



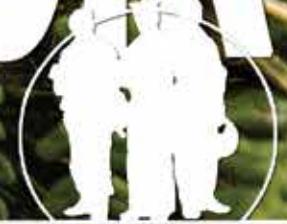
THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

# AN COSANTÓIR

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NOVEMBER 2019



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STRENGTHEN  
THE NATION

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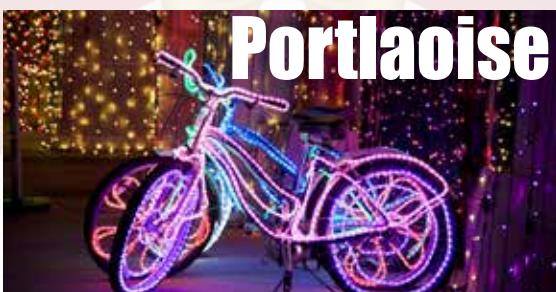


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**Front Cover**

*Sniper team from the 6 Inf Bn.*  
Photo by Sgt Karl Byrne

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# Editorial

Hello and welcome to our November issue. This month we have fewer, but longer, articles than usual, with some great contributions from around the Defence Forces and the defence and security community. Topics extend from the training room to the range, to overseas and home again, to issues affecting serving members and our veterans.

As ever, your photos stand tall *On Parade*, before our first *In Focus* piece, by Pat McGrath, which looks at the Irish branch of the International Plastic Modellers Society (IPMS), who held their national show and competition in the Plaza Hotel, Tallaght, in early October.

Our second *In Focus* piece looks at a new book on Defence Forces badges and insignia by retired flight sergeant James Perkins.

The *Veterans Gala Ball*, covered in this month's *Veterans News*, is in its fourth year and building on its success as an excellent fundraising event.

Our first, and front cover feature looks at the *2019 International Marksmanship Skills Competition*, co-ordinated by the IWW in Kilbride Camp and the Glen of Imaal.

This is followed by the Ordnance School's fifth instalment in their series on ordnance equipment, looking at night vision and thermal imaging devices.

In our second feature, *Rangers Head to Mali*, I look at the last few overseas missions that the ARW served with as a

unit, and the lead up to their participation in the MINUSMA mission in Mali.

In *ONE: Serving Those Who Served*, ONE National Chairman Brig Gen Colm Campbell (retd) looks at the role of the veterans' organisation in terms of support, comradeship, advocacy, and remembrance.

This is followed by *The US Military's Next Existential Threat*, by Shane McCarthy, which looks at recruitment difficulties faced by the US armed forces.

Next up, Sgt Rena Kennedy and I report on the *Defence Forces Values Awards 2018* ceremony held in Áras an Uachtaráin, the seven award recipients, and the actions and values that led to their nominations.

We then take a short look at IUNVA's and ONE's recent annual conventions.

Our history article, *A Bloody Week - The Irish at Arnhem*, by Lt Col Dan Harvey (retd), looks at Operation 'Market Garden', the failed Allied attempt to secure a number of Rhine bridges in order to provide the Allies with an invasion route into Germany towards the end of WWII.

Our first sports feature, by CQMS Michael Barrett (AR), is *Fit for Purpose: the case for a physical fitness corps*. Our second sports feature carries the results of the biggest sporting event in the Defence Forces' sporting calendar, the *An Cosantóir 10K Road Race*, which celebrated its 40th anniversary.

We also have our regular features: *Gear Review*, *Noticeboard*, *Book Reviews* and *What I Do*.

**Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald – Editor**

## Going Pink for Cancer

Collins Barracks welcomed a Breakfast Morning in Aid of Breast Cancer Awareness (Pink Week October 2019). A special thanks must go to all DF personnel involved in this successful event. Pictured below are: EO 1 Bde Col Tim Daly, Sylvia Mc Henry (organiser), European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan, Miriam Healy (organiser) and Lt Col Noel Maher OC Collins Bks and 1 BAR. Photo: Cpl Christine O'Leary, 1 Bde HQ



# 61 ON PARADE



**AN COSANTÓIR 10K**  
Pictured are five RDF members of the 7 Inf Bn, who all took part in the 40th Anniversary *An Cosantóir* 10K Road Race on the 9th October 2019. They are (L/R): Pte Brennan, Pte Aparajithan, CQMS Barrett, Lt Salonen, and Sgt Stevenson. *Photo: CQMS Michael Barrett AR, 7 Inf Bn*



## 9 TIMES WINNER OF AN COSANTÓIR 10K

A very proud moment for Pte Kenneth Rogers of the 12 Inf Bn for his remarkable achievement of winning the 2019 *An Cosantóir* 10k. This achievement equals the record for winning the run for an overall 9th time. The athletic ability of Kenny is coupled by his great modesty and humility and truly epitomises why he is a champion within the DF. *Photo: Lt Martin Cuddihy, 12 Inf Bn*



**RESERVISTS COMPLETE DRIVING SKILLS**  
Pictured are seven of the fifteen reservists who recently passed their Mod 2B driving course and who will move onto their Mod 3A in the first quarter of 2020. Students came from 1 ACS, 1 MIC, Engineers and the Naval Service Reserve. The instructors came from Tpt Gp DFTC, 1 MIC, Tpt Gp 2 Bde, and 2 Bde Cav Sqn. *Photo: Capt Damien O'Herlihy AR, 2 Cav Sqn*



## LAST DAY ON THE JOB

Mr Stephen O'Neill (pictured center) recently completed his last day on the job and clocked out for the last time after 40-years-service with the Defence Forces with the BFW. Stephen completed 39 years in Baldonnel and did his first year in Collins Barracks, Dublin. Colleague Mark Pollock said, "It has been a pleasure to work with you, you will be sadly missed by all the lads and I know you will be missed by all the engineers. I hope you and Helen, and your family enjoy your retirement and I wish you all the best in happiness and health for the future." *Photo: Mark Pollock, BFW Baldonnel*



## BSM DAVE GALVIN RETIRES

Colleagues and friends of BSM Dave Galvin, 1 Bde HQ, marked the occasion on his last day in uniform, by holding a coffee morning presentation in Collins Bks, Cork recently. BSM Galvin embarks on his retirement from the Defence Forces after 42-years of dedicated and loyal service. He is pictured receiving a presentation from Brig Gen Patrick Flynn, GOC 1 Bde. All personnel of 1 Brigade and the wider DF family wish Dave the very best for the future. *Photo: Sgt Barry McCarthy, 1 Bde HQ*



## VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

Pictured are members of the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) Post 1, who were out fundraising on Grafton Street on Saturday 24th August, to raise some much-needed funds to help fellow veterans. *Photo: Frank Donnelly*



### ALL-ARMY MILITARY SKILLS COMPETITION WINNERS

Brig Gen Patrick Flynn, GOC 1 Bde visited Dún Uí Mhaolíosa, Galway on the 10th October for his annual inspection. He is pictured here congratulating the winners of the All-Army Military Skills Competition under the command of Cpl Joe Hession. Photo: Coy Sgt Seamus Gannon



### ROYAL IRISH RANGERS VISIT TO THE CURRAGH CAMP

Members of the DFTC and the Na Fianna Military History Society welcomed veterans from the Lisburn Branch of the Royal Irish Rangers Old Comrades Association to the Curragh Camp recently. Their tour consisted of refreshments on arrival, display of photographs and badges and a talk by Mick Thompson, Murty Quinn and Eddie Doyle from the IUNVA, a talk by Matthew McNamara on the Military History of the Curragh Camp. They then had dinner in the McDonagh Complex, a visit to the Curragh Military Museum, a visit to the Curragh Military Cemetery, and the WWI Trench system at Flagstaff Hill, before retiring to the NCOs Mess for light refreshments. Photo: Martin Rowe, IUNVA



### VISIT BY LT GEN PULKKINEN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF EUMS

On the 15th October 2019, the Defence Forces Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM met with Lt Gen Esa Pulkkinen. Gen Pulkkinen is a Finnish military officer serving as the Director General of the European Union's Military Staff (DGEUMS), since 2016. He is the head of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) and also serves as Director of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (Dir MPCC). Photo: Armn Sam Gibney



### DEFENCE FORCES FISHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Pictured in Finner Camp, Co Donegal are the Defence Forces Fishing Championships Team Boat Winners from the 28 Inf Bn. L/R: Pte JP White, Lt Col Fred O'Donovan OC 28 Inf Bn, Pte Padar Folan, who was also the biggest fish individual winner and Sgt Terry O'Brien. Photo: Sgt Terry O'Brien, 28 Inf Bn

### 50TH REUNION OF UNFICYP NO 2 PL, A COY, 12 INF GP

Pictured are the 33 members of No 2 Pl, A Coy, 12 Inf Gp, UNFICYP, in Cyprus in 1969. On the 4th October 2019 10 members of the platoon met to celebrate the 50th Anniversary reunion of the platoon in Ceannt NCOs Mess, Curragh Camp. A number of platoon members have sadly passed away, or were non-contactable or unable to attend, but were remembered on the day. BQMS Michael Stynes DFTC was representing his father Michael 'Hiker' Stynes who had recently passed away. Pictured: Front row L/R: John Sheils, Paddy Donnelly (Pl Sgt), Mick Kavanagh (Pl Offr), Tony McGrath and Joe Flanagan. Back row L/R: Mick McMahon, Willie Lawlor (Cpl), Tony Philips, Mick Carroll, Paddy Flood and BQMS Michael Stynes. Photo: Armn Sam Gibney



# A MODEL ARMY – IPMS IRELAND

BY PAT MCGRATH PHOTOS BY PAT MCGRATH, MICHAEL KEENAN AND DERMOT MORIARTY



Keith Donnelly's Panhard AML 90.



Roy Kinsella's Irish Hurricane from 'The Emergency' period.

**T**he Republic of Ireland branch of the International Plastic Modellers' Society (IPMS), known as IPMS Ireland was formed in 2008. Their current membership stands at almost 100 members from across the island of Ireland and overseas, including some past and present members of the Irish Defence Forces.

*"We are all about scale modelling and enjoying this great hobby and we build anything from basic model kits right up to super scratch-builds, mostly using plastic."*

The hobby covers building scale models of aircraft and vehicles both civilian and military, ships and submarines, historical figures and busts, dioramas and science fiction / fantasy subjects. We recently held our National Show and Competition, on the 5th and 6th October in the Plaza Hotel, Tallaght. A total of 274 models were entered this year, along with a number of IPMS branch displays. There is always a strong showing of Irish subjects at the National Competition every year as there are two special awards for Irish Subjects: S2 IPMS Ireland Aviation Trophy - for any Irish themed aviation subject and S3 IPMS Ireland Non-Aviation Trophy - for any Irish themed non-aviation subject.

#### The following are some of the Irish subjects entered:

Keith Donnelly built Takom's new kit of the Panhard AML 90 representing a vehicle from the 11th Cavalry Squadron parked outside the old armour sheds in Cathal Brugha Barracks. This won the Gold Medal in the Modern Armour Class.



Dermot Moriarty's 'retired' Dauphin helicopter.



Eoin Ryan's Rolls Royce Armoured Car as Sliabh na mBan

Paddy McGannon scratch built a 1/35 scale Unimog APC, again representing a vehicle from the 11th Cavalry Squadron, which won the Gold Medal in the Military Vehicles Conversions / scratch-built class and the IPMS Ireland special award for the best Irish themed non-aviation subject.

Roy Kinsella built and painted Shamrock Miniatures Modern Irish Soldier in 1/35 scale as a Military Policeman as well as a trio of Irish Hurricanes from 'The Emergency' period.

Eoin Ryan built Roden's Rolls Royce Armoured Car as Sliabh na mBan in 1/35 scale, which has a special place in Irish Military history as it was present at the fateful Béal na mBláth ambush.

Dermot Moriarty built a 'retired' Dauphin from the old matchbox kit which won the IPMS Special Award for Irish Aviation subjects and a bronze medal in the Rotary Wings class.

IPMS Ireland welcomes new members and we have three very active branches. The Dublin meetings take place in The Lab, Foley Street, Dublin 1, usually on the third Saturday of each month from 11am-1pm. The next meetings are Saturday 23rd November 2019 and Saturday 21st December.

The Mid-West Branch, typically meet on the first Saturday of every month at the Atlantic Air Adventure Centre in Shannon Town, Co Clare. It is located at Hogan's Cross as you come in on the old road - not the dual carriageway. Meetings start at 2.30 pm.

The North Midland's Branch meet in Feericks Hotel, Rathowen, Co Westmeath - see their Facebook page [www.facebook.com/groups/406263723413627/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/406263723413627/) for dates.

Meetings generally have a show and tell element, and sometimes a demonstration of modelling techniques, kit swapping and trading, and most importantly we always have free biscuits. *"Drop-in we'd love to see you."*

Any questions, please go to our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/groups/128545347164792/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/128545347164792/) or visit our forum at <https://ipmsireland.com> and ask away. ■

## BADGES AND INSIGNIA OF THE DEFENCES FORCES

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD  
PHOTOS BY ARMN SAM GIBNEY

**O**n 22nd October 2019 in Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Bks, GOC Air Corps Brig Gen Rory O'Connor, launched a new, highly anticipated book, *Badges and Insignia of the Irish Defences Forces*, written by retired flight sergeant James Perkins; a man known to many as a solid point of contact for all things uniform related.

Not since James J Hogan's *Badges, Medals, Insignia: Oglaih na hÉireann (Irish Defence Forces)* in 1987 has there been such a detailed book on this subject.

James's 220-page, hardback book contains over 2,000 full-colour images covering the badges and insignia of the Defence Forces since its foundation, and will be the go-to reference book for years to come.

In 1970 James served with 16 HM Bty, 3 Arty Regt FCÁ before enlisting in the PDF with 2 Inf Bn, Cathal Brugha Bks, in 1974. Shortly after recruit training James successfully applied for and completed the MP Probationers course and was posted to 2 Grn MP Coy. In 1976 he was posted to the new 1 Grn MP Coy, working in the orderly room in Griffith Bks.

