



THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

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# AN COSANTÓIR



**BSG UNIFIL**

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# CADETSHIP 2021

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## FRONT COVER

96th Cadetship class  
commissioning ceremony  
on Collins Bks Square  
Photographer A/M Sam Gibney

# EDITORIAL

**Hello, and welcome to our third issue of 2021, our 81<sup>st</sup> volume of the An Cosantóir magazine. As the year continues to fly past us, we hope you are doing well and continuing to enjoy the magazine in its new format.**

This issue's Noticeboard contains a challenge piece with the ARW Foreman Aftman test walk, are you tough enough? Our On Parade features 118Bn UNIFIL pictures along with an NCO's course passing out parade in Cathal Brugha Bks, as well as the 63rd INF GP's Mission Readiness Exercise.

Our first feature is a double piece about the DF Commission by Tony O'Brien, who gives us a report on the Commission from his independent point of view and then on P11 reports on the DF Podcast from Adrian O'Driscoll, who heads up the Commission.

Lt Cdr Mary Lane of the Navy, gives us an interview on her career so far in the Irish Defence Forces as a Naval Officer of 19 years. Neonatal Air Ambulance looks back on one of the many heli ambulance trips that the Air Corps has undertaken, as Lt Col David Browne talks about his task to bring a new-born baby over to London for an operation in Great Ormond hospital.

Lt David Kelly provides us with an insight into the missions of the BSG in UNIFIL, in particular the water tankers and their crew. In RDF Covid Response, Tony O'Brien speaks with Dr Mathew McCauley, also a serving Comdt in the Army Reserve. Mathew speaks about the Army

Reserve's response to the Covid crisis and about his own career to date.

In Cadetship 2019 - 2021 we have a feature about what it's like to participate in Cadetship training from three different perspectives.

The ARW has provided us with an article on SOFEVAL, Special Operations Evaluation, an insight into the up-to-date practices of the ARW training. This issue we have an article from May 2001 about the Gustav submachine gun. Part 2 of Walking into a Healthy Lifestyle from Sgt Thomas Deveraux features on pages 24-25.

Pte Lukasz Gancarz provides us with a very interesting interview with an American helicopter pilot from the Vietnam War in Chickenhawk.

Along with all these features you'll also find our regulars, Headspace and Timing from PSS, Internal Comms from Lt Austin Doyle, Military Fitness from Sgt Mick Lennon and our Book Reviews.

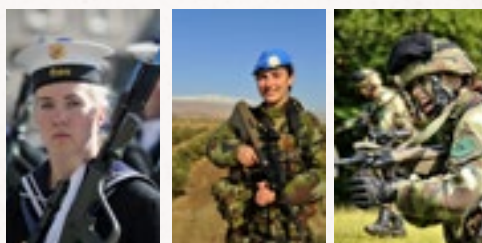
Our Curragh Pens competition continues this month, which is running for a limited time, and could see you win one of five unique handcrafted pens - kindly provided to us by Bill Dooley of Curragh Pens. See page 4 for further details.

Many thanks to all our contributors and we hope to continue producing the magazine, that we know you've enjoyed over the years, throughout 2021.

## Request for Information

I am creating a pictorial chronology of Women in the Defence Forces to mark 40 years of service. While the book will be predominately a photographic record, I'd also like to include some vignettes and anecdotal records of life in DF. Anybody who would like to be included in the book is strongly encouraged to make contact with me via [renken91@gmail.com](mailto:renken91@gmail.com). The book will feature the following topics - though this list is not exhaustive - early days following the foundation of the State, the Army Nursing Corps, change in legislation late 1970s, first eight cadets, first platoon, first apprentices, second platoon, integrated training from 1994, overseas, sport, family service (siblings, parent/daughter) and present day. I will need and would greatly appreciate members of the first two platoons from 1981 and 1990 to get in touch to educate me on their experiences, as having joined in 94 myself, I am somewhat familiar with life in DF since then! I would also like access to photos from those early days if people can share with me and I will conduct interviews with volunteers who are keen to be featured. This will be a publication that we can

all take pride in and be a part of so I really would urge people to get in touch. My publication date is aimed at mid-summer and by then hopefully we can hold an event to celebrate 40 years without Covid-19 spoiling play. Thanks in advance.



**«To command is to serve, nothing more and nothing less»**

— Andre Malraux

**Sgt Karl Byrne – (Stand-in) Editor.**



# NOTICEBOARD

## Foreman-Aftman ARW SOFQ Test

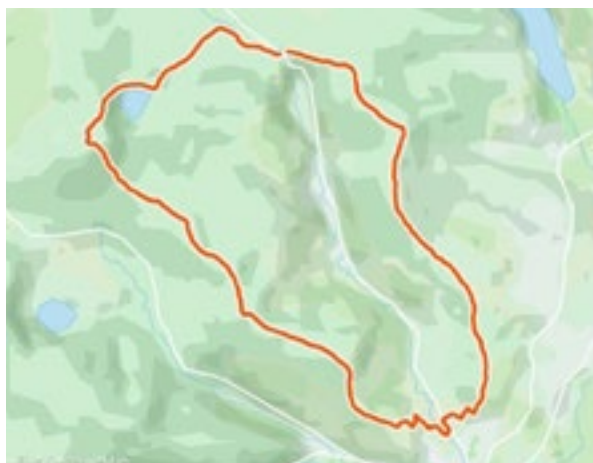
The Army Ranger Wing SOFQ article recently published on the members area of [military.ie](https://www.military.ie/!D6YXIN) (available here-<https://www.military.ie/!D6YXIN>) explains some of the qualifying tests required during Ranger Selection. We at An Cosantóir decided that this might be a perfect opportunity for you to go and find out for yourself what this test might be like. A very challenging and rewarding day is guaranteed, whether completed with the 45lbs/20kg (plus water and rations) for our younger and fitter readers or as a tough hillwalk for us outside of the ARW selection demographic (Don't forget your compass, map (sheet 56), first aid kit, whistle, torch, fully charged mobile phone, sturdy walking boots and your usual warm and waterproof gear).

The route begins (and ends) at Tonlague Car Park, located on the road between Sally Gap and Laragh, just at Glenmacness Waterfall. There is no gentle beginning and this challenging walk, with nearly 1000m of ascent, begins straight out of the carpark. From the carpark we head directly to the col between Kanturk/Brown Mountain and Scarr, then follow the spur due south to ascend Scarr (641m), you'll need to stop here to catch your breath and on a clear day you can see north as far as the Sugar Loaf and views over Vartry Reservoir. From Scarr you continue due south, heading downhill toward Paddock Hill and on to join the Wicklow Way, highlighted by the yellow markers. The Wicklow way takes you across the Military Road (R115) just outside of Laragh and to the lowest part of the route (170m), a very scenic pedestrian bridge over the Glenmacness River (which later joins the Avonmore, Avonbeg and Avoca rivers before entering the Sea at Arklow). We depart the Wicklow Way, taking a right at the second cross roads (be aware that different versions of sheet 56 show different track patterns) after the bridge to enter back onto Brockagh Mountain through a marked gate, following the spur North to .470 and onward to Brockagh Mountain, taking in the views of the Spink and the Glendalough Lakes to the south. It is only at Brockagh Mountain (.557) that you really encounter the first intimidating view of that steep ascent to Tonlague. Continue North West following the high ground, here the terrain is tough going and potentially very difficult in fog (Take a bearing to be sure).

Taking off a few layers at the base of Tonlague is advisable as you begin the ascent to 817m. The thoughts of doing this on tired legs really hits home and I can see why this single test results in 40% of SOFQ failures during Module 1. On arrival at the peak you will find a Triangulation Point. This concludes the «Test» section of the walk. From here you can see the entire span of the Wicklow mountains from Lugnaquilla (925m) out to the sea. But for a special view, and some shelter, take a walk over to view Lough Ouler, a famously heart shaped lake. Our top tip here is to take a bearing from the Triangulation point at Tonlague, it is very easy to head off in the wrong direction, even in fine weather, and find yourself accidentally heading towards Stoney Top (.714) to the north and a significant further walk back to the Car Park! Take a minute as you look over Lough Ouler to look east to see your start point at the Car Park and also the first section of your route, up Scarr Mountain. The route home is completed by following the spurs on either side of Lough Ouler and joining the Lough Brook river, where a trail will lead you down to the Car Park. The total route was 23km and was completed in a moving time of 5hrs and 32 minutes. The «Test» section took us 4hrs and 19 minutes. Why don't you challenge a good friend and give it a try together this summer? If you do complete the walk then please tag An Cosantóir on your social media to let us know how you got on. Finally, best of luck to all who are considering SOFQ in 2021.

For higher resolution map please click the link:

[www.military.ie/!D6YXIN](https://www.military.ie/!D6YXIN)



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# ON PARADE

May  
June

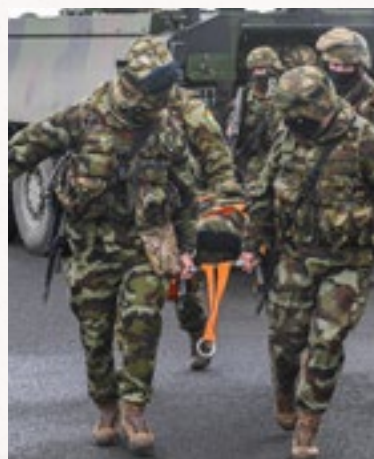
2021

## 118<sup>th</sup> BN UNIFIL MRE

Photos by Sgt Colum Lawlor & A/M Sean Foley



Photo Album of the 118th BN UNIFIL MRE can be found at the follow link: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157718922831277/with/51111188338>





# 118<sup>th</sup> Bn UNIFIL COS Review

Photos by A/M Sam Gibney



Photo Album of the 118th BN UNIFIL COS Review can be found at the follow link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157718933420762>





## Potential NCO's CSE Cathal Brugha Bks

Photos by A/M Sam Gibney



Photo Album of the Potential NCO's can be found at the follow link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157718604176901>





# 63<sup>rd</sup> INF GP UNDOF Mission Readiness Exercise

Photos by A/M Sean Foley



Photo Album of the 63rd INF GP UNDOF MRE can be found at the follow link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157718508957316>







# DF COMMISSION

By Tony O'Brien

Contributions to the public consultation on the Commission on the Defence Forces are being examined to see what points and suggestions have been made, regarding the future of the Defence Forces. The public consultation ended on March 19th.

