we had the correct kit and equipment necessary and that camouflage was appropriate for the terrain, I also designated responsibilities to each team member regarding navigation, security, actions-on for various scenarios and for locating our final firing position. Even though it was my responsibility to locate the final firing position the position itself was actually found by my spotter Cpl Fitzpatrick. A TL needs to be open to receiving information from the team and acting upon it accordingly, not just telling people what to do. Another relevant challenge to the stalk and something that has become more apparent during the war in Ukraine is the ability to remain undetected from aerial surveillance. The US Army was using drones with infrared cameras to locate sniper teams, an aid that maximized the observation posts ability to detect sniper teams. Through teamwork and tenacity we were able to score 90% pass on this stalk where



Cpl McQuaid firing the pistol

most teams failed to complete this task.

Mark: I enjoyed many of the events and would like to credit the US Army sniper cadre staff for their effort and dedication to the competition. My favourite event was "Mystery Box". This event had the Team

Leader (TL) engaging targets with a foreign non-standard weapon and then myself engaging moving robotic targets that can appear in any direction, range or area among a vast field firing range area. Once engaged successfully, they would then drop, reveal a colour that corresponded to a pistol target that the TL had to engage. Speed and communication were vital here and we scored well on this event.

You trained here in Ireland for the competition, but when you arrived in Fort Benning just how different was the climate, terrain, new equipment and did the team have to change any plans to deal with these changes?

Colin: Unit support is crucial to any competitive DF team and a special mention must be given to all members of the 27th Inf Bn who supported us in a multitude of ways, they took a lot of pressure off us in regard to the lead-up. Logistics, transport, stores, PTIs and personnel support provided for range days was truly appreciated by our team. A massive thanks goes to Sgt Flanagan who played a central role in our training leading up to the event. The climate and terrain in Fort Benning is very different from anything in Ireland, we had to deal with temperatures ranging from -5 to +30 degrees with extremely high humidity, along with the possibility of torrential rain and thunderstorms. We also had to deal with wild pigs and poisonous snakes lurking in the dense scrub and swamps. We had to borrow various items of equipment from the US Army which provided its own set of challenges as a sniper needs weeks and months to get accustomed to new equipment but we only had two days. This is part of why we travel to take part in these competitions as it allows us to see our deficiencies both in kit and equipment and TTP's and eventually improving our standards.



Cpl Fitzpatrick taking notes after an event

Now that you have taken part in sniping on the world stage, what were some of the differences you noticed comparing yourselves to other nations, training equipment TTP's etc, good or bad?

Colin: Had the team access to more modern equipment we believe it is possible that we would be on par with any other army given our high level of training and experience. Our training is on par with any army and is at a very high level and cutting edge in its approach. We would benefit from more training days and improved training facilities, sniping is constantly changing and improving and we cannot afford to be left behind in future developments. The US Army has incorporated civilian style IPSC shooting events to round out the sniper skill set, they have constructed cost effective multi-platform shooting areas from shipping containers to allow snipers to shoot from high angles, unusual positions and different rooms replicating an urban fighting environment, whilst targeting robotic moving targets. Most of these things can be replicated in the DF and at little cost and with great returns in improved skills and capabilities not only for sniper teams but also individual infantry soldiers who would benefit from using these facilities. The bottom line being that the individual Irish sniper is highly capable and on par with any

international sniper if given the correct equipment.

Mark: DS staff regardless of nationality have to devise shoots in such a way that it is safe, realistic, achievable and tests the team in specific areas. Similarly, we provide this atmosphere and environment back home just as well and many teams who have taken part in our competition commented on the same outlook and thoroughly enjoyed themselves at the competition setting we provide, this is something we can be proud of. What would bring us on par with other nationalities would be a concerted investment in and development of all current sniper ordnance and ancillary equipment. Some items are currently in progress but some are not and this needs to be addressed. A major item that impressed us was the US Army's Marathon Moving Target system. Again, these targets would be multipurpose as enemy combatants for LFTT, career courses, infantry courses recce/sniper etc. They could be utilised in all our training exercises or every competition setting possible, replicating an unpredictable, impact sensitive enemy developed from US operational experience and lessons learnt in Afghanistan and Iraq. Put simply, enemy forces are not static.

What advice do you guys have for the team that will go to the competition in 2024?

Colin: Communication between teammates, Physical fitness, Study previous competitions and ask questions and assistance from the army sniper community. We regularly take part in civilian shooting competitions which keeps our skill set fresh and creates opportunities to see how things can be done outside of the military environment and we in turn can bring that back to the unit and increase our training portfolio.

Mark: Support is key, unit commanders need to be fully aware of the dedication and support competitive teams travelling abroad actually require IOT to have a realistic chance of a respectable placing. Previous AAR's need to continue to be studied and actioned on where highlighted. Resources need to be compiled and cross training with other units is encouraged to maintain continuity and incorporate different events.

Finally, some of our serving readers might be interested in becoming a sniper, could you explain just how long your courses were and how hard they were physically and mentally?

Colin: Someone wishing to become a sniper should make themselves known to their unit sniper instructors and put themselves forward to assist on the regular training that snipers take part in. This will expose someone who maybe is interested in becoming a sniper into the world of sniping and allow for a greater insight to the daily activities of snipers. It's useful to have the ability to demonstrate above average fieldcraft, navigation, excellent personal administration and problem solving by using your own initiative.

Mark: The DF Basic Sniper course is 8 weeks long. Preparation is key, the course itself is demanding in all aspects of learning the required skills of a sniper. Marksmanship, navigation, camouflage/concealment, judging distance, observation, advanced map reading, practice these skills. Physical and mental fitness are also essential, unit sniper instructors are available and more than happy to advise anyone who expresses an interest.



Cpl Erasmus giving his everything in the event



Adjusting for absolute precision

From Pioneering Leap to Soaring Heights

A LOOK BACK ON THE FIRST DEFENCE FORCES FREEFALL PARACHUTE JUMP

BY COL TOM HODSON (RETD)
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SGT J ROSSITER

Introduction

The first Defence Forces (DF) freefall parachute jump took place over Casement Aerodrome on a sunny afternoon on Friday the 9th of June 1972. The aircraft was an Alouette III, the pilot was Capt Frank Russell, and I was the parachutist. It is important to emphasise 'freefall' as the first DF parachute descent was by Cadet Ronald McPartland after ejecting from a Vampire T55 on the 5th of May 1961 (See An Cosantóir of October 2011). My intention in this article is to record the background, the jump and the four subsequent jumps at Baldonnel which led to the first DF parachute display in Mallow Racecourse on the 25th of June 1972.