On promotion to sergeant in 1979, he was appointed Ord Room Sgt, E Comd FCÁ HQ, before transferring to the Air Corps as Ord Room Sgt, Trg Wing (now Air Corps College). He was promoted to flight sergeant in 1984.

James's overseas service comprised UNFICYP (March 1981–March 1982); three trips to Lebanon with 11 Ir Comp (1984), 79 Inf Bn (1996), and UNIFIL HQ (2000); a year-long appointment in Bosnia (2001); and an 18-month tour in Paris with EUFOR Chad/CAR (2008/9). He retired in 2014 after 40 years of service.

James's interest in collecting Defence Forces badges and insignia began in the 1970s when he found his father's kit box from his 38 years' service in the DF. Later, when he started picking up badges while on FCÁ camps he noticed there was no reference book or collectors guide. There was a 1968 *An Cosantóir* handbook and in 1987 the Hogan book referred to earlier came out, but by the late-1990s even the latter was outdated.

In 2001, to address this problem, James decided to make his substantial collection available for viewing on what subsequently became his online collection and reference website, which became the go-to place for information on DF badges and insignia. This



website is being updated to coincide with James's new book, which he self-published and produced at his own cost.

James says the idea for the book came to him around 13 years ago when Sgt Eric O'Brien (1 Inf Bn and Cpl Noel Lee (4 Cav Sqn, now retired) were visiting his collection and they said it would be great if James wrote a book on DF insignia and badges. (Noel Lee subsequently did the layout and design for James's book.)

*"The information was in my head,"* James told us, "and needed to be recorded. Also, after I retired I became a volunteer in Military Archives, in their uniform and insignia section, and research there continually turned up new information."

James says this research turned up new things that he didn't know, or provided the answer to things he wasn't 100% sure of, like the 1963 one-star-one-stripe, and two-star-one-stripe rank markings, which were in fact issued to acting corporals going to the Congo to bridge the gap between privates and corporals. Another finding was that there had been a Signals Corps cloth collar badge, with a lightning bolt incorporated in the design, planned for issue in 1941 (during WWII) that subsequently wasn't issued because it looked very similar to the German signals badge of the time.

James has dedicated his book to his wife, Geraldine, who he says has been an amazing support to him from the very start. To purchase a copy of *Badges and Insignia of the Irish Defences Forces*, priced at €30 +P&P, email James at [jamesperkinsbadgebook@gmail.com](mailto:jamesperkinsbadgebook@gmail.com). ■



Brig Gen Rory O'Connor, GOC Air Corps launching the book in Military Archives.



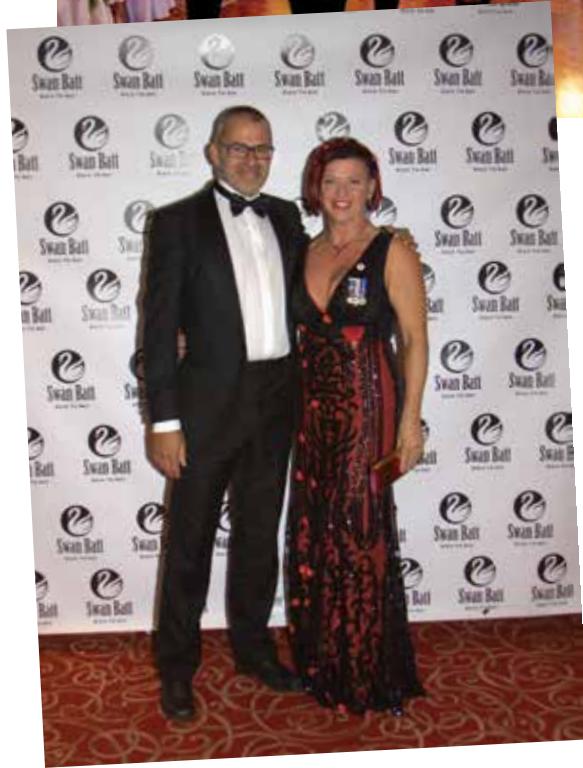
Retired Flt Sgt James Perkins signing copies of Badges and Insignia of the Irish Defence Forces.



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

## THE FOURTH MILITARY BALL – ‘VETERANS HELPING VETERANS’

BY BENNY HILL



**T**he Fourth Military Ball took place on Saturday 24th of August in Morans Hotel Red Cow Dublin. The Ball was attended by a record number of almost 300 people, all there to support a great cause.

This event started in 2016 as a morale booster for ex-service personnel, it was an idea to have veterans from all branches of the Defence Forces meet up once a year on a social occasion with their partners. The Ball soon turned into a brilliant way to raise much-needed funding for Brú na bhFiann (Home of the Brave), a home for Defence Forces veterans operated by the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE).

The Ball has turned into a great way for all veterans' associations to meet and this year we had the following – Erskine Childers Branch ONE, Naval Association, 2 Inf Bn Association, Military Engineers Association, The Doyle Family, 2 Cav Association, 2 Fd Arty Regt Association, 2 Bde Tpt Association, The Military Women's Association, The Irish United Nations Veterans Associations (IUNVA) were represented by Posts 30 and 9 and also the Chairman of IUNVA Mr Jim Casey.

The Ball was also attended by representatives of ONE, Chairman of ONE Brig Gen Colm

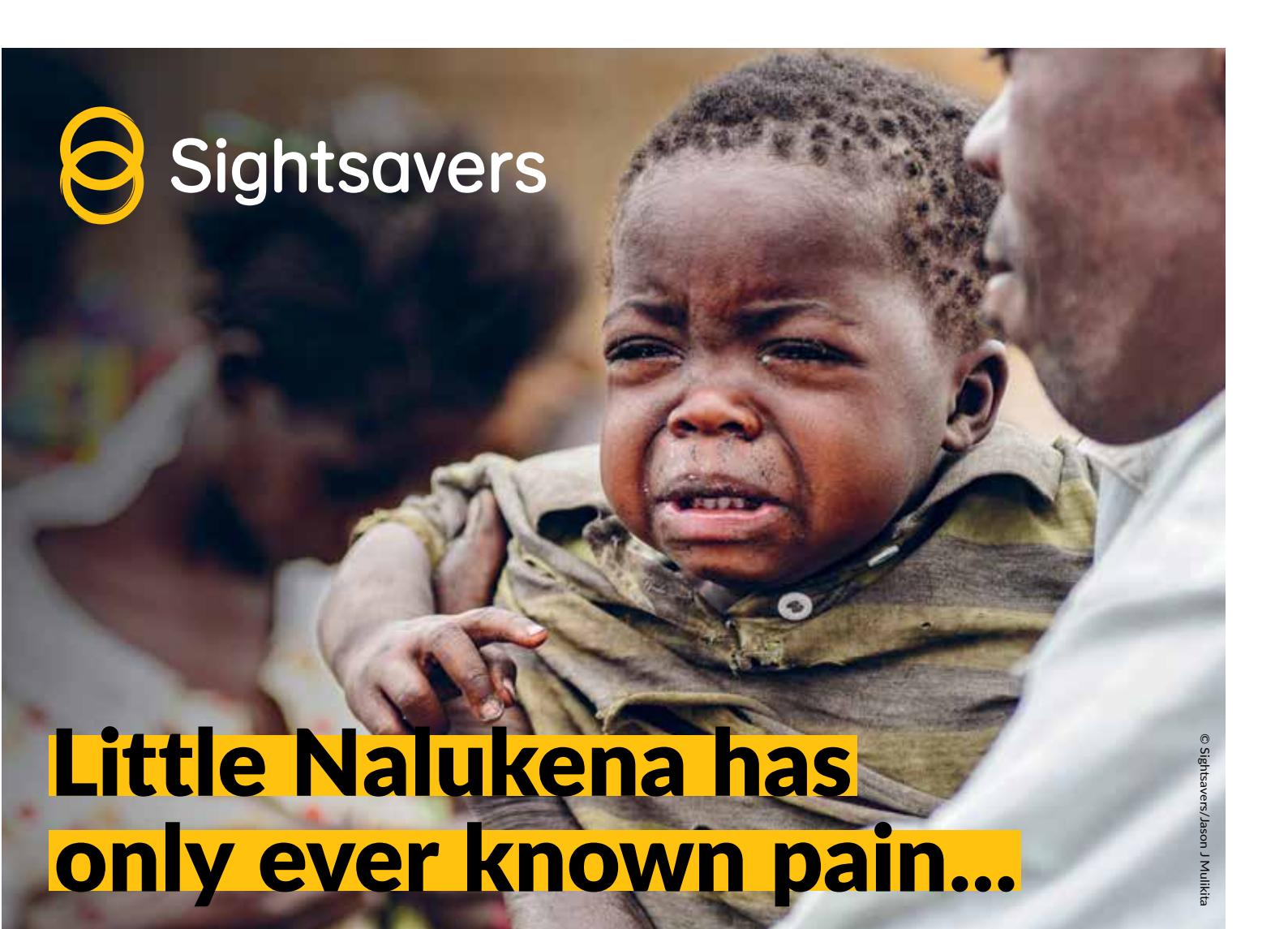
Campbell Retd and Ms Sinead Black Asst House Manager from Brú na bhFiann.

Another excellent night was had by all, with the evening starting off with the pipers and trumpet playing on 'The Colours' and the opening address followed on by a delicious four course meal.

Generous donations and raffle income meant a substantial sum of €12,000 was handed over to Brú na bhFiann for the specific use of furthering the welfare and comfort of the residents.

Already many tables have been booked for 2020 Military Ball, with many people both military and civilian showing an interest in supporting us next year. A really big thank you to all our supporters and to the organising committee – on a job well done! ■





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Sightsavers is committed to the highest standards of transparency, governance and accountability to ensure we deliver maximum value and impact with your generous donations. Sightsavers is fully committed to the Charities Regulator's Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public and also fully adheres to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messaging. Your donation will be used to support our work wherever the need is greatest. Thank You.

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# SHARPSHOOTERS PUT TO THE TEST

**T**he 2019 International Marksmanship Skills (IMS) competition, co-ordinated by the IWW and held from 7th to 17th May, took a slightly different format from previous years, with a concentration week (7th-10th May) in Kilbride Camp and ranges, followed by four days of competition (13th -17th May) in the Glen of Imaal.

BY SGT WILLIE FALLON, 6 INF BN  
PHOTOS BY AUTHOR & SGT KARL BYRNE



This year saw a total of 24 teams compete: 16 from the Defence Forces, four from the USA, three from the UK, and one from the Netherlands.

OC IWW, Comdt Gleeson, greeted the teams on their arrival in Kilbride for the concentration week and gave the opening address. All competitors, DF and international, were accommodated together, which led to an atmosphere that fostered a sharing of knowledge and some good-hearted slagging.

The focus of the concentration week was to allow teams to practice, train, learn and trade knowledge. Members of the ARW also gave instruction on the various weapons systems that competitors would use during the following week, such as the .5 Accuracy International Sniper Rifle and the FN Scar. Ordnance Corps personnel also provided instruction on the .303 bolt-action rifle.

This was the first time this format had been implemented and it

was a great success. The teams shared knowledge and tips with each other, demonstrated skills and drills, and displayed the various items of equipment and weapons that they had brought to the competition, all within a relaxed, non-competitive atmosphere. It was especially interesting to see the international teams' issued equipment.

The week also provided teams the opportunity to check weapon system zeros and shoot to 800m with their rifles, as well as taking advantage of the pistol range. Fairly importantly, it also gave competitors the chance to gauge the various teams' skill levels and identify who might be the main challengers in the following week's competition.

At the start of the second week the teams arrived for an opening address and competition brief in the Glen of Imaal.

There were to be two divisions in this year's competition, na-

tional and international. The national division would comprise only Irish teams, who would be restricted to using certain issued items of equipment only. The international division was open to both Irish and international teams, with no equipment restrictions in this class. The team from 28 Inf Bn were the only Irish entry in this division.

The beginning of the competition saw all teams line up at the briefing shed, with body armour, helmets, day sacks, and weapons, from where they were released for a two-mile battle run to the anti-tank range. On arrival at the anti-tank range they had to identify their 'high-value target' (a head-sized target) and engage with one 'cold bore' round, all in under 20 minutes.

While all but one of the 24 teams made it to the firing point and fired a shot inside the allotted time, only five teams managed to hit their correct target in time.

Teams got little chance to rest after the battle run before being split into two groups and sent to concurrent shoots. While one group was participating in an 'unknown distance shoot' the other group faced a 'barrier shoot'. As soon as a team had completed their shoot they were moved by TCV to the other shoot; ensuring that the competitors were kept under pressure and constantly moving.

The unknown distance shoot comprised team snipers having to fire from inside a jeep, out of the window, onto targets to which their spotter had calculated the distance. Snipers could only fire after their spotter had successfully shot a steel plate that rotated to reveal a colour. Whatever colour was revealed indicated to the sniper what colour target to engage. Directing staff made it difficult for competitors to communicate with each other by having the jeep running and the radio turned up loud; some of the more quick-thinking teams turned off the radio, making communications with their partner much easier.

The barrier shoot saw teams confined in a tight enclosed space, facing wooden walls with variously shaped holes cut out, through which they had to shoot a set number of targets under a time constraint. To increase difficulty, the sniper team's space was cluttered with objects, such as ammo boxes, chairs and various military items. Again, smarter teams adapted quickly, using the various ammo boxes and items to their advantage to build platforms to aid or steady their firing position, whereas other teams simply saw the items as clutter that was in the way.

After the teams had completed both the barrier and unknown distance shoots there was a short break for personal admin before the first day's final event, the night shoot.

The night shoot consisted of teams moving an injured member of friendly forces to safety, from where the spotter would call on a circling heli to use an infra-red (IR) beam to mark enemy targets. (The 'helis' were simulated by directing staff using IR beams.)