The Commission on the Defence Forces was established in December 2020 on foot of a commitment given in the Programme for Government, set out by the Coalition Government. It was announced by the Minister for Defence and Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD. The Commission has been charged with carrying out a wide-ranging review of all aspects of the Defence Forces and developing a longer-term vision beyond 2030.

In announcing the set up of the Commission, Minister Coveney said it underpinned the Government's commitment to ensuring that the Defence Forces are fit for purpose, both in terms of meeting immediate requirements and also in terms of the longer-term vision. In establishing this Commission, which contains national and international high-level expertise and experience, he said the Government was seeking to ensure that the outcome will be a Defence Forces that is "agile, flexible and adaptive in responding to dynamic changes in the security environment, including new and emerging threats and technologies."

The Minister noted that the Terms of Reference require that the Commission's overall approach will be guided and informed by both the White Paper on Defence 2015 and the White Paper Update 2019, which set out Ireland's overall Defence Policy approach. This is against a backdrop of the high-level defence goal to provide for the military defence of the State, contribute to national and international peace and security and fulfil all other roles assigned by Government. This fits within the broader context of the protection of Ireland's defence and security interests nationally and internationally.

Under its Terms of Reference, the Commission will take account of Ireland's particular defence requirements, including its strong international commitment in the overseas domain as well as the particular roles of the Defence Forces in the domestic security environment which itself continues to evolve. It will consider and recommend the appropriate structure and size of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) and the Reserve Defence Force (RDF). This will encompass consideration of appropriate capabilities, structures and staffing for the Army, and its brigade structure; the Air Corps and the Naval Service along with the appropriate balance and disposition of personnel and structures across a joint force approach in the land, air, maritime, cyber, intelligence

and space domains. With the Reserve Defence Force, the Commission will consider a wide range of options and will make recommendations to better leverage the capabilities of the RDF in their supports to the PDF and to make service in the RDF a more attractive option.

The most appropriate governance and effective high-level command and control structures in the Defence Forces will also be looked at. In addition, the Commission will examine the evolution of all remuneration systems and structures currently in place in the Defence Forces, noting what the Programme for Government states in relation to a future Permanent Pay Review Body.

Upon completion of the Commission's work, the Minister for Defence will consult with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform on the establishment of a permanent pay review body, reflecting the unique nature of military service in the context of the public service. All recommendations by the Commission or the successor body and their implementation must be consistent with national public sector wage policy.

The Commission will also set out a strategic perspective on HR policies, and associated strategies, including grievance processes and consideration of appropriate structural flexibility, to fulfil the requirements of military capabilities for a more agile and adaptive Defence Forces in a manner congruent with modern society, and in light of the prevailing dynamics of the labour market, while consistent with public sector pay and personnel policy.

It will recommend appropriate turnover and retention approaches, considering work undertaken to date, and international best practice, to deliver the capabilities required of a modern military force. In addition, it will recommend approaches to recruitment, including identifying military career options that could create a more diverse, gender-balanced, flexible and responsive force, with a system of career progression to meet the recommended force structures and disposition.

The Commission is chaired by Mr Aidan O'Driscoll, former Secretary General of the Department of Justice, and previously Secretary General of the Department of Agriculture. Other members have been chosen to ensure the optimum range of expertise in key areas including management, HR, security policy, public service, as well as both domestic and international military expertise.

The Commission, which is supported by an independent Secretariat, has a mandate from Government to report by December 2021.



# Adrian O'Driscoll interview on the DF Commission

By Tony O'Brien

As a former FCA man, Adrian O'Driscoll is uniquely qualified to head up the Commission on the Defence Forces. "When I got the call from the Minister I didn't hesitate. I have a great affection and commitment to the Defence Forces".

He knows he is facing a daunting task in his review and recommendations for the future of the Irish Defence Forces, but believes the team which makes up the Commission will bring vast experience to the job ahead. "We have very experienced Irish and overseas military people, along with people from academia with a background in security and defence", he said, adding that there was other senior Civil Servant and HR people from the public and private sector.

In a Defence Forces podcast interview with Capt Cian Clancy, Mr O'Driscoll talked about the wide range of issues which the Commission has to deal with and how they plan to tackle those. "It is a very strong Commission, these are people used to making tough decisions. It is not going to be a timid Commission but one that knows its own mind and will make the recommendations it wishes to make."

He emphasises that they are "anchored firmly in the Defence Forces of the future" looking at what kind of Defence Forces is needed for the 21st century. He added: "We have been asked to look at structures, capabilities and staff for the future." Mr O'Driscoll added: "There are challenges out there. Some of them are old challenges in the defence and security area. However some are very new and very different and require different approaches, different technologies, structures, training and skills. We have to move on and look to the future."



## S3EP1 - COMMISSION ON DEFENCE FORCES

DF Podcast special edition with Mr Adrian O'Driscoll, Head of Commission on the Defence Forces.

On the show we discuss the work of the Commission, covering terms of reference, composition and approach.

The Irish Defence Forces Podcast aims to provide interesting content on all aspects of the Irish military. It is a production of the Defence Forces Public Relations Branch.



One of the issues a lot of people are concerned about is that of pay. "People are obviously interested in whether or not we are looking at remuneration. We don't have a remit to look at pay rates, which is a whole separate process, but we have been asked to look at remuneration systems and structures including the various allowances, which are quite complicated."

Saying the Commission had very good engagement from the various staff organisations, Mr O'Driscoll said they had had over 100 submissions and this was very welcome: "Public consultation is extremely important in that it gives people an opportunity to put ideas and thoughts to us. While we have a brilliant Commission, we don't know everything, so good ideas can come that way."

However, COVID – not surprisingly – has curtailed the Commission's plans to engage directly with Defence Force members. "I really want to get out there and meet people of all ranks in their natural environment, in their barracks, in

other locations. COVID is a problem for us so I want to try a mixture of physical visits and virtual visits." There may also make use of webinars.

Retention and recruitment are other major issues which the Commission will consider. "There is a huge range of issues under this heading. Career progression is extremely important. Then there are gender issues along with diversity and the various HR issues."

Structure is also an important matter to be dealt with by the Commission. "Command and Control is called out as a specific issue in our Terms of Reference. But there are issues of structures at the whole Defence Forces level and also in the Army, Navy and Aer Corps," he said.

"There are a whole set of issues around these structures that I think are absolute key. In fact, I would perhaps see them as the first issue in terms of the overall overview on the future of the Defence Forces. You really need to get a clear sense of what kind of structure you think is necessary for the 21st century."

The Reserve Defence Forces will also figure. "Actually, I think the Reserve is hugely important and it is an area we need to attend. There is widespread recognition of this so we will certainly be giving it that attention." Mr O'Driscoll pointed out the need for all kinds of specialisations and technical skills in the Defence Forces saying: "Some of these technical skills are present in the private and public sector and some of those people are very willing and happy to serve in the Reserve Defence Force, so it is another way of tapping into those skills."

As regards the Commission's final recommendations, he said the report would be presented to the Minister. "It is a report to Government, it is then for them to decide whether to implement the recommendations. Government will typically set up some sort of implementation structure, but the crucial step I think is their response to our recommendations."

<https://www.military.ie/!B9SU9R>





# LT CDR MARY LANE

Lt Cdr Mary Lane seen here posing with her husband and son at the decommissioning of the LE Emer

By Tony O'Brien  
Photos by Lt Cdr Mary Lane

"I did not come from a military family but I certainly married into one", explains Lt Cdr Mary Elizabeth Lane.

She tells An Cosantoir: "My husband is LtCdr (Ret'd.) Owen Mullowney who was Captain of LE Emer and his father – my father-in-law – is, Lt Col (Ret'd.) A.J. Mullowney of the Military Police."

But then Mary knew from an early age that she wanted to do something different with her life. "In fourth year in college studying electrical electronic engineering, I remember doing my final year project and being in the lab for hours at a time everyday and thinking to myself: 'oh my god, when I graduate is this it, am I going to be stuck in a lab all day every day, 9-to-5 never leaving it.' I thought there has to be something else," she recalls.

That something else turned out to be a fulfilling career in the Naval Service. But it came about by chance: "I just happened to be looking at an Engineering magazine and they were advertising for the Army. I wasn't interested in the Army but the Navy, I could see radios, radar etc, that would all apply to electrical electronic engineering.

"I contacted the Naval Service and funnily enough they were going to start a campaign to recruit different types of engineers. That was it for me. My mind was set, my goal was set and I was delighted when I did get the call and got in. "Basically, I just wanted something different, I wanted a challenge. An adventure I suppose, and I certainly got that."

Nineteen years later, Mary has absolutely no regrets about her career choice. Indeed, she remains excited by each day's work, the challenges and experiences that lie ahead and the rest of a very happy and fulfilling career."