Background

I had been freefall parachuting since 1966 with the Irish Skydiving Club (ISC). Following customary Irish practice, the ISC was a breakaway club from the Irish Parachute Club (IPC) formed in 1956 at Weston by Freddie Bond, a former British army parachute instructor. By 1966 some members of the IPC had become frustrated with what they considered the slow progression rates at the club and formed the ISC. Weston, under the enthusiastic ownership and operations of the legendary Capt Darby Kennedy, was very important to Irish parachuting because as well as

hosting the IPC and later the ISC, freefall jumps were made there in 1955 and 1956 by French army officers. I remember watching IPC activities during the early 1960s which included a freefall jump by the future QMG, Maj Gen Jack Gallagher. There may well have been other DF personnel who jumped with the IPC but by 1966, when I joined the ISC, I was then the only member of the DF actively making



Landing after the jump

freefall jumps. I jumped regularly during weekends in 1966, weather and aircraft permitting, at both Weston and Coonagh airfields. In 1967 I was posted with the 8th Infantry Group to the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), and with the approval of the CQMS I managed somewhat optimistically to insert my parachuting equipment into the company stores before we departed. Optimism paid off, and I spent several very enjoyable periods of weekend leave jumping at Nicosia airport with the Cyprus Combined Services Parachute Club. In 1968, following the obligatory path for Irish freefall jumpers who wished to circumvent the vagaries of Irish weather in order to progress in their sport, I spent three weeks at the Centre de Parachutisme at Chalons sur Saone near Dijon. French freefall parachuting was at the beginning the international gold standard but was soon overtaken by the United States. By 1969 I had logged well over a hundred jumps – not negligible by prevailing Irish standards – and had been awarded a Department of Transport and Power 'B' Licence. The 'B' Licence authorised independent and display freefall jumping, including such esoteric delights as night and water jumps, which we carried out at Weston, Powerscourt and Howth Harbour.



Early freefall jump

It was always in my mind that parachuting, an inherently military activity, could and should be introduced into the DF. Having gained experience, expertise and the 'B' Licence I felt that I could approach



Col Hodson (Retd) with Maj Gen Adrian Ó Murchú D COS (Sp)

my superiors on the matter. Events in 1969 impacted negatively on my first approach, but on the other hand, my participation in the 1st Fianóglach Course, and discussions during later Fianóglach courses, allowed me to pursue the issue unofficially with senior course DS. Understandably, given DF priorities at the time, more important matters prevailed and it was not until Friday the 9th of June 1972 that my approaches bore fruit, and then in a most unusual and unexpected manner. At the time I was 2IC of Support Company of the 12th Infantry Battalion in Clonmel, and engaged in the normal Friday regimental administrative duties of pay and company ordnance checks. That morning, I received a phone call instructing me to be ready with my parachute equipment to travel to Baldonnel by helicopter, which would arrive in Kichham Barracks shortly after noon. I was to demonstrate my abilities or otherwise to senior officers of the Air Corps and AHQ that afternoon. I had and still have no knowledge of what discussions had taken place at AHQ and Air Corps HQ, but it was not an opportunity to be missed.

The 1st DF Freefall Jump

I can recall no great formalities on arrival at Casement that afternoon apart from mutual briefings between myself and the pilot Capt Frank Russell, with whom I had the good fortune to have made friends with during earlier ATPC operations. It would be a first for both of us, for Frank to drop a



Member of the Black Knights landing at the Bray Air Show

parachutist and for me to jump from a helicopter. My principal concern was accuracy, given that this was obviously going to be a test jump, and that freefall would be secondary to accuracy. We agreed on a target drop zone (DZ) near to the football field and on my requirements for judging the correct time and spot to leave the aircraft. In those early years before high performance parachute



The highly skilled Black Knights team

canopies and GPS, the 'spotting' technique was rudimentary, a 'streamer' made from coloured crepe paper, weighted down by two six-inch nails was dropped from the aircraft at parachute opening height over the designated target, and the spotter directed the pilot so that he, the spotter, could watch where the streamer landed. After that the theory was simple, on the run-in at the exit height, the spotter would direct the pilot to



ARW operator performing a freefall jump

fly the aircraft over the location of the dropped streamer and along the wind line towards the target by tapping on the pilot's shoulders, and then at an equal distance from the target, as the streamer, he would request him to cut the engine and the jumper(s) would then exit. If the spotter had got it correct, when the jumpers opened their canopies, they would be on the correct direction and distance from the target. It was simple in theory,

but demanded considerable skill, and variables like a change in the strength and direction of the wind between dropping the streamer and exiting the aircraft would often produce unwelcome inaccurate landings. This was to be avoided if at all possible, on this jump. There was to be a bonus however this time which I quickly learned; while spotting from a helicopter with its slower forward speed than that of a fixed wing aircraft, it proved easier to be accurate both on the streamer and exit runs-in. So after the streamer run, Frank climbed the aircraft to 2,500 feet, I exited and following a short freefall opened the canopy and much to my relief guided it to a landing just twenty yards from the target. This accuracy was undoubtedly assisted by favourable weather conditions, and the fact that on this jump I was using the then, only dedicated



Member of the Black Knights leaving the AW139

DF Parachuting course boarding the AW139 for their freefall jump



sport parachute in Ireland, the ISC owned Paracommander. Again, there were no great discussions with those watching the jump from the ground. But I did learn for the first time that

a parachute drop was planned for a DF display in Mallow Racecourse on the 28th of June and that familiarisation jumps, both for the pilots and I, would continue.

I carried out four subsequent jumps at Baldonnell between the 10th and 15th of June, increasing the height and freefall until a final jump on the 15th from 7,000ft with a freefall of 30 seconds. Flying at that height was interesting for the pilots as they did not normally fly helicopters so high. During those days in Baldonnell I was welcomed into his rigger's shop by the Air Corps parachute rigger, Sgt Matt Hanley. Matt was responsible for the packing and maintenance of all Air Corps parachutes including that in the ejector seat of Cadet Ronald McPartland. I was also privileged to fly in a Vampire T55 piloted by Capt Ken Byrne, but thankfully with no need to use the ejector seat. The DF display took place in Mallow Racecourse on the afternoon of the 25th of June. Capt Tom Croke was the pilot, and he flew the aircraft from Collins Barracks Cork. The drop was from 5,500 feet with a freefall of 20 seconds, during which I used red and green smoke canisters. Unfortunately, the freefall and smoke were lost on some of the spectators since ground to air communications were not the best, and it was only as I opened the canopy that I saw crowds rushing out from the grandstand to observe the jump. At least the accuracy was acceptable; landing in front of the grandstand, and the precedence

of a DF parachute display had been established. Unfortunately, and inexplicably by today's practice, no photographs were taken of any of the jumps. Perhaps it would have been tempting fortune with such a novel and potentially risky initiative.



Three members of the legendary Black Knights perfecting their landing

Aftermath

I was posted to UNTSO shortly afterwards. In the meantime, the Para Cumann Míleata (PCM) was established at the Cadet School by Capt Des Travers and Lt Con McNamara. Initial instruction was provided by friends from the ISC, notably by its chief parachuting instructor, the late Tony Moore, Tom Kellett and Tom Colley. I maintained tenuous continuity with PCM activities as my old-fashioned C9 parachute was taken over by Con McNamara, albeit that he was never too convinced of its performance. Parachuting in the DF bears hardly any relationship with those early jumps, and it would be

invidious to even include current capabilities, both sport parachuting and operational parachuting, by the ARW in the same sentence. Nevertheless, a start had to be made.

