

THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

# AN COSANTÓIR



Óglaigh  
na hÉireann  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



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## From the editor

— Sgt Eric Ryan

March was a busy period for all the An Cosantóir staff as we prepared for and had our 4th Overseas Family Support Day in Dublin Zoo on Saturday 07th of March. As tensions rose in the Middle East, families of Defence Forces members currently serving overseas had the opportunity to mix with other families and soldiers helping out on the day. In this edition we cover topics that reflect the traditions of Óglaigh na hÉireann. Capt Ciara Carroll gives an insight into the UNIFIL CIMIC cell, with the UNIFIL mission due to end, the work of the CIMIC cell is as important as ever for the people of South Lebanon. This edition includes reflections from the Commanding Officer of 1BAR to courses, leadership, medals and much more.

“The nation which regards its defenders as well as its children will never perish.” — Patrick Pearse



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## AN COSANTÓIR



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Photo by – Comdt Trevor Gethins, 28  
Inf Bn Skill of Arms camp

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Gnr Sammour and Pte Forrester, 127  
Inf Bn UNIFIL at the Special Needs  
School in Rshaf, Lebanon

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# AN GHAEILGE AGUS ÓGLAIGH NA hÉIREANN - TRAIDISIÚN BEO MÍLEATA

## THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND THE DEFENCE FORCES - A LIVING MILITARY TRADITION

Is é Cor Seán Ó Fátharta an tOifigeach Sinsearach Gaeilge i nÓglaigh na hÉireann le tacaíocht ón gComhairle Gaeilge, Bord Pearsanra bunaithe faoin Treoir Riaracháin A8 Caibideal 5- Polasaí Teangacha Oifigiúla. Chomh maith le faireachán agus monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar chomhlíonacht Óglaigh na hÉireann le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 (Leasaithe 2021), tarraingíonn an Chomhairle An Gréasan Gaeilge (Irish Language Network) le chéile. Má tá suim ag éinne pairt a ghlacadh sa nGréasan seól teachtaireacht chuig [mdl\\_gaeilge@defenceforces.ie](mailto:mdl_gaeilge@defenceforces.ie).

As The Senior Irish Language Officer for the Defence Forces I was delighted to get a call from the An Cosantóir Team inviting me to submit an article to coincide with Seachtain na Gaeilge 2026. It is a great opportunity to inform the readers about Óglaigh na hÉireann's relationship with the language, what is happening nationally and what is happening across the Air Corps (an tAer Chóir), The Navy (An Chabhloch) and the Army (An tArm) in terms of Irish language use. If you are wondering why this article isn't "as Gaeilge" I subscribe to Michael Cronin's view that "ironically but understandably it is in English that the fate of Irish will be decided"

### "Buíon - Buíon Aire"

On the very first day of all our careers in the Defence Forces every single one of us heard Irish as we were ordered to stand to attention for the first time by a kind-hearted NCO "Aire!". The giving of this order in Irish can be traced back to the leaders who took over the Headquarters of the British Army in Dublin Castle on 16 January 1922, who were fluent Irish speakers and members or former members of Conradh na Gaeilge. They wove Irish into the ethos of the military and as the new State faced the challenge of building national institutions, the Defence Forces became one of the most visible expressions of new Ireland's identity. The use of Irish in the day-to-day life of the military was formalised on 13 August 1923 when legislation establishing The Defence Forces was enacted; Article 25 of the legislation stated "All Officers and Non Commissioned Officers shall be instructed in giving and receiving executive words of Command in each of the official languages of the state". In 1924 An Chéad Chathlán Coisithe was founded as an Irish Speaking Battalion and remains so designated today. Since then, the use of Irish in the Defence Forces has reflected both society's relationship with the language, and the State's efforts, with varying degrees of success, to increase services provided in Irish by Public Bodies.

Ar Muir



Ceolchoirm



An Ceathrú rua

In 1993 An Comhairle Gaeilge, a like-minded group of serving Irish enthusiasts, was founded, and we held our first Campa Gaeilge in Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa that year, an Irish Language Training Camp that has taken place each year since, with the exception of one Covid affected year. In 2004 An Comhairle Gaeilge was formally tasked by Lt Gen Dermot Earley who was D COS (Sp) at the time, to monitor compliance with The Official Languages Act 2003 (Amended 2021) and the implementation of the Defence Forces Official Languages Policy (Admin Instr A8 Chapter 5). Our work to date, supported by the Director of Defence Forces Training and Education, has supported and advocated on behalf of personnel who wish to use or improve their Irish but we are entering an exciting, if challenging, period in respect of the work we do.

**National Plan 2024-2030.**

The Defence Forces must now prepare for, and implement The National Plan for Irish Language Public Services 2024-2030 which aims to normalise Irish in Public Services and empower users to access services in Irish. The plan is to create a fully bilingual public service in Ireland, with a target of 20% of public sector recruits being competent in Irish by 2030. The National Plan is supported by the Action Plan for Irish Language Public Services 2026-2028, with over 100 actions identified across 5 strategic themes; Recruitment and Human Resources; Training and Language Skills Development; Delivery of Public Services through Irish; Technology; and Awareness, Monitoring and Evaluation - Tá go leor oibre romhainn!!

**“Tír le Anam – Tír le Teanga (A land with a soul is a land with a language)**

While this seems daunting the Defence Forces is in a good position - see Text box - and there is a really encouraging groundswell of support for the language in society. The revivalist battle cry of “Tír gan Teanga, Tír gan anam - A land without a language is a land without a soul” has been very effective in stirring emotions over the years but we are very much in the space now of Tír le Anam - Tír le Teanga - a quiet falling or re-falling in love with Irish; choosing to use a little Irish as part of a cultural movement inspired by gaelscoileanna, the emphasis on the spoken word on the Irish curriculum, quality of content on TG 4, the proliferation of Irish language resources online and Irish language influencers on Social Media, and of course in the use of Irish in our music and songs with national treasures such as Liam Ó Maonlaói and Kíla, Cormac Ó

Beaglaíoch, and Séamus and Caoimhe Uí Fhlátharta.

For the Defence Forces, the challenge is to balance operational effectiveness with cultural commitment. Modern military operations require clear and efficient communication, particularly in multinational environments. At the same time, maintaining Irish-language traditions and supporting bilingual public services reflects the values upon which the organisation was founded.

Ultimately, the presence of Irish in the Defence Forces is more than about policy compliance. Its use every day on parade reflects a deeper connection between military service and national identity and continues to symbolise the history, culture and spirit of the Irish nation- reminding those who serve that we are part of a tradition that reaches far beyond the parade ground.

If you would like more information or to join the Irish Language Network drop a line to [mdl\\_gaeilge@defenceforces.ie](mailto:mdl_gaeilge@defenceforces.ie)

**Beir Bua!! Did you know:**

Personnel who are competent in Irish may wear a unique insignia “An g” on their uniforms.

If you wish to have your name in Irish on the PMS or to have a síne fada inserted in your name you can do so.

To insert the Síne Fada in a document press and hold ALT GR and then the vowel.

There is a vibrant Irish speaking network in the Defence Forces.

There are Irish Language Representatives in your Service, Brigade.

The Defence Forces Library has a great Cúinne Gaeilge!

Campa Gaeilge takes place during the last week in May each year, providing beginner, intermediate and advanced classes.

Online Irish classes are regularly provided.

Opportunities to undertake diplomas in Irish are available each year.

A Defence Forces Military English Irish Dictionary is available.

An Comhairle Gaeilge has a page on Connect with regular updates on Irish language activities and events.

The Foras na Gaeilge website – [forasnagaeilge.ie](http://forasnagaeilge.ie) provides information on all Irish language resources including podcasts, published books,

Foclóir.ie, the first monolingual Irish dictionary was published in 2025.

The Teanglann App is an excellent an excellent online tool with free, easy-to-use dictionaries and grammatical information and pronunciation sound files.




Tráth na gceist boird

Tráth na gCeist

Laochra ban





# CIMIC – CIVIL MILITARY COORDINATION/ COOPERATION

*An integral part of  
all operations for  
127 Inf Bn UNIFIL*

ARTICLE BY CAPT CIARA CARROLL

**T**he purpose of our S9 CIMIC Cell is coordinating the interface between the military element of IRISHPOLBATT, and the local civilian population (CIVPOP). Our key principles are neutrality, cooperation, and support to mission objectives. Our relationship with the Host Nation (HN) is paramount in assisting with the execution of our mission;

it enables freedom of movement within the Area of Operations (AO), and creates an understanding amongst the CIVPOP of our role and mission here. It is an immensely rewarding job; every day we are out in the local area, striving to make a meaningful difference to the lives of the local people we live among.



Our team is comprised of one Irish Captain, and two Irish Sgts, all of whom worked together previously in 28 Inf Bn. Both of the Irish Sgts, Sgt Shane Gallagher and Sgt Damian Reilly have served in the CIMIC Sgt role before 121 Inf Bn and 126 Inf Bn, respectively. We work

closely with our Polish CIMIC colleagues, who have six personnel in total in their cell.



One of the key functions of the CIMIC Cell is meeting with local leadership in the form of Key Leader Engagements (KLEs). In IRISHPOLBATT's AO, we have 14 municipalities, with 14 individual Mayors. These 14 municipalities are headed by the Director of the Union of Municipalities,

who is based in the village of Bint Jubayl. We work closely with him, and indeed all 14 municipality mayors, to hear their needs and concerns. We in turn, with the assistance of our Polish S9 colleagues, endeavour to provide key life support projects to alleviate some of their concerns. Some of the projects completed by IRISHPOLBATT include solar power installation, waste management plant building, and streetlights systems. The mayors would often fondly recall in these meetings meeting Irish soldiers as far back as 1978 when the first peacekeepers came to south Lebanon. They share endearing stories from the years of cooperation with UNIFIL they have enjoyed and express their sadness at the looming mission drawdown in December 2026.



In 127 Inf Bn CIMIC Cell, one of our priorities is community engagement and outreach. We attend the local market in Bint Jubayl every Thursday, where we are warmly welcomed by the local vendors. Here we purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables, nuts and the famous "manooshis". We have played several soccer matches in Debel (women's), Bayt Yahun (men's), Bint Jubayl (men's) and Kunin (men's). These are important outreach activities



which the locals thoroughly enjoy. After these matches, we are in the privileged position where we can donate news sports gear, gathered in Ireland by the CIMIC cell during pre-deployment training, to the players and their children. We're due a few rematches, which we hope can go ahead during our tenure.