She is based at HQ in Haulbowline where her current role is OIC MMU (Officer in Charge, Maintenance Management Unit).

But she is moving to a different appointment in May. Her new job will be as OIC Communications Technical Section. "Some people might be put off by a regular switching of jobs but I am really looking forward to a different challenge," Mary explains, "It can be a bit of a disappointment leaving people you have worked with for two years and a role you are familiar with, but six months in and you feel the same about the new appointment."

When she first joined of course, there was extensive, sometimes demanding training but it was all part of the adventure for Mary. "The first few times I went to sea I was being 'marinised', as I put it. I was sent on the LE Aisling and the LE Niamh and it was basically to get used to seagoing and life at sea."

Over the years she has had many roles and experiences, a variety which is one of the joys of the serving in the Naval Service, according to Mary. "In the Navy you never have one job: I was a Health and Safety Officer; I was a Fisheries Boarding Officer and when the ship was put into refit I was project manager."

She adds: "On any given day you can be doing completely different things. Every two years we actually change job. In the role I am in I can be in the college instructing, I can be in the lab if I choose, I can be doing IT support - basically a whole range of jobs! I have my basic qualification, but the way it is applied here is bringing me to new ranges that I never thought possible."

"The first time I actually filled an appointment was on board the LE Eithne as an Electrical Officer. You are in charge of a team of four technicians and are responsible for everything from the maintenance and operation of radars to navigation, sat equipment, lights, generators, etc. It is a responsible job."





Mary seen here with President Michael D. Higgins & his wife Sabina visiting Cobh for the commemoration of the Lusitania

She also mentions the important work the Navy does in fisheries protection saying people looking at a map of Ireland just see the land mass. "Ninety per cent of what Ireland owns is under the sea and it is the Navy's job to protect that." While defence of the State is the Naval Service's (and the Defence Forces' generally) primary objective, fisheries protection is the "bread and butter" of the Navy. "In any one year I think we will do between 900 and 1,000 boardings. With nine ships, that is quite an achievement."

Mary tells of her first boarding, "I was an Officer Under Training on the LE Aisling and it was actually a welcome diversion from seasickness to be speeding across the sea in a rib with the rest of the boarding party and then going on board a fishing trawler. It was so different to looking after equipment on board ship or my land-based duties." The fishermen, she said, "wouldn't exactly be pleased to see you but they wouldn't be aggressive, they knew we were just carrying out our duties and protecting Irish waters and enforcing the regulations. But taking part in something like that was also important in term of your own self-confidence."

Mary talks with enthusiasm of all her experiences in the Navy and is keen to emphasise that the Naval Service is an equal opportunities employer. "We are equal, there is just not enough of us. The problem is recruiting young women. If they are in secondary school or university and looking at a future career, they don't see enough female role models in the Navy. That's something we have to look at."

Recruitment to the Naval Service (and the Defence Forces generally) she said is ongoing but the real issue is retention. "The big issue is holding on to people, poor wages combined with the fact that you could be away from family for long periods means jobs in civilian life can seem a lot more attractive. Admittedly, it's somewhat easier for me because I am mostly land-based."

However, Mary is keen to emphasise that young people (women and men) looking at what they might do with their lives would find life in the Naval Service answers a lot of their questions because of the variety of roles and unique experiences it offers.

Every single appointment in the Defence Forces is open to either gender, she points out. "There are no restrictions on the jobs that women can apply for, and it's all merit based. On every recruitment team, on every interview board there are females. They know that by increasing their female



Mary exits the water at a Naval service Triathlon in Haulbowline

membership they will increase their operational capability. Just as in the private sector, having a balance of males and females is to the benefit of the company. It's the same in the case of the Defence Forces."

Her advice to young women in their careers, and in life generally, is to work at a job that gives them satisfaction and a challenge. "There is no point in sticking in an area or a job that you don't like for whatever reason. I think it's one of the best reasons to have a job where you love coming to work. You have to enjoy what you do and have a sense of pride and satisfaction."

Improved family-friendly policies are also helping both men and women. "I'm very fortunate in that I have a very supportive husband, he is ex-military himself, so he has a full understanding of my role. Other people aren't as fortunate and the Defence Forces have stepped up to provide support and that is to their benefit as they spend so much time and money recruiting and training people that to retain them is the sensible thing."

And is there ever resentment amongst her male colleagues about having a woman in command? "The Naval Service is known for having a good sense of humour. When you are on a small ship with 40 personnel for four weeks at a time there is a lot of banter, so I don't think you would join unless you were able for that. I don't think you would stay anyway."

And that is certainly the case with Lt Cdr Lane: "I am in Haulbowline a long time at this stage and you tend to get used to it and think this is normal. Then on another day you are driving over the bridge to Haulbowline, you can see across to Cobh and cruise liners coming in, one of our ships heading out on patrol and another back coming in, there are recruits marching on the square and you realise how lucky you are."

Over her 19 years Mary has many memories but a special one was the visit of President Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina some years ago, to mark the sinking of the 'Lusitania.' "I was Liaison Officer for Mrs Higgins and it was a very special day. That's another thing about this job, the people you get to meet. I was Liaison Officer on another occasion for the visit of the head of the US Coastguard."

As to the future, Mary - who is mother to 10-year-old Conor - says she is looking forward to it with the same excitement as on her first day. "I am very happy in my work and grateful for the wonderful experiences it has given me."



# NEONATAL AIR AMBULANCE

## THE FIRST EVER IRISH AIR AMBULANCE TO LONDON HELIPORT

By Lt Col David Browne

Photos provided by Lt Col David Browne

Flying the London helicopter routes is not for the faint-hearted and requires specialised training. The core routes traverse either side of the River Thames right through the city centre, with all helicopters flying exactly at the same heights and only separated by the width of the river.



An aerial view of London Battersea Heliport beside the Thames river

The heli-lane route in from the West passes directly under landing aircraft on finals into Heathrow Airport with minimal separation, and involves flying exactly along ground features at various stepped heights, which change frequently. When we say precision is required, Air Traffic Controllers in London monitor the helicopters flying the routes. If they see a minor discrepancy of a helicopter being say 30 feet higher or lower than it is supposed to be, or 50 metres from the exact ground track, a warning will be given. If the helicopter is either

not seen to improve accuracy or commit a repeat offence, the helicopter is given a radar heading and instructed to immediately leave the airspace. Helicopters being ordered to leave the airspace occurs regularly, with the standards of precision demanded ensuring separation of aircraft in this busy airspace, including in poor weather. An alternative route for twin-engine helicopters starts from the North of the city and then joins the River Thames. The route to be flown depends on ATC requirements at the time.

London Heliport at Battersea is located in the city centre on the South bank of the River Thames, and flying to it requires using the helicopter lanes. Over the years I had brought quite a lot of Air Corps pilots into it for training. A condition of being accepted to use the heliport is that the pilot flying there for the first time must be accompanied by another pilot



Buckingham Palace from a different view



'Irish 277' on the pad

who has previously been there. When requesting permission to land there, you must give the name of the pilot on board who has been there previously, and you then wait while they check their database. Even after landing, the new pilot must attend a mandatory area and procedures brief to better equip them for the next occasion when they may be flying there by themselves. Only then is their name added to the list of approved pilots.

An advantage of London Heliport for Air Corps Air Ambulance purposes is the distance from the heliport to the two main children's hospitals in London: Great Ormond Street and King's College Hospital. Both of these hospitals are approximately 15 minutes under 'blue lights' from the heliport, which is a vast improvement when compared to the more usual landing locations of either RAF Northolt or Heathrow, which are both approximately 1 hour 15 minutes to the hospitals. For a critically ill child or baby requiring emergency transport to a specialist hospital for life-saving treatment, this



difference in the reduction of ground-transport time can make a vast difference to the patient.

On Saturday morning 15 October 2016, I was the duty AW139 P1 (aircraft commander) on standby when I received a call at 10:45 that a potential neonatal air ambulance to London might be requested. I alerted the rest of the flight crew, Lt Neil Dunne and Sgt Alan Martin and met them in the Helicopter Operations Room to begin planning the flight while our two helicopter technicians began preparing the standby aircraft, AW279. Within a few minutes the task went from 'potential' to 'live', and I contacted the consultant from the Coombe Hospital, Dr Jan Franta to offer him a transit directly into London City Centre (at that point I didn't know the destination hospital, and therefore whether the heliport would be appropriate). Jan has been involved with neonatal air ambulance transfers for many years, and was well aware of the lengthy ambulance time from Northolt or Heathrow, so he jumped at the idea of landing somewhere with only a 15 minute transit time to the hospital. We were also to carry two neonatal nurses, Geraldine Walsh and Anita Cako, and of course our little VIP passenger, Sophia Murphy.

At 11:25 we could hear an ambulance siren approaching



Westminster Abbey & the London Eye from 1,500ft

Baldonnell, and a minute later the HSE ambulance was escorted over to the waiting AW139 by the Military Police. Within a few minutes the incubator was secured into the aircraft cabin, all oxygen and other medical systems and equipment checked functioning correctly, the medical crew briefed, baby Sophia comfortable, and then we were airborne, heading straight for London.

Because it was a Saturday, the military firing ranges along the Welsh coast were inactive, and so we were able to fly straight through them. However, a Saturday also meant that there was a significant amount of general aviation light aircraft up on pleasure flights all over the UK, which don't always appear at the altitude they say they're at. Luckily the weather was initially very good, and so we were able to fly high above these 'weekend warriors' until getting close to London, when the weather deteriorated significantly. We were directed to the Brent Reservoir for the Northern join to the heli routes, and had to dodge clouds and poor visibility along the way. At one point some large low clouds lay directly in our path (going down to about 300 feet above the rooftops below) and so we

had to request permission from Heathrow radar to move 300 metres left to avoid it. This permission was tentatively given, but a few seconds later as we passed the low clouds, the controller asked how many more seconds we needed to be off course. We were being watched closely!