And to complete the story of early firsts, 2022 was also the 40th anniversary of the first Reserve Defence Force (RDF) parachute jump. It was made over Gormanston Camp on the 5th of July 1982 by Lt Richard Hodson 11th Mot Sqn, while instructing on a DF parachute course. At least I knew something about the discussions surrounding that jump, as by then I was a staff officer in Training



DF members about to be collected at the Bray Air Show for their jump

Section, Chief of Staff's Branch, DFHQ.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Defence Forces now has their own Sports Parachuting Display Team, progressing DF parachuting as an operational capability, an adventure training activity, a competition sport and as a public relations tool. The Black Knights, drawn exclusively from An Para-Chumann Míleata (PCM), is a remarkable group of highly skilled individuals who regularly showcase their expertise at the Bray Air Show, DF open days and other public events. With precision and skill, they perform many highly rehearsed jumps that captivate spectators. These fearless soldiers undergo rigorous training in order to perfect their techniques and ensure maximum safety during each jump. Dressed in their distinctive black jumpsuits and with their Tri Colour parachutes they symbolise professionalism, precision and courage. The team is currently organised, trained and administered by a small, core group of dedicated individuals who possess the necessary skills and internationally recognised qualifications to conduct parachuting to the highest standards. Their performances clearly demonstrate the elite capabilities of Ireland's Defence Forces and showcase the huge skills that can be acquired when you choose a career in the Defence Forces.

To see a great video of some of our very own Defence Forces Black Knights practising freefall jumps for an upcoming event, just click on the [link](#). This excellent video was created by Cpl Paul Kelly from the DF Air Corps.



SLEEP – WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP IN THE MILITARY: ENHANCING PERFORMANCE AND OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

BY COMDT DES CONNOLLY



In the military, where physical and mental alertness is crucial, sleep plays a vitally important role in maintaining optimal performance and operational effectiveness. Military personnel are often subjected to demanding and high-stress environments that can disrupt their sleep patterns and lead to sleep deprivation. This can be particularly prevalent when personnel are serving overseas, where operational demands are high. In any case, understanding and prioritising the importance of sleep in the military context is essential for the well-being and success of military personnel.

First and foremost, sleep is essential for the physical health and recovery of military personnel. In demanding operational environments, soldiers are subjected to rigorous physical training, intense physical exertion, and potential exposure to harsh weather conditions. Sleep allows the body to repair and regenerate tissues, strengthen the immune system, and restore energy levels. Insufficient sleep compromises the body's ability to recover from physical strain and increases the risk of injuries, fatigue-related accidents, and musculoskeletal problems. Adequate sleep is vital for ensuring that military personnel remain physically fit and resilient, ready to face the physical challenges they encounter.

The immune system, our body's defence against infections and diseases, relies on adequate sleep to function optimally. During sleep, the immune system releases cytokines, proteins that help fight inflammation and infections. Sleep deprivation weakens the immune response, making individuals more susceptible to illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe infections.

In addition to the physical and cognitive benefits, sleep also supports creativity and enhances problem-solving abilities. Research has shown that sleep promotes a process called memory consolidation, where the brain reorganizes and strengthens memories. This process allows for the integration of newly acquired information with existing knowledge, leading to enhanced creativity and the ability to generate innovative ideas. Many artists, writers, and scientists have attributed their breakthroughs to insights gained through dreams or well-rested periods of sleep.

Moreover, sleep plays a critical role in cognitive functioning and decision-making abilities. In the military, split-second decisions and the ability to think clearly under pressure can be a matter of life and death. Sleep deprivation has a profound impact on cognitive function, attention, memory, and problem-solving skills. It impairs judgment, reaction time, and the ability to assess risks accurately. Studies have shown that sleep-deprived individuals exhibit decreased vigilance, diminished situational awareness, and impaired decision-making abilities, all of which can have severe consequences in military operations.

Deprivation

A study conducted by Harrison, Horne, and Rothwell (2000) examined the effects of sleep deprivation on military performance and found that sleep loss negatively impacted various cognitive functions. It impaired sustained attention, working memory, and psychomotor performance, all of which are essential for military tasks. The study concluded that adequate sleep is vital for maintaining cognitive



performance and recommended implementing strategies to ensure sufficient sleep for military personnel.

Furthermore, sleep deprivation can have a detrimental effect on mental health and psychological well-being. Military personnel often face high levels of stress, traumatic experiences, and the constant demand for alertness. Lack of sleep exacerbates these challenges, increasing the risk of developing mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Prioritising adequate sleep is crucial for promoting mental resilience and maintaining optimal psychological well-being in military personnel.

In addition to individual well-being, sleep also has significant implications for unit performance and operational effectiveness. In a military setting, effective teamwork and coordination are essential for mission success. Sleep deprivation can hinder communication, cooperation, and coordination among team members. It impairs interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, and the ability to work effectively as part of a team. Sleep-deprived individuals are more prone to making mistakes, exhibiting poor judgment, and experiencing conflicts within the unit. These factors can negatively impact overall mission readiness and compromise operational effectiveness.

Recognizing the importance of sleep, military organizations have started implementing measures to prioritize sleep health and education. The U.S. Army, for instance, has implemented the Performance Triad program, which emphasizes the importance of sleep, activity, and nutrition for optimal performance. The program provides education and resources to help soldiers develop healthy sleep habits and ensure adequate rest.

In conclusion, sleep plays a crucial role in the military context, impacting physical health, cognitive functioning, mental resilience, and operational effectiveness.

Get your 7-8 hours!

The Personnel Support Service (PSS): PSS staff are available to you in every location of the DF on island. Additionally, every overseas deployment is supported by PSS. You can access details of your PSS support team by emailing pss@military.ie. In some cases, PSS staff will visit you in your mission area, and will maintain contact with you throughout your deployment. PSS staff are available to both you and your family to support you through your deployment experience, including when you return home.

The Chaplaincy Service: DF Chaplains are available in some mission areas and are always available at home to military personnel and to their families.

DF Medical, Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology services: DF Clinical Psychologists are available to support members of the Defence Forces during their deployment. These services are usually contacted through your MO.

The **INSPIRE Counselling Service** is a free and confidential service, available 24/7/365 to ALL Defence Forces personnel and adult family members – 1800 409673 OR 00353(0)1 685 6816

Good luck to you all who are serving overseas at the moment and to those who will return home soon. And if you are struggling in any way, please [use the services and supports available](#). Safe travels!

Soldiers become experts at sleeping anywhere



SURVEILLANCE AND AIRLIFT: CHARTING THE FUTURE OF IRELAND'S MARITIME AND DEFENCE AIR OPERATIONS

BY CAPT DECLAN HICKEY
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPT HICKEY

101 "Surveillance and Airlift" Sqn operate out of No 1 Operations Wing and have primary responsibility for the aerial surveillance and monitoring of Ireland's maritime domain, as well as providing a bedrock for logistical and operational support to numerous State agencies and the wider Defence Forces in the form of troop transport, parachute operations, airlift, air ambulance and prisoner transportation, to name a few. Over the past six decades, the squadron has seen much change, developments and advancements, and 2023 marks the beginning of the latest and most innovative changes to date with the intro-



duction of the most advanced aircraft to be introduced to the Air Corps. In December 2020, the Irish Government signed contracts for the provision of two Airbus Military C295W Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) to continue the Irish Air Corps commitments to maritime surveillance and defence, monitoring of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Contracts were signed later in December 2022 for the procurement of a third Airbus Military C295W Military Transport Aircraft (MTA) which will enter service in 2025, providing a strategic medium lift capability. The future of 101 Sqn will undoubtedly see a leap forward in the Air Corps' capabilities, providing a number of new, demanding and exciting opportunities for growth and development throughout Óglaigh na h-Éireann, all built upon a proud and unbroken service providing maritime surveillance for almost 50 years.