Overall CIMIC is an immensely rewarding and eye-opening cell to be a part of. To see the locals in their own communities offers a unique insight into how UNIFIL is perceived by the communities and reinstates the importance of the role of peacekeepers in the region.

As we say in almost all of our encounters with the local people, we as a nation will miss the people of south Lebanon dearly once the drawdown of the mission is complete.





ARTICLE BY LT COL PEADAR Ó CATHÁIN

# REFLECTIONS OF A COMMANDING OFFICER

## 1 Brigade Artillery Regiment, 30 years later

**I**t is a rare privilege to return to command the unit in which one was first commissioned. To do so twenty-eight years later, as Commanding Officer of 1 Brigade Artillery Regiment, is both humbling and deeply rewarding. From the outset, I was reminded that while equipment, structures and personnel evolve, the character of the Regiment — its professionalism, pride and cohesion — endures.

On taking up appointment in Murphy Barracks, Ballincollig, I was struck by the clarity of purpose across the Regiment. Despite sustained operational commitments and staffing pressures, output has remained consistently high. The Regiment has delivered State ceremonial duties with precision, including gun salutes and Guards of Honour; supported the civil authority during severe weather and other contingencies; and maintained a steady contribution of trained personnel for overseas deployments. Each task, whether conducted under public scrutiny or in demanding operational environments, has been approached with discipline and professionalism.



*The Unit maintains strong links outside of the Barrack walls, supporting Veterans' societies, Cork Penny Dinners & the Cork Lions Club Christmas appeal*

Following the 2012 reorganisation of Óglaigh na hÉireann, the Unit was redesignated 1 Bde Arty Regt, assuming additional capabilities through the integration of an Air Defence

Battery and a Surveillance and Target Acquisition Battery. This broadened both its expertise and its operational responsibilities, ensuring the Regiment remains relevant, agile and fully aligned with modern Defence Forces requirements.

Training is the foundation of our effectiveness. Live firing, tactical exercises, command post training and specialist courses are conducted to exacting standards, reinforcing technical mastery and safety while building confidence and cohesion. The Regiment also plays a vital role in developing recruits, instilling not only professional competence but also the ethos and standards expected of soldiers of the Defence Forces.

Beyond operational and training commitments, 1 Bde Arty Regt carries responsibility for the management of Collins Barracks. Overseeing infrastructure, security, logistics and daily administration is a significant undertaking. That these garrison responsibilities are delivered seamlessly alongside operational, ceremonial and overseas commitments speaks to strong leadership, effective systems and a culture of shared accountability.

The Regiment's achievements extend



*The Unit provides a traditional welcome to the new Lord Mayor of Cork, strengthening the ties between the Barracks and Cork City Hall*

beyond purely military outputs. Sport has long been an integral part of military life, and our personnel have distinguished themselves in inter-unit, inter-service and national competitions across a range of disciplines. 1 Bde Arty Regt has had soldiers, officers & NCOs excel in a number of sports. These include representation at CISM World Championship events in soccer, rugby, boxing & athletics. 1 Bde Arty Regt has also had a runner up in the overall An Cosantóir 10km road race as well as age group winners. The Unit has had success at Hyrox London, with an age group winner also. 1 Bde Arty Regt has also excelled in Combat Sports, with members of the Unit competing at both national & international competitions in boxing, wrestling & samba wrestling. 1 Bde Arty Regt has consistently formed the backbone of 1 Brigade hurling, camogie, football & rugby teams, while also supplying players to the Defence Forces teams.

These sporting successes foster resilience, teamwork and physical excellence — qualities directly transferable to operational effectiveness. Just as importantly, they strengthen bonds within the Regiment and enhance our visibility and reputation within the wider Defence Forces community.

Equally significant is the Regiment's role within the local community. Through active engagement with Defence Forces Veterans' Associations, support to commemorative events, and outreach to local schools and sporting clubs, the Regiment reinforces the strong connection between the Defence Forces and the people it serves. Personnel regularly contribute time and expertise to community initiatives, educational visits and sporting activities, enhancing understanding of the Defence Forces' role while demonstrating our commitment to service beyond the barrack gates. This engagement strengthens Defence standing locally and reflects the pride the Regiment takes in being an integral part of the community.

At the core of all these efforts is a commitment to uphold the values of the Defence Forces — loyalty, selflessness, moral and physical courage, integrity

and professionalism. These values guide conduct in training, on operations, in sport and in community engagement. I was particularly proud to see a member of the Regiment recently recognised as a recipient of a Defence Forces Values Award. That honour reflects both individual character and the culture within the Regiment that encourages and sustains such standards.

Having served elsewhere during my career, I have long been aware of the regard in which 1 Bde Arty Regt is held across the wider organisation. Returning after seven years away, I have witnessed experienced personnel step into greater responsibility while new members bring energy and fresh perspective. This combination ensures continuity of standards while embracing renewal.

As Commanding Officer, my responsibility is to preserve that ethos while preparing the Regiment for future challenges. Our legacy is important, but it is our daily performance — in training areas, on parade, overseas, in competition and within our local community — that truly defines us.

Looking ahead, I do so with confidence. The qualities that first inspired me as a young officer remain firmly embedded in 1 Bde Arty Regt today. To command a Regiment distinguished not only by operational excellence, but also by sporting achievement, strong community engagement and steadfast adherence to Defence Forces values, is both the honour of my career and a testament to the enduring strength of its people.



*The core task of 1 BAR is Artillery Competence*



*1 BAR An Cosantóir Team 2024*





# *THE DEFENCE FORCES* **TRANSFORMATION** **JOURNEY**

ARTICLE BY LT COL BRIAN CAHILL, DF TMO

**S**ince the publication of the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces (CoDF) in February 2022, the Defence Forces has been engaged in the most significant programme of reform in its history. Importantly, many of the reforms discussed over the past number of years are no longer proposals; they are completed actions now shaping daily service life. In 2025, the Joint Cyber Defence Command was formally established, a new programme of regular climate and attitude surveys has been initiated, gendered regulations were removed and grooming and fitness standards modernised. Female personnel were provided with appropriate clothing and equipment as standard issue. Mentoring programmes were expanded, unconscious bias training became mandatory, and direct-entry pathways were increased for specialist roles. The removal of the blanket exclusion from the Working Time Directive and the implementation of 'non-financial labour hour budgeting' measures have also had practical effects on workload management and career progression. In parallel, the publication of the Reserve Defence Force Regeneration and Development Plan, the embedding of the Office of Reserve Affairs, and streamlined recruitment processes (including fast-track entry to the First Line Reserve) are strengthening the integration and relevance of the Reserve across the organisation. This is an ongoing process, 53 of the 130 recommendations have been completed and there are a further 22 recommendations due for completion in 2026. Alongside this, a structured approach to benefits realisation is now embedded within the transformation programme, ensuring that progress is measured not only by completed actions but by tangible improvements in capability, culture and our day to day service experience. That scale of activity reflects something important. This is not symbolic change; it is sustained reform. But what does that actually mean for those serving and for the public we protect?

### Culture: The Starting Point

The most important element of transformation is not equipment or infrastructure; it's our people and the culture that shapes how we serve. For the Defence Forces to be effective, it must be professional, fair, and trusted both internally and externally. Over the past two years, significant steps have been taken to rebuild confidence in systems and leadership. A statutory External Oversight Body (EOB) is now in place, and an Independent Grievance Process has been introduced. Promotion systems are being reformed to ensure transparency and merit-based progression, while performance management and career pathways are being redesigned. Annual climate surveys are measuring morale and organisational health. They are about ensuring that every member, be they recruit, private, NCO, officer, reservist, or civilian employee, is treated with dignity and respect, and that talent is recognised fairly. Our Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Rossa Mulcahy has been explicit on this matter – "there is a zero-tolerance policy to inappropriate behaviour in our Defence Forces". Trust is rebuilt through consistent action and that work is ongoing.

### Regenerating Maritime and Air Capability

The global security environment has changed dramatically in recent years, and Ireland's role within it has evolved accordingly. The protection of our nation across the land, air, maritime, cyber and space domains, as well as the protection of our critical infrastructure, has become more complex than ever before. In response, the regeneration of the Naval Service and growth of the Air Corps have become central priorities. Progress is visible: new C-295 aircraft and the Strategic Reach platform have entered service; phased delivery of the Military Radar Programme has commenced; Counter-Uncrewed

Aerial Systems capability is being introduced; and investment in subsea domain awareness is underway, alongside planning for the growth of our naval fleet. This regeneration agenda is now aligned with the State's new Maritime Security Strategy (MSS), which reinforces the need for integrated maritime and air capability and a more coherent national approach to maritime security. But this goes beyond simply buying platforms. It is about restoring operational predictability; ships at sea, aircraft flying, crews trained, maintenance systems functioning, and technical expertise rebuilt. The goal is a Defence Forces capable of sustained, credible operations in an increasingly demanding global security environment.

### Growing the Organisation

A capable organisation depends on its people. At the end of 2025, the Permanent Defence Forces strength stood at 7,756 personnel. The ambition under Level of Ambition 2 is to increase that to 11,500 personnel and beyond. Recruitment pipelines are expanding with Direct Entry pathways being increased for specialist roles. A comprehensive Workforce Plan is being developed to align recruitment, retention and future capability needs. Civilianisation strategies are being advanced to ensure that military personnel are focused on military tasks. Equally important is retention. The establishment of flexible service options, enhanced family-friendly policies and clearer career progression pathways are part of ensuring that those who serve see a future for themselves within the organisation. Growth is not about short-term spikes; it is about building a force structure that is sustainable and resilient.



**Investment You Can See**

For many serving members, transformation is most real when it affects daily life. As the 2026 Strategic Framework states, “clear and irrefutable evidence of change on the ground is the only thing that will re-build the trust and confidence of serving members.” Across installations, masterplans are being developed to futureproof infrastructure. Accommodation blocks are being refurbished and constructed. Gyms and training facilities are being upgraded. Equipment modernisation programmes are underway across the land, air, maritime, and cyber domains. Armoured fleets are being upgraded. New combat uniform systems are progressing. Modern Software Defined Radio (SDR) systems are being rolled out. These investments matter; they affect morale, professional standards, and operational effectiveness. A modern military must train and live in modern facilities. Capital investment in recent years has reached historically high levels, backed by multi-annual funding commitments. This provides stability and long-term planning certainty.