Targets would only be marked on receipt of a correct IR request format message, and as some targets were very difficult to see through the NV without the IR marker the spotter needed to send the IR request correctly for each of the five targets available; all while under time pressure and trying to guide the sniper onto the targets. To add another level of stress to the shoot the directing staff used loud hailers, blank ammunition and thunder flashes to simulate battlefield noise. Due to the distraction, pressure, and visual and communications difficulties, only one team scored maximum points on this stage.

Day two saw competitors again split into two groups for concurrent activities, comprised of a 'rural OP shoot', an 'alternate position shoot', an 'unstable platform shoot', and a 'battlefield recovery shoot'.

The rural OP shoot saw teams given a scenario of an enemy sniper to their front, who they must find and engage after crawling forward and entering a subsurface OP. From the tight confines of

the OP they had to find and engage the target representing the sniper, before withdrawing from the OP and immediately engaging close targets with their pistol.

The alternate position shoot took the format of various barriers, much like the previous day's barrier shoot. This time, however, teams needed to make their way along several of these barriers, problem solving various awkward and unusual firing positions they encountered and were forced to fire from.

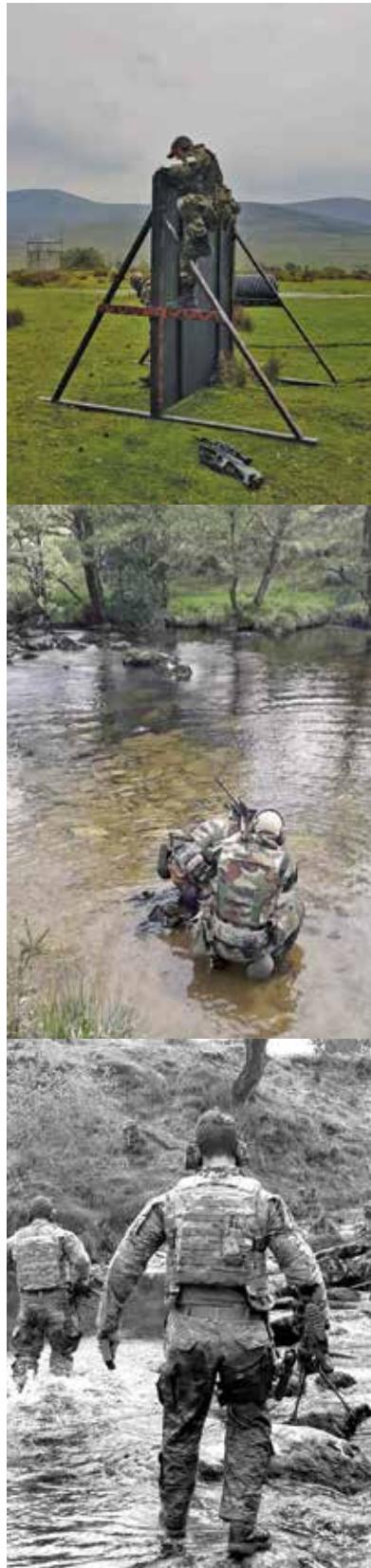
The unstable platform shoot, a new shoot to this competition, saw teams engaging targets from the back of a TCV as it drove along a bumpy track; sniper and spotter fired five rounds each. The erratic movement of the vehicle as it traversed the rough ground made for difficult and challenging shooting, and while shooting from a moving vehicle was a skill all of the international teams had practised before it was new to nearly all the Irish teams.

The battlefield recovery shoot involved a friendly forces outpost that had come under enemy fire. Teams were briefed to give first aid to casualties and to find and engage any enemy targets. On running to the stand teams found a casualty to whom they needed to render first aid in the form of a tourniquet to the leg, and move the casualty to cover. They then had to search for and engage enemy targets. Again, the directing staff used battle simulations and blank firing to simulate battlefield noise, to add realism, pressure and distraction to the competitors.

Day three began with a stalk, where teams were given a mission area and a time in which they must stalk unseen onto an OP manned by two directing staff. From there they had to fire a blank round before withdrawing, without being seen. Directing staff recorded the distance and type of firing position that teams selected during the blank firing phase of the stalk. (The following day directing staff recreated the firing positions and the competitors fired a live round at a steel target from the same distance and firing position as previously recorded.)

After the stalk competitors were again split into two groups and sent to two concurrent shoots: a pistol shoot and a box shoot.

This year's pistol shoot, involving various shooting positions, focused on engaging small precision targets under time stress, and proved to be very challenging.



The box shoot comprised four separate firing points creating the corners of a box. At each firing point the teams had to engage steel targets in a designated firing position, with a nod to the fundamental shooting positions taught on the basic sniper course, varying from standing to prone unsupported. Teams were also placed under physical pressure as they had to run between each firing point in order to complete the stage in time.

Once all four positions had been shot, the teams ran to a fifth, prone, firing position where they were quickly briefed on the target facing them; a paper target with three circles, small, medium, and large, with the smallest circle being less than half an inch in diameter.

The sniper had one round to fire at whichever circle he chose. Hitting the small circle would double the points already earned on the box shoot; hitting the medium would retain the points scored; hitting the large would halve the points scored. However, a miss would lose all points earned from this shoot.

This know-your-limits style target immediately put teams under pressure as they now had a tough decision to make. Of the teams that opted for the small target to double their points, some paid dearly for their decision, as they missed and ended up with a zero score for the stage.

At the close of the third day a leader board was displayed, adding to the pressure, as teams now knew where they placed and that there was so little between the top teams that day four's events would make or break them.

The last day comprised a single shoot composed of multiple stages, the 'stress shoot'. Teams had to navigate a course that would see them encounter various obstacles that they had to either cross or take a time penalty for avoiding. Along the route the teams would fire the .303 bolt action rifle, engage in a pistol shoot through a wooded area, complete a shoot while standing in a river, and engage a target beyond 1km with the .5 sniper rifle, all the while conscious they were being timed. Scores would be calculated from combining finishing time and hits made throughout the stage. This was a very challenging shoot, testing teams' physical robustness, marksmanship, communication skills and decision-making/problem-solving abilities.

Once all teams had completed the stress shoot, the scores were totalled and confirmed before the teams gathered in the briefing shed that evening to hear the results from Comdt Gleeson.

The results of the national division placed 6 Inf Bn first, with ARW teams in a close second and third. In the international division the US Navy Seals took first, with 2 Rifles (British Army) coming second, and Irish Guards (British Army) in third. The top scoring sniper award went to Sgt W Fallon from 6 Inf Bn and the top scoring spotter award went to an ARW competitor.

The competition was a great success, and was conducted extremely efficiently and professionally. It provided an excellent training opportunity for all involved, allowing the DF teams to interact with, learn from, and compete against, their international counterparts, thereby fostering good relations with those countries involved and increasing skillsets.

Having won the national division, Sgt W. Fallon and Pte G. O'Reilly of 6 Inf Bn will represent the Defence Forces in the International Sniper Competition in Fort Benning, Georgia, next April. ■



## ORDNANCE CORPS ARTICLE SERIES - HOW YOUR EQUIPMENT WORKS

## Part 5: Night Vision and Thermal Imaging Equipment

BY ORDNANCE SCHOOL, DFTC

**T**he ability to fight at night is of great importance to modern military forces. The lack of visible light at night affects the soldier's ability to observe friendly troop movements, understand terrain, and affects perception of enemy movements and positions. DF personnel have two technologies at their disposal to assist them to operate in low-light environments: image intensification and thermal imaging.

To understand these technologies, we must understand electromagnetic radiation, which refers to waves propagating through space at the speed of light carrying electromagnetic energy. Visible light, radio waves, microwaves, infrared, ultra-violet, X-rays and gamma rays are all forms of electromagnetic radiation, differing by frequency and wavelength. Our eyes have adapted to seeing the small portion of this spectrum (0.4 - 0.7μm) that corresponds with the most intense radiation emitted from the sun. However, in the absence of visible light we can use technology to take advantage of non-visible sources of electromagnetic radiation.

The most well-known technology is image intensification, or night vision, which works by amplifying available light in the visible and near-infrared (0.7 - 2.5μm) spectrums. At the heart of the system is the image intensification tube. First designed in the 1960s, this device has undergone several generation changes but still relies on the original concept, in which available photons of light strike a photo-emissive surface, or photocathode, at the front of the tube. These are converted into electrons that are then amplified along the tube using high voltage and a micro-channel plate. The amplified electrons strike a phosphor screen at the back of the tube where their energy is converted to photons that create a visible green image of the area.

Image intensifiers are passive systems but can also detect active, non-visible infrared sources to improve imaging and lasers. Passive sources like IR paint, tape and patches, along with active sources like IR beacons and 'chem lights' allow identification of friendly forces through image intensifiers, helping to avoid blue-on-blue incidents. Image-intensification equipment available to

DF personnel include the Thales LUCIE night-vision goggles and the KITE weapon-mounted sight for the Steyr and FN MAG.

In contrast to image intensification systems that use reflected energy, thermal imaging depends on emitted energy. All ob-

jects with temperatures above absolute zero (-273°C) emit electromagnetic radiation, with the emitted wavelength directly related to the object's temperature. For example, a fighter jet's exhaust plume will emit radiation in the near IR and visual spectrum, while humans and vehicles emit radiation in the far IR (8 to 14μm).

To produce a thermal image the small temperature differences observed by the detector are converted into a visual picture that is equally effective by day or night. The thermal imager lens, typically made of germanium, focuses the object's emitted radiation onto a phased array of infrared detector elements to produce a temperature pattern, which is then displayed in colours proportional to the intensity of the infrared.

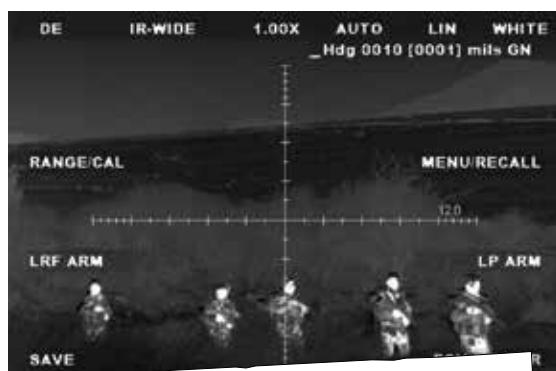
Two types of IR detectors are used in thermal imaging: thermal and photon detectors. Thermal detectors, such as the Kongsberg RWS Protector, do not need to be cooled and conse-

quently are small, light weight, and provide output on start up.

Photon detectors, which use multiple semiconductors, have much higher response time and sensitivity compared to thermal detectors, but must be cooled. The FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missile system and the FLIR B2-FO RECON both use photon detectors. ■



ARW operators during Exercise 'Ullamh'. Note the dual helmet-mounted NVE and weapon-mounted visible/IR light and laser.



Troops from 2 STA BTY, 1 BAR on a patrolling exercise in Kilworth. Photograph taken using the FLIR B2-FO RECON, a key component of the new artillery OP suite.



Kongsberg M151 Protector RWS (remote weapon station) mounted on a Mowag Piranha in UNIFIL. Note the bottom mirror-like lens belonging to its thermal imager.

# RANGERS HEAD to Mali

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

**A**rmy Ranger Wing (ARW) roles are divided into Special Operation, including Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR) and Military Assistance (MA); and Counter-Terrorist Operations in aid to the civil power (ATCP), including counter-hijack, hostage rescue and maritime counter-terrorism (MCT).

The DF's special-forces unit since 1980, the ARW has been the spear tip on a number of UN-sponsored peacekeeping missions that required an immediate response, specially trained soldiers capable of operating independently in hostile environments, far away from the main unit, and able to meet any challenges they encounter.

In September 1999 the UN Security Council established International Force East Timor (INTERFET), a multinational, peace-making taskforce, organised and led by Australia, to address a humanitarian and security crisis in East Timor. In October 1999 an ARW platoon and support elements from the DF joined the mission.

INTERFET was soon replaced by the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). During the changeover the ARW supplied the main Irish troop commitment, with a specialist infantry platoon operating with a New Zealand battalion until June 2000, when they were replaced by regular infantry troops from 2 Inf Bn.

In November 2003 the Defence Forces sent 90 Inf Bn to participate in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) along with an ARW special operations task group (SOTG) whose function was to provide FC UNMIL with capabilities for special reconnaissance,

human intelligence and hostage rescue or extraction.

This ARW capability was again used in 2008 an Initial Entry Force, for a follow-on Irish peacekeeping deployment to the UN-mandated, EU-led peacekeeping mission to Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR Chad/CAR).

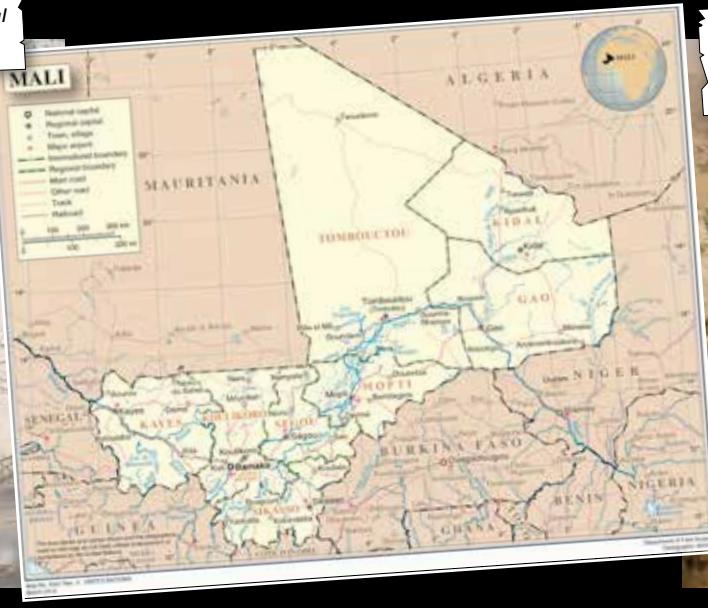
The initial EU force consisted of Special Forces from Austria, Belgium, France, Sweden and Ireland. The Irish Initial Entry Force deployed to commence operations in the Goz Beida region of south-east Chad. They established the conditions for the Irish Advance Party to build the basic infrastructure for Camp Ciara, which would house the first Irish Battalion to operate in the region.