The genesis of what is now 101 Squadron can be traced back to the early 1970's. Membership of the European Economic Community (now the EU) placed responsibility on the State for the policing 132,000 sq nm of fishing grounds, 16% of the total EU fishery area. In 1977 the first of two Beechcraft Super King Air 200 aircraft was taken on task by General Purpose (GP) Flight for fishery protection and coastal surveillance. Joined by a second aircraft in 1978, GP Flight quickly expanded the roles to include Search and Rescue (SAR) capability. The King Airs however lacked bespoke surveillance

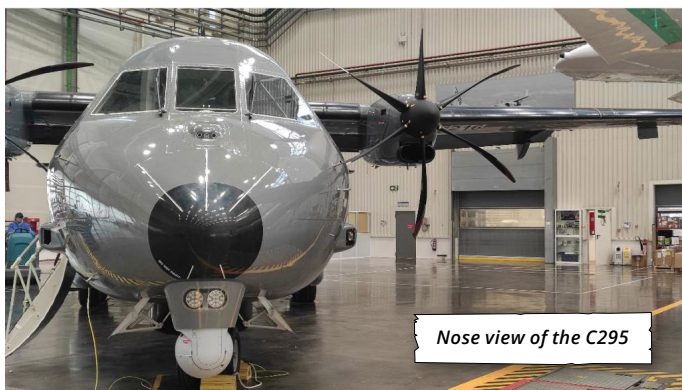
equipment and relied upon the aircraft's own weather radar for vessel location. Two observers were carried and vessels photographed through the window with information passed to the Irish Naval Service for further investigation as necessary. Although originally acquired as an interim measure, both King Airs formally became the aircraft of now re-titled "Maritime Squadron" in 1980, dutifully conducting operations until their replacement in 1991.

Although effective, the King Airs were unsuited to prolonged flights in the harsh operating environment at low altitude over the Atlantic. Dedicated MPA in the form of two CASA CN-



235 "Persuader" aircraft took up the mantle in 1994 (in the interim the Sqn operated a leased CN-235-100). The "CASA's" (Persuader never really caught on!) represented a significant evolution in the squadron's capability. Equipped with search radar, electro optical (EO) Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) technology and photographer's windows, with integrated links to the on-board mission suite, the CASA's provided a platform for maritime surveillance and information gathering that has led to evolving roles with other maritime agencies aside from pure fisheries monitoring. The Squadron motto "Shúile thar an bhfarraige" (Eyes over the Sea) denoted the squadron's multi-role approach to surveillance in the maritime domain and has remained in place throughout the CN-235's operation.

A standard Maritime Defence and Security Operation (MDSO) in the CN-235 would last approximately six hours with the ability to loiter for longer durations if required. For fisheries monitoring, the only way to confirm a vessel's activity remains a low-level visual inspection. For this, the aircraft is required to descend to as low as 250' above mean sea level (AMSL) and visually identify and confirm the vessel's activities and markings. While the vessel may be easily identified at range by the EO systems, the verification of identity and activity is still the responsibility of the aircrew (all pilots and radar operators are EU Fishery Inspectors). As the fishing industry contributes



Nose view of the C295

up to €1.4Bn annually, appropriate monitoring is essential to ensure regulations are being followed and any violations are dealt with accordingly.

Additionally, the aircraft were equipped for SAR operations with the ability to deploy life rafts, surface smoke markers or illumination flares for night activity. Close cooperation is achieved with Coast Guard units through marine VHF and the aircraft are regularly involved with inter agency exercises. Although not specifically optimised for pollution monitoring, the aircraft are capable in providing this information to the Irish Coast Guard and have taken active roles in international pollution monitoring operations such as Super CEPCO events in Denmark, Germany and Norway, as well as observation and verification of satellite detections within the Irish area of responsibility.

Outside of the maritime environment, the aircraft have become invaluable State assets for the provision of Air Ambulance transfers both on and off island. CASAs are regular visitors to RAF Northolt, Newcastle and Manchester, as well as further afield to Brussels and Frankfurt in support of critical patient transfer. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CASAs were utilised to transport vital medical equipment and test samples to and from Ireland and were regularly tasked with logistic and humanitarian support to Irish UN missions abroad (Lebanon and Kosovo for example). It is easy to forget that there are only two aircraft and perhaps no surprise that they have amassed over 20,000 flight hours each - the highest of the worldwide CN-235 fleet - a testament to the expertise of the maintenance crews in 103 Squadron.

This is where the Squadron now looks to the future, and the further expansion of roles and capabilities as the C295W MPA (and later MTA) variants are introduced into service. 2023 has long been in the minds of all personnel involved in the C295W project; as early as 16th January 2023, the first flight crews commenced the first ever pilot's type rating course in Airbus Defence and Space International Training Centre (ITC) in

Seville, Spain. The first flight crew received their aircraft type rating qualification on 16th March 2023, just in time to celebrate St Patrick's Day! Concurrently in the same Training Centre in Seville, the first Loadmaster and B1/B2 technician courses commenced with all crews successfully completing their respective courses. In total, 106 individual courses will be completed by personnel



Air Corps unit flash

from No 1 Operations Wing in the ITC Seville, gaining various qualifications on the new aircraft. The first C295W MPA is due for delivery in late June 2023, with personnel honing in their skills and knowledge operating the aircraft, and later commencing flight training throughout the summer. The second C295W MPA is due for delivery in late September. The new aircraft will provide much improved and enhanced surveillance capability (the addition of LiDAR for example), an on-board sea pollution detection system and defensive aids protection system, the first of its kind on any Irish Air Corps aircraft. An increased lift capacity and range will be an invaluable capability for logistics support, a capability that will further be expanded with the arrival of the C295W MTA variant in 2025. The aircraft will also be expected to continue to provide support to SOF activity in the transport, para and C2 roles previously developed with the CN-235.

Throughout this integration period, the trusted CN-235 will continue to provide the State with vital operational output until it is stood down in late 2023. This will undoubtedly be an emotional moment for the Air Corps, and wider Defence Forces, as the "big blue bus" is retired after over 31 years of stellar service.

With the introduction of the C295W MPA and MTA, the Squadron updated its image to better reflect the official title of "Surveillance and Airlift". This in turn has led to a re-branding of the Squadron with a new badge, incorporating the aspects



Pilot performing a training flight

future roles while retaining important ties to the past and the foundation of the squadron. The shield design remains unique to the squadron, and a new text scroll of "Faireachas" (Surveillance) and "Aerárthach" (Airlift) in gold Celtic style font denotes the new squadron name. The primary image in the badge is the powerful and dominant grey horse, the same colour as the new aircraft. This horse has its roots in the ancient Celtic mythology of the Capaill Uisce – a mythical creature who lived in the seas and lakes of Celtic waters, who acted as protector of all in its path. The horse's green eyes symbolising their vigilance over Ireland and the Irish EEZ. The prominence of the crashing wave gives a nod to the squadron's primary role in the maritime environment, while the lightning bolt, a standard SIGINT symbol across many squadron insignia, symbolises the technological advances the platform possesses. Night time navy is the prominent background which denotes both the intention for day/night operations as well as the covert nature of future operations.