**Accountability and Oversight**

Transformation on this scale cannot rely on goodwill alone; it requires structure. Clear governance arrangements are now in place with quarterly review meetings chaired by the Minister ensuring direct oversight. The External Oversight Body monitors culture and HR reform. Implementation groups track progress on Commission recommendations. Six-monthly updates ensure transparency. Importantly, attention is shifting from simply completing actions to measuring impact. Are systems working? Are behaviours changing? Is morale improving? Is capability increasing? The

2026 CoDF Recommendations Delivery Date by Month				
Strategic Objective	Work Package	DF Ownership	No #	Recommendation
<b>February</b>				
Strategic HR & Culture Change	Family Friendly Policies	DF	48	Extension and enhancement of existing family friendly policies to the greatest practicable extent, including for overseas postings, and recognition of the challenges faced by single parents and parents of children with disabilities, amongst others.
<b>March</b>				
Services to be Reformed and Restructured	DF Taskings - Operations & Resources	DF	1	The respective roles of the Garda Emergency Response Unit (ERU) and the Defence Forces' ARW should be clarified to ensure that there is clear understanding of how they would interact in an operational situation and common procedures and operational guidelines should be developed.
Strategic HR & Culture Change	Medical Services Review	DoD	53	Completion of all outstanding reviews into medical services within a 12-18 month period and the implementation processes started immediately.
Reserve Defence Forces to be Revitalised	Reserve Force Regeneration	DF	45	Decisions to deploy RDF personnel should be taken by the unit commanders, and should not be limited by the overarching policy as at present.
Reserve Defence Forces to be Revitalised	Office of Reserve Affairs	DF	70	(i) A Joint Office of Reserve Affairs (ORA), with senior staff from RDF and with support from the PDF, be established which should report regularly to the CHOD and senior commanders on all reserve matters. Command authority should remain with the integrated PDF/RDF unit commanders in conformity with the SFC. (ii) Complete
Services to be Reformed and Restructured	DF Taskings - Interagency & Interdepartmental Review	DoD	129	Specific taskings of the Defence Forces, including those arising from ATCP and ATCA, should be subject to regular review for continued relevance and priority, with appropriately defined levels of ambition.
Services to be Reformed and Restructured	DF Taskings - Interagency & Interdepartmental Review	DoD	123	Clear inter-agency policies and planning for the deployment of the Defence Forces to support routine armed policing duties in times of emergency should be developed and that the necessary contingency planning and training for such deployments should be undertaken.
<b>June</b>				
Reserve Defence Forces to be Revitalised	Reserve Force Recruitment Plan	DF	75	Clarify the specific skillsets where targeted Reserve recruitment would be most likely to yield positive benefits and build the outcome into a sustained recruitment effort.
<b>September</b>				
Reserve Defence Forces to be Revitalised	Reserve Force Recruitment Plan	DF	77	Create lateral entry mechanisms for those with prior foreign military experience who wish to join the RDF.
<b>October</b>				
Strategic HR & Culture Change		DF	14	The introduction of a talent management system and new career streams.
Strategic HR & Culture Change		DF	15	The conduct of a comprehensive exercise that maps current patterns of career progression and develops a career progression route map for all roles, starting with entry level and those roles that are experiencing higher attrition rates.
Strategic HR & Culture Change		DF	16	All personnel should have a personal Continuous Professional Development plan and at least annual meetings with their commander to review their performance and competencies.
Strategic HR & Culture Change	Career & Talent Processes & Promotion Systems	DF	23	Re-development of promotion systems to ensure they are open, competitive and entirely merit-based, while the necessity for all officers and NCOs to undertake long career progression opportunities.
Strategic HR & Culture Change		DF	24	There should be objective, competitive selection processes designed for career course selection that recognise high performing individuals and avoids creating a 'box ticking' culture.
Strategic HR & Culture Change		DF	27	A practice should be developed of actively managing retention of valuable members of the Defence Forces who have decided that promotion is not for them, or whose career stream has a restricted rank structure.
Strategic HR & Culture Change		DF	38	Identification and removal of practices around access to promotion opportunities and courses which, in effect, indirectly discriminate against women or other groups such as, for example, primary carers.
<b>December</b>				
Services to be Reformed and Restructured	Joint Staffing	DF	7	That the supporting joint functions are staffed by all three services, from all ranks.
Strategic HR & Culture Change	Training Establishment	DF	18	The creation of a permanent training establishment and provision of greater flexibility for managers, within the overall establishment number, to allocate staff across formations and ranks.
Strategic HR & Culture Change	Naval Divers	DF	21	The creation of a structure to provide a recognised career path for Naval divers that permits rank progression for enlisted personnel within the Naval Service Diving Section.
Strategic HR & Culture Change	Pay & Allowance Structures	DoD	62	The introduction of a mechanism to provide for ongoing review of the application of existing specialist pay rates and allowances to groups and categories of personnel, and to make recommendations, within public pay policy parameters, where adjustments are required.
Joint Capability Development to be Implemented	Capability Development Structures	DoD	85	The immediate establishment of a codified top-down Capability Development Planning process through the creation of a permanent civil-military structure in order to embed capability development within the DoD & DF
Services to be Reformed and Restructured	Defence Infrastructure	DoD	130	That a focused and detailed review of the Defence estate be carried out by appropriately qualified professionals prior to decisions on the optimum future disposition of the Defence Forces.

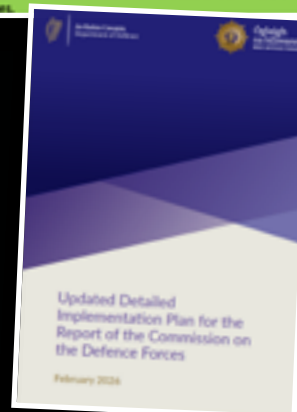
Transformation Management Office (TMO) plays a critical role in ensuring that action owners are held to account for delivery, with the Defence Board providing decisive oversight at senior level. Together, these mechanisms create a tiered accountability system that also enables ongoing tracking of benefits realisation as a core part of transformation.

**A Long-Term Effort**

Large organisations do not change through isolated initiatives; they change when systems, behaviours and accountability mechanisms shift together. This is a generational reform effort designed to ensure that Óglaigh na hÉireann is organised, equipped, and led to meet the demands of a changing security environment. The essential structures are now in place. Oversight is operational. Legislative reform is advancing. Investment is sustained. Workforce planning is aligning to future capability. Cultural reform is embedded in formal systems.

What matters now is continuity of delivery. For serving personnel, reform should be experienced in clearer processes, fairer systems, improved facilities and strengthening operational capability. For the public, it should be reflected in a Defence

Forces that is professional, credible, and ready to defend the State in an increasingly complex world. Across our installations, the signs are clear in how we recruit, how we lead, how we equip, and how we hold ourselves to account. The work is not finished, but it is structured, sustained and real. Above all, it is shaping a joint, agile and fit-for-purpose military force, postured to defend our sovereignty, protect Irish citizens and secure Ireland's interests.



# CISM REGIONAL CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS IN SCHAFFEN

ARTICLE BY TPR CHRISTINA MANDZYUK (RDF) - 2 BRIGADE CAVALRY SQUADRON

**T**he Irish Defence Forces once again delivered an impressive performance at the CISM (International Military Sports Council) Regional Cross Country Championships held from 9–12 December 2025 in Schaffen, Belgium. The event, organised by the Belgian Delegation of the International Military Sports Council (CISM), combined the Belgian National Championship Defence (NCD) Cross-Country with the official CISM competition, meaning athletes from several nations competed on the same course, at the same time, under identical conditions.

Hosted at the Training Center for Paratroopers (TrgC Para) at the Schaffen Air Base near Diest, the championship brought together teams from Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, with Ireland's delegation comprising four male athletes and three female athletes.

The Schaffen course, already well-known among European military athletes, proved to be its usual demanding test. Both male and female routes incorporated varied terrain designed to challenge runners' technique, stamina and tactical awareness. The course, entirely suited to spikes, required competitors to manage rapid changes between flat running, rolling gradients and uneven surfaces typical of military cross-country layouts. Both courses at Schaffen are known for their complexity where athletes must balance speed with careful navigation of steep gradients, mud sections and high tempo flat segments where races can be won or lost.

The Irish contingent, arriving on the evening of 10 December, joined their partner nations for a structured programme which included training sessions, a guided race-course inspection and a detailed competition schedule on 11 December. Delegations were accommodated at nearby Kamp Beverlo in Leopoldsburg.

Race day commenced with bib collection and final warm-up sessions before both male and female events commenced. The Irish Defence Forces have long been recognised for their consistency in Schaffen, among the standout performers was Capt Liz Carr, who continued her impressive run of results on the European military circuit to take first place with a time of 25.47 with the combined women's team of Capt Liz Carr, Pte Tina McKeever and Tpr Christina Mandzyuk finishing third overall, while the men's team of Sgmn Josh O'Sullivan Hourihane, Sgt Gavin Sweeney, Capt Brian Kelly, Lt Enda Cloake and Pte Kenny Rodgers all finished in the top ten placing the team in second place overall. Results at Schaffen placed Ireland firmly among the leading nations, reinforcing the Defence Forces' commitment to excellence in CISM competition.

The schedule concluded with an official CISM Award Ceremony on the evening of 11 December, and after the ceremony and closing dinner, transport returned teams to their accommodation in preparation for their departure the following day.

The Schaffen Championship is more than a race, the event serves as an important gathering point for military athletes, fostering camaraderie, mutual respect and the CISM ideal of "Friendship Through Sport." The convivial atmosphere off the course contrasts with the fierce competitiveness on it. Athletes from across Europe share training insights, exchange unit badges and develop professional bonds that extend far beyond the event itself.

For the Irish Defence Forces, participation in Schaffen is not only about securing podium finishes; it is also about representing Ireland on an international stage, promoting physical courage and strengthening ties with partner nations. The event has become a fixed and valued part of the Defence Forces' sporting calendar, offering an annual benchmark for performance and a platform to inspire future military athletes.

As the Irish team returned home from Belgium, their achievements in Schaffen added another chapter to our proud history in CISM competition. With strong results, memorable performances and growing international recognition, the Irish Defence Forces continue to stand among the most respected competitors in European military sport.

For the latest information on athletic events within the Defence Forces, visit and join the "DF Athletics" space on the DF Connect app.