The ARW used specially adapted reconnaissance vehicles to patrol within its large area of operations (AO) along the Chad/Sudan border, which was filled with refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), humanitarian organisations, and civilians in danger. In March 2009 the mission switched to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT).

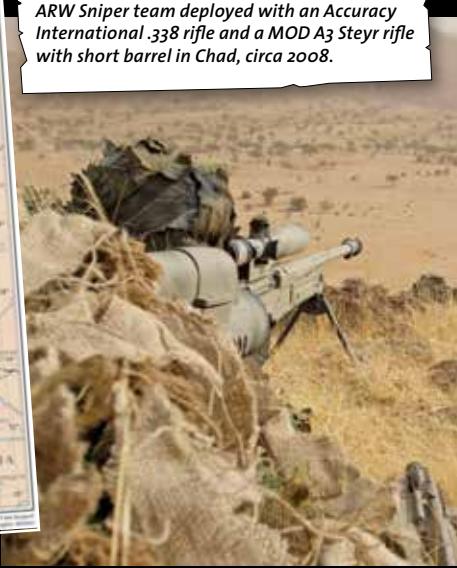
At the start of 2019 Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Minister of State with responsibility for Defence Paul Kehoe, and Defence Forces Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, paid a week-long visit to Mali and Ethiopia to meet with DF personnel and Irish NGOs currently serving in the region.

Asked by RTÉ News if Ireland planned to increase its presence with the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM), An Taoiseach said:

ARW initial entry force on patrol in a Special Reconnaissance Vehicle (SRV) in EUFOR Chad/CAR in 2008.



ARW Sniper team deployed with an Accuracy International .338 rifle and a MOD A3 Steyr rifle with short barrel in Chad, circa 2008.



*"We have been here in Mali as part of the EU training mission for five years now. Given the impact the region has on the rest of the world in terms of migration and being a source of terrorism in some cases, in terms of climate change, there will be an Irish presence in Africa for quite a period to come."*

In response to the reporters asking if the government was considering sending ARW personnel to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission (MINUSMA), Vice Admiral Mellett said: "It is ten years since the ARW deployed overseas in an active mission. Obviously, they provide protection for vital missions like this, but almost on an ad hoc basis." However, he added that this would be entirely a matter for the government to decide.

The EUTM Mali mission, which is mandated to improve the capacity of the Malian Armed Forces, is regarded as a challenging mission for security reasons, and although the 18 DF personnel with the mission are not directly engaged in operational roles, their bases in EUTM HQ in Bamako and the Koulikoro Training Camp (in the bush, approx 100km east of Bamako) have come under attack.

Taoiseach Varadkar also met with the Malian president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, to discuss the EUTM mission and MINUSMA, which operates in north-west Mali and is deemed by many to be the most dangerous UN mission: since July 2013, 123 MINUSMA peacekeeping and law-enforcement personnel have been killed and 358 seriously injured.

The current strength of MINUSMA is 12,647 military, 1,753 police, and 1,180 civilians.

From 1st July 2013 to 28th February 2019, a total of 183,769 military patrols and 72,755 police patrols have been completed in 13 areas: Sector North (Kidal, Tessalit, Aguelhoc), Sector South (Bamako), Sector East (Gao, Menaka, Ansongo) and Sector West (Tombouctou, Ber, Diabaly, Douentza, Goundam, Mopti-Sévaré).

At the commissioning ceremony for 94 Cadet Class in Dublin Castle in February 2019, An Taoiseach said: *"As Taoiseach I've had the privilege of visiting the Defence Forces on mission in Lebanon and Mali and I have seen firsthand their commitment and courage. Our Defence Forces have stood up to violent extremists, freed hostages, rescued nearly 18,000 people in the Mediterranean and tragically they have seen hundreds drown and recovered scores of bodies. The Defence Forces are our first line of defence at home and they bring honour on our country abroad. It is an enormous responsibility..."*

In June 2019, the Dáil approved sending an ARW Task Unit to MINUSMA along with two staff officers in intelligence and operational roles. The Irish contingent, who will mainly be tasked with conducting long-range patrols, will deploy as part of a German-led ISTAR (intelligence surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance) Task Force, rather than operating in isolation, which means they will benefit from the protections and medical support in place for the larger force.

Minister Kehoe spoke to the ARW operatives before they departed for Mali towards the middle of September 2019. He said that they were a highly trained specialist force, well equipped to operate in hostile environments such as Mali and told them: *"In helping to secure stability in Mali you will be contributing to the security and stability of the wider G5 Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). The region is a source of much criminality, including people trafficking and smuggling. Such criminal activities threaten the security of the entire region and beyond, including the European Union."*

The ARW peacekeepers are being deployed in a response to an upsurge in violence in north-eastern Mali, led by Al Qaeda-affiliated militant groups. They will be used for long-range reconnaissance patrols and intelligence tasks. This requires speed, mobility, flexibility, and the ability to undertake missions that regular infantry soldiers are not trained for.

Lt Col Johnny Whittaker, OiC Public Relations, said: *"The ARW operatives have the capabilities, training and experience to operate in what will be a challenging environment in Mali as part of MINUSMA. They will form part of Ireland's growing support to peace, security and the protection of vulnerable communities across the Sahel."*

At the same time, other members of the ARW have been tasked to take part in a German-led EU battlegroup, along with 1,500 troops from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Latvia and Sweden. This is the Defence Forces' fourth time to participate in an EU battlegroup, but it is the first time the ARW has been tasked as the DF's main contribution. DF and ARW personnel have deployed to the EU battlegroup in Germany, and further personnel will deploy to Germany to train and exercise with the battlegroup in the coming months, after which they will return to Ireland and remain on standby to deploy with the EU for a six-month period, if required. ■



# ONE SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED



BY BRIG GEN COLM CAMPBELL RET'D, CHAIRPERSON BOARD OF DIRECTORS ONE

**T**he role of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann / Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE) can be summarised in four words: **support, comradeship, advocacy, remembrance**. Examining these words will help in understanding how ONE derives its aims of funding hostels for homeless veterans; putting in place preventative measures to avert homelessness; and providing other support services for Defence Forces' veterans.

**Support:** Support takes many forms, ranging from a warm greeting to a former comrade to a bed for a homeless veteran, and everything in between. With 35 branches and three area councils, ONE is well positioned to provide this support.

We currently have hostels for homeless veterans in Athlone, Dublin and Letterkenny, and we are in the process of developing a small hostel and veteran support centre (VSC) in Cobh. We are also developing 15 VSCs nationwide with the support of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces.

VSCs, which can be described as a cross between advice centres and men's/women's sheds, are now located in Athlone, Casement Aerodrome, Cavan, the Curragh, Dundalk, Galway, Kilkenny, and Limerick, with a temporary facility in Collins Bks, Cork. Further VSCs will be established in Athy Collins Bks and Cobh (Cork), Cathal Brugha Bks and McKee Bks (Dublin), Finner Camp (Donegal), and Wexford Town.

We provide over 16,000 bed nights every year in our hostels and approximately 900 homeless veterans have availed of our services to date, with the majority of these moving on to permanent housing. These people, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, volunteered to serve their country; nobody volunteers to become homeless.

**Comradeship:** We use the term 'comradeship' deliberately because it evokes a sense of shared experience, a shared culture, a shared set of values, and a willingness to serve. Being part of a veterans association (I include all associations) helps preserve a sense of identity and a sense of belonging. It should also evoke a sense of shared responsibility for those less fortunate than us.

The Defence family, like any true community, is not just an organisation; rather it is an organism made up of smaller parts working together. Homeless veterans are part of that family and they cannot be left behind.

There can be a tendency to blame the victim when things go wrong or to say that caring for veterans is the responsibility of other agencies. However, when a former soldier, sailor, or airman or women is involved, we believe that it is our responsibility to help. This spirit of comradeship is exemplified in the outstanding support received from the Defence Forces, other veterans associations, and individual serving and retired members of the DF. The Swanbatt Gala Ball and the Gala Concert organised by 6 Inf Bn in Athlone are recent examples of that support.

Units of the Defence Forces and students on courses routinely fundraise on behalf of their less fortunate comrades and ONE also acknowledges the voluntary contributions made by serving personnel and veterans, and the donations received from other associations and groups.

**Advocacy:** ONE unashamedly advocates in support of veterans, particularly on behalf of those who are less fortunate. The majority of veterans, irrespective of length of service, are very successful in new careers or happy in retirement. However, there are quite a number who need help from time to time. There is a dual challenge in providing this help: ignorance of the issue and ignoring the issue. Both of these have to be addressed. The Sleeping Flags Awareness Campaign, launched in February of this year, was aimed at those who were ignorant of the plight of some our veterans and we are also working very hard on ensuring that those who now know about it don't just ignore it. Advocacy on veterans' issues must remain constant.

**Support:** Pictured in 2018 at the opening of a new Veteran Support Centre (VSC) in the Curragh Camp is GOC DFTC Brig Gen Joe Mulligan (now retired), ONE's National President Tom James, National Chairman Brig Gen Colm Campbell Ret'd along with members of St Conleth's Branch ONE and other veterans' associations.



**Comradeship:** Pictured at the 2016 Veterans' Day parade in McKee Bks are L/R: ONE member Patrick Flavin, St Conleth's Branch (Newbridge), IUNVA member Tony Grant, Post 24 (Clonmel) and Vice President of ARCO Col George Kerton (ret'd).



**Remembrance:** Remembrance is the fourth pillar of ONE and it is therefore appropriate that the annual Fuchsia Appeal is launched at the Defence Forces National Memorial in Merrion Square. Remembrance serves to bring to mind, and keep in mind, those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and who we must always honour. We must also remember those veterans who for some reason or another become homeless or others that need our support.

The current level of service provision costs ONE in the region of €800,000 annually and our future annual funding requirement is estimated at €1,000,000. Our Dublin hostel, Brú na bhFiann, receives support from the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, and the Department of Defence contributes annually towards the administrative overheads of the charity. The balance of our income, approximately €650,000 for future planned services, comes through various fundraising activities. These include members' subscriptions, donations, revenue from meals and accommodation, and our national collection through the Fuchsia Appeal.

Corporate bodies can fulfil their social responsibility by sponsoring rooms in our homes, sponsoring their local VSC or ONE branch, or by donating their expertise. ONE is increasingly benefitting from support from businesses and other charity partners, and we gratefully acknowledge the great support received from: Cygnus Consulting, who have become the first company to sponsor a room in one of our facilities; ROTHCO/Accenture, one of our close neighbours in Smithfield, who spearheaded the Sleeping Flags Awareness Campaign, which as well as winning a host of media awards, more importantly, helped ONE identify and support a number of homeless veterans that would otherwise not have come to our attention; Harte Communications for media advice; Dublin Bus, for continuing our Sleeping Flags Awareness Campaign in July; the Leopardstown Park Hospital Trust, who sponsor the training of our staff and volunteers; and the ESB's Energy for Generations Fund, for their support in upgrading the lighting systems in Brú na bhFiann.

It is important to know what you are supporting, so what follows is a flavour of our future plans.

In Brú na bhFiann, in partnership with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and the HSE, we are increasing the number of bedrooms for homeless veterans from 30 to 36, providing an ante room (day room) for residents, and developing a veterans counselling service.

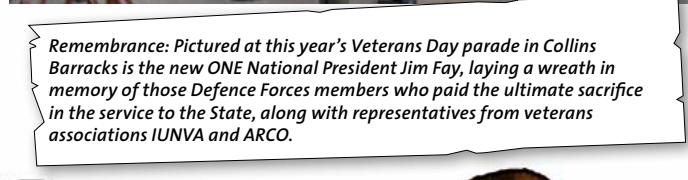
We are co-operating with hospitals to create a pathway for those who need long-term care.

We are also continuing to develop our facilities in Beechwood House and Custume House; opening a small hostel in Cobh in tandem with the VSC; and examining the provision of further hostel facilities in the Munster area.

In conclusion, our members, staff and volunteers give excellent service to ONE through their commitment to helping veterans in their time of need. Other veterans associations and individuals also provide outstanding support to their less fortunate comrades. Throughout this article we do not quantify the terms 'service' or 'veteran' as it is our view that the duration, type of service, and rank achieved are not important; rather it is that veterans served their country at home and overseas. Some of those veterans now need others to help them. ■



*Advocacy: Sleeping Flags Campaign: Pictured on Virgin Media's Ireland AM on the 11th February 2019 is Richard Dillon House Manager of Brú na bhFiann accompanied by Tony Stafford a former resident in Brú na bhFiann advocating on ONE's behalf to raise public awareness in aid of homeless Defence Forces veterans it supports.*



*Remembrance: Pictured at this year's Veterans Day parade in Collins Barracks is the new ONE National President Jim Fay, laying a wreath in memory of those Defence Forces members who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service to the State, along with representatives from veterans associations IUNVA and ARCO.*



# THE US MILITARY'S NEXT EXISTENTIAL THREAT



Drill instructors with Bravo Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, demonstrate a log curl to recruits at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

BY SHANE MCCARTHY  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE US MILITARY

Last year, the US Army missed its recruiting goal for the first time since 2005. The strong economy, the increasing divide between military and civilians, and the large proportion of young Americans who are ineligible to serve, are making military recruiting more difficult today.

The army missed its target by 6,500 recruits, enlisting closer to 70,000 individuals; the Army National Guard missed its objective by 22%; while the Army Reserves were 30% below their requirement.

Although the army is set to hit its 68,000 recruitment target for 2019, some senior military and government leaders are worried about trends in force preparedness.