We landed at Battersea at 13:41, and were met by an NHS



A wider view on downtown London

ambulance and police escort, and a little after 14:00 the baby was arriving into Great Ormond Street Hospital. Between the AW139's fast cruise speed of 150 knots indicated airspeed and the proximity of the heliport to the city hospital (and our ability to use it), the total time from leaving Baldonnell to arriving in the doors of the hospital was a little over 2 hours. This air ambulance represented the first time ever that an Irish air ambulance flew directly into London City Centre by way of Battersea Heliport. The various training flights to the heliport were worth it as we heard that baby Sophia had been delivered safely and comfortably to the intensive care unit in preparation for her operation.

After re-fuelling at the heliport, we made use of the facility's coffee and snacks area and prepped for the flight home, joined for a time by members of the band 'One Direction' (or 'One Dimension' as I mistakenly called them) while they waited for their helicopter. A couple of hours later the medical team arrived back at the heliport and we departed for Baldonnell, landing back in Dublin at 18:15, having flown the latter part of the flight home on night vision goggles. Jan and the team were delighted with the outcome of the transfer, remarking that for some critically ill children, the ability to use Battersea was a 'game changer'.

We were happy in that we had been given an opportunity to successfully test and prove the effectiveness of using London Heliport with AW139s on emergency air ambulances for the first time, and paved a path for future such transfers.

Lt Col David Browne is an AW139 commander and currently the Officer Commanding Air Corps College.

Read more about the AW139 here -

<https://www.military.ie/!4AY9Y4>





## A SINGLE DROP

A Water Container being loaded into the Water Truck

By Lt David Kelly, BSG 117 Inf Bn UNIFIL  
Photos by Lt David Kelly

The nuance of the noun is often the seminal distinction of a soldier. A green, black and brown uniform, complimented by the tri colour, graces the shoulders of every member of the Irish contingent in UNIFIL. However, the skill set, experience and educational accomplishments of the individual are the reasons why they have been selected to serve.

The Irish Polish Battalion is comprised of four companies. The mission design provides two operational companies, namely infantry and reconnaissance, complemented by a HQ staff and a Battalion Support Group. The former are undoubtedly the pillars of the mission: the parades of

weapons, armoured vehicles and advanced equipment will easily steal the attention of the cameras. However, behind the cameras are a collection of individuals that have been selected to serve for roles not traditionally associated with a soldier.

The Battalion Support Group (hereinafter BSG) is a combination of society's most skilled individuals. These include Doctors, Engineers, Mechanics, Fire Fighters and arguably the most important individual - the barista. Thus, the BSG is a congregation of people designed to facilitate the mission, with the added forbearance of any other soldier within the Battalion.

The Company acts as the catalyst to the mission, while the operational elements conduct patrols, convoys, provide assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces, and monitor some of the Lebanon's most conflict-stricken regions. The BSG provides the backdrop for operational efficiency. The hidden soldiers contribute the mission's mechanics, who enable vehicles to patrol the elevated terrain of the south Lebanon. Meanwhile the weapon specialists guarantee the proficiency of every soldier's weapon, their last line of defence. All whilst the medical staff implicitly quell the internal echo that it only takes one incident, or one act, on one day.

The proclivity to assume that life's most basic amenities, such as water, are instant and plentiful is far from the reality for the United Nations Post 2-45. Arguably, the anecdotal depiction of the Irish Soldiers acquisition of a single drop of water will accurately define the framework required to provide the most rudimentary of conveniences. An alarm will likely wake the driver of the day, unable to roll over and hit the snooze button, the soldier will bear their uniform and collect their weapon. On the walk to the thirty-six tonne armoured mammoth that is the water truck, the majority will consume a freshly brewed coffee with hope for a quiet day. The driver will mount the water truck accompanied by the security element of the patrol, commonly referred to as a shotgun due to the seat they occupy in the vehicle.

A short journey to the Tactical Operations Cell will offer a security brief, it will likely be short and to the point, a mere summary of the security threat within the area of operations. On completion, the parties will travel north for roughly 20 kilometres to the designated water well. The dialogue on route will more often than not include a brief history of the area. The conversation captures the contrast in age and experience that commonly separates the drivers and the security element; the discussion is draped in the legacy and rich history of the Irish soldier in the Lebanon. They are often



The MOWAG fleet that is serviced by the BSG's mechanics



The Water Trucks at 0600 prior to 9 daily rotations



reminded of the previously stated echo, which are the tragic tales of the 47 Irish soldiers that have lost their lives while serving in the town and villages on route.

On arrival at the well, both driver and shotgun throw a casual salute to the Malaysian security element on the gate, a quick check of credentials and passing comments about the weather sees both parties on their way. The task takes no longer than an hour, the driver will inspect the well in the knowledge that nine trucks will endeavour to draw water from this single source prior to the sun being set. The water will be pumped in to the back of the truck and the ten-thousand litres will be signed for with the stroke of a pen. The routine is so well established the drivers can time the process of filling up to the last few seconds. As such, the laborious task of climbing up and down the truck in an effort to check the water levels is a rookie's errand, one merely relies on the time that has



The BSG working with their Polish counter-parts

passed, somewhere around 34 minutes.

On completion, both parties will make their way back to the camp in the knowledge that breakfast will likely be their second order of business. First, they must drop the water to the camp's well, where the eagerly waiting water engineer is set to treat the ten thousand litre delivery. The hard or "grey" water will be stored, treated and distributed around the camp, the process requires a team of plumbers, electricians and water specialists. The network is similar to that of a small town.

Meanwhile, the driver has undoubtedly gone for a well-deserved breakfast with the knowledge that the water truck must make two more runs before the day is done.

Finally, the driver and shotgun can enjoy the fruits of their labour, the end of the day offers a small opportunity to enjoy a somewhat warm shower for a maximum of 30 seconds and some eagerly anticipated downtime. It seems to be the small luxuries that have the greatest effect on these soldiers: a quick wave, a common complaint and a simple hot brew served by an eagerly



The missions mechanics servicing the 36 tonne Water Truck

awaiting ear to listen to the history of the day and the speculation of what tomorrow might bring. The single drop of water requires an alarm clock, a driver, security, a team of engineers and a comrade or two.

Undoubtedly from the outside looking in, the collection of individual skill sets would discombobulate an unacquainted individual. However, the internal working of the company offers a unique and diverse perspective on how to complete the mission. The providence of initiatives is premised in the multiple years of experience garnered from generations of soldiers that have toured numerous countries. Thus, the nuance of the noun soldier is the seminal distinction when defining a member of the Battalion Support Group.



Pte Kilbride collecting 10,000 litres of water for UNP 2-45



# RDF COVID RESPONSE

By Tony O'Brien

They are sometimes known as “citizen soldiers” but to those involved with the Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) it is much more serious than that. Their commitment to serving in support of the Permanent Defence Forces (PDF) – and their country – is total.

And if proof were ever needed of that commitment and dedication, then COVID19 has provided the perfect example. This is no more evident than in the RDF personnel who have responded to the pandemic, including those serving in the Medical Corps.

## RDF and Covid19

“Within weeks of the onset of COVID19, reservists were sought to participate in the Defence Forces’ (DF) national response to combating the virus”, said Dr Mathew McCauley, Consultant Military Clinical Psychologist with the RDF, adding “And they certainly stepped up.”

“The response was across the board, with reservists contributing from various skills-sets, disciplines and professions” he added. Dr McCauley was quick to point out that he was only one of a number of fellow reservists from across the DF who deployed during the pandemic as part of Operation Fortitude, stating “These reservists include highly capable multi-disciplinary professionals, such as clinicians from some of Ireland’s major hospitals.”

The Medical Corps is one component of the RDF. Comprising the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve, the RDF has an established strength of around 4,000 men and women, with an effective strength of approximately 1,600. “The RDF makes an important contribution to the defence capabilities of the country”, explained Dr McCauley, “We serve on a part-time basis, remaining operationally ready to step up when needed.”

He added: “Members of the RDF make themselves available for the defence of the nation and readily serve when called upon during times of crises, such as the COVID19 pandemic. Proud Irish men and women are willing to give up their time, including career and family time, for military training and service.”



Capt McCauley

## Reservist Profile

Dr McCauley, who holds the rank of Captain in the Army Reserve, was always destined to have some kind

of military role in life. His grandfather served during the War of Independence, while his father and other members of his family served in the US and UK militaries, with some serving during both world wars.

The Dubliner left Ireland in the early 1990s and did not return home until 20 years later. During his time away, he served in the British Army Reserve in a non-medical capacity. After training at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine and the NHS, he served for many years as a clinician with the US Department of Defence and UK Ministry of Defence, including six years with the USAF’s 48th Medical Group and the 501st Combat Support Wing. Upon returning home, he received his commission as an officer in the Army Reserve. He has since fulfilled a number of roles in the Reserve within DFHQ and the Office of Director Medical Branch, St Brigid’s Military Hospital.



Capt McCauley with RDF colleague, Sgt McGovern, during Operation Fortitude

He provides the DF with clinical, consultation, education and research support to command. During the past year, he joined fellow RDF and PDF colleagues in serving alongside personnel from the HSE and NAS, delivering frontline clinical services; and training DF personnel as regards psychological health ahead of their deployment on COVID19 duties in civilian settings. Dr McCauley is currently overseeing a research study on the mental health effects of COVID19 across the DF (in collaboration with Trinity College Dublin, TCD). He is also a member of the DF’s Mental Health and



Wellbeing Strategy Group, in which he contributes to clinical research ethics and policies, along with the development of operational mental health resources for DF personnel.