Sgmn Josh O'Sullivan Hourihane, Capt Brian Kelly, Lt Enda Cloake, Pte Kenny Rodgers  
Pte Tom Tompson (Coach) Tpr Christina Mandzyuk, Pte Tina McKeever, Capt Liz Carr

# THE BAND OF THE CURRAGH COMMAND

ARTICLE BY SGT (RETD) PJ LYDON

**A**s early as November 1922, General Richard Mulcahy mooted that "I want bands for the Army. I want to have bands that will dispense music and musical understanding in the highest terms to the people." After an unsuccessful approach to the French government, two noted German military musicians (Fritz Brase and Christian Sauerzweig) were recruited and arrived in Ireland in March 1923. Within a month, they had secured a building

in the Curragh Camp for an Army School of Music and procured enough musical instruments from Germany to equip two full bands. Musicians were feverishly trained and that October, the Army No. 1 Band gave their first public recital in the Theatre Royal which was declared an unqualified success. By January 1926, three bands had been formed, the third of which was placed at the disposal of the GOC Curragh Command.



Sgt PJ Lydon (Retd) pictured at Lansdowne Road before playing for the Army Number 1 band at a Six Nations game between Ireland and Wales



PJ Lydon pictured with Lt Col Fergal Carroll at a Photo Exhibition in Kildare Council Offices, Naas



30 Ex members of the Curragh Command sitting in Ceannt NCO's mess in 2023

The Curragh Band played at RTE's Theatre Nights, 2 Radio programmes followed for the band after the concert



Sgt Davy Scott leading the Curragh Band through Connolly Bks, DFTC

This No. 3 Band was originally less than thirty members and had an emphasis on German instrumentation, with Sergeant Major Flahive acting as Conductor. From its earliest days, the band played an integral part in the life of the local community, with members teaching music in local schools and assisting local bands. In 1935, Sgt Dermot O'Hara took over as Conductor; later commissioned, he continued in this appointment until 1943.

During the Emergency years, the Bands played an increasingly important role in boosting morale on route marches and the 'Big Inspection' and 'Step Together Week' events of this period. Lt Kealy and Lt Doherty acted as conductor from 1943 until the appointment of Sgt Pat King in 1945. Band member Captain Dermot O'Hara became conductor of the Radio Éireann Orchestra in the post-Emergency years. CS Peter Mulreid acted as conductor after 1950 and in 1952, Corkman Lt Denis Mellerick was appointed Conductor of the No 3 Band and was to serve 35 years in this role. It was later noted that: "his ability to generate mood and emotional response in interpretation drew large appreciative audiences wherever he appeared... thousands of soldiers marched with spring in their flagging

production of the motion picture 'The Blue Max.' In 1967, the band won the prestigious John McCormack Cup. Other notable occasions included the opening of the Gulf Oil Terminal in Bantry in 1969, the 50th anniversary ceremony of the death of General Michael Collins in Béal na Bláth and the funeral of President Childers in 1974.

These events were in addition to the Band's regular duties at commissioning ceremonies, passing out parades, guards of honour at Áras Uachtarán and military funerals. Other regular tasks included charity fundraisers, the RDS Spring Show and the Kilkenny Arts Festival. In that year, Commandant Mellerick retired after over three decades as Conductor and was replaced in this role by fellow Corkman Capt Pat Dermody, formerly of the Garda Band. He in turn was replaced by Capt Joe Ryan.

When Captain Mark Armstrong became Conductor in 1990, the Band of the Curragh Command was at a strength of forty bandsmen. In that year, the band participated in the inauguration of President Mary Robinson. Apart from performances at RTÉ, Cork City Hall and the National Concert



Band pictured with GOC DFTC in



The Curragh Band on parade

steps to his sparkling rhythm of marital music. Their morale was lifted despite the frost, the bleak Curragh winds of winter or the sweltering heat of summer."

In 1955, the No 3 Band was joined by the young Bandsman TJ Boyle who in later years as Superintendent Boyle was the musical director of the Garda Band

from 1972 to 1988. By 1956, the No 3 Band was renamed Band of the Curragh Training Camp. Regular duties at this time included GOC's Inspections and such religious events as the Corpus Christi Procession.

During the sixties the band was on duty on many historic occasions including the state visit of President JF Kennedy in 1963. In 1965 alone, they provided honours at the opening of Galway Cathedral, the opening of Tynagh Mines and the funeral of Roger Casement. They even participated in

Hall, a particularly popular duty was the many informal concerts for local schools where children were introduced to instruments and even given conducting lessons. In 1992, Armstrong and two band members travelled to Lebanon to play a series of concerts for UNIFIL forces.

By 1998, the strength of the band had decreased to 28 instrumentalists ('crisis point' according to Armstrong). As a consequence of the Defence Forces Reorganisation of that year, the Curragh Command was disestablished and the camp was re-designated the Defence Forces Training Centre; this new DFTC however would no longer have a military band. In January 1999, the Chief of Staff (Lt Gen Mangan) informed the OC ASM (Lt Col Power) that the Band of the Curragh Command was to be amalgamated with and absorbed into the No 1 Army Band. In 2002, the Band of the Curragh Command was formally disbanded. Many career soldiers had the band play at their commissioning ceremonies or passing-out parades and a few had the same band play at their stand-down parades. The band had also rendered honours at many military funerals. Their loss would be felt keenly.

# SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ÓGLAIGH NA HÉIREANN

ARTICLE BY SGT MAJ DAVID O'REILLY

**Servant leadership** emphasises placing followers' needs first while achieving the mission

**S**ervant leadership offers a values driven framework that strengthens military effectiveness by centring people while sustaining mission focus. In reframing servant leadership for Óglaigh na Héireann (DF) to explicitly connect with the profession of arms and mission command clarifies how caring for personnel, professional ethics, and decentralised command mutually reinforce operational success, resilience, and the long-term health of the force. This article will examine the link between Servant Leadership, The Profession of Arms, and Mission Command.

## What is servant leadership in a military context?

Servant leadership, from Robert K. Greenleaf (1977), emphasises placing followers' needs first while achieving the mission. In the military, it means leaders serve subordinates by developing them, supporting their welfare, and enabling success (Uhlir, 2025; U.S. Army, 2023). Core traits include empathy, stewardship, and commitment to growth (Spears, 1995). In practice, leaders know their people, empower decision making within the commander's intent (U.S. Air Forces, 2019), and build trust and psychological safety. Rather than replacing traditional command, servant leadership strengthens it by grounding authority in trust, respect and a shared commitment to mission and people (Uhlir, 2025; U.S. Army, 2023).

## Servant Leadership, Profession of Arms, and Mission Command

Servant leadership places the needs and

*"If serving is below you then leadership is beyond you"*

development of subordinates at the heart of leadership practice while preserving clear authority to accomplish the mission (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995). The profession of arms denotes a distinct vocation defined by specialised expertise, ethical responsibility, and a commitment to the public good; it demands leaders who model professional standards, stewardship, and lifelong development. Mission command is the DF leadership doctrinal approach that empowers subordinate initiative through clear intent, trust, and disciplined decentralisation.

Integrating these three concepts produces a coherent leadership model for Óglaigh na Héireann:

- **Ethical stewardship:** Servant leaders embody the profession of arms by modelling integrity, duty, and professional competence while prioritising the welfare and development of their people (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995).
- **Trust and initiative:** Servant leadership builds the psychological safety and mutual trust that mission command requires, enabling junior leaders to exercise initiative within commander's intent (Uhlir, 2025; U.S. Air Force, 2019).
- **Sustained professional development:** A profession centred servant approach institutionalises mentoring, technical mastery, and ethical education so that mission command is exercised by capable, morally grounded subordinates (Gonzaga University, 2017; Leadership Development Network, 2025).

## Evidence from Other Militaries

Servant leadership has become a defining feature of modern military leadership philosophy across the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Each nation's armed forces have adapted the concept to align with their doctrine and culture, emphasising the balance between mission success and the welfare of personnel.

## United States:

Within the U.S. Army, the approach is tied to resilience and unit cohesion. Army doctrine stresses that leaders must prioritise their soldiers' physical and mental well-being, share hardships, and mentor emerging leaders. Such inclusive leadership fosters resilience and trust within the ranks. The U.S. Air Force links servant leadership to job satisfaction, performance, and retention, finding that airmen & airwomen who see their leaders as servant-



oriented report stronger loyalty and commitment. Similarly, the Navy associates servant leadership with improved morale and follower development in its hierarchical environments. Across all branches, this leadership model enhances mission effectiveness by building cohesion, trust, and sustainable leadership pipelines.

United Kingdom:

Similarly align with servant leadership principles through their focus on moral leadership, character, and welfare. Concepts such as “leading from the front” and “caring for the troops” are embedded in their doctrine. Leaders who prioritise subordinate well-being, lead in by example, and development of junior leaders foster resilient and cohesive units, particularly in demanding operational contexts. The UK experience reinforces the need to institutionalise servant leadership through training and performance evaluation so that it becomes an enduring aspect of military culture.

Canada:

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) explicitly integrate servant leadership into official doctrine, framing leaders as stewards of both mission and people. Canadian case studies show that servant leadership boosts cohesion, morale, and retention, while nurturing a culture of mentorship and empowerment. The CAF model rejects any perception of servant leadership as permissive; instead, it presents it as a disciplined, value-driven approach balancing compassion with operational excellence.

Australia

In the Australian Defence Force (ADF), servant leadership principles underpin leadership development, emphasising ethics, character, and the welfare of personnel. Servant-oriented leaders within the ADF demonstrate adaptability, resilience, and integrity, earning both internal trust and public respect. Like other forces, the ADF highlights that servant leadership thrives when supported by doctrine, formal training, and performance management, ensuring it endures as a cultural norm rather than a transient ideal.

### Benefits for the Irish Defence Forces

Adopting a servant leadership model explicitly tied to the profession of arms and mission command would deliver targeted benefits for the DF:

- Stronger professional identity: Framing servant leadership as an expression of the profession of arms reinforces standards of competence, ethics, and public service while making care for personnel a professional obligation (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995).
- Enhanced mission command: Leaders who serve their people cultivate the trust and initiative necessary for effective mission command, improving decentralised decision making in complex, time sensitive operations (U.S. Air Force, 2019; Uhlir, 2025).
- Improved retention and morale: When professional development and welfare are prioritised, job satisfaction and retention rise – critical for maintaining specialist skills and institutional knowledge (Gonzaga University, 2017; U.S. Air Force, 2019).
- Resilience and mental health: Servant leaders are better positioned to detect and address stressors, supporting force resilience and reducing stigma around help seeking (U.S. Army, 2023; Uhlir, 2025).
- Sustainable leadership pipeline: Embedding mentorship and stewardship into the profession of arms ensures a steady flow of competent leaders capable of exercising mission command responsibly (Leadership Development Network, 2025; Gonzaga University, 2017).