Former commander of the army's Initial Military Training Command, Major General Malcolm Frost, explained at an event before his retirement, "*I would argue that the next existential threat we have...is the inability to man our military.*"

Writing in Politico, Major John Spencer said about the United States' elimination of the draft in 1973 and move to an all-volunteer force: "*The major assumption undergirding that move was a belief that Americans would volunteer for military service when national security is at risk. But the past 14 years of war have proven that that assumption is wrong.*"

President Trump wants to grow each branch of the military over the coming years, a goal shared by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley. Last summer, when General Milley was the army chief of staff, he made a case for increasing the army

to 540,000 soldiers over the next four years, up from 470,000. He explained, "*We have done the analysis. We need to be bigger, and we need to be stronger and more capable.*"

One of the largest factors preventing the army and other branches of the military from reaching their objectives is the number of young Americans that are ineligible to serve; over 71% of 17 to 24-year-olds are disqualified due to issues like health problems, drug use, criminal records, and inadequate education levels.

Retired Air Force brigadier general and current member of Congress, Don Bacon, said at a mission-readiness event in DC in 2017 that, "*the single most important ingredient to readiness is the constant flow of willing volunteers*", and he described the current recruiting situation as "*a red flag for our country*".

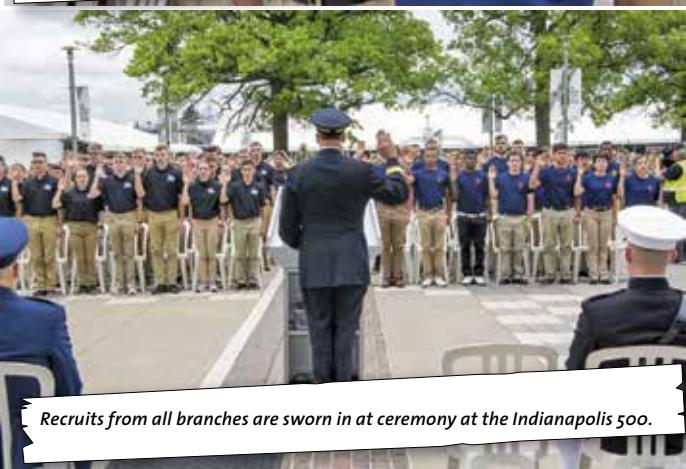
Health problems that prevent recruits from serving include obesity. It particularly affects recruiting from southern states, whose citizens historically had a higher propensity to serve in the military. Youth from these states are more likely to be overweight and physically unfit for service.

Lieutenant General John Bednarek (retd) said, when speaking about the number of high school students that are ineligible to serve, "*It's a problem that is a getting worse. They're not eligible to join the military if they wanted to. For 80% there is no requirement for physical fitness for graduation [from high school].*"

Although marijuana is fully legal in 11 states, members of the military are not allowed to use the drug, and the army gave more than 500 waivers to recruits who admitted to using the drug prior



New Navy recruits are sworn in at ceremony at the Indianapolis 500.



Recruits from all branches are sworn in at ceremony at the Indianapolis 500.



Quartermaster 1st Class Christian McGhee inspects recruits during a uniform inspection at Navy Recruit Training Command.

to enlisting; five years ago, no waivers were given for marijuana usage. The head of army recruiting, Major General Jeff Snow, explained last year: *"Provided they understand that they cannot do that when they serve in the military, I will waive that all day long."*

Illegal drugs are not the only disqualifying substances. Some ADHD medication, anti-depressants, and other prescription drug use at any time during childhood can also prevent enlistment. With the government's Center for Disease Control reporting that 5.2% of 2 to 17-year-old Americans are currently taking medication for the treatment of ADHD, many become instantly ineligible to serve.

While 71% are disqualified from service, even fewer have an interest in enlisting. Only 12% of 18-year-olds in 2018 showed an interest in joining the military. This varies by branch of service, with the Air Force currently at 7%, the lowest it has been since before the recession. The propensity surveys carried out by the Department of Defense showed that interest in joining the Air Force was highest, at 11%, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

As the job market, salaries, and the overall economy improve, interest in joining the military usually decreases – they are inversely correlated. For example, one study by the RAND Corporation found that as unemployment increases by 1%, recruitment of high-quality candidates increases by about 0.5%.

While the economy remains strong, the benefits of joining the military become less appealing. In a 2017 Department of Defense study the top reason given by participants as their reason for potentially joining the military was to pay for further education (49% of participants gave this as one reason), and 'pay/money' was third on the list of top 10 reasons (with 44% of participants giving this as one reason). 'It is my duty/obligation to my country' was in eighth position on the list (with 28% of participants giving this as a reason).

Unemployment rates are at recent record lows, meaning there is job opportunities open to young people without them needing to enlist. There are also more career pathways in a strong economy that do not require college degrees. Fully paid college tuition after four years of military services loses effectiveness as an incentive when potential recruits do not see the need to attend college.

For those who see the value in college, the military has to convince them that they should enlist first and delay college until they complete their service. This is not always an effective sales pitch. The various branches of services are not just competing against themselves or colleges; they are also competing against every private company in the ongoing talent war.

*"You have fewer people who can serve, they have more opportunities in the job market, that makes it very hard on the army,"* explained Beth Asch, a senior economist at the RAND Corporation.

As detailed by Admiral Robert Burke, the vice chief of Naval Operations, the war for people is also enticing service members out of the military. *"Talent is tough to draw in and even tougher to keep,"* Burke explained. *"Just like corporate businesses are adapting, the navy must adapt to modern personnel policies as well."*

The current active duty force being stationed at remote bases or concentrated in specific areas can lead to a military-civilian divide. In the mid-1990s, 40% of potential recruits had at least one parent who served in the military. That percentage has more than halved. Lack of interactions with members of the military can lead to misconceptions about service.

Lernes 'Bear' Hebert, acting deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel policy, illustrated why this is a problem. *"While there is great support for military servicemen and women, we do find that misperceptions about service have taken a toll on the propensity to serve,"* said Herbert.

Even though service members who see combat are in the minority, 63% of young people think it is 'likely' or 'very likely' that people leave the military with psychological or emotional problems.

Closer connections with members of the military may not only help to clear up some of the misconceptions created about the military from television, movies, and videos, but a 2018 RAND study on the life of new soldiers, found that almost 21% of soldiers in their research group were influenced by a friend or significant other to join, compared to just over 8% by a military recruiter.

To combat the issues that military recruiting is facing, the army increased the number of recruiters by 800. The navy raised special duty assignment pay, allowing recruiters to collect up to \$525 extra per month. They also increased the number of recruiters from 2016 by 16% to almost 3,400.

The Army has set aside \$450m for bonuses to assist with recruitment and retention. These may be specific to the occupation, such as the \$11,000 bonus for joining the infantry, or time-based, such as a \$20,000 quick-ship bonus for leaving for training within 30 days of signing their enlistment contract if there are spaces to be immediately filled.

**About the Author:** Shane McCarthy is the chief marketing officer of Sandboxx, a platform that supports over a million United States service members and their supporters throughout their military journey via content, technology, and products enabling the military ecosystem to thrive. He has also briefed and advised numerous military recruiting commands. ■

# DEFENCE FORCES VALUES AWARDS 2018

BY SGT RENA KENNEDY & SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD PHOTOS BY CPL PAT O'MEARA, 105 SQN

**O**n 11th September 2019, An tUachtarán Michael D Higgins, supreme commander of the Defence Forces, hosted the second annual Defence Forces Values Awards ceremony in Áras an Uachtaráin. TV presenter Bláthnáid ní Choфаigh compèred the event, which was attended by Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, and friends, relations and colleagues of the award recipients.

Opening the ceremony, President Higgins said: "Today, we are recognising in a special way the noble actions of seven serving and retired members of our Defence Forces. We are recognising their conduct as embodying the essential Defence Forces qualities of moral courage, respect, integrity, physical courage, selflessness and loyalty. This evening is also an opportunity for me to personally honour and acknowledge the integral role that Óglaigh na hÉireann occupies in Irish society; something that I have always been aware of."

The values referred to by the president - respect, loyalty, selflessness, physical courage, moral courage, and integrity - are a moral component of our organisation; they are interdependent and held as a collective responsibility.

Officers and enlisted personnel of the Defence Forces swear to be faithful to Ireland and loyal to the constitution and as such are an integral part of our democracy. Our unique culture depends on our values, which provide the foundation for who we are. This is why the Defence Forces takes so much time and effort to define and disseminate our core values throughout the organisation.

Acknowledging and highlighting examples of DF values in action is the purpose of the DF Values Awards, and will hopefully assist in inculcating these values throughout our organisation.

**Our recipients for 2018 were as follows:-**

## RESPECT – ‘TREAT EVERYONE AS YOU WOULD EXPECT TO BE TREATED’

This award was presented to AB/Mech Ryan O’Driscoll who serves on the crew of LÉ Samuel Beckett. Ryan was nominated by CPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra who said:

*“It is a pleasure to have this sailor as part of the engineering team onboard. He strengthens the team and brings out the best in those who come in contact and work with him.”*

In his short, but eventful, four years’ service Ryan has been a navy diver for three years and has deployed overseas twice: assisting in the rescue of over 3,400 migrants onboard LÉ Samuel Beckett during Operation Pontus and with the EU NAVFOR Operation Sophia as an RPAS drone pilot gathering information on oil smuggling and countering illegal arms trafficking.

As a navy diver he has been involved in many search-and-recovery operations including the recovery of the remains of Capt Mark Duffy from Coastguard helicopter R116, which tragically crashed in March 2017.

In advancement of his career Ryan is shortly due to start studying electrical engineering in CIT.



## LOYALTY – ‘BE FAITHFUL TO IRELAND, TO THE DEFENCE FORCES, AND YOUR COMRADES’

The award for loyalty was presented to Sgt PJ McCabe (2 Bde MP Coy). PJ was nominated by members of his unit who credited him with: ‘Demonstrating impeccable loyalty to his unit over 37 years of service; never questioning why, only asking where and when his service is required; being a consistent presence at state ceremonial events, where his counsel and advice is often sought; carrying out his role as NCO-in-charge of 2 Bde MP Coy Reserve personnel with dedication, making himself available outside routine duty hours, on evenings and weekends, and encouraging and implementing the single-force concept.

Sgt McCabe joined 8 Inf Bn FCÁ in Monaghan in 1977 before joining the PDF in 1980. He has been a member of the MP Corps since 1981 and served overseas with UNIFIL in Lebanon. Highlights of his career include being an integral part of the 1916 centenary commemorations, being involved on Aga Khan Day at the Dublin Horse Show for the last 38 years, and serving at four presidential inaugurations, including our current president’s.

Sgt McCabe is also proud to be third generation of his family to serve in the Defence Forces: his grandfather, Thomas Henry Farrell, served with 6 Inf Bn in Athlone and his uncle is retired Brig General Jim Farrell of Collins Bks, Cork.

### SELFLESSNESS – ‘MISSION AND TEAM FIRST, ME SECOND’

The award for selflessness was presented to Cpl Thomas Carew (3 Inf Bn) who was nominated for his actions in saving the life of a motorcyclist who was thrown into an estuary at high tide after a collision. Assistant Commissioner AJ Nolan of An Garda Síochána commended Thomas for his actions, as did the area operations manager for the HSE who said: “*The bravery you demonstrated was outstanding and your actions were fearless. You are a credit to the Defence Forces and, on behalf of the Ambulance Service, I thank you for your act of kindness and selflessness.*”

It is fitting that on the morning of the day that Thomas risked his own life to save the life of a stranger he had attended a briefing on the ethos and values of the Defence Forces.

Thomas joined the Defence Forces in 2012 and completed his recruit and three-star training in Collins Bks, Cork, before being stationed in Stephens Bks, Kilkenny. Some of the highlights of his military career to date include winning Parson’s Cup hurling medals with 3 Inf Bn and serving overseas with 53 Inf Gp, UNIFIL. He recently completed a diploma in Military Medical Care, having studied in University College Dublin between 2018 and 2019, qualifying him as a combat medical technician, and is looking forward to transferring to the Central Medical Unit and serving overseas in the future as a medic.



### PHYSICAL COURAGE – ‘PERSEVERE THROUGH DANGER AND HARDSHIP’

The award for displaying physical courage was given to Cpl David McCormack (1 Cn Cois), who was nominated by many of his unit comrades.

Shortly after returning from serving with UNDOF on the Golan Heights, David was the victim of an assault that left him with life-threatening injuries. He subsequently spent 10 months undergoing medical treatment and recovering in the National Rehab Centre.

In the face of severe physical and psychological challenges, David demonstrated the highest levels of bravery in overcoming his injuries to return to operational effectiveness in just over 12 months after the assault. During that time he had to face high-risk surgical procedures, setbacks, therapy, and the ever-present fear that he would not overcome his disabilities. David’s colleagues nominated him for this well-deserved award for the incredible physical courage he displayed on his very difficult journey back to full health.

David joined the army in December 2007 and has completed two tours of duty overseas, to Chad and Syria, and recently completed a Physical Training Instructors course.

David’s grandfather, Michael McCormack (RIP) served in the Congo and was involved in the Siege of Jadotville in 1961. Two years ago David had the honour of collecting the Jadotville medal on his grandfather’s behalf. Career highlights include achieving promotion to corporal at 23 years of age and his two tours overseas.



### MORAL COURAGE – ‘DO THE RIGHT THING, NOT THE EASY THING’

The award for moral courage was received by Cpl Cathriona Lacey (6 Inf Bn) who was nominated by the members of her unit in Athlone. During a chief of staff’s address to personnel in the barracks, the role of the Personal Support Service (PSS) came under question. Displaying great moral courage, Cathriona spoke up in defence of the service by sharing with those present a deeply personal and hugely painful story about the journey she had gone through following the loss of her brother, Thomas (who was also a member of the DF), to suicide in September 2014, and how the support of the PSS has helped her and her family through an extremely difficult time. Cathriona passionately explained how having issues is nothing to be ashamed of and if you seek help you can take back control of your life.