His civilian roles include being Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology in TCD and Consultant Clinical Psychologist at Blackrock Clinic, which are also rooted in his experience in the field of military psychology. In recent years, he has provided psychological assessment services for pilot selection to the Air Corps and post-deployment clinical mental health assessments for DF personnel returning from overseas' deployment. A former guest-editor of the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps, he currently functions as a clinical researcher within NATO's Science and Technology Organisation. He also recently served as a trainer and advisor during the US military's Operation Bushmaster.



Capt McCauley with US military colleagues during Operation Bushmaster

## RDFRA

Dr McCauley sits on the National Executive (NE) of the Reserve Defence Forces Representative Association (RDFRA), which involves representing the interests of RDF members, especially during COVID19. "The NE team is hopeful that legislative changes will be made in the near future, assuring that - as in other jurisdictions when reservists are called up - their civilian employers will be required to keep their jobs open for them." He added that the Minister for Defence, Simon Coveney TD, is in favour of improving the status of reservists and hopes to make progress on it.

Dr McCauley encourages all RDF personnel to consider becoming members of RDFRA, which continues to work on addressing the concerns of reservists in support of the DF's operational requirements. He has worked with NE colleagues in providing input for the Association's submission to the

Commission on the DF. "RDFRA has proposed significant improvements to the RDF, both in terms of numbers and speciality structures" he noted, adding that one area seen in need of progress is the option of utilizing reservists in an official capacity outside the State. "This development will improve support to our PDF colleagues, in which we'll function as an operational force multiplier both in terms of specific skills sets and as a surge resource" he stated.



Capt McCauley representing RDFRA at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence in Leinster House, Dublin

## Conclusion

**"This is an excellent time to join the RDF and there is always a need for new recruits"**

noted Dr McCauley. As for himself, he looks forward to many more years' service in the RDF. "I am committed to the Reserve, as it remains a crucially important resource for the Defence Forces and the country", he stated.



# CADETSHIP 2019 - 2021

By Tony O'Brien

Photos by A/M Sam Gigney, Mark Pollock and Air Corps Photo Section



A Cadet practicing her war cry and bayonet drills on tactical training

To ensure the Defence Forces is well set for the future, there is a need for a regular 'pipeline' of young officers coming through. That is why the Cadet course is so important.

It is good to report that not only is there a plentiful supply of motivated young men and women joining, but their commitment and enthusiasm is of the highest standard. A batch of 75 young officers were commissioned in March, one of the highest numbers ever. Of the 75, 70 were Irish and five Maltese. Plus a welcome detail within that was the figure of 12 female officers. It takes 17 months to turn a young, sometimes nervous, civilian into a well-prepared, responsible officer of the Defence Forces. Helping them along the way were between 20 and 25 training staff at any one time.



Commandant Aidan Ryan

## THE CLASS OFFICER

"We would have started off with 102 cadets, including Naval Service cadets. The Naval Cadets left after the first stage of training. Due to a range of different factors the number of officers for commissioning was 75," explained the man in charge of the course, Comdt Aidan Ryan, Class Officer of the 96th Cadet Class.

What he noted with the commissioned officers was their enthusiasm plus their robustness to literally stay the course: "The training requires somebody to love what they are doing; you can't be half-hearted. And these young men and

women certainly had that commitment." At the outset of the course, they go through basic military discipline, drills, weapons training etc. Then they move on to more tactical work, leadership training, public order training and weapons

instruction. "The syllabus is huge and they have a lot to learn", said Comdt Ryan.

Just like with every other walk of life, COVID 19 impacted the training. The usual weekend leave was cancelled because of the fear of bringing the virus into the school in the Military College in the Curragh Camp while the young trainee officers were also drafted in by the HSE to act as Contract Tracers on two occasions. "They worked as Contract Tracers



Sgt Sean Pollard of the Cadet School instructs a cadet while on tactical training

in March of last year and obviously they did such a good job that the HSE in effect head-hunted them in October again during the second wave", he said.

As to his own role, Comdt Ryan said the position is advertised and you have to apply, then there is an interview process. He later arrived in the college two months before the cadets to prepare, saying: "You are with them from start to finish, completing all aspects of training with them." He added: "It was a humbling experience. It was enjoyable from the point of view of access to these young people's lives. You get to see them grow and develop. But you learn along with them."

## THE INSTRUCTOR

The job of actually training and instructing the would-be officers fell to people like Lt Stephen Best from the Air Corps who said that an Officer Instructor's job was to ensure the training is carried out to the highest standard while also conducting continuous assessment of the young men and women. It was,



Lieutenant Stephen Best

he said, a mixture of practical exercises and classroom instruction. It ranged from tactical exercises in the Glen of Immal to coaching in public-speaking or dealing with a simulated military scenario.

Stephen and his fellow instructors set tasks for the trainees, ensuring these were carried out correctly and then assessed





A Cadet manoeuvres through a river trying to keep his rifle as dry as possible

how they all did. “We would be relatively hands-on in terms of the physical training”, he recalled, “there could be quite challenging physical conditions that the staff and students would have to face as the weather can change in minutes when on exercise. We were physically alongside them all the way and that was for a number of reasons, from assessment purposes to the off chance of an injury or emergency.”

He said that 75 was quite a large group of trainees. “A group that size is going to be a logistical challenge, but we just had to be adequately prepared. It requires a great level of attention to detail but when you are tasked with a job, you have to try and ensure it gets completed.” Stephen and his fellow instructors saw the young men and women come in on the very first day. “When they start off they are civilians and they have to be put into and develop a military mindset. They were nervous and quite shy on the first day, but fast forward 17 months and we could see they had become one big cohesive unit.”

He added: “I was there from the start and was one of the few to see them through the whole thing. I could see the changes they went through, mentally and physically. You always have some characters, some very serious, others less so but they were all focused and did what was required to the best of their ability.” By the end of it, Stephen says they were a good group overall. “I am confident they will make good officers and serve the Defence Forces well in the future.”



A recently commissioned officer offers a salute...



Cadets marching forward in line to receive their certificates

Stephen benefitted greatly from spending such a long time in the Cadet School adding: “Personally I enjoyed the experience. I take a lot of pride in seeing the improvement in someone through your efforts. Teaching them things and then later seeing them do those things well. I thoroughly enjoyed it and would not hesitate to do it again.”



Lieutenant Paul Condon as a cadet

## THE STUDENT

But what was it like to be a cadet going through the rigorous 17 months of instruction and training?

Lt Paul Condon found it tough but ultimately fulfilling. But then he wasn't quite like any raw recruit. The Newbridge man has military heritage: his father Col Liam Condon, recently retired having been Aide de Camp to President Michael

D Higgins. “It was a long and hard course – 17 months – it was tough and certainly tests you physically and mentally, but I kept the head down and, thankfully, got through it,” he said.

He explained how the course was in four phases. The first was essentially teaching them how to be a soldier, including physical fitness. Followed by lessons on tactics, then exercise including digging trenches etc and finally they were taught all about leadership skills. Paul remarked: “I thought it was tough and demanding. Some might not have lasted but I think we realised it was going to be worthwhile in the end.”

As well as the practical lessons learned, he found the Contract Tracing experience, which he and his fellow recruits had to go through twice over the 17 months, very rewarding. “We were making thousands of calls but if you caught one person and got them tested and helped them then it was very rewarding. I was happy to be doing something to help people at this time. Everyone in the class felt the same, we were grateful to be involved.”

Paul studied electronic engineering and is hoping to use those skills in the Ordnance Corps. Of course, it was only natural that he would follow in his proud father's footsteps. “I suppose it was natural, I grew up in the Curragh and was immersed in Army life so joining was always in my head”, Paul said as the young officer looks forward to a long career in the Defence Forces.

The 2021 Cadetship competition is now open -

<https://www.military.ie/!2D06VU>



COS Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM salutes Cadets of the Army and Air Corps during their commissioning parade

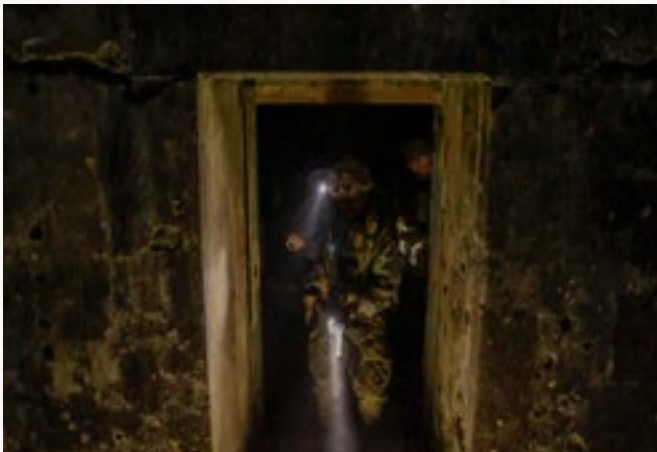


# NATO SOFEVAL

By ARW    Photos provided by ARW

## Background

The Army Ranger Wing (ARW) recently conducted a NATO Special Operations Evaluation (SOFEVAL). NATO Special Operations Evaluation (SOFEVAL) is “a tactical tool to modernise a unit, or a strategic tool to modernise a Defence



A member of the ARW carrying out Close Quarter Battle drills (CQB)

Forces” and was used to benchmark the current capabilities of the ARW and identify areas for capability improvement in line with international best practice and NATO SOF Standards.