### Practical steps for implementation

#### 1. Doctrine and framing

Revise the DF leadership doctrine to state explicitly that servant leadership is a professional obligation within the profession of arms and a force multiplier for mission command (Uhlir, 2025; Columbia University, 2001).

#### 2. Education and professional development

Integrate servant leadership principles, ethics, and mission command exercises across career courses—from recruits to senior staff—using case studies, scenario training, and reflective practice (Leadership Development Network, 2025; Gonzaga University, 2017).

#### 3. Assessment and incentives

Align promotion boards, performance evaluations, and command selection criteria to reward demonstrated stewardship, mentorship, and effective decentralised decision making (U.S. Air Force, 2019; Gonzaga University, 2017).

#### 4. Mentoring and coaching networks

Establish formal mentoring programmes that pair experienced officers and NCOs with junior leaders to transmit professional standards, technical skills, and the servant ethos (Leadership Development Network, 2025).

#### 5. Operationalising mission command

Train commanders to articulate clear intent, accept prudent risk, and delegate authority while maintaining accountability—supported by servant leadership practices that prepare subordinates to act decisively (U.S. Army, 2023; U.S. Air Force, 2019).

#### 6. Measure and adapt

Monitor outcomes—cohesion, retention and mental health indicators, and mission performance through surveys, after action reviews, and career tracking metrics to refine doctrine and training (Gonzaga University, 2017; Columbia University, 2001).



### Conclusion

Positioning servant leadership as an integral expression of the profession of arms and as an enabler of mission command offers the Irish Defence Forces a unified, practical leadership model. This approach preserves command authority while deepening professional ethics, empowering subordinate initiative, and safeguarding the human dimension of military service. By embedding servant leadership in doctrine, education, assessment, and operational practice, we can build a more adaptive, resilient, and professionally grounded force for the challenges ahead.

*References supporting this article are available from the Editor upon request.*

# DEFENCE FORCES OVERSEAS FAMILY SUPPORT DAY

The fourth Defence Forces family day for families of personnel currently serving overseas took place recently in Dublin Zoo with around 350 family members attending. The purpose of this day was to recognise the support our families give to each and every member of the Defence Forces to help us do our job. The day was really well attended, with the sun even making an appearance! Lots of children of DF personnel were there who had mummies, daddies, aunts and uncles deployed with UNIFIL and KFOR

were delighted to get their face painted. The troops out in UNIFIL took great comfort from knowing that their families were being catered for at home on the day and the event was very well received by the personnel who attended. We are still distributing our Defence Forces colouring book which is available for anyone who'd like to get the crayons out - just email [info@military.ie](mailto:info@military.ie)! The next family day will take place over the Summer, keep an eye on our social media for info.





# AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CADETSHIP

ARTICLE BY CADET SAMUEL MASSEY

**M**y name is Samuel Massey. I am 22 years old and currently an Air Traffic Controller Cadet with the Irish Air Corps.

**In 2022, while completing my Leaving Certificate in 6th year, I applied for the Aircraft Technician Apprenticeship. At the time, I had my heart set on pursuing an apprenticeship. In September, I was offered the position and began my journey in Baldonnell that October as a recruit. Like most first days in the Defence Forces, it was daunting. A mixture of excitement, nerves, and uncertainty all at once.**

I thoroughly enjoyed my 6 months of recruit training in the Military Training School (MTS). The experience of going through both the highs and lows alongside others created friendships that will last a lifetime. I was incredibly fortunate to receive the award for Best Soldier from recruit training through to 3-star, an achievement I never expected and one I am extremely proud of.

A week later, I began the Aircraft Technician Apprenticeship. Growing up on a farm, I've always enjoyed hands-on work tinkering with machinery and cars in my spare time. Life in the Technical Training School was demanding, with long classroom hours, challenging exams, and a vast amount of material to master. We were fortunate to have practical training two days a week for certain modules, which I found particularly rewarding. Working on aircraft required precision, discipline, and attention to detail. Qualities I enjoyed developing.

During the summer, we spent two months working in the hangars on live operational aircraft, gaining invaluable on-the-job experience. It was during this time that my interest shifted toward the operational side of aviation, particularly Air Traffic Control. Watching aircraft move seamlessly through the sky and wondering how they maintained safe separation felt almost like black magic.

The following year, I heard about the possibility of the first-ever

ATC Cadetship being launched. Previously, entry into ATC required applying internally for an Aerodrome Controllers course, which was advertised periodically in the Routine Orders. When the cadetship was advertised, I arranged a visit to the tower to see if it might be the right path for me. From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed by the staff on duty. They walked me through their daily responsibilities, the equipment they used, and the scope of their role. It was an incredibly insightful experience.

After careful consideration, I decided to apply. The selection process was extensive: psychometric testing, a fitness assessment, and a group exercise. For the ATC cadetship specifically, we were also required to complete the FEAST and DART aptitude tests, which lasted between three and five hours under supervision. This was followed by an interview and a comprehensive medical, including an air medical. When I received the offer in October, I was over the moon. Shortly after, I prepared to depart for the Curragh to begin the military phase of training.

As part of the ATC cadetship, we completed three months in the Curragh as members of the 101st Cadet Class. Training covered foot drill, arms drill, navigation, military writing, and weapons handling including the Steyr AUG and GPMG. Returning to a strict routine was challenging, but my prior experience allowed me to adapt quickly. I met people from a wide range of backgrounds, and although I enjoyed my time there, I was ready to move forward when we finished in December.

After Christmas, we returned to Casement Aerodrome for orientation and received a briefing on the six-month training phase in Spain. We also visited Dublin Tower, which was an incredible experience. Seeing their modern facilities and the volume of traffic they manage daily highlighted the importance of teamwork and coordination in ATC.

The following week, we departed for southern Spain. The first six weeks consisted of the Basic Course, covering air law, meteorology,





navigation, airspace, and general regulations. This phase was classroom-based, with multiple-choice exams at the end of each subject. All flights during our study period were covered. After a short break at home, we returned to begin the Aerodrome Controllers course.

This phase began with two weeks of classroom instruction, focusing on flight progress strips and correct radiotelephony procedures. We then moved into a high-fidelity simulator with a 180-degree visual display, replicating a real ATC tower. The scenarios began with simple ground movements and gradually progressed to airborne traffic and increasingly complex situations. Initially challenging, the simulator phase became deeply rewarding as progress became evident. Each session felt like solving a new puzzle. We completed two final simulator assessments, one involving complex traffic scenarios and one emergency simulation before returning home briefly.

The final training phase in Spain was Procedural Approach Control. This involved sequencing aircraft to an aerodrome without radar, relying solely on reporting points and mental visualization. I found this to be the most demanding phase, as it required building a complete mental picture of traffic movement. Like the tower course, it concluded with a complex and an emergency simulator assessment.

Spending six months training in Spain was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, one I never expected to experience so early in my career.

Upon returning to Baldonnell in August, we began unit-specific training, covering Irish airspace, procedures, and air law. We then progressed to local simulators using a magnetic pinboard system to represent aircraft movements. While less technologically advanced than those in Spain, the system is highly effective in reinforcing procedures and RT discipline. This phase lasted approximately three weeks, increasing in complexity.

Live on-the-job training began in late September. Working alongside Officer and NCO instructor's in the tower, I gradually transitioned from guided control to increasing independence. There are ten training objectives divided into three phases, each requiring 30 hours before progression.

Phase 1 focused on communications, coordination with other ATC units, and data management.

Phase 2 centred on traffic management, conflict resolution, and understanding operational requirements.

Phase 3 the final stage, this required maintaining separation, ensuring safety, planning efficiently, and demonstrating initiative and adaptability.

The final assessment involved a board of assessors evaluating my ability to

control traffic independently, with a safety controller present to intervene if necessary.

My experience during live training was extremely positive. Each day in the tower brought new challenges and learning opportunities. Gaining insight from multiple instructors, each with unique

experiences, was invaluable. Written feedback after every session allowed me to reflect and improve. Progressing through each phase meant accepting greater responsibility and accountability. Phase 3 was the biggest leap. Controlling independently was daunting at first, but confidence grew with experience. In a role so critical to operations, openness to feedback is essential; every critique is aimed at building competence and ensuring safety.

After five months of on-the-job training, my Primary instructor, Capt Healip recommended I be put forward for assessment and a board was convened. Assessment consisted of several sessions during day and night operations where a safety controller and an assessor were present in the tower observing the work I was completing, ensuring I was providing a safe and expeditions level of service. At the end of February, I was proud to receive my Aerodrome Controller rating. The sense of relief and accomplishment was immense. Shaking hands with the ATC Commanding Officer, Comdt Keane and my assessors, Capt Moore and RSM Barrett was a moment I will never forget.

I now look forward to commissioning in May alongside my fellow cadets and officially joining 505 Squadron.





# AN BONN SEIRBHÍSE DEARSCNA



**O**n the 12th of February 2026 Minister for Defence, Ms Helen McEntee T.D., accompanied by the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Rossa Mulcahy, presented Distinguished Service Medals (DSM) to Corporal Daniel Padden, Private Dylan Geraghty, Private Ciara Shanahan and Father Paul Murphy.