Through sharing her story, Cathriona helped relieve the pressure on others and acted as a positive role model for removing the stigma attached to mental health. While it was extremely difficult to speak about such deeply personal matters in front of others Cathriona stood proud and ‘did the right thing, not the easy thing’.

Cathriona enlisted in 1998 and was the only female in her recruit platoon. She has served overseas on three occasions, in Lebanon and Liberia.

Cathriona’s most treasured memory of her 21 years service is travelling with the 6 Inf Bn pipe band to Kosovo where her brother Thomas was serving at the time, getting to spend time with him there, and returning with great memories and photographs to cherish.





#### INTEGRITY – ‘BE TRUTHFUL, RELIABLE AND HONOURABLE’

The award for integrity was presented to retired gunner David Stack, who was nominated by his former colleagues in 1 Bde Arty Regt, who said that throughout his seven years service David epitomised integrity in the workplace, displaying moral judgement and character, combined with honesty and leadership. During Storm Emma he reported for duty when others sought reasons not to, putting the unit ahead of his own needs, and remained on station for 48 hours, advising, guiding and assisting external emergency and support agencies, all while worried about his own family at home.

David initially served with 12 Inf Bn in Limerick before securing a transfer to 1 Bde Arty Regt in Cork. He travelled overseas with 49 Inf Gp to Lebanon in 2015.

Highlights of his career include the experience of serving overseas at a young age and having the honour of playing with the Defence Forces soccer team in the 2017 CISM Military World Cup in Oman.

#### DEFENCE FORCES VALUES CHAMPION

The overall award of DF Values Champion was presented to RSM John Murray (CIS Gp, DFTC) who has completed 41 years service in the DF. An outstanding soldier and valued member of his unit, John has consistently displayed innovative thinking, exceptional commitment, dedication and selflessness in carrying out his duties. His absolute loyalty to all his comrades, superiors and subordinates, and his mentorship of younger members of the Defence Forces is an example of real leadership in action.

Displaying the moral courage to respectfully challenge superiors when he feels it right to do so, RSM Murray leads by example: first in, last out.

John has immense pride in his unit and in the ethos, traditions, and values of the DF; a pride he embodies in his turnout, deportment, and physical fitness.

He regularly displays selflessness by responding to incidents outside duty hours, and his steadfast loyalty to the Defence Forces in the face of significant change has been an inspiration to others to embrace change while still preserving the ethos and values of the organisation.

RSM Murray has had many highlights during his career, most notably his 15 tours of duty overseas to Lebanon (nine times), Kosovo (twice), Bosnia, Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria and with an EU Nordic Battlegroup, which trained in Northern Sweden and the Arctic Circle.

RSM Murray works as the senior personnel manager of the DFTC CIS Group, which has three wings: CIS School, CIS Workshop and CIS Operations. While his current duties focus on maintaining standards and discipline for all CIS Corps personnel, his background is in the area of telecommunications, networks and aerial rigging, and he has always enjoyed working as part of a team, or leading the team when needed.



#### SPECIAL AWARD - A SPECIAL AWARD WAS MADE TO 15-YEAR-OLD CHARLIE WATSON FROM SWORDS.

Charlie, who has cerebral palsy, has a great interest in the work of the Defence Forces, and who in his own way has demonstrated those values that are central to the Defence Forces. He displayed a determination towards pursuing his goal of working overseas and supporting the Defence Forces in their valuable work for vulnerable people at risk in areas of conflict. We wish him great success while attending his transition year work experience in the Curragh Camp this November 2019.



The 2019 Defence Forces Values Awards process has recently closed and the next recipients will be announced at the end of the year. ■

## Do you shop online from the UK?

Your consumer rights could be affected by Brexit

**Áine Carroll, Director of Communications and Policy, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) looks at the potential impact of Brexit on your consumer rights when shopping online.**



By Áine Carroll, Director of Communications & Policy with the CCPC

With 24/7 opening hours, 365 days a year and endless choice, it is easy to see why buying online has become so popular. And the availability of a huge range of goods from UK-based websites means that a lot of consumers in Ireland buy from UK-based traders. In fact, the CCPC's latest research found that 72% of us have bought online from a company based in the UK in the last two years. 29% of consumers reported that they have done so more than 10 times in the last two years.

When you shop online from an EU-based retailer you have specific consumer rights. When the UK leaves the EU, these protections will no longer be guaranteed and so there are potential changes ahead for online shoppers. With still much uncertainty ahead, what do you need to know if you if you are one of the many consumers in Ireland that buy online from UK retailers?

One of the main rights consumers have when we buy online from an EU based retailer is the right to change our mind and receive a refund within a certain timeframe. The CCPC's research found that 40% of people who had bought from a UK website had returned items. When asked about their reason for returning items, the research found that a large number of consumers in Ireland exercise their consumer rights under EU law – 55% reported they returned a purchase because the product did not fit or suit their needs and 16% said that they had changed their mind. In the event of a no deal Brexit, these rights may not be guaranteed.

So what should you do? Whether you are a frequent or occasional online shopper - before you buy, check where the business is located. If it's in the EU, you have specific rights under EU regulations. Read the terms and conditions on the website – be sure to check in particular the returns policy and see if you can return goods if you change your mind. Also check to see if there are costs for returning items. It's also really important to know where the website is located as if it's outside the EU, you may have to pay certain taxes and duties including customs duty, excise duty and VAT.

### Tips for shopping online

- Buy from a reputable website or one with positive customer feedback. Check if any of your friends have used the site and check online reviews. Check the physical location of the business, remember EU protections only automatically apply when you buy from a business based in the EU

- When your order arrives check it straight away to make sure it's ok and that you are happy with it.
- Make sure that you leave plenty of time for your order to arrive.
- Use a secure method of payment, such as a debit or credit card. Never send cash or use a money wiring service because you will have no recourse if something goes wrong.
- Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is. If you see something significantly cheaper on a website than everywhere else, be wary. If you're not sure if a site is selling genuine products, look for a list of authorised sellers.
- Remember you may have to pay certain taxes and duties including customs duty, excise duty and VAT, if you are buying from traders outside the EU.



Our website [www.ccpc.ie](http://www.ccpc.ie) has dedicated information on the impact Brexit could have on your consumer rights. We also have information on extra taxes and charges you may need to pay if you are ordering online from a country outside the EU.

## IUNVA Annual General Convention 2019

BY FREDERICK O'REILLY, IUNVA NATIONAL DEPUTY PRO PHOTOS BY ARMN SAM GIBNEY

**T**he Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) Annual General Convention (AGC) took place in Clonmel Park Hotel, Clonmel on Saturday 21st September 2019.

The event was started off when a Guard of Honour (GoH) took place in front of the entrance to the Hotel for Brig Gen Patrick Flynn, GOC 1 Bde. Retired Sgt Major Seanie Cosgrove, Chairman of Post 24 Clonmel, brought the GoH to attention on the arrival of the Brig Gen Flynn, before he inspected them. The GoH was made up of members from 23 Posts from IUNVA.

The general was escorted into the conference room by an IUNVA piper, before he addressed the National Delegates. He began by thanking the veterans for their overseas service and for the good work carried out by IUNVA Nationally.

National Chairman Jim Casey thanked General Flynn for his opening address, and then thanked all the delegates and observers for attending the AGC. The National Chairman then invited retired Sgt Major Willie Gilbert to make the opening address as he was deputising for the Association President retired General Vincent Savino - who could not attend due to ill health.



Brig Gen Patrick Flynn, GOC 1 Bde greets the Guard of Honour.



IUNVA National Chairman Jim Casey presents Eddie Robinson with a framed picture for his dedicated service on the National Executive Committee.

Two new members were elected to the National Executive at the convention, they were Derek Judge (Post 1) as National Executive Secretary, and recently retired Sgt Major John Murray to National Executive Treasury (Post 11).

The convention was concluded by 17:00 hours and was followed later that night by a dinner and ball. ■

## ONE ANNUAL CONVENTION & AGM 2019

BY OLLIE O'CONNOR, CEO ONE PHOTOS BY ARMN SAM GIBNEY

**T**he Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE) held its 2019 Annual Convention and its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dundalk on Saturday 28th September. Branch delegates attended where outgoing National President Tom James opened the convention by thanking all of the branches for the support he received during his two years in office and a special word of thanks to Presidents and Chairpersons of the three Area Councils for their loyal support and courtesy. Jim Fay was inaugurated as National President for the next two years.

ONE's CEO Ollie O'Connor presented his annual report to the convention, where he spoke of the work being carried out in the three hostels and eight Veterans Support Centres (VSC). He outlined the plan to increase the number of rooms available to homeless veterans in Brú na bhFiann from 30 to 35, the employment of a Veterans' Support Officer from January 2020, increasing the number of VSCs and the proposal to develop a 4-bedroom hostel and VSC in Cobh. He also thanked the professional staff and residents in the hostels for giving of their time above and beyond the call of duty, during the Sleeping Flags Campaign, which was the vision of the talented team of the Rothco advertising company. He also thanked the branches and their members for continuing to support the Fuchsia Appeal.

The Convention focussed on four briefings with the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Colm Campbell, presenting the first on ONE's Strategic Plan, 'Building for the Future'. The plan has seven goals: Consolidating and Future Proofing; Enhanced support and awareness; Government Veterans Policy (in union with the other veterans organisations), Finances of the organisation; Strengthen and invigorate ONE; Develop a sustainable nationwide network of Veterans Support Centres and a nationwide network of Veterans Hostels.

Former PSS Director, and ONE Director Ollie Barbour presented the second briefing, which concerned Veterans Welfare, and addressed training of Welfare Officers in Mental Health First Aid and other welfare areas.

The third briefing was presented by the Chairman Colm Campbell and concentrated on the adoption of a new Handbook of Rules, which had been sent to every branch prior to the Convention and was accepted by a very large vote.

Recently retired Defence Forces Press Officer, Comdt Pat O'Connor, presented the fourth briefing as the guest speaker, 'Communicating on behalf of ONE'. ■



National President Jim Fay (right) presenting the award for 'Best Branch' to Galway Branch Chairman Pat Nugent.



Brig Gen Colm Campbell (ret'd) ONE's Chairman giving a briefing on ONE's Strategic Plan, 'Building for the Future'.

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# A BLOODY WEEK - THE IRISH AT ARNHEM

BY LT COL DAN HARVEY RET'D

**“I think we may be going a bridge too far”**

- Lt General Frederick Browning to Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery



A still from the film *A Bridge Too Far* (1977).

repeatedly around the Oosterbeek perimeter in a chaotic, clamorous cacophony.

Raw, raucous and reverberating, a battle is an angry place to be. Fiery muzzle flashes, the arching, stark brilliance of tracer trajectory and vividly coloured sparks of impacts against walls and off cobbled roadways were dazzling, dramatic and dangerous. There was an almost mad magnificence, a splendid surrealism, and an insane intensity to it all. Vivid, vigorous and violent, the sights, sounds and sensations of frenzied German attack and frantic British defence assaulted the senses.

This was a new stage in the week-long fight in the reshaped Arnhem battlespace. In the midst of all this turmoil, disturbance and



General Stanislaw Sosabowski (left) with Lt General Frederick Browning (right).

**I**t was 75 years ago that Operation 'Market Garden' took place, a dramatic but unsuccessful campaign fought by the British Army in the Netherlands from 17th to 25th September 1944 to secure a number of bridges over the Rhine that might provide an Allied invasion route into Germany. Allied airborne and land forces successfully liberated Eindhoven and Nijmegen, but were repelled by the Germans at the Battle of Arnhem during their efforts to secure the last bridge over the Rhine.

The battle for the bridge at Arnhem – of such strategic importance that both forces were desperate to hold it – was a pivotal moment in the final phase of the war in Europe. The intense conflict was famously depicted in the epic war movie *A Bridge Too Far*, but more significantly its outcome thwarted Allied plans to end the war by Christmas 1944.

The sharp staccato sound of rounds being fired, ricochets resounding, and machineguns rattling, adding to the 'crump' of mortars, the 'thump' of artillery, and the signature shrieking scream of the six-barrelled 'Moaning Minnie' (Nebelwerfer) were all heard

confusion was Major Tony Blake, born in County Wicklow, Brigade Major with the 1st Airlanding Brigade Headquarters. Embattled and exhausted, he had faced adversity almost from the very start of 'Market Garden' when on 19th September in the Arnhem area four 1st Airlanding Brigade HQ officers were killed by a German mortar shell, with Major Blake temporarily blinded by the same shell. He refused to go for treatment and remained on duty at the field telephone and radios in a slit trench. His sight did not fully return until after evacuation, but until then he was constantly on duty throughout this period of intense mortaring and artillery fire.

With XXX Corps now in close proximity to Arnhem, Major Blake fortuitously found he was able to establish communications with them via a shared radio frequency and this enabled him to direct the artillery fires of 64 Medium Regiment, who were supporting the 1st Airborne Division from a range of ten miles. He carried out this direction of artillery fire quietly and efficiently and its highly accurate fall of shot consistently broke up enemy concentrations

# HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY

and attacks, drastically decreasing the German advantage. Without these artillery support fires the Oosterbeek perimeter could not have held.

With this added firepower support, the airborne resistance stiffened. Thoroughly shaken and with his sight greatly impaired, Major Blake nonetheless displayed the greatest courage and determination throughout the operation in carrying out his duties and was awarded the US Distinguished Service Cross, gazetted on 14th November 1947. (Major Blake's medals are exhibited at the award-winning Soldiers & Chiefs exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin.)