Ireland’s relationship with NATO is set within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), including its Planning and Review Process (PARP). PARP is a mechanism for planning and capability development for Defence Forces deployment on Peace Support operations that allows for external review of defence capability and provision.



2 Air Corps helicopters carrying ARW troops into a training mission area in Baldonnel Aerodrome

## What are the benefits?

The highlighting of capability strengths and weaknesses is vital to development. Partaking in NATO SOFEVAL provides the ARW with access to NATO procedures and standards, as well as courses at NATO Special Operations School (NSOS). In the lead up to SOFEVAL, all staff underwent remote learning NSOS courses such as the NATO Special Operations Component Command (SOCC) staff course, SOF Intelligence and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) collection courses. With improved participation and engagement comes improved interoperability, capability and opportunities.



An AW 139 hovers over the drop off point after an ARW member fast roped down from the helicopter

## Jointness

Special operations are inherently joint in nature as a result of the requirement to operate across the land and maritime domains. Throughout the various operations conducted during the SOFEVAL exercises, the ARW was supported by the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service. These included Heli-borne vehicle interdictions, M-UAV’s as part of the ISR assets and Naval support during maritime sub-surface insertions. The capabilities of the Defence Forces are improved when the organisation can draw upon the strengths of an integrated SOF unit, as opposed to an isolated one.

Based out of Baldonnel, and co-located with the Air assets, the ARW were organised as a Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) in line with NATO Doctrine. It was in this SOTG HQ, where a significant portion of the evaluation focused on the SOTG HQ’s ability to make use of the SOF Decision Making Process (SDMP) and NATO Mission cycles such as F3EAD (the SOF targeting cycle). These systems are used to plan and execute the various operations and tasks exclusive to the Army Ranger Wing. These included Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance and Military Assistance.



An innovative solutions based approach was adapted to R&D the interoperability and C3 element of the SOTG. This involved the use of rotary wing and fixed wing assets from the Air Corps to assist the Special Operations Task Units (SOTU) to conduct SOF insertion methods such as Military Free Fall (MFF), Fast Roping and Heli-borne Vehicle interdictions. The PC-12 Spectre and Orbiter M-UAV were trialled and



Under the wash of the AW 139 an ARW member covers off in the direction of the threat

tested to ensure a Full Motion Video (FMV) live feed was available to the Tactical operations Centre (TOC) delivering an excellent Situational Awareness platform. This provided the SOTG Commander with a more informed decision making process, an increased capability with regard to battlefield management, a centralised communications platform and improved C3 solutions. All of these factors helped to maximise the potential for increased coordination, integration and harmonization of SOF effects.

## F3EAD: The SOF Targeting Process

The SOTG HQ utilised the SOF targeting process known as F3EAD. This stands for FIND-FIX-FINISH-EXPLOIT-ANALYSE-DISSEMINATE. The critical strength of the F3EAD process is the fusion of operations and intelligence. In the FIND and FIX phase, HUMINT collection disciplines and ISR play a vital role in developing the intelligence picture to facilitate a smooth transition into the FINISH phase. The FINISH phase was conducted by the SOTU's by means of a Direct action. It is vital that the target location is exploited to gather all information to enable the EXPLOIT-ANALYSE-DISSEMINATE phase of the cycle. Exploitation consists of Technical Exploitation Operations (TEO) and Sensitive Site Exploitation



An EC 135 P2 hovers over the training area providing overhead support to ARW members

(SSE). The exploited materials are then analysed by the S2 Cell and any actionable intelligence is then disseminated to all relevant stakeholders. The result of the analysis and dissemination of exploited information often leads to rapid re-tasking and initiation of follow on operations.



An ARW member carries out a high altitude parachute jump otherwise known as MFF(Military Free Fall)

## What does it mean for the ARW and DF into the future?

NATO SOF HQ has certified the ARW as operationally ready. To maintain this certification the ARW will re-engage with SOFEVAL in 2024. The time spent between the successful completion of SOFEVAL 2021 and 2024 will focus on strengthening Jointness, Integration and Interoperability, in addition to focusing on the significant enhancement of the capabilities of the ARW. A key factor in the success of SOFEVAL 2021 was the development of a SOF planning and analyst S2-S3 cell, which provided the appropriate planning platform to support the SOTU's ease of transition into the execution phase of the mission.



A thermal image of an ARW team moving into position



The scene of an training operation as an ARW team neutralise the targets

Post-SOFEVAL, maintaining this planning and analyst staff function is seen as a key enabler and first step towards enhancing the unit's existing capacity and capabilities. The continued development of the ARW along the NATO SOF model will strengthen the DFs alternative capability, allowing the DF to maintain a competitive edge to counter the complex security and hybrid threats of the future.





# WALKING INTO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

## PART 2 COVID-RECOVERY GUIDELINES

By Sgt Thomas Deveraux  
DFPES, DFTC

This evaluation guideline is for people who are suffering from the aftermaths surrounding COVID-19. It allows you to record your daily routine using the exercises provided. Following a structured plan will aid better recovery and it's a great way for you to get back to the things you love doing.

**The headings that will be covered are as followed:**

1. Stability Exercises
2. Breathing Exercises
3. Nutrition
4. Focusing Exercises
5. Wellness

Before beginning, you must remember this is only a guideline to aid recovery for Post-COVID. If you have been advised from a healthcare professional on recovery I'm sure they provided you with recovery information to follow. Nonetheless, the above headings that will be covered in this evaluation guideline sheet will support your recovery. Before starting I'd advise you to ask a family member or friend to get involved with you, for safety and support.

### Stability Exercises

Exercising has proven to be very beneficial for people after COVID. Health professionals are inviting people to get more active after the illness.

The benefits of physical activity are as follows:

1. Improve your overall fitness levels.
2. Reduce breathlessness.
3. Improve your energy levels.
4. Reduce stress and improve behaviour.
5. Develop balance and coordination.

During your exercise programme, you'll be asked to record your workout, this will allow you to keep track and also discuss your progress to date with family members or friends.

### Exercising Safely

Before starting your programme you must remember your body has been analysed both mentally and physically and the things you did before COVID might be different now, for example:

You might have been able to do 50 x squat jumps without stopping, and after 40 x squat jumps, you start feeling the effects of the exercise working, you're breathing a bit heavily after 40 but still managing the exercise.

Research has proven that COVID impacts the Lungs, therefore, your cardiovascular endurance might not be the same as before and you might be breathing heavily after 5 x squat jumps. So my advice to you is start exercising at the beginning and work your way up. This will lead to better performance in the weeks to come.

### Steps before any exercise

1. Carrying out a warm-up and conducting a cool-down afterwards, to improve blood flow and range of motion (ROM).
2. Having the correct clothing and footwear.

3. Drinking plenty of water before/during and afterwards.

4. Maintaining a healthy balanced diet.

If you're adventuring outdoors, always make sure someone knows the route you're taking and what time you'll be back at, have your phone with you. When taking the following steps above, if you feel any symptoms such as dizziness, nausea or sickness, shortness of breath, or chest pain stop and cancel your session, I'd advise you to get in contact with a health professional and record your symptoms.

You're playing it safe as you're merely on your path to recovery, so it's important to remember that at all times. Nonetheless, during your warm-up, your heart rate will naturally increase bringing your body temperature up, so feeling breathless when exercising is not harmful but you need to know the difference between this and breathlessness that you're uncomfortable with. Gradually building up your fitness will help and it will help you become less breathless.

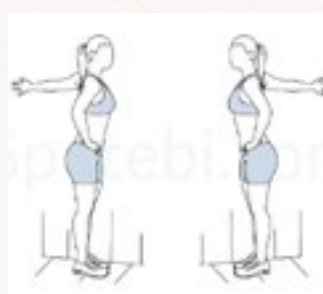
Your warm-up should take 5-10 minutes approx. All exercises should be carried out in a relaxed manner, for example:



#### Quadriceps Stretch

1. Stand on your left foot and grab your right shin by bending your leg behind you.
2. Tuck your pelvis in, pull your shin toward your glutes, making sure your knee is pointing to the ground. Try not to pull the knee backward or sideways.
3. Hold for 30 seconds and then switch sides.

The benefit of this stretch is that you can support your body weight by holding onto a chair or against a wall.



#### Chest Stretch

1. Wall stretch: place hand on wall
2. Elbow slightly bent or straight,
3. Turn body away from wall.
4. Hold for 30 seconds and then switch sides.

During your warm-up, you can stand or sit. All stretches

should be carried out in a controlled manner, holding the stretch for 30 seconds, and repeating the stretches twice. During your stretching make sure you control your breathing and if you need to drink water during the warm-up, please do so.

### Starting your main event

Below are a number of stability exercises and a small note attached. During this phase you must be monitoring your progress with notes and addressing any issues during the week with a family member or friend. All exercises are low intensity, furthermore you need to record your time on each exercise and then each week gradually build-up the amount of time you can manage. A good starting point for each exercise would be 30 seconds on your first week. Remember it may take a few weeks before you return to a level of fitness where you feel comfortable on each exercise.

**Balancing on one foot, change foot** - Maintain your balance for several mins and repeat 3 times.

**Walking a straight line** - Mark a line on the ground, walk it: improving your balance and core.





**Turning** - Walk forward 20 meters, stop and turn around and walk back, alternate each side.

**Twisting** - Twisting your body side to side from the waist.

**Rotating** - Truck rotation, arm and hip rotation.

**Bending** - Pivoting at the waist, leaning your body forward and standing upright.

**Stretching** - Start from head to toe, so your stretching is in order.

## Breathing Exercises

After spending time in hospital your body is naturally going to lose its strength and fitness and we need to build it back up. Shortness of breath can occur easily and when this takes place you naturally get worried and this can make matters worse, remaining calm and learning how to control your breathing will help. Taking time to understand how to inhale and exhale properly and learning the different techniques (as shown below) will benefit you and will improve your physical fitness performance.