*“For exceptional bravery arising out of risk to his own life and the lives of others during a violent attack in Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa on 15 Aug 2024. Pte Geraghty exhibited extraordinary courage and a disciplined use of force by physically engaging and restraining an armed assailant at significant personal risk. His selfless actions neutralised the attacker, prevented loss of life and reflect immense credit upon himself and the Defence Forces.”*

## Dylan Geraghty (Private)

*Is Awarded The Distinguished Service Medal, With Honour*

*“For distinguished service in displaying leadership and courage during a violent attack in Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa. On 15 Aug 2024, Cpl Padden, despite personal risk displayed exceptional leadership and composure by swiftly directing the response, issuing warnings, and safely neutralising an armed attacker. His decisive actions and controlled use of force prevented further harm, removed the threat to life and reflected great credit upon himself and the Defence Forces.”*

## Daniel Padden (Corporal)

*Is Awarded The Distinguished Service Medal, With Distinction*

*“For distinguished service arising from a violent attack on himself on 15 Aug 2024 in Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa. Fr Paul Murphy displayed courage, leadership and devotion to duty in both his immediate reaction during the incident and by personifying the Defence Forces Core Values in the aftermath of this life changing event. His actions and humanity reflect great credit upon himself and on the Irish Defence Forces.”*

## Paul Murphy (Father)

*Is Awarded The Distinguished Service Medal, With Merit*

*“For distinguished service in displaying courage and devotion to duty during a violent attack in Dún Uí Mhaoilíosa. On 15 Aug 2024, Pte Shanahan, despite personal risk demonstrated vigilance and bravery by immediately alerting others to an armed threat and courageously attempting to distract the attacker despite being unarmed. Her initiative and composure enabled a disciplined and effective response and reflected great credit upon herself and the Defence Forces.”*

## Ciara Shanahan (Private)

*Is Awarded The Distinguished Service Medal, With Merit*

# FORGING

## THE CAVALRY SCOUT

ARTICLE BY LT SHANE MCGRATH

**The ability to locate, observe and understand the enemy before contact is made has always been a defining capability of the Cavalry Corps. Modern day reconnaissance demands soldiers who can operate independently, think critically under pressure and gather accurate intelligence in challenging environments. The Cavalry Scout Tactical Course, conducted in the Cavalry School, is designed to develop precisely these qualities. The four-week programme sees students introduced to the core skills required to operate as an effective Cavalry Scout, culminating in multiple training exercises that tests both their tactical proficiency and resilience.**

### Week One: Understanding Combat Tracking

The opening week of the course focuses on one of many skills within the Cavalry Corps Scouts portfolio, Combat Tracking. Although the methods and equipment used by modern forces continue to evolve, the ability to read the ground sign left by an ENFOR remains an invaluable reconnaissance capability.

Students begin by gaining a fundamental understanding of how to locate, identify and pursue ground signs left by individuals or groups moving through terrain. These signs may include disturbed soil, broken vegetation, displaced stones, footprints or subtle indicators of recent movement that may otherwise go unnoticed. Learning to identify such indicators requires patience, attention to detail and disciplined observation.

Combat Tracking goes far beyond simply following footprints. It involves interpreting patterns and forming logical assumptions about the enemy's movement, numbers, equipment and intentions. Students are trained to analyse the environment and piece together information that can feed into future taskings.

By the end of week one, students understand that the primary purpose of combat tracking is not just to pursue an ENFOR, but to exploit every possible piece of information. Accurate and timely information gathered through tracking allows superior commanders to develop a clearer understanding of enemy activity and to have a clearer battlespace picture.

### Week Two: Tactical Skills Refresher

With the fundamentals of combat tracking established, the second week broadens the students' skillset and reinforces essential fieldcraft required of cavalry scouts. Training during this phase focuses on operational readiness and ensuring that each student can operate confidently as part of a reconnaissance detachment.

A key component of the week involves training in reporting procedures. In reconnaissance operations, the ability to deliver clear, concise and accurate reports is critical. Intelligence gathered within operations must be communicated quickly and effectively so that higher headquarters can build a comprehensive understanding of the operational environment. Students practice structuring



and delivering reports under time pressure, ensuring that vital information can be passed up the chain of command without delay.

Another major element of the week is the occupation and routine of a patrol harbour. Students learn the correct drills for establishing and maintaining patrol harbours, emphasising discipline, stealth and all-round protection. Another evolving tactical element which needs to be considered within the occupation of a patrol harbour is C-UAS (Counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems). Students established their HQ element within their Patrol Harbour and used Anti Drone Thermal Netting for their overhead protection to eliminate any possible ENFOR air threat.

Training also included instruction in raids and ambushes. While the primary role of the cavalry scout is reconnaissance and information gathering, there are occasions when direct kinetic actions are required in order to exploit an opportunity.

Students also conducted water confidence training in the DFPES. Operating in difficult terrain often requires Scouts to cross water obstacles or conduct operations near rivers and lakes. Developing confidence and competence in these conditions ensures that students can maintain operational effectiveness regardless of the environment.



### Week Three: EX CLOSE LOOK & FIRST VIEW

The third week introduces a significant increase in intensity as students participate in a demanding 48-hour field exercise conducted in the Powerscourt Estate and Hollywood area of County Wicklow. This exercise is designed to place students in realistic reconnaissance scenarios where they must apply the skills developed during the first two weeks.

Operating in small detachments, students conducted reconnaissance missions on multiple NAI's (Named Areas of Interest) by way of CTR's (close target reconnaissance) throughout the Powerscourt area. These locations represent points where enemy activity is present and where important information can be gathered. Information collected during these tasks are compiled and reported to higher HQ, contributing to the broader operational picture.

Students then received a new mission which included a move to the Hollywood area, where they established an OP screen along a designated MSR (Main Supply Route). Observation screens are a critical tool used by cavalry scout detachments to maintain contact with enemy forces once they have been located. By monitoring movement along key routes and decision points, scouts provide commanders with valuable intelligence that can influence operational planning and decision-making.

In addition to their 48hr EX students utilised their skills learned in the DFPES and conducted a tactical crossing in Blessington Lake. This element of the course reinforced the importance of adaptability and physical endurance when operating in challenging and changing environments

### Week Four: FTX SABRE STRIKE

The final week of the course culminates in a demanding 72-hour FTX conducted IVO of St. Kevin's Way and the Wicklow Gap. This exercise serves as the final assessment, confirming that each student has developed the skills and professional understanding over the last number of weeks, required to operate as a Cavalry Scout.

Students began by inserting into the operational area with the support of armoured elements from 1 ACS and 2 Cavalry Squadron. Once deployed, students infiltrated and established a patrol harbour and began to receive multiple new taskings. These included further CTR's, OP's and Call for Fire Missions.

Throughout the exercise all information gathered by the students is continuously reported to higher HQ. This information and intelligence contributed to the overall battlespace picture, allowing commanders to track enemy activity and make future operational decisions.

The exercise concluded with a troop-level ambush conducted onto a final TAI (Target Area of Interest). This final task allows students to demonstrate their ability to coordinate reconnaissance information with decisive kinetic action, highlighting the importance of accurate intelligence in shaping a successful operation.

### Conclusion

The Cavalry Scout Tactical Course represents a demanding but essential step in developing the next generation of reconnaissance soldiers within the Cavalry Corps. Over four intensive weeks, students refine and build on skills learned from their respective instructors, which gives them the understanding of what is required to work as part of a small Cavalry Scout detachment.

A massive positive for the students on the course was the introduction of the Defence Forces new stream of communication equipment, the SDR (Software Defined Radio) Squadnets. This modern advancement in individual comms allowed students to always maintain a high level of communications within their respective Troop and Detachments, a vitally important element of any successful operations.

The course concluded with the recognition of Tpr Manley as Best Overall Student, a reflection of his professionalism and high performance throughout the course.

A word of thanks to the instructors from 1 ACS, 1 Cavalry Squadron and 2 Cavalry Squadron whose professionalism and mentorship ensured the success of the course.

Congratulations and best of luck to all successful students as they return to their units. They now carry forward the skills and knowledge gained during the course, strengthening the dismounted capability within the Cavalry Corps and contributing to the overall operational effectiveness of the Defence Forces.



Wayne is pictured making tools on a course with FROE



Ross, Wayne and Joe pictured together on a course in Gormanston, 2024



# THE ORIGINS OF SERE

## AND HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BUSHCRAFT

ARTICLE BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD (RETIRED)

**S**urvival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) is widely regarded as a modern military training system, formalised during the twentieth century. Yet the principles that underpin SERE are far older. Long before the acronym existed, armies were developing ways to survive hostile environments, avoid capture, resist exploitation, and return to friendly forces. Among the earliest practitioners of these ideas were the Roman legions.

Although the Romans did not operate a centralised “SERE school”, they embedded survival and evasion into their military culture through discipline, engineering, and doctrine. Their approach was simple and practical: a soldier who could not survive the environment would never reach the battlefield.

### Roman Foundations of Survival and Evasion

Roman survival doctrine centred on logistics and routine. Every legion on campaign constructed a fortified camp (castra) at the end of each day’s march. These camps followed a standardised layout, with defensive ditches, ramparts, and organised internal streets. The system provided protection from attack and the elements while ensuring troops

were never exposed overnight. In effect, this daily practice functioned as an early

environmental survival protocol.

Roman soldiers were also trained as engineers and foragers. Writing in *De Re Militari*, the military author Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus stressed the importance of locating clean water sources, building bridges, and sustaining troops during winter campaigns. These capabilities mirror what modern SERE training identifies as core survival skills: shelter, water, fire, and movement.

The importance of evasion was reinforced by defeat. The catastrophic destruction of three Roman legions in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest forced the Roman army to rethink its methods of operating in hostile terrain. Greater emphasis was placed on scouting units (exploratores) and small-unit movement through forests, deserts, and mountain regions. The ability to withdraw unseen and regroup with friendly forces became as important as victory in battle.



## Resistance and Escape in Roman Culture

Roman resistance doctrine was cultural rather than instructional. Capture was viewed as shameful, and soldiers were expected to resist to the death rather than surrender. After the Roman defeat at the Battle of Cannae, the Roman Senate refused to ransom captured soldiers, reinforcing the belief that surrender was unacceptable.

Stories of stoic resistance became part of Roman identity. Figures such as Gaius Mucius Scaevola, who endured torture without revealing information, were held up as examples of loyalty and courage. Escape was also celebrated. The legend of Cloelia, who swam across the River Tiber to freedom, reinforced the idea that a captive's duty was to escape and return to the state.

Roman "SERE" therefore rested on discipline and identity rather than formal training. A Roman soldier did not attend a resistance course; he was raised to believe that resilience and loyalty were fundamental virtues.

## The Birth of Modern SERE

Modern SERE training began to take shape during the Second World War. British intelligence recognised that aircrew and covert operatives required structured preparation for survival and evasion behind enemy lines. The organisation MI9 developed concealed maps and escape equipment, while the Special Operations Executive trained agents to operate clandestinely in occupied Europe. In the United States, the Army Air Forces created MIS-X to support similar missions.

The Korean War revealed another challenge: systematic psychological exploitation of prisoners of war. Captured American airmen were pressured into false confessions and propaganda broadcasts. In response, the United States formalised resistance training and introduced the United States Military Code of Conduct under President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The Vietnam War further shaped SERE training. Jungle warfare required specialised survival techniques, while the experiences of prisoners such as James N. Rowe demonstrated the importance of psychological resilience and escape planning. By the 1980s, SERE training had become

standardised across US forces. Today, SERE is a core element of personnel recovery doctrine across NATO militaries.