The coming months will see much change in 101 Sqn as the C295W are introduced to service. The coming years will, however, see much progression and development across the entire Defence Forces as this platform provides new and exciting capabilities never before utilised in the organisation. Above all, 101 Sqn will continue to maintain "Eyes over the Sea.....and beyond"!

DEFENCE FORCES ADVENTURE RACE 2023

BY CAPT DIARMAID COLLINS
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPT COLLINS

Sport in all its forms has always played an important role within the Defence Forces. It allows us to develop key military skills in a social but competitive setting. Essential skills such as physical fitness, teamwork, leadership, navigation, endurance, stamina, and robustness can all be developed within the myriad of sports engaged in within the Defence Forces. Team sports such as football, hurling, rugby etc. have always developed team dynamics, leadership, strategy and physical skill, other sports such as athletics and orienteering can be used to develop navigation, physical endurance and stamina. In the last few years however, new sports have emerged and developed which develop a wider array of skills and proficiencies.

Adventure racing is one of those sports. It shares a common root with its closest relative triathlon but aside from both sports being a combination of various endurance sports on foot, bike, and water, the two have evolved differently and developed into separate distinct sports.

Within Adventure Racing, two distinct styles of races have developed. Multisport adventure racing is more closely aligned to triathlon. The focus then is more on speed, stamina, and endurance. The Gaelforce and Quest series are examples of this style. The course is marked so no navigation is required, the bike sections are for the most part on road with small sections off road, and the kayaking is usually kept short. It allows competitors to test their physical fitness on a set course across a variety of disciplines.

Expedition style adventure racing is where the sport provides a greater variety of skills, demands and rewards. It is a team event, usually a team of four and in order to be competitive there must be a mix of genders within the team. The course can last anywhere from a few hours to a few days. The course is unmarked, teams must navigate through a series of checkpoints, often in remote wilderness areas. Teams must race through the night often with little to no sleep, dealing with sleep deprivation affecting navigation, team strategy and team dynamics.

The Defence Forces Adventure Racing Club was set up to develop the sport within the Defence Forces and expose members of the DF to a sport which can complement and



CQMS Mahon and Comdt McKnight enjoying the testing event

develop their military skills. As part of that development the Defence Forces Adventure Race was established to allow DF personnel compete in an expedition style adventure race. The 2022 DF Adventure Race was held in Kilbride and surrounding areas. In 2023 the race moved South to Kilworth, and its surrounds, the Nagles Mountains, River Blackwater, and Glensheskin Forest.

DF Adventure 2023 Kilworth

Planning and organising is often a key skill in getting not only to the finish line but getting to the start line with all the necessary clothes, food, water and equipment correctly packed away or carried. Teams arrived early to Kilworth camp to give themselves enough time to check in and register, collect satellite trackers, race bibs maps, bike tags, gear bag tags before organising all their own equipment, bikes, clothes, energy food and drink.

Bikes and gear bags were loaded onto one set of transport headed to Transition area 2 in Fermoy Rowing Club, and the racers were loaded onto another set of transport headed to the Start point in the Nagles Mountains. Race start was at 1000hrs with team having a five-hour cut off to collect all mandatory check points and as many bonus checkpoints



Participants synchronise their watches before starting the event



Good teamwork is a key component in this event



Blackwater Way walking route

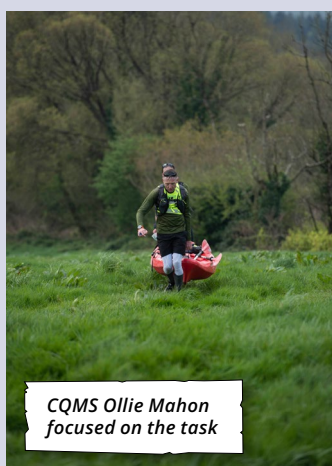
along the route as they could drop within the cut off. Bonus checkpoints had different points assigned depending on the degree of difficulty in getting them. Teams arriving after the cut off would be

deducted ten points for every minute over. The team with the highest points with bonuses and penalties taken into account would be ranked the highest.

The first leg was a trek leg through the Nagles Mountains, the mandatory course was a fairly straight forward 8kms from the start to Transition Area 1(TA1) in Ballyhooley Bridge. Most teams at this point were feeling strong and went for the bonus checkpoints further out on the course. There was some tricky navigation getting through the track systems in the lower half of the section and this split the race into two groups. To get down from the mountain area teams followed a marked section across farmland to link up with the Blackwater Way and on into transition. Out in front crossing the farmland were Lee Boyd/Eamon Kelly from 28 Inf Bn, closely followed by two experienced adventure racers Eoghan Carton/Maeve O'Grady from the DFTC/Air Corp. With only a few minutes between the two teams they would spend the rest of the race battling for the lead.

Teams dropped down from the high ground and linked up with the national waymarked trail the Blackwater way which brought the teams further downhill to their first transition point at Ballyhooley Bridge. Team changed here from trekking to Kayaking. Leg two was a nine-kilometre kayak leg on the Blackwater River finishing in Fermoy town at Fermoy Rowing Club. The DF Kayak club and Dive group were on land and on water to provide safety throughout. The flow of the Blackwater River was strong adding to the paddling of the teams in their double sit on top kayaks, most teams took an hour to get down river to TA 2 in Fermoy.

At TA2 teams were out of the kayaks and onto their bikes. At TA 2 teams had access to pre dropped kit bags and bikes and had use of Fermoy Rowing Club to warm themselves up. The weather was on side, with clear skies and high temperatures, but an hour sitting down in a kayak with a bit of wind made it feel a few degrees colder than it was getting out of the kayaks. Changed into bike kit and refuelled teams headed out through Fermoy town towards their first mandatory checkpoint in Kilworth village. From there teams headed into Glensheskin forest and a bike navigation section that would test the team's ability to navigate on the bike and test their technical mountain biking. A series of bonus checkpoints in Glensheskin brought the teams to the furthest extent north of the forest for the faster teams. Some teams, having lost some time on the trek leg, electing to drop a few of the bonus checkpoints to make it back in time for the cut off. The top two teams traded places at this point and a bit of a gamble by the 28th Bn team



CQMS Ollie Mahon focused on the task

in dropping the bikes and running up a technical mountain biking section went against them and they lost a few minutes to Carton/O'Grady. The cut off time

was set at 1500hrs with the finish line in the Kilworth HQ area. Carton/O'Grady's experience paid off and they arrived back into the finish with the course cleared and in a time of 4:57:58. Boyd/Kelly having taken a chance on the bikes arrived back in a few minutes over the cut off and copped a time penalty but with the course cleared for second place.

As teams crossed the finish line after five hours of trekking, kayaking, and biking, they were able to sit down, with an ice cream and a can of coke and await the results.

1st Mixed and overall winners were Carton/O'Grady.