### 4-7-8

The 4-7-8 breathing technique, also known as 'relaxing breath', involves breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and exhaling for 8 seconds. Let's take a closer look at this pattern: followers have claimed it helps them fall asleep but the most important part is its aim to reduce a build-up of anxiety. The 4-7-8 breathing pattern requires you to focus on taking a long deep breath in and out. This breathing pattern can help reduce anxiety, help with poor sleep habits and reduce anger responses.

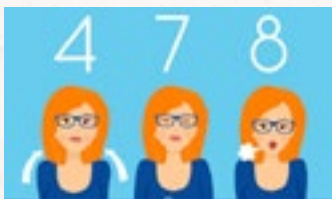
### How to do it

Before starting the breathing pattern, adopt a comfortable sitting position and place the tip of the tongue on the tissue right behind the top front teeth.

**To use the 4-7-8 technique, focus on the following breathing pattern:**

1. Empty the lungs of air
2. Breathe in quietly through the nose for 4 seconds
3. Hold the breath for a count of 7 seconds
4. Exhale forcefully through the mouth, pursing the lips and making a "whoosh" sound, for 8 seconds
5. Repeat the cycle up to 4 times

Dr Weil recommends using the technique at least twice a day to start seeing the benefits sooner. He also suggests that people avoid doing more than four breath cycles in a row until they have more practice with the technique. Search Dr Weil 4-7-8 pattern on the link below.



www.drweil.com

## Nutrition

Nutrition is a key fundamental on your path to recovery. It is important to eat and drink a well-balanced diet; this will boost your immune system and help you to regain your strength. When eating you may notice your breathing is becoming difficult, when you eat you hold your breath when you swallow, this might have an impact on how much you eat. So you need to train your mind when eating, breathing and swallowing.

### Some easy tips to follow during mealtimes

1. Aim for 3 smaller meals and follow that with 3 snacks every day.
2. Always give yourself time and don't rush your meals, you might find yourself eating more slowly than before.
3. When eating make sure you are sitting in an upright position and that you're comfortable.
4. Get professional advice on nutrition and eat nourishing foods

that you enjoy.

5. Make sure you haven't been doing any heavy labour beforehand, sit down and unwind before meals are ready.

6. If you cough or choke, or your breathing becomes difficult when you eat and drink, take a break to recover.

Why eating healthy food is important

Eating well is a fundamental to good health and well-being. Healthy eating helps us to maintain a healthy weight and reduces our risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

[www.foodincare.org.uk](http://www.foodincare.org.uk) > eating-well

## Focusing Exercises

Research has proven that people that have been affected with COVID, especially patients who had a breathing tube in hospital, might experience difficulty focusing, remembering stuff and thinking clearly.

### If you experience these difficulties, these strategies may help:

Physical Fitness: easy walks/ runs are a great way to discharge pressure on the brain, even if your body is finding it hard with shortness of breath, feeling weak and fatigue. Just a short 5-10 minutes out in the fresh air will help. If you can get outdoors, the exercises that we worked on are perfect, give them a go.

Practice mindfulness throughout the day: This exercise is simple, focusing completely your physical and emotional sensations at that time.

Brian exercises: puzzles, crosswords, number games, memory games, reading... the list goes on. Always make sure you challenge your brain - this will keep you motivated.

## Wellness

"Breath is the power behind all things.... I breathe in and know that good things will happen."

—Tao Porchon-Lynch

The impact surrounding COVID is undoubtedly stressful. After spending weeks upon weeks lying in a hospital bed, praying to make a fast recovery and get home to love ones is a dream changer for a person. But with that come stress, anxiety, worry, fear, depression and sadness. With all this building up inside it's extremely hard to fight it and can lead to worse things. So we need a mechanism to manage stress and feelings of anxiety and depression. Therefore this plays an important part in your overall recovery.

## Wellness Journal

A wellness journal is a journal dedicated to keeping track of your wellbeing. Rather than just writing out events of the day or your response to an emotional experience, wellness journals are designed to track a goal or an intention.

Composing your thoughts and emotions onto a wellness journal truly finishes off your day in a positive manner. Having somewhere dedicated to your self-care, gratitude and development can work wonders for a clear and happy mind and knowing you can reflect on your journal at any time. I'd advise you to record your progress from start to finish on your path to recovery. Wellness is particularly significant as we age, since regular exercise and proper nutrition can help prevent a variety of ailments; including cardiovascular disease, obesity, and fall risk behaviours. Furthermore, the requirement for vitamins and minerals increments after age 50, so it's imperative to have a key eating regimen.

Whether you are in your early 20s or late 80s, implementing wellness into your daily lifestyle is so important. You need to remain active for yourself and most importantly for your family, so you can enjoy every day with them. Assess your personal wellness goals and get started today, it's never too late!





By Pte Lukasz Gancarz  
Photos courtesy of Robert  
Mason & the U.S. Veterans  
Memorial MuseumDFTC

For many helicopter pilots, “Chickenhawk” is one of the most important (if not the most important) books they have ever read. Some got hold of it before they started flying, motivating them to do it. Others discovered it during their flying careers, or on their retirement. The common thing is that it stays with you forever. It captures your mind and your heart.



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One of the many flights Robert would have undertaken, dropping troops off in a paddy field

I consider myself very privileged to interview Mr. Mason (via Zoom call) recently. Here is the recollection of our chat.

Lukasz Gancarz: Mr. Mason, first things first: You have been a private pilot before you started flying helicopters. How have you found switching from fixed wing to rotary?

Robert Mason: I started flying when I was in high school. I had odd jobs back then and I even started working at an airport. I was learning to fly when I was 16 and got my license when I was 17. Soon after that, I joined the army specifically for the Helicopter Training Programme. The advantage I had going into it, was that I had the 'air sense' from flying the fixed wing. Of course cruise flight is pretty much the same in helicopters as in flying the fixed wing. I think it was very helpful having this experience.

LG: When you got into the helicopter for the first time, I remember that you had some issues, especially with the hover. When did you have that moment, when it just 'clicked in' and you knew that this is what you wanted to do for the rest of your life?

RM: Probably the very first time I tried to control this contraption, the H-23 Hiller, I knew I loved it. Even though I couldn't control it very well, going all over the place and what not, this was still exactly what I wanted. It didn't take me long to learn how to hover and so on but I enjoyed it from the very beginning!

LG: Let's go back to Hiller and the H-19 Chickasaw. They are two very different machines. What are your most vivid memories from flying both? What's the thing that stuck in your mind from the training?

RM: Well, the H-23 Hiller is a contraption by today's standards. Vibrating all the time, it had the tendency that when you pulled on the collective on a H-23 Hiller it would keep pushing up. So, we had that thing called

'popping the collective'. You yank it to shake out the ballast to the balancing elements that were supposed to stabilise it. So, you had to actually jerk the helicopter to stop it from climbing further.

It was heavy for its size, so when I became an instructor pilot I enjoyed it, because it was virtually indestructible. In the army training that we did back then, we did the auto-rotations to the ground. For the new students we would set them up on the stage fields in Texas and as an IP I was at my students' command. My hands were near the cyclic and the collective, but I wanted them to experience all the things that they were doing. So, we would come down for these auto-rotations and as it flares for the initial slowing down it would just cock over itself... I mean I had students doing 90 degree turns on me - on 10 feet - and I was like "what are you thinking!?" and I calmed myself.

With the Hiller I could bring it back around (recover), but I wouldn't bring it all the way around and just let it hit kind of cocked in sideways just to scare the crap out of



Robert pictured here in Preacher Camp in Vietnam

everybody. It was a good training device and the Hiller could take it - it was an amazing machine.

Now the H-19, when I got to fly it, was a completely different aircraft. It's a heavy cargo aircraft and so underpowered, that it can't really carry more than a couple of people on a good day. But it was great training for handling an overloaded Huey.

The first time I got on a flightline with H-19 in Alabama the IP said "go ahead, pick it up to a hover - you know how to fly helicopters. I said "sure" and I started this huge radial engine that's in the front...it sounds like a bomber when you pick it up! So, I pull up the collective, I'm doing just fine and pick it up to just 3 feet and it starts to settle back out and I'm wondering what's going on. Then the pitch and the RPM started to drop,





so this thing settles out of the air and the guy (IP) says: "you're over controlling it!" He says: "watch me". He picks it up and you can't see the cyclic moving at all. He says: "with this aircraft, if you over control the cycle, you'll dump all of your air pressure and it won't fly." That's how underpowered it was. Of course it was summer, so it was worse, but I got very good at flying this machine and it was very good training for flying the Huey in overloaded conditions, which was almost all the time!

LG: That leads me to my next question. After flying this aircraft, you are being introduced to the Huey. How did it feel to switch over for a young pilot?

RM: It was beautiful! I'd been flying the H-23 and H-19 and for one thing, they were just old helicopters. The Huey was brand new. The first one I flew was D model and that's the one I ended up flying in Vietnam. It felt, I



Roberts huey helicopter after landing in a paddy field

actually used this phrase in the book; it felt like falling upwards. When I pulled the collective for the first time it so effortlessly sat up in the air... I was really impressed by it. And the sound - the beautiful sound of the turbine when compared to the awful noise of the other engines - was just amazing. I loved it immediately. Anyone who ever flew a Huey loved this machine. The last time I flew it was five years ago and it was so easy, so natural to take off after 47 years without flying a Huey. I picked up in windy conditions and I started looking around to see if the IP (instructor pilot) was flying it, because it was too God damn easy! It was like nothing!