## SERE in the Irish Defence Forces

Within the Irish Defence Forces, SERE training forms part of the Personnel Recovery framework and is delivered primarily through the Military Training and Survival School at Casement Aerodrome.

Originally developed for Air Corps aircrew, the programme now supports both aviation and special operations requirements. The syllabus includes shelter construction, fire lighting, navigation, evasion techniques, resistance to interrogation, and extraction scenarios. SERE training is mandatory for pilots and aircrew and also forms part of the selection and qualification process for the Army Ranger Wing. The school also delivers instructor-level courses to ensure that SERE expertise is sustained within the Defence Forces.

## Bushcraft, SERE and Scouting

Beyond the military environment, the principles of SERE have clear parallels in civilian bushcraft and outdoor education. Skills such as shelter construction, fire lighting, navigation, water procurement, and emergency response form the foundation of both wilderness living and survival training.

These competencies also play a central role within Scouting Ireland. In Scouting, bushcraft is not viewed as an extreme activity but as a structured pathway for developing self-reliance, teamwork, and environmental awareness.

The Scouting Ireland Adventure Skills system provides certified progression from Level 1 to Level 9 for young people and adults alike. Skills closely aligned with SERE principles include Backwoods, Camping, Pioneering, Hillwalking and Emergency (First Aid).

Introduced in September 2025, the new Scouting Ireland knife policy also requires adult Scouters and Rover Scouts who intend to use fixed-blade knives and instruct youth members to complete a dedicated 3.5-hour in-person training course.

## Bushcraft and the Civilian Skillset

While SERE remains a specialised military capability, many of its foundations lie in bushcraft and wilderness living skills. Competencies such as shelter construction, firecraft, navigation, water procurement, and leadership are equally relevant to outdoor professionals and serious enthusiasts.

One pathway for developing these skills in Ireland is the NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Bushcraft and Wilderness Skills. Delivered by Free Range Outdoor Education (FROE) in partnership with Wildway Bushcraft UK and instructors Joe Price and Ross Wareham, the programme provides structured and recognised training for those seeking to deepen their outdoor competence.

Ross Wareham explains: "The course combines intensive practical instruction with theoretical learning. Participants develop advanced shelter-building techniques, firecraft, wild food and water procurement, navigation, wilderness safety, and group leadership skills."

Discussing the training, Joe Price notes that the course equips participants - soldiers, scouts and civilians alike - with practical skills directly transferable to survival and fieldcraft training.

Founded in 1848, NCFE is an internationally recognised awarding organisation. The Level 2 qualification provides a pathway for those wishing to work in outdoor education or enhance their capability in remote environments.

Visit [www.froe.ie](http://www.froe.ie) for more info.



# PEOPLE OF THE DF

## NAME:

DAVE WILLIAMS

## RANK:

BQMS

## SERVICE:

29 YEARS

## CURRENT ROLE:

BQMS 12<sup>TH</sup> INF BN

## OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS:

8



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

I joined the Defence Forces on the 31/12/1996 and completed initial training in the BTC Collins Bks Cork, following completion of this phase I was posted to the 4th Inf Bn where I served up to its closure. Since then, I have served in the BTC as a Cpl, Sgt and A/CQMS, further spells in the 12th Bn as Sgt and CQMS, 1 Bde HQ as RDF Bde Training Sgt and 1 Bde Ord as CQMS until promotion to the rank of BQMS in June 2023. I have also had spells detached to the Cadet School, IWW as instructor and spells detached to 1 Bde Transport, Coy, 1 Bde Ord Clothing Stores, 1 Bde Barrack Services, 1 Bde OSP Ord Coy, in a bid to further broaden my logistic knowledge. I served in the 2013 to 2015 Nordic Battle Group which was also a fantastic experience. I have also completed some 31 military courses to date. I also followed my earlier education qualifications prior to joining by completing a level 7 degree in 2013 in CIT Cork in Supply Chain management, this led to opportunities within the

DF to complete a further Level 8 degree and Level 9 Masters in supply chain management. I then completed a Green Belt in Lean Six Sigma which utilises continuous improvement tools in an effort to reduce wastage within a supply chain. In the mix of all this I have served overseas on 9 occasions.

### What made you decide to join the DF?

I wasn't necessarily following

in a family tradition, but I knew I wanted to do something different with my life. Initially the opportunity to work in teams doing a job that's not necessarily 9 to 5 which involved outdoor environments that brought its own challenges was very appealing. I also wanted to push myself as far as I possibly could, the opportunity to travel was also a big draw and attraction. Ireland has a proud tradition and history of UN peacekeeping, and I was determined to follow in this pathway.

### What was your proudest moment so far in the DF?

There have been many individual moments over an almost 30 year career to date, whether it is passing intense physical courses, serving overseas or dealing with certain scenarios. But, I think the best is yet to come in March this year when my son, who finished college in June 2025, completes his initial training in Cork and passes out as a three star private and begins life in 1 Bde Engineers Cork. So, I think this will be a nice and proud day out for our family.

In a sporting environment, we have put so much effort into the Defence Forces Rowing Club over the last 4 years, effectively building it from scratch, and in 2025, the club won its first National title and medal in Loch Rinn, with Ptes Danny Scanlon and Dave Collins crossing the finish line in first place to win the masters B double national title. The race only lasted just over three and a half minutes, but it was three and a half years in the making, the lads did brilliant.

### What was your most challenging moment so far in the DF?

Obviously one of the most challenging moments to date can be the real life issues; like any member who has children, when you are deploying overseas or on long career courses it can be challenging and just trying to tie it all in together at home





regardless of whether you are male or female it can be tough. The Defence Forces are fantastic in supporting your family if needs be whilst overseas. It must be said that overseas service can at times be surrounded by obstacles and more times than not it is the partner/wife/husband/parent at home who has to embrace the real day to day struggle, dealing with Parent Teacher meetings, school runs, sports days, training nights for football, Rowing or Taekwondo etc whilst working themselves.

### **You're involved in the DF rowing, how did you get into that?**

The Defence Forces Rowing Club actually came about during the 2013/2015 NBG deployment to Sweden when one of my best friends Pte Rob Diffley and I were chatting about training; we were both involved with civilian clubs at that stage, and Rob had a brief interaction with the Previous DFRA "Defence Forces Rowing Association". However, the time wasn't right to start a new club, the old one was slowly fading into the background, and we both knew we wanted a new fresh approach and identity for Rowing within the Defence Forces, one that hadn't been seen before. It wasn't until 3 years later (2018) whilst undergoing a college course, myself and Rob started chatting to then CQMS Martyn Underhill of 1 Bde Engineers who told us he had recently started rowing, and from there the club and ideas started to grow.

### **What stage is the Defence Forces Rowing Club at currently?**

The Defence Forces Rowing Club has gone through a complete overhaul in the last eighteen months. If it's one thing the Defence Forces teaches you over a period of almost 30 years, it is to call out when things are not right, or stagnant and as head coach I discussed this with Rob Diffley and Martyn Underhill – we needed a fresh approach. We had won a nice few Rowing Ireland regattas and won the Ocean to City race in Cork but we knew we needed to go in a different direction if we wanted national honours. We decided we needed new or better coaching ideas and expertise. The DF has taught us many things and one was we shouldn't accept lower standards; with this in mind we went straight for the best available person in 3 time Olympian and two time World Champion Ms Sanita Purspora as a new High Performance Coach. This step alone had a significant improvement in training on the water. This also led to us improving the Defence Forces public image at Rowing Ireland events where

on a typical National Championship regatta you can have crowds at the National Rowing Centre in excess of 5000, with at the very least 2000 junior athletes at the age for joining the Defence Forces. Our club members are always stopped and asked questions about careers in the Defence Forces. Another significant step in the clubs planning for future development was the construction of a new boathouse and training facility at Collins Bks Cork Campfield in August 2025. This was followed in Sept 2025 by the induction of Recruit Ronan Byrne, 26, who is a former 2020 Olympian and current Irish International. With more of Ronan's calibre to follow, the future looks bright for our club and indeed sport in general within the Defence Forces.

### **What are in the plans for the future for the rowing club?**

Very simple, to continue to grow and develop the Sport across the Defence Forces. To identify athletes within our organisation who have the potential to enter into a HP (High Performance) programme and represent the Defence Forces in Rowing for Ireland.

### **What do you enjoy the most about it?**

How brutal and physically hard it can be, but also Rowing is unlike any sport you can compete in, simply because regardless of age there is a category for you.

### **Most memorable experience in DF Rowing?**

From Day one to present day, it's just been one long enjoyable experience, but I think capturing the services of Ms Sanita Pursora as High Performance coach was unthinkable when we first started out, to have Sintia in the Safety Launch coaching you is unbelievable at times.

### **What advice would you give anyone thinking of joining?**

Very simply, there is NO other club in the Defence Forces who can offer you the type of 1:1 training by a former 3 time Olympian and 2 time World Champion, if you want to be challenged physically, technically, psychologically and pushed to your limits at times, then simply reach out. We're not messing around!!

### **What is your favourite quote?**

**Let's Go!!**



# SPORTS & CLUBS



## DF ATHLETICS

**T**he DF Athletics team were in action 25 Feb to 02 March at the 60th edition of the World CISM Cross Country in Greece. In total the DF had 10 athletes in action over Men's 10km, Ladies 8km and a mixed 4 x 2km relay.

The top DF finishers were Pte Nicole Moorehouse (CMU) who finished 35th and 16th European in a race dominated by North

African athletes. Cpl Gavin Sweeney (1BDE) finished best of the men in 65th position and led the Irish team to a top 20 position and 7th European nation.

The DF have selected a team of 4 male and 4 female athletes for the forthcoming World Half Marathon championships in Turkey at the start of April.

Forthcoming events will be outdoor Track and Field, 10 mile road and DF cross country with dates tbc

## DF MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Each year DFAM members partake in a CPD in Calpe, Spain. Climbing in Calpe consists of single and multi-pitch sports climbing routes. This CPD allows members to progress their technical climbing ability, stamina, strength and rope techniques.

DFAM members spend 9 days climbing consistently from morning to evening.

Typically DFAM members undertake a multipitch climb on the famous Peñon de Ifach. This year due to the poor weather members undertook 'Rowlands Magical Mystery Tour' which consist of 5 pitches of sea cliff climbing.