2nd Mixed team of Niamh Morrissey/Conor Fenlon 1 BAR

1st Male 2nd overall Boyd/Kelly 28 Inf Bn.

Second Male Dave McKnight/Ollie Mahon DFHQ J4 Branch.

1st Masters Tim O'Connor/Diarmuid Barry 1 Bde Engr/HQ

For the racers they had the chance to develop their endurance, teamwork, navigation, planning and organisation. For the race organisers a different set of skills were used to ensure that the event was able to go ahead, and more importantly in a safe manner. As mentioned, adventure racing is a sport which complements military fitness. The organisation of adventure racing can also develop everyday military skills. Risk assessments, land permission, safety plans, coordination of resources all makes up part of routine military, this was chance to use those same processes in a sphere outside of normal military operations. Special thanks to the local landowners who made this event possible Will Leahy in the Nagles, Margaret Lombard in Ballyhooley, as well as Stephen Donnellan and Fermoy Rowing Club for offering the use of their facilities. Within the Defence Forces thanks to the DF Kayak club and Dive group for their safety cover during the kayak section, as well as 1 Bde mapping section, 1 Bde MP, and 1 Bde Tpt Grp.



Comdt Carton after completing the kayaking section



Sgt O' Donnell 28 Inf Bn taking a well deserved break in between the events



The Defence Forces Adventure Racing Club is established and aims to develop the sport of adventure racing within the Defence Forces. More information on upcoming mountain bike sessions, training days, and upcoming races see the DFAR IKON Page.

[Check out our great video](#) of the race day created by our very own AVS team.

DF Sports & Clubs Update

FOR REGULAR UPDATES ON ANY OF THESE CLUBS, PLEASE LOG ONTO THE CONNECT APP



Airman Glenn Fullam (RIP) - Who sadly passed away on 16 Apr 23 tragically at such a young age. A true stalwart of DF soccer seen here in action against the UKAF in Tallaght Stadium last May

DF Men's Soccer

The DF men's soccer team recently lost 4-2 to the French, but overall they put in an excellent performance against a top-quality French side. Goals came from Cpl Ronan Keirns and Airman Dave Long. They recently held a training camp from the 29 May to 05 Jun in McKee Barracks, Dublin. This camp was to facilitate the Men's DF Soccer team's preparation to play the UKAF in Leicester. They conduct their preparation training sessions in FAI HQ Abbottstown and also based out of McKee where they conduct video analysis and S&C assessments. The men's team lost 4-1 on the day but they

played some good football for periods of the game.



The DF bench standing for the national anthem against the French Armed Forces in Clairefontaine (where the French national team train) on the 15 Feb 23

DF Women's Soccer

The Defence Forces Women's Soccer team recently underwent a training camp from the 30 May to 02 Jun in McKee Barracks, Dublin. This camp was to facilitate the Women's DF Soccer



The DF women's rugby team seen here after a recent match

team's preparation to play the UKAF in Leicester. Unfortunately, the result just did not happen with the Womens team losing 5-0, but there were some positive overall performances to take away from the

match.

Women's Rugby Combined Forces Team

The Women's rugby combined team is made up of players from both the Irish Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána with a number of the players also competing in the Women's All Ireland League and Leinster League with their home clubs. They kicked off the year with their first game against Wicklow RFC in January. They have a number of exciting fixtures in the works for this year. The likes of which include the French Armed Forces who they last played in March 2019. They are also planning a potential game against the British AF. They have a number of training sessions and camps in the planning process some of which are hoped to link in with the men's team. The DF Rugby



Pte Scott Delaney (Team Capt) for the game in France

Committee are working extremely hard to facilitate the development of women's rugby within the organization and it's an exciting time ahead. If you would be interested in joining you can contact Capt Roisin O'Driscoll (roisinodriscoll@defenceforces.ie) or Lt Meabh O'Brien (meabh.obrien@defenceforces.ie) for more information.

The DF men's rugby team recent lineup against AGS

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. M. Kennedy | Tullamore Rfc |
| 2. P. Dowling | Dolphin Rfc |
| 3. K. Gamble | Strabane Rfc |
| 4. B. Scully | Cill Dara Rfc |
| 5. M. Cummins | Dunmore Rfc |
| 6. I. Rigbi | Cashel Rfc |
| 7. M. O'Neill | Buccaneers Rfc |
| 8. E. Walsh | Naas Rfc |
| 9. J. McCarthy | Cashel Rfc |
| 10. J. Feeney | Coillthians Rfc |
| 11. R. Finn | Ballinrobe Rfc |
| 12. D. Liddy | Lansdowne Fc |
| 13. R. Conway | Cill Dara Rfc |
| 14. K. Coughlan | Dolphin Rfc |
| 15. C. Stapleton | Naas Rfc |

Cover
W. Ryan, S. Hayes, T. Sheehan, M. Coleman,
J. Yallop, R. Cleary, G. Browne, N. Butler.



DF Men's Rugby

The DF Men's rugby team recently took on AGS on 09 May in Kildaloe/Ballina RFC. This was the 50th anniversary of the Gordon Wood Trophy, this was a highly competitive game with the DF coming out on top, winning the game 43 - 26.



Comdt Curran celebrating another recent win



The DF men's rugby team seen here after another successful win



Two sporting legends Comdt Stephen Molumphy and Capt Paul Murphy at the recent DF hurling Parsons Cup



Pte Sullivan who was named as player of the tournament in the recent DF Parsons Cup

The DF Hooker Reagan will be hosted in June/July, date and loc TBC. The Defence Forces Senior Men's Rugby Team recently hosted a one-day training camp in Buccaneers RFC, Athlone on 24 May. This open camp was aimed at identifying players for the DF panel travelling to the Defence Rugby World Cup in France in Aug 2023.

A big congratulations also to DF Mens team manager Comdt John Quinn and DF rugby members Lt Cdr Stuart Donaldson and Gnr Paudie Sheehan who have made the national referee panel for the upcoming season.

Army Equitation School

Comdt Geoff Curran, Army Equitation School, had a recent victory in the Puissance at Royal Windsor Horse Show, UK riding on Bishop's Quarter, the winning height jumped was 2.15 metres.

Hurling & Camogie

On 27th Apr 2023, over 150 DF camogie players and hurlers gathered together for the first time to play the inter-barracks 2023 hurling competition. This featured a team from every



Team captain Donal Liddy receiving the winning trophy from Keith Wood



Lt. James Brennan (Air Corps) Captain Eoin Stanley (Air Corps) and Lt. Rob Scully (2Cav). Both Lt's are playing for the Leinster Juniors Rugby Team in the Interpro Series, they have recently beaten Ulster and Connaught and will play against Munster Juniors in the Junior Interpro Championship

barracks across the island playing against one another in an 11aside and 7aside competition.

The DF Hurling Chaplains and

Parsons Cup was held in Liam Mellows GAA Club. The DFHQ/ DFTC and the 3 Inf Bn were the winners of on the day.