A 'perimeter defence' can be a structured, deliberate form of defence, organised to give depth and a mutually supporting series of strong points with interlocking arches of fire and forward defensive screens. Even a hastily put together all-round defensive position and situation can adapt its circumstances to informally incorporate the principles employed in an otherwise more established and considered defence. The strong points are often referred

as individual units may leave these areas for the other to defend and it might end up being ignored, undefended or gaps occurring, particularly after an engagement due to deaths and destruction suffered. It is advisable to confirm the integrity of the line, that one's own troops and those of one's neighbouring units are intact, physically remaining and capable of continuing a defensive effort. Sent out to do just that, a four-man patrol from 21st Independent Parachute Company (Pathfinders) ventured out from their position at Pietersbergseweg towards Annastraat where the 10th Parachute Battalion were in situ. Proceeding through laneways, back gardens and other obstacles, Private Tommy Scullion from County Antrim gave necessary covering fires with his Bren gun. Private James Vincent Fiely from Dublin was another Irishman amongst them. On arrival at the area of their patrol's objective they occupied a house along the perimeter and noticed a presence of troops in the house adjacent. Enquiring if they were from the 10th Parachute Battalion, their query was replied to in the form of an abrupt eruption of gunfire as the German occupiers opened up with machine guns and



*Sherman tanks of the Irish Guards Group advance past others, which were knocked out earlier during Operation 'Market Garden'.*



*Allied tanks of British XXX Corps cross the road bridge at Nijmegen during its capture. 17th – 20th September 1944.*

to as hedgehogs because even within the perimeter's protection they themselves are designed to be stand alone, three hundred and sixty degree (360°) self-protecting positions, so if the area within the perimeter wherein they are located is overrun they can themselves hold out until the ground around them is retaken by the defenders.

Rarely fixed however, a perimeter's defence line can be fluid and fluctuate, vary or alter as the action around it of enemy offensive assaults and defender's defensive efforts swing and seesaw with positions held, lost and retaken. The line penetrated here, pushed back there, shifting and changing and may not necessarily have been neatly linear to begin with. With German patrols probing the perimeter looking for weak spots, British airborne patrols seeking to neutralise German snipers, any particular portion of the perimeter, even if not being attacked, could see activity along it, as patrols pursued their designated tasks as ordered. The boundaries between specified areas of responsibility are particularly vulnerable,

grenades. Private James Fiely, in a kneeling position at the exterior corner of the house, was mowed down and died immediately. A fire-fight developed and the remaining three Pathfinders managed to extricate themselves from their situation.

Killed in action also on 22nd September was Private 'Paddy' Patrick Hurley from the Republic of Ireland, soldiering with the 1st Battalion Border Regiment. All around the perimeter, all day, concurrent activities were on-going as the battle raged, with an attack here, concentration of mortar fires there, fighting patrols elsewhere and of course within the perimeter there were those fighting to save the lives of the critically and seriously wounded casualties. Three hotels at the Oosterbeek crossroads, the Schoonoord, the Tafeberg and the Vreewijk Hotels, were converted into temporary dressing stations during the battle, with doctors and medical orderlies from the Royal Army Medical Corps doing their best in desperate conditions to render medical aid as best they could in the circumstances. Military Chaplains and local padres

# HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY

were giving spiritual comfort where appropriate, their services unfortunately all too frequently required. The men of the 1st Airborne Division were doing two things concurrently fighting and waiting. Fighting their German attackers and waiting for the arrival of XXX Corps. They were all too aware that their situation was not ideal, but they were optimistic about what they believed was the imminent arrival of XXX Corps to relieve them. They were determined they were going to hold out until they did so. In the interim the continued non-arrival of the resupply drops was frustrating in the extreme. It was not the fault of the RAF, indeed their courage and sacrifices were admirable; it was that the supplies were falling in the wrong places. Correctly speaking they were landing in the 'right' locations, but the British on the ground did not hold them anymore and communicating this fact had not been a success, so the valiant efforts of the RAF were largely in vain. To continue to fight, they urgently needed ammunition. They also desperately required food, water and rest. Of course, they also had to avoid being killed and the German snipers and mortars were constantly doing to their utmost to achieve that!

Mortar fire is deadly, its lethality derived not so much from the explosive effect, unless it was an unlikely but possible direct hit, rather from the slivers of fragmenting shrapnel subsequent to the shredding of its outer metallic case on impact; a killing radius of 25-50 metres. The larger the calibre the greater the killing area. Mortar duels developed between both sides. These duels however, frequently escalated in the numbers of mortars employed and the addition of artillery, German 88s, Airborne howitzers (75mm). Because they are fired indirectly, concealed from each other's observers, a mortar fire controller (MFC) or 'spotter' (for the artillery it is a Forward Observation Officer – FOO) gives directions and adjustments of the fall of shot onto the target. For him (like Major Tony Blake) to do so, he had to have had direct line of sight onto the target, to see the round's impact, how near, far or wide, and communications with the mortar or artillery firing line to call in the adjustments. Discovering each other's spotters' likely position, 'spotting the spotter' and neutralising him is a way of disrupting the process and this makes his job a hazardous one. Far more hazardous of course is to be under a mortar barrage, to be in the area where mortar fire is being directed onto. The best defence of course is to put distance between yourself and that area as quickly as possible using the best cover available. If you cannot remove yourself but are duty bound to remain where you are, then to make yourself safe you quite literally occupy the ground you must hold by digging into it. As the name implies, 'slit trenches' are dug, firing positions excavated from the earth, overhead protection built in, to retreat into to take cover from mortar and artillery barrages, all of which is camouflaged and strict occupation discipline imposed. Depth is added to the defensive position by the siting of trenches over distance rearwards to prevent against being easily overrun. Support weapon trenches sited tactically throughout, bearing in mind the nature of the terrain. Well dug in troops can be difficult to dislodge. Given that the perimeter consisted of a mixture of built up suburban, open ground and woodlands type terrain, there were prepared defences in variations of slit trenches in gardens, streets and residential houses and buildings fortified to different degrees. These combinations of 'protection from fire' positions were where



Irish Guards Group, Guards Armoured Division, Aalst, 18th September 1944.

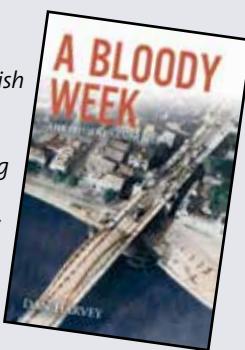


German Troops during the battle for Arnhem bridge in 1944.

what remained of the 1st Airborne Division and from where they would do their fighting and waiting.

Post D-Day, with the collapse of German resistance in France and Belgium in late August 1944, the end of the war was within sight. Operation 'Market Garden' was designed to bring it within reach. The Operation 'Market Garden' Plan was imaginative, daring and simple. Nothing like it had ever been attempted before. It was the first time airborne troops were to be used strategically by the Allies on such a scale. 35,000 of them were to be flown from England, a distance of 300 miles and dropped behind enemy lines to seize and hold a series of bridges in Holland to allow an Allied armoured column of Corps strength advance 64 miles into enemy territory in order to consolidate a bridgehead from which the Allies could further their offensive. The brainchild of Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, with deep family roots in Counties Donegal and Derry, it was an uncharacteristically imaginative, audacious, and ambitious plan, and may well have spectacularly secured a 'Start Line' for a 'backdoor' Allied advance into Germany's industrial Ruhr and so likely have ended the Second World War before Christmas 1944, and consequently saved thousands of lives. Surprise and speed were crucial to the success of Operation 'Market Garden'. It was opportune to try, the prize a secure start line to strike into Germany itself.

**About the Author:** Lt Col Dan Harvey, now retired, served on operations at home and abroad for over 35-years. He is the author of *A Bloody Week - The Irish at Arnhem* (reviewed on P37); *A Bloody Dawn: The Irish at D-Day* (2019); *Soldiering Against Subversion: The Irish Defence Forces and Internal Security During the Troubles, 1969-1998* (2018); *Into Action: Irish Peacekeepers Under Fire, 1960-2014* (2017); *A Bloody Day: The Irish at Waterloo and A Bloody Night: The Irish at Rorke's Drift* (both reissued 2017); and *Soldiers of the Short Grass: A History of the Curragh Camp* (2016). ■



# FIT FOR PURPOSE:

## THE CASE FOR A PHYSICAL FITNESS CORPS

**REPORT AND PHOTOS BY CQMS MICHAEL BARRETT AR,  
7 INF BN**

**P**hysical fitness is a basic requirement for military life, and in the Defence Forces the Defence Forces Physical Education School (DFPES) is the prime institution of instruction for fitness standards and ethos, supported by a network of qualified personnel in barracks around the country.

Fitness is central to Defence Forces life. All recruits and cadets must pass the induction fitness test; trained personnel must pass the annual standard life test; and anyone going on an overseas mission or attending a training course will require, more often than not, a fitness test pass grade.

Added to this there are additional specialised fitness tests for various elements of the Defence Forces, including the ARW, Naval Service divers, and infantry leader courses conducted in the Military College.

Fitness not only enhances the robustness of soldiers, it makes them more resistant to illness and injury, and also improves morale and mental wellbeing. Combat fitness prepares a soldier for battle, increasing agility and aggression, and helps to focus the mind.

Military fitness is expanding as new ideas and concepts seep into the Defence Forces from international best practice, such as adding the carrying of a rifle to the timed loaded march in the standard test.

With all this, and maybe more in future years, is it time to ask if we need a dedicated Defence Forces physical training corps, manned by DFPES-qualified personnel?

The concept would see a corps that would be quite small in terms of overall Defence Forces strength, and would almost exclusively consist of NCOs, with a small number of officers.

Identifiable by a corps insignia, worn on tracksuits, T-shirts, etc, corps staff could be attached to every company-level unit in the DF, both at home and overseas, including onboard naval vessels.

This staff would be responsible for fitness levels in their assigned units and their roles would include: conducting standard fitness tests; advising and assisting personnel with difficulties regarding fitness; educating personnel on DF fitness policy and test changes; advising unit commanders on their troops' fitness levels; providing basic adventure training within their units; advising the DFPES with regard to new ideas to enhance fitness.

As regards future recruits in the Defence Forces, while people are potentially as robust as they used to be, modern life is increasingly sedentary and inactive, which in turn affects the fitness levels of potential recruits; this has to be acknowledged and acted on. Our conceptual physical fitness corps could do this by advice and guidance that could help in the induction and retention of personnel for the DF.

In essence, a new physical training corps would make the future Defence Forces even more 'fit for purpose' in carrying out all of its assigned roles. ■



# AN COSANTÓIR 10K ROAD RACE 2019

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD - PHOTOS: CPL PAT O'MEARA, ARMN SEAN CASSIN AND ARMN SAM GIBNEY

**T**he largest sporting event in the Defence Forces competitive sporting calendar took place on Wednesday 9th October 2019, as participants took to the roads in the Phoenix Park for the 40th anniversary *An Cosantóir* 10K Road Race and 5K Walk. With over 838 competitors from all over the DF along with veterans and invited guests not including those working and hosting the event in McKee Bks for the displays and soaking up the atmosphere.

To get us started for this special year we invited participants of the RTÉ's *Special Forces Ultimate Hellweek* show, which was based on an ARW Selection Course to fire the starter pistol and to take part as guests. We are very grateful to them for taking the time out to help support the Defence Forces.

There were no surprises in the Senior Male category as Pte Kenneth Rodgers, 12 Inf Bn won for a coveted 9th time with a time of 31:27, which was 1 minute faster than his time last year. This record equals the one previously held by CQMS Pat Byrne, DFTC Tpt Gp – who himself won this years Male O/45 category. Lt Elizabeth Carr, 1 MIC DFTC won the Senior Female again for the third time in a row with a time of 39:21. She is now a legend in the making.

The Naval Service took the first podium position again this year for the Team event and were followed by 1 MIC DFTC and 2 Cav Sqn respectively. The Naval Service team consisted of P/O Christopher Murphy (34:17), AB Michael Coakley (36:58), Darren McCann (38:18), Patrick Reidy (38:48), Colin Archer (39:21) and Connor McCory (40:46) with a combined time of 3:48:46. Our #Hellweek guests came in an unplaced but respectable 4th place.

The block run event as ever preceded the main race, with only 10 units/formations entering as a block of 25 runners and needing a minimum of 20 finishers to qualify. This event creates a great 'esprit de corps' and team building with all runners working together to stay in formation to win. Out of the 10 blocks the winning bragging rights went to the Cadet School 'A' (39:10) they were followed by classmates in Cadet School 'B' (43:03) and taking the 3rd place were the 7 Inf Bn (45:36).

In an open air awards ceremony Defence Forces Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM got the prize giving underway. The COS thanked everyone for taking part stating "*it is always a great sporting event, where we can meet new and old friends.*" The COS also acknowledged that it was great to get out in the park with special emphasis on mental health, "*it's great to see women and men supporting fitness and wellbeing in the Defence Forces.*" Both the COS and the OiC Public Relations Lt Col Johnny Whittaker thanked our sponsors ANASC Credit Union, Aviva and Druid Craft for their continued support of this event. Lt Col Johnny Whittaker thanked J7, OC DFPES, DFCAT, OC McKee Bks, Catering Staff, MPs, CMU, CIS staff, 7 Inf Bn work party, An Garda Síochána, the Office of Public Works (OPW) for their continued support to make this annual event a success year-on-year.