## DF WOMEN'S SOCCER

### Manager Profile - Sgt Shane Desmond

Sergeant Shane Desmond brings almost three decades of military experience and a long-standing involvement in Defence Forces football to his role as team manager. With 29 years of service in the Irish Defence Forces, Sgt Desmond has developed a strong reputation as both a leader and a performance coach.

He served 16 years with the 4th Battalion and currently holds appointments as Missile Sergeant and Physical Training Instructor (PTI) with 3 Battery, 1 Brigade Artillery Regiment (1 BAR). In addition, he serves as the unit Gym Sergeant. Over the course of his military career he has completed eight overseas deployments.

Sgt Desmond has been involved in Defence Forces football for many years, winning five All-Army Cunningham Cup medals - three as a player and two as a coach. He began working in Strength and Conditioning (S&C) with teams in 2005 and has continued to support the development of players through structured performance programmes.

In 2022 he became Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Defence Forces Women's Football Team and worked with the squad at the Military World Championships in Spokane, USA. Since then he has served as Assistant Manager and S&C

Coach for fixtures against the UK Armed Forces, the Military World Championships in Holland in 2023, and representative games against the Belgian Armed Forces.

Outside the Defence Forces, Sgt Desmond is currently coaching a team competing in the Munster Senior League in Cork.

### Career Summary

Service: 29 years - Irish Defence Forces

Battalion Service: 16 years - 4th Battalion

Current Appointment: Missile Sgt / PTI - 3 Bty, 1 BAR | Gym Sgt

Overseas Service: 8 overseas tours

Football Honours: 5 All-Army Cunningham Cup medals (3 player, 2 coach)

S&C Coaching: Coaching teams since 2005

Civilian Coaching: Munster Senior League team - Cork

International Roles: Military World Championships USA 2022 | Holland 2023

### Strengthening Links with the FAI

As part of the continued development of the programme, the management team recently met with Lizzy Kent, Head of Girls and Women's Football with the Football Association of Ireland (FAI). The meeting focused on strengthening links between the Defence Forces Women's team and the FAI and exploring opportunities for future collaboration and development.

This engagement aims to build stronger relationships within Irish football and support the continued growth of the women's game within the Defence Forces.

### Player Recruitment

The management team is actively looking to identify and develop new players within the Defence Forces. Personnel interested in representing the Defence Forces Women's Football Team and taking part in training camps, representative fixtures and international competitions are encouraged to contact the team management.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact

Comdt Margaret Hogan

Capt Brian Dunne

Lt Shauna Connaughton

Sgt Shane Desmond

Sgt Jason Walsh



# ON PARADE



After visiting Glasnevin Cemetery, the soldiers of the 7th Inf Bn conducted a Battle Run through Dublin City, past the GPO and back to Cathal Brugha Barracks



Members of 127 INF BN UNIFIL prepare to go on their Shamrock Parade on St. Patrick's day



Minister for Defence Helen McEntee cut the ribbon to officially open the newly renovated USAC



A NATO AIRCOM Mobile Training Team delivered training to Air Corps personnel on the Air Operations Planning Process (AOPP). All aspects of planning and decision-making in relation to Air Operations were comprehensively covered over four days of very insightful learning



The Cavalry School hosted a coffee morning for Cavalry Corps Veterans



1 MIC provided a Mowag and weapons display for members of the Department of Defence



Sgt Major Caffrey presenting the Naval Service Standard NCO Course president with the Senior Enlisted Advisor Challenge Coin



"Hold the line" Members of the 2 BTC Public Order Instructor Course geared up for instruction in Cathal Brugha Barracks



Cadet Ryan Houlihan delivering orders during the 102nd Cadet Class section attack training in the Glen of Imaal



Reservist instructors were recently qualified on the new indoor simulator in 2 BTC

# ON PARADE



The Naval College welcomed Jo Lawler from the Irish Blood Transfusion Board who spoke about the importance of blood and platelet donation



General Staff enjoying the DF Gala



DF Band members playing at the Gala concert in Cork



Newly promoted Two-Star Privates from the 6th Recruit Platoon 2 BAR pictured with instructors after their passing out parade



DF Women's Rugby in action against the British Army



DF Women's Rugby pictured after receiving their International Caps



Congratulations to our newest qualified Rotary pilots Lt's Bolas, McGuire, O'Donnell & Hayes who graduated from 1 FTS at RAF Shawbury



SCPO Cian McParland pictured receiving his new rank markings on promotion from General Sean Clancy, Chairman of the EUMC. SCPO McParland will take up the appointment of SCPO in the Navy Capability Development Office



GOC DFTC Brigadier General Brendan McGuinness at his stand down parade in March



An Cosantóir staff visit to Post 1 IUNVA in Arbour hill

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

AN COSANTÓIR VOLUME 54 ISSUE 10, DEC-JAN 1995

*Spouses Overseas Support (SOS) Group are a dynamic and forward-thinking organisation. Based in the Curragh at the moment, they hope to expand nationwide in the near future. A recent meeting with President Robinson has provided further impetus to this aim. Sgt Terry McLaughlin spoke to several members of the group at a meeting in the Curragh.*

**T**he name Spouses Overseas Support is slightly misleading. For a start, your spouse does not have to be overseas. The group welcome people whose partner may be away on a course or on long term security operations. Then again it doesn't even have to be a spouse. Girlfriends or fiancées of personnel away from home are also welcome. The bottom line is



President Robinson is presented with a memento of the SOS visit by Moe O'Shea.

that the group is there to offer support and self-help to anyone whose partner is serving away from home.

Anyone who thinks SOS is an excuse for a group of ladies to get together and feel sorry for themselves could not be more mistaken. The group is built around a weekly get-together which takes place every Monday at 1030 am, in

a room attached to St Brigid's Church in the Curragh. But there is far more to it than that. SOS arrange outings and events for themselves and for the children. Over the last year there have been Sports days, visits to the zoo, barbecues, trips to see Disney on Ice.

A very important development has been in the area of education. SOS members, with the support of local agencies, such as the VEC, have undertaken courses in Parenting, Self-Awareness, First Aid, and Home Nursing, to name but a few. At the moment, their secretary, Ann Loneragan, is attending a VEC-funded Leadership Facilitators Skills Course which is conducted over a 22 week period. While people are encouraged to become involved in courses if they wish, there is no obligation on anyone to do so. Some of the senior ladies within the group provide a creche type facility for the children of those attending courses. This essential service is much appreciated by mothers who would otherwise be unable to take the opportunity.

The group are always delighted to receive new members. As Ann Loneragan says, "we are a non-ranking, non-political, non-everything group". There is no membership fee and SOS is open to partners of all ranks. Mae O'Shea (President) puts it well when she says,

"Nobody is bothered whether your husband is a Lieutenant Colonel or a Private. As far as we are concerned you are just Mary or Helen whose husband is in Rwanda or Lebanon or wherever." Neither is the group confined to women. Men whose partners are away are equally welcome.

For those who find it difficult to attend the weekly meetings due to distance, transport, or any other reason, SOS operate a telephone network. Members exchange numbers so that there is always someone available for a chat. Ann Loneragan points out that sometimes problems which may seem trivial can get people down. For instance,

she says, "The television may have gone on the blink or the washing machine breaks down. Problems that a husband may normally have dealt with. In cases like this it can be a great relief to have someone to talk to who understands."

Many members who join when their spouse goes overseas remain active with the group after the trip is over. SOS

## NATIO



actively encourages people to stay. This maintains friendships that have grown, but more importantly, gives the organisation continuity, and retains the skills that members have acquired. Often these skills have been learned through SOS activities, but in other cases members bring in skills with them. Marie Barnes would be an example of the latter. She qualified as a Community Mother under an Eastern Health Board scheme. Marie and another member of SOS are currently undergoing a course on Religious Psychology in Newbridge (at their own expense). The skills that they develop can only be of benefit to the group as a whole. Already Marie has conducted ("facilitated" is the official term) a course in Parenting for SOS.

One person who has remained a member is Helen Doyle. She is in her second year with SOS. Her husband is currently serving with B Coy, 76 Inf Bn, UNIFIL. She likes the group because, "there is always something going on".

# ONWIDE SOS



and also "it's great to have someone to talk to who feels the same as you do".

This idea of a common bond is a predominant one. Theresa Fitzgerald, who has been with SOS for only three weeks, is well aware of this bond. As she says, "Family and friends are great, but they're just not in the same situation."

What of support from within the Military establishment? Mae O'Shea is unstinting in her praise of the support given by the Military Authorities. "The AG, Maj Gen Wall, was GOC in the Curragh when we first began and he gave us great help. And the current GOC, Brig Gen Crean, is the same. He couldn't do more for us." In general, the support SOS receives is first rate both within and outside of Military circles. They have good links with other support groups and several women's groups in the area. On the educational side they have had great assistance from local schools and the VEC. The latter has provided SOS with facilities, funding (by

means of grants), and advice.

Mae is particularly hopeful that the organisation will spread beyond the Curragh. She feels there is a great need for it among people left behind when a spouse goes away. She remembers when her husband first went overseas. Mae had been on the Curragh for a few short years when he went to the Congo. "It was dreadful", she says, "I had nobody. I would love to have had a group like SOS around at the time."

The wish to spread the group beyond the Curragh recently received a double boost. Two members of SOS spoke at a Personnel Support Services conference and, as a result, have had enquiries from Baldonnel, Athlone, Cork, and several other areas.

The second boost came from an invitation to meet President Robinson in Aras an Uachtaráin. All the members of the group who attended were struck by the warmth of the President and the degree to which she supported their efforts. Helen Doyle said that the President was "full of praise for the lads overseas in Lebanon, Rwanda, and all the other missions". The main message that the ladies received from the President was that she would like to see them "branch out into all areas of the Defence Forces community".

The women hope that the new year will see some advances in this area. Mae O'Shea says that members of the group are more than willing to travel to any area to give a talk on the organisation. If anyone is interested they should contact Mae or Ann Lonergan or any member of SOS (Phone 045 41744).

Having met these ladies for the first time, this reporter was more than impressed. If there is one word which sums up SOS it is 'dynamic'. To use the modern terminology, these are 'can do' people. They have taken a difficult and problematic aspect of Defence Forces life and turned it into an area of personal growth and self-development. ■

**Above:**  
President Robinson and the ladies of SOS at Aras an Uachtaráin.

**Below:**  
President Robinson chats with her guests.  
All photos: Armin John Daly.



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