Orienteering

The DF Orienteering group recently held an event in the Phoenix Park on Wed 10th May 2023. There were two courses one with a distance of 6.2km and 14 controls, the other course was 3.6km and had 12 controls. 1st place on the 6.2km was CQMS T. Maher from the Air Corps in a time of 49:32. 1st place on the 3.6km Sgt D. Rainey 28 Inf Bn in a time of 27:57, 2nd place was Pte L. Rooney DFPP in a time of 29:30, 3rd place was Pte Foley 28 Inf Bn in a time of 29:46. Thanks to all who contributed to the successful running of the event – Capt Byrne (McKee Barracks Coy), Sgt Eastwood (Engr Br, DFHQ), CQ Maher (5 Sp Wing) and CS Friel (28 Inf Bn).

Golf

Pte Kerry Ryan, 28 Inf Bn was the recent winner of the 2023 Collins Cup. The DF Golf Committee held their first meeting of the year on the 22nd February 2023. The Bde/Fmn Reps are Comdt Ian Harrington (1 Bde), Capt Shane O' Neill (2 Bde), Lt Col Brian Donagh (DFTC), Capt Mark Doyle (AC) and CPO

Thomas Plunkett (NS).

A number of fixtures have been confirmed, the DF Championships will be held in Mount Wolseley on the 12/ 13 June. The Colin's Cup is also fixed for Monday 4th September in the Royal Curragh Golf Club. Championships will be held in Mount Wolseley on the 12/ 13 June. The Colin's Cup is also fixed for Monday 4th September in the Royal Curragh Golf Club.



Pte Kerry Ryan, 28 Inf Bn the winner of 2023 Collins Cup seen here being presented with the cup by DJ 7, Col Louis Flynn



L-R Pte Keith Gamble, Lt Sam Smyth, Pte Rory Conway, S/Lt Kieran Coughlan, Pte Tommie Sheahan, seen here during the national anthem

THE ORIGIN, CONCEPT AND TREATMENTS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

BY MELISSA PIA MORRIS - BSC ANATOMY (NUI GALWAY), MSC WAR & PSYCHIATRY
(KING'S COLLEGE LONDON), ASSOCIATE OF KING'S COLLEGE LONDON (AKC)
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MELISSA PIA MORRIS

"To live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in suffering."

— Friedrich Nietzsche

Why do some soldiers return from war in relatively good health, while others return woken at night by the sound of artillery or air raids? People react in different ways to traumatic events in life, and war is no different.

What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

When we hear the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) most of us will immediately think of war veterans and all they have done and witnessed while in combat. But what about those who have been the victims of sexual violence, severe neglect, a terrorist attack, a natural disaster or even a traumatic birth? Could they not experience PTSD? Of course, they could.

PTSD is a term which was added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in the 1980's and can be described as a type of anxiety disorder triggered by a traumatic event, with symptoms lasting longer than a few months.

However, PTSD existed well before the 1980's. The first description of something similar to PTSD was in 1915 when Charles Myers coined the term Shell Shock.

Origin of PTSD

PTSD first came into the public domain as something described as Shell Shock. Shell Shock was the primary injury of the "opening war of the modern age".

The first to identify and group behaviours of PTSD, however, were the Swiss military physicians in 1678. During the American Civil War (1861-65) many soldiers were dismissed unsupervised, with their psychological stress breakdown attributed to a lack of discipline and cowardice. In 1905 following their war against the Japanese, the Russians were the first to accept that psychological stress during war time was a legitimate condition. The Korean War in the 1950's saw combat as a primary factor of psychological breakdown, particularly with the emergence of symptoms in veterans after the war.



The American Civil War

In September 1914 during the Battle of Marne, many men were described as being in 'military stance at their posts but not being alive'. The first cases of shell shock were recorded in The Lancet Journal in February 1915 by Charles Myers of the Royal Army Medical Corp. In these three cases the main symptoms present were reduced visual fields, loss of memory, smell and taste. The first record was made just six months after the beginning of the war! By 1917 medical personnel were discouraged from using the term 'Shell Shock' and instead were to use 'Not Yet Diagnosed (Nervous)'. Soldiers deemed to be 'Nervous' were then referred to a psychiatrist who would further diagnose under the term 'Shell Shock (Wound)', for those who were close to an explosion, and 'Shell Shock (Sick)' for those who had not been close to an explosion. Before being returned to the war or discharged, soldiers were given a chance to recuperate in privately funded treatment centres, such as the Lennel Auxiliary Hospital.



Lennel House during World War One

The Lennel Auxiliary Hospital was a privately-owned country estate in Scotland owned by Major Walter Waring and his wife Lady Clementine. What is interesting about this particular treatment centre is, unlike the personal medical files which were destroyed during The Blitz of World War Two and the National Personal Records Office, the records of the Lennel Auxiliary House were kept safe in a metal box in the basement of the house.

Are Shell Shock and PTSD the same?

After the emergence of the term PTSD in the 1980's this was quite a common question – are shell shock and PTSD the same? In my opinion, the answer is two-fold. On the one hand, yes, they are the same in that when experiencing either of these disorders one has a "desire for mental escape". While on the other hand, shell shock is strictly a combat related disorder whereas PTSD is much broader in its causes, for this reason they are quite different. However, when reading DSM IV in the diagnosis of PTSD one will see that there are varying types of PTSD, with varying symptoms. Some of which resemble symptoms of Shell Shock. For example, some types of PTSD may be more fear conditioning while others may be more depressive.



Soldier suffering from trauma

Coping Mechanisms and Treatments

Military personnel risk unimaginable stressors during deployment, such as combat, injury, suffering and



**Lady Clementine
with her daughter**

regularly witnessing death. Whilst many personnel are resilient and possess the mechanisms to cope with such life-threatening stressors, an overwhelming 29% develop PTSD in the first years after deployment. The following first-choice interventions are recommended in many clinical practice guidelines: eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing, exposure therapy, cognitive therapy, cognitive restructuring therapy,

cognitive processing therapy, and trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy. It is evidenced that many military personnel do responded well to these recommended therapies. That being said, the majority of veterans (in excess of 75%) continue to receive therapy four years after their initial treatment.

Furthermore, military personnel diagnosed with PTSD tend to benefit less from psychotherapy than their civilian counterparts. The postulated reason for this is due to the complex nature of combat-related traumatic events. That being said, exposure therapy and cognitive processing therapy prove very effective in targeting combat-related PTSD. From a social standpoint, military personnel tend to perform worse in treatment if they are socially isolated, have a dysfunctional family, or experience marital distress.

The trauma experienced by these individuals during various conflicts while on deployment has the potential to negatively impinge on their psychological wellbeing and in turn may have a negative impact on the mission's success. Therefore, the importance of psychological support cannot be overstated, during deployment in the building of mental health resilience and improving overall wellbeing, and also post-deployment, to aid the individual in the transition back to civilian life. This combined with the stresses associated with evolving war tactics, for example the development of nuclear weaponry, has proved that psychological support is of the utmost importance to military personnel - further highlighting that peacekeeping operations have evolved to more complex politico-military-humanitarian efforts.

Social support is also important when personnel return from deployment or on retirement from the Defence Forces as an aid in transitioning back into civilian life. This social support may in some way compensate for the lost comradeship and 'brotherhood' these individuals may experience on leaving the military.