So for the 40th time to some, thank you to those who took part in the race and we offer a big 'thank you' to participants for making the event what it is. The *An Cosantóir*/Information Office would also like to thank the organising committee, and all those who gave a hand on the day and getting stuck in. ■



*The captain of the winning Block from Cadet School 'A' collects the trophy from our sponsors from Aviva.*



*COS Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM presents Lt Elizabeth Carr, 1 MIC DFTC with her trophy for Senior Female.*



#### THE INDIVIDUAL WINNERS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Male Senior	1st	Pte Kenneth Rogers, 12 Inf Bn	31:27
Male Senior	2nd	Pte Gavin Sweeney, Engr Gp DFTC	31:44
Male Senior	3rd	Pte Josh O'Sullivan Hourihan, 1 CIS	31:47
Male O/35	1st	Capt James Ledingham, 3 Inf Bn	33:47
Male O/35	2nd	PO Christopher Murphy, Naval Service	34:17
Male O/35	3rd	AB Michael Coakley, Naval Service	36:58
Male O/40	1st	Sgt Edmund O'Neill, 1 MIC DFTC	34:35
Male O/40	2nd	Cpl Derek Nugent, 6 Inf Bn	34:42
Male O/40	3rd	Cpl Gavin Crawford, 28 Inf Bn	34:45
Male O/45	1st	CQMS Pat Byrne, Tpt Gp DFTC	35:54
Male O/45	2nd	Pte Anto Devaney, 2 Arty Regt	38:53
Male O/50	1st	Lt Col Johnny Whittaker, PRB DFHQ	39:40
Male O/50	2nd	Pte Tom Thompson, 28 Inf Bn	42:08
Male O/55	1st	Pte Mark Bulman, 1 Tpt Gp	43:45
Veteran Male	1st	John Boylan, 2 Bde	35:01
Guest Male	1st	Mick Keogh (#Hellweek)	35:30
Guest Male	2nd	Ray Kenny (#Hellweek)	37:39
Female Senior	1st	Lt Elizabeth Carr, 1 MIC DFTC	39:21
Female Senior	2nd	CQMS Jackie Wykes, 2 Arty Regt	42:03
Female Senior	3rd	Comdt Laura Lafferty, Mil Col DFTC	44:22
Female O/35	1st	Comdt Dorota O'Brien, CMU	48:58
Female O/35	2nd	Comdt Claire Mortimer, DFHQ	50:38
Female O/40	1st	Comdt Orla Jennings, Air Corps	45:06
Veteran Female	1st	Deborah Carr, Air Corps	48:19
Guest Female	1st	Grace O'Rourke (#Hellweek)	42:50

The results can be viewed online on here: [www.myrunresults.com/events/an\\_cosantoir\\_10k/3471/results](http://www.myrunresults.com/events/an_cosantoir_10k/3471/results)  
 The many photos can be viewed and downloaded here: <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmHC13Jr>



COS Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM presents Pte Kenneth Rogers, 12 Inf Bn with his trophy for Senior Male.



Our Sponsors from Aviva presenting the Naval Service with the Team event trophy.



## VALUE YOUR VOTE!

**Kildare County Council are currently preparing the draft register of electors for 2020-2021. RFC registration forms are issued by the Defence Forces authorities to every whole-time member of the Defence Forces on 1 September each year.**

Instructions are issued, requiring the completed RFC forms to be returned by each Defence Forces Unit to the local authority by 25 November.

Where an RFC form is not received in respect of a member of the Defence Forces who is on the register of electors 2019-2020 their name will be removed from the draft register of electors 2020-2021 postal voters list. Check that your name and address are present and correct on the Draft Register.

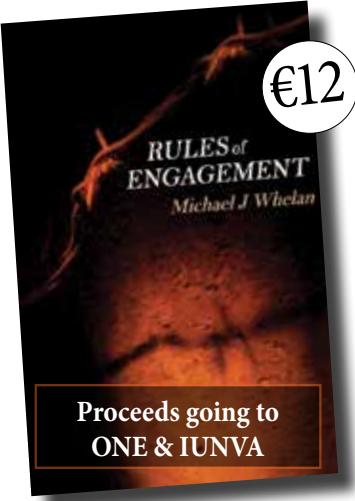
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Best wishes to the Defence Forces



# GEAR REVIEW

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# NOTICEBOARD

## MILITARY HISTORY LECTURES FOR NOVEMBER 2019

**THURSDAY 14TH NOVEMBER AT 7.30PM:** Paul Callery will present 'The Weapons of the Conflict (War of Independence)' in the Dún Laoghaire Club, 3 Eblana Avenue, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Admission free - voluntary donation. Reserve a place via [elblana@gmail.com](mailto:elblana@gmail.com).

**THURSDAY 21ST NOVEMBER AT 7.30PM:** Jamie Moran will speak about 'Deansgrange Graves' in the Dún Laoghaire Club, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Admission free - voluntary donation. Reserve a place via [elblana@gmail.com](mailto:elblana@gmail.com).

**WEDNESDAY 27TH NOVEMBER AT 6PM:** Peadar Curran will present 'Mary Mulligan, neighbour to Countess Markievicz' to the Old Dublin Society in the Conference Room of Dublin City Library & Archive, 138-144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2. All welcome - admission free.

**THURSDAY 28TH NOVEMBER AT 7.30PM:** Jim Lacey will recall 'The Ashtown Ambush - Attempt on the life of Lord French' in the Dún Laoghaire Club, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Admission free - voluntary donation. Reserve a place via [elblana@gmail.com](mailto:elblana@gmail.com).

## MILITARY HISTORY SOCIETY IRELAND (MHSI) WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME 2019

The MHSI Winter Lecture Programme 2019-2020 takes place from October to April, mostly in Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin 8 on the dates as indicated below. One lecture will take place in Athlone. Wheel-chair access is available, attendance is free and non-members are welcome to all lectures. [www.mhsie.ie](http://www.mhsie.ie)

**FRIDAY 8TH NOVEMBER AT 8PM:** Professor David Edwards will present 'The military world of Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork, 1603-1642'.

**WEDNESDAY 13TH NOVEMBER AT 8.15PM:** Guy Warner will present U-Boats around Ireland 1915-1918; Dr Pat McCarthy will present Casements Irish Brigade. Lectures will take place in Athlone, in conjunction with the Old Athlone Society. Venue to be confirmed.

**FRIDAY 6TH DECEMBER AT 8PM:** Comdt Lar Joye AR will present 'Stepping together' a history of the Reserve Defence Forces 1929-2019.

## UNIFORM SERVICES

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## WORD SEARCH

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

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

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Last month's winner of the PROTAC €50 Voucher was George Winning, Co Kildare. Closing date is 20th November 2019.

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# BOOKS BOOKS

## THATCHER'S SPY: MY LIFE AS AN MI5 AGENT INSIDE SINN FÉIN

**Author:** Willie Carlin

**Publisher:** Merrion Press (September 2019) <https://irishacademicpress.ie>

**ISBN:** 978-1785372858

**Pages:** 300

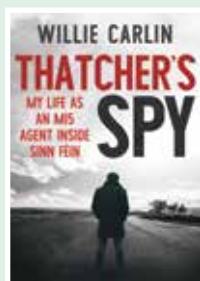
**Price:** €16.95

*Thatcher's Spy* is a detailed account of the life and times of a former MI5 informant embedded within the ranks of Sinn Féin.

Willie Carlin, coming from a republican area of Derry joined the British Army in the mid-1960's until he signed off in 1974. It was through his discharge papers that his file by chance came upon an officer's eyes, looking to recruit members for MI5. Willie was approached and after some time agreed to be an informer. One of the stipulations that Willie was told by his handlers that surprised me was that they weren't interested in any paramilitary ongoing of the IRA but solely wanted information on the political ideas and movements of Sinn Féin. Willie was in the army while the troubles were really starting to kick off and becoming quite dangerous, especially for a former soldier coming home to a republican area after incidents such as Bloody Sunday took place.

Carlin spent 11 years as an informer for MI5, it came to an end when the IRA were given information of the tout, a fellow undercover operative in one of the IRA's assassination teams were able to pass on that Willie's cover was blown and that he was next on the list. Carlin and his family were then flown to Britain that very day, given new identities and never settling in one location permanently.

This book was a great insight into the ground level workings of Republican and Crown operations, still fairly current in history's eyes. Hard for many to believe, it's vital stories like this are told and read. **SG**



## A BLOODY WEEK: THE IRISH AT ARNHEM

**Author:** Dan Harvey

**Publisher:** Merrion Press (July 2019) <https://irishacademicpress.ie>

**ISBN:** 978-1785372735

**Pages:** 170

**Price:** €14.95

*"I think we may be going a bridge too far"* This statement is reported to have been said by Lt General Frederick (Boy) Browning to Field Marshal Bernard (Law) Montgomery.

This would have taken place during one of the planning stages, with the architects of Operation 'Market-Garden'.

In retired Lt Col Dan Harvey's well researched book, *A Bloody Week: The Irish at Arnhem*, the author informs us of the unknown hundreds of Irish soldiers, airmen with a mixture of backgrounds, experience's and ranks. These men from both North and South of Ireland gave their all-in Operation 'Market-Garden'. General Horrocks, General Adair and Lieutenant Col Vandeleur, all had strong Irish connections.

The book looks at this part of the Second World War, which was now in its fifth year of hostilities, borne in part, on a war weary English-Irish population. General Montgomery was formulating a plan in order to shorten the war by Christmas 1944. Operation 'Market-Garden' was the first time that airborne troops, along with ground forces, were involved on such a scale. The objectives were to capture a series of nine bridges, allowing an Allied invasion into Germany. Land forces liberated Nijmegen and Eindhoven, but were unable to complete the operation, and secure the last bridge over the River Rhine at the Battle of Arnhem.

A highly recommended read not just for the Irish connections but for the military story itself. **SS**

## BADGES AND INSIGNIA OF THE IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

**Author:** James Perkins

**Publisher:** Lettertec (October 2019) [www.irishmilitaryinsignia.com](http://www.irishmilitaryinsignia.com)

**ISBN:** 978-1-912606-49-8

**Pages:** 220

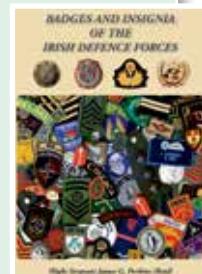
**Price:** €30 H/B

Not since James J Hogan's book Badges, Medals, Insignia: Óglaigh na hÉireann (Irish Defence Forces), published in 1987 in association with Military Archives has there been a book that contains so much on the history of our badges and insignia.

Flt Sgt James Perkins retired after 40-years of service in the Defence Forces in 2014. In that time James served in the Military Police Corps, and Air Corps in a number of different appointments. He has served overseas on numerous missions as a peacekeeper, including Cyprus, Lebanon, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and finally serving under Irish General Pat Nash for 18-months with the HQ element of EUFOR Chad/CAR mission in Paris, France. His interest in collecting Defence Forces badges and insignia began back in the 1970s, when he found his father's kit box from his 38-years' service in the Defence Forces (1932-1970).

Many people will know James because he has been a solid point of contact for all things uniform related in the Defence Forces for a number of decades. So this book is highly anticipated and will be this generations guide to collecting Irish Defence Forces badges and insignia, and James' legacy and knowledge will be etched into history for further generations to read and collect. The full story is on page 9 of this issue.

The book contains 220 pages with over 2,000 images of full colour and in hardback. It is now a great guide of what badges and insignia the Defence Forces wore since 1922, and will be the go to reference book for years to come. To purchase a copy priced at €30 +P&P email James on [jamesperkinsbadgebook@gmail.com](mailto:jamesperkinsbadgebook@gmail.com) from early 2020 can be purchased online. **WF**



## NAME

THOMAS DULLAGHAN

## RANK

SIGNALMAN

## UNIT

DFHQ CIS COY



BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

MAIN PHOTO BY ARMN SAM GIBNEY

Thomas Dullaghan enlisted in the Defence Forces on 2 August 1988 with 27 Inf Bn, Aiken Barracks, Dundalk. While serving in the company office of his sub-unit in 27 Inf Bn, Thomas began his long-time education within the Defence Forces started, undergoing a computer appreciation course followed by a Lotus 123 (the precursor to our current Microsoft Excel programme) spreadsheet course.

In the summer of 1990 Thomas travelled to Lebanon with 67 Infantry Battalion. He recalls this being a highly tense trip as several 27 Inf Bn personnel had been injured with 66 Inf Bn.

On his return Thomas served in A Coy, 27 Inf Bn, for the next number of years, during which time he completed various unit and command courses, including an Orderly Room Corporals course.

In 1999, Thomas studied for his junior certificate as a mature student through the Defence Forces in Pearse College, Crumlin. Having received exceptional results, and at the recommendation and request of the college principal that Thomas be allowed to continue his education, Thomas continued on to complete his leaving certificate in 2000. Thomas again achieved good results and during this three-year period in Pearse College, he was elected president of the Student Union.

In 2000 Thomas also became a PDFORRA rep in the McKee Barracks District.

Wanting to put his education to work Thomas applied for a transfer to DFHQ CIS Company, which he joined during his educational course. In 2003 Thomas completed a Communication Operatives course to become a qualified member of the CIS Corps. At this time Thomas was also elected as vice chairman of McKee District, PDFORRA.

From 2004 to 2005 Thomas worked in the telecommunications area of DFHQ CIS Coy, until he was selected, through psychometric testing and interview, for the Defence Forces Trainee Technician Scheme. He was a member of the first military class in IT Carlow and was class president for the duration of the course.

During his service Thomas also qualified as a transit (Mod 2B) and truck (Mod 3B) driver.

In 2008 Thomas graduated with a bachelor of engineering degree, with distinction, in Military Communication Systems.

In 2009 Thomas joined the staff of the CIS Directorate, DJ6, where he worked in a sergeant's appointment for a number of years.

Thomas's PDFORRA journey continued, with him become chairman of McKee District and vice chairman of PDFORRA Eastern Region.

In 2014 Thomas became part of the technical team launching the IKON (information knowledge online) system, which was rolled out throughout the Defence Forces and is still in operation today. During the process, Thomas and the CIS team worked with a number of external partners and underwent specialised IT training with Spanishpoint.

Thomas then worked as part of the team in Information Technology Operations (IT Ops) and also helped out as an administrator in the unit orderly room.

Thomas, who retired from the Defence Forces in August 2019 with over 31 years' exemplary service, says he is very grateful to the Defence Forces for allowing him to live a life of difference. He told us: *"People often asked me 'Is the army a good job?' and I've always told them that the Defence Forces is a way of life, not just a job."*

Upon his retirement Thomas joined the Irish Defence Forces Veterans Association (IDFVA) and was elected to the Associations National Executive Committee, where he currently holds the role of National Liaison Officer. We wish Thomas all the best in his future endeavours and thank him for his service to his country and the Defence Forces. ■



Thomas receiving a presentation on his retirement from Lt Col Stuart McNamara, OC DFHQ CIS Coy in the Ptes Mess, McKee Bks.



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