Conclusion

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in general have been the subject of much worldwide attention over many decades. However, the mental health of personnel deployed



**Soldiers experiencing
trauma in war**

on such missions has not received the same attention. With adequate preparation and training there is potential to equip serving personnel with the means to boost their mental resilience during service which is of the utmost importance as it can encourage those who are suffering to

come forward, without fear of stigma, at an earlier stage in their illness. Should the significance of peacekeepers mental health and psychological wellbeing receive more attention, the efficacy of peacekeeping operations could also benefit as a consequence.

Now that we have more advanced methods of measuring someone's psychological wellbeing it is easy to question why PTSD was not diagnosed earlier and treated as a severe illness. But as in today's society, there was a stigma around mental health during the First World War period.

Perhaps the origin of PTSD was actually a result of the anxiety experienced by soldiers, returning from war, in reacting to the stigma of 'madmen' and the perception of the population thinking the individual to be 'gone mad'? Maybe they felt the intense pressure to be seen as courageous when all they had witnessed was death and suffering.

During the First World War the number of patients in mental asylums increased dramatically, perhaps this was a factor which pushed for the diagnosis and care of those suffering from PTSD.

While PTSD is widely studied, there are still a number of questions surrounding it: why do some people experience PTSD while others do not? Why does it affect some people more than others? Can we predict its onset before the event? Are there structural or chemical differences in the brains of those who suffer?

However, one thing is for sure – many more veterans and civilians will continue to suffer until these questions are answered.

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**Óglaigh
na hÉireann**
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

UN MISSIONS

- UNIFIL : 338
- UNDOF : 132
- UNTSO : 13
- UNNY : 3
- UNMAS : 1

EU MISSIONS

- EUTM-M : 7
- EUFOR BIH : 4
- EUMAM UA : 4
- EUNAFVOR MED : 61
- OSCE : 2
- BRUSSELS : 17

NATO

- KFOR : 13

**TOTAL INTERNATIONAL
DEPLOYMENTS: 595**

UNNY



[STRENGTHEN
THE NATION]



IRISH DEFENCE FORCES OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS



RESERVES ARE 'FIT TO FIGHT'

BY SGT STEVE CONRAN (62 RES CAV SQN)



"Fit to Fight" a slogan that applies to all PDF/RDF personnel alike

For those of you who are perhaps sceptical about the emphasis placed on fitness in the RDF (Reserve Defence Forces) in times past, this article will hopefully reaffirm your belief that the term "Fit to Fight" is a slogan that applies to all Defence Forces personnel, be they professional or reserve soldiers.

The first PTLs (Physical Training Leaders) in the Army Reserve were qualified in 2005, when students were selected from the Reserve BTCs (Brigade Training Centre). They joined their PDF counterparts as students for two weeks, to complete the PTL module on the PDF Potential NCO course. However since then, the concept of RDF PTLs has evolved and a dedicated RDF PTL course has been established, with three such courses having been successfully run in the DFTC in recent years. This newly comprised "RDF PT Leaders course" is a highly sought after amongst RDF personnel with student allocations from each brigade being in high demand. This relatively recent introduction of PTLs into the Battalions and Corps RDF units, as distinct from solely in BTCs, should not be down played or underestimated, as it enables these units to conduct physical training on parade nights, weekends or periods of Full Time Training (FTT), all of which could not be carried out, in the absence of PTLs.

This years All Army RDF PT Leaders course, run under the auspices of the DFPES (Defence Forces Physical Education School) and the RDFTA (Reserve Defence Forces Training Authority) qualified a further 16 Army Reserve personnel as PTLs. This in turn will enable them to return to their respective units and conduct PT for the benefit of all ranks. In most of

the cases, this years students will be the only PTLs in their units (company/squadron), and as such will be a new training resource. There are strict regulations pertaining to exactly what a PTL can and cannot do with regards training troops. A PTL is allowed to warm up and stretch troops prior to exercise, bring troops for a run, conduct games etc. in sports gear and running shoes, to cool down troops and conduct a post-stretch following exercise to insure cramp and injury do not occur after training.

However the course itself goes into far more detail and explores areas such as: diet, nutrition, anatomy, physiology, the human skeletal system, muscle groups, manual handling, morale boosting and incentivising the students during PT, circuit training, games, running methods, exercise strategy, unarmed combat and self defence, sea survival, water confidence training, weights training, and more, and all with a huge emphasis on team work.

In many ways the PTL course is an introductory point for other more advanced courses such as; PTS (Physical Training Supervisor), PTI (Physical Training Instructor), life guard, unarmed combat instructor. Some of these courses are unfortunately not open to RDF personnel at the moment due to the duration of these courses, combined also with the current man-day restrictions which limit and curtail the number of paid



The successful students of the RDF PT Leaders course

days a Reservist can complete per annum, thus limiting course opportunities.

Each of the students this year found the course to be varied in content, non repetitive in nature, practical and consistent. The instruction, reception, organisation, professionalism and the facilities of the DFPES I freely admit were second to none, with our instructors being eager and enthusiastic to impart their varying expertise, with each of the students being as equally enthusiastic and thirsty for knowledge to develop their new skillset. Each day of the course was as one would expect quite physically demanding, involving back to back practical lessons with a mix of some much welcomed theory lectures which gave the muscles a chance to rest up before toggling out again on the Curragh plains, or falling in 'on deck' at the side of the training pool, to conduct more practical lessons.

In hindsight it is still hard to pick out exactly what the best and most enjoyable aspects of the courses were, especially seeing as the entire course without exception was highly enjoyable. However, the new state of the art obstacle course at the back of the DFPES I think will be etched in my mind for some time to come, along with the memories of making flotation devices out of our DMP combats in the 3.8m deep training pool. The exercises of both swimming disorientated while blind folded, and pushing a car tyre along the floor of the swimming pool for 50m are also memories that I think few of us will forget in a hurry. From my own point of view this was my first interaction with the DFPES in my 11 years service, I have up until this course only really interacted with the CSC, Cav School, CIS School and TVMS while being on non unit run courses, and was very impressed with all aspects of the course,

from the instruction and expertise, through to organisation and facilities.

For anyone interested in becoming a PT Leader in their respective units I can not recommend this course highly enough. It is not only a fantastic skillset to have as an NCO or Officer in the Reserve, but also from a personal point of view, as it furnishes students with a solid foundation in fitness ideology and training techniques. Prior to the commencement of the course I would strongly recommend obtaining a good level of fitness, as even though the prerequisite as per the joining instructions is a pass grade in the ITs, those who are grade 3 or 4 will without a doubt feel the pressure and the fatigue early on in the course, thus increasing the chance of perhaps injury and non completion of the course. With fitness being a major priority for the Reserve as a whole, and talk of the introduction of induction tests for all new RDF entrants, undoubtedly PTLs at unit level are the key to the delivery of regular physical training being actualised.

It is impossible to insure reservists exercise regularly, and as such it must be stated that the onus to do so lies heavily upon individuals to train regularly in their own time, and make themselves available for ITs annually regardless of training commitments, in preparation for courses, but more importantly, to maintain a readiness and fitness for operations should their service be required. There is already another RDF PT Leaders course planned for July 2012. Note that it is a physically demanding course, but well worth the effort in terms of both time dedicated to preparation, and also the two weeks leave required from civilian employment to attend the course. So for those successful in securing a place on next year's course I wish you all the very best, you won't regret it. It is truly a fabulous course.



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