The Huey helicopter is the easiest helicopter in the world to fly! It's so stable, it's so beautiful and the design allows it to take off and hover, despite the wind loads from all other directions, it automatically compensates for that. It's a really marvellous system mechanically speaking. I know that new Hueys don't

use the stabiliser bars, but back then they did, and they were just amazingly stable machines and very, very powerful of course.

LG: Tell me more about learning to fly the battle formation. I remember reading in your book when you had overlapping rotors and getting so close, that you were using another pilot's panel as a guidance. I remember that you were not too happy with it at the start.

RM: In flight school you never get that close. As a matter of fact, when I was in the flight school, they weren't teaching that type of flying at all. It was being considered dangerous to bring the helicopters tight in, with the rotor blades spinning an all, so I learned to fly formation in the Cav. The guys I flew with in the 1st Cavalry were nuts about flying in a formation to get into the tight LZs. At night time, they were flying especially closer because if you get too far apart, you will lose the track of your position and it'll be dangerous. So, they came close enough that you could hear the tail rotor of their ship. You can see the red lighting in the cockpit inside their helicopter, that's how close we were! And we maintained these tight formations, especially at night, just for safety. It took me a while to get used to it because it's intimidating to get another person's rotor blades with your rotor blades, and they are going the opposite direction (laughing). After a while I got very competent with it to a stage that, when I became an IP (Instructor Pilot) in Texas, I was teaching pilots formation flying as we had learned.

LG: I think that this has to be one of the most-asked questions, but I have to ask it. In your book you recall being interviewed by a Japanese TV crew. They asked you this silly question that I want to revisit 55 years later. What is it like to fly into the bullets?

RM: Well, I guess you go into some sort of shock because the tactics in the 1st Cav were to land ships on the ground, in the LZ where the combat will be going on. This was the 1st Cav assault technique, and we would have gunships coming in beside us. They would put the fire on the LZ and we had our own guns, which can be used by the gunners if they saw an obvious target, but on the initial approach, you had tracers. You can see tracers coming towards you and a lot of them were the US tracers, because they (NVA) had plenty of American ammunition.

The first tracers I saw were red and later we started noticing green, but anyway my instinct was to tighten my stomach. We're both on controls in case one of us gets shot, and we get closer and the tracers are getting





An experienced Robert Mason relaxing at the front of his huey helicopter

on and you just cannot move. You can't say "shit they're shooting at me" and turn left and get the hell out of here. No, you had to maintain the same formation - tight. The things you had in mind were: not running into another helicopter, and when the bullets started coming through that flight, you couldn't move. So, I tighten my stomach, muscles tensed up on everything and just held on. That's all you can do, right? It was an exciting experience I have to say - one that I have not forgotten to this day.

LG: One of the other common questions must have been about the time you shot your own helicopter from a handgun while on the ground. Do you recall more of



Huey helicopters fly over Vietnam at sunset

the funnier situations from your deployment?

RM: Things get boring sometimes when flying from a mission so we would get down to a highway, my buddy Gerald Tyler, and I. We would have a game where we could see who could follow the road the best with all the turns, without having to pull up. Of course, if the turn is too steep you had a chance of hitting your rotor against the tree crown, that's how low we were flying. It was an illegal sort of game. I remember coming down the Highway 19 towards An Khe and there was this convoy that we were approaching head on; Jeeps and trucks and all so we decided and just stay low and bust that convoy. So, as we got closer and closer, that lead jeep started flashing his lights because he was so scared we gonna hit him and I pulled up just barely missing the guy and his tall whip antenna. We went on laughing our asses off, thinking this was the funniest thing in the world, scared the shit out of the grunts. The minute I got back to the division, we were both called in. We were 'talked to'...(laughing) hey, what are they gonna do? Send me to Vietnam???

So definitely we had moments when we just goofed around.

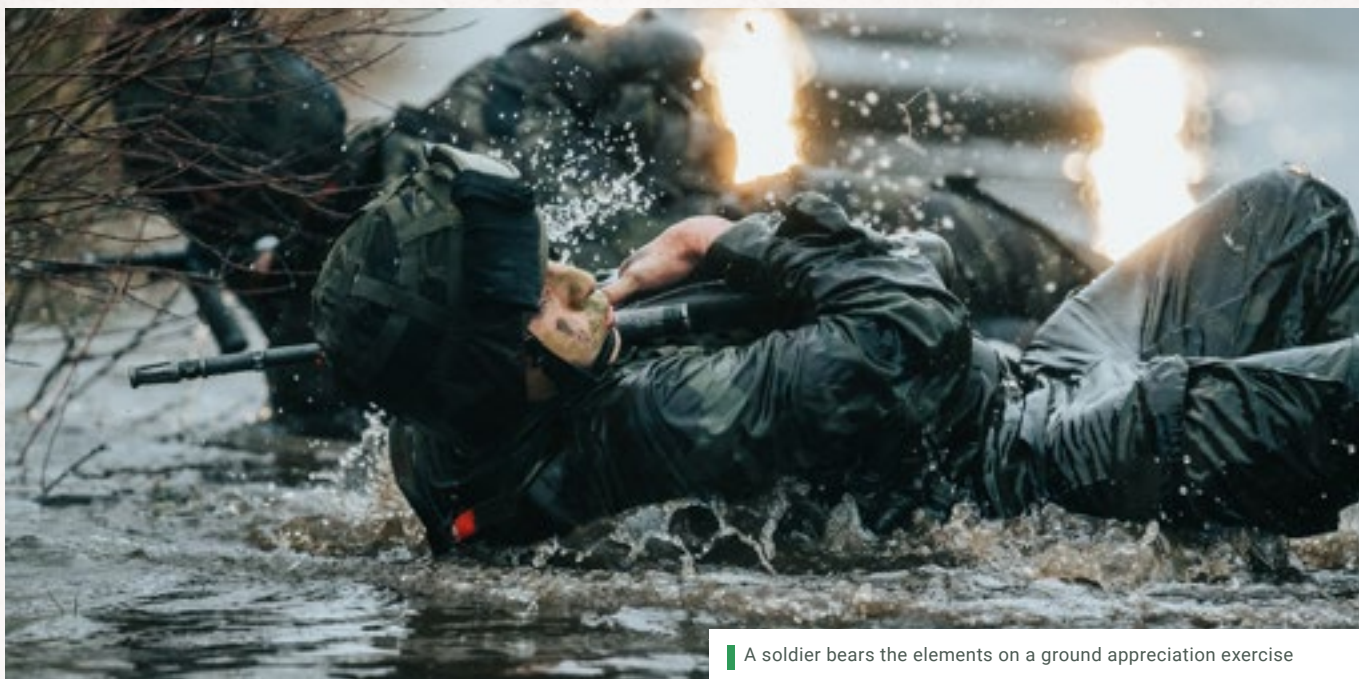
LG: While in Vietnam, and back home, with all the stress and trauma going on, did you have any way of coping with it? How did you cope with loss?

RM: That's an interesting one. I flew too much time in the combat zone. I had a thousand combat missions, and it wears on you. I became a very anxious person, and I had a hard time sleeping at night. It was in 1966 and I just came out with Valium, the flight surgeon said: "take these and they will help you sleep, just don't take them during the day". So, I started taking Valium in Vietnam in combat and it did help. It allowed me to sleep but it's just masking the symptoms. I had developed a serious case of PTSD anxiety disorder, before I left Vietnam. I am still suffering from it. I'm treated by the VA for it and I still have symptoms of anxiety today, it doesn't go away. Human beings have a certain tolerance for continuous stress and finally you start feeling physical things from it. I have paid for the kind of wounds that are invisible, one might say.

LG: Just a final question. Do you have a particular memory or something that you enjoyed such as having a breakfast in the helicopter out in the field?

RM: No. (laughter) You mean the actual living conditions and being nostalgic for being bitten to death by mosquitoes? I don't have any nostalgic moments like that that I can think of. I don't wish to be back there at all.





A soldier bears the elements on a ground appreciation exercise

# THE DEFENCE FORCES MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2020-2023

By Lt Col John Martin, PSS

Photos by Pte Derek Feehan & DF Flicker

## Introduction

For a long time now there has been a real understanding and awareness in the wider community of the importance of Mental Health and Wellbeing in the workplace. This awareness is centred not just in ensuring that employers get the best out of their personnel, but also to ensure that people get the most out of their experience of work, and that the workplace is as safe as it can be for them and for their families.

In the Defence Forces we are lucky to have a strong team of people from many disciplines engaged in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our personnel and their families. The Medical Branch, the Personnel Support Service (PSS) and the Chaplaincy Service work together to provide effective support during all stages of the military career. The work of the schools of Physical Education and Catering, our Health and Safety team and our Gender Adviser all contribute to providing a work environment that is as safe as it can be, where personnel can develop to the best of their potential.

## So why do we need a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

The Defence Forces Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2023 was launched in December 2020 by the Minister for Defence. The main aim of the Strategy is to provide a coordinated and effective mental health and wellbeing

support system for personnel of the Defence Forces between 2020 and 2023. What this means is that all our work in mental health and wellbeing, from education and training, to supporting and providing clinical services, will be done in a way that is coordinated and cooperative. This will enhance our services and be of benefit to our personnel and their families, and to the Defence Forces as an organisation.

## What will the Strategy achieve?

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is a slim volume that will generate a lot of work and make significant progress. It has identified seven key areas of work that will need to be addressed over the lifetime of the strategy. Each of these areas deals with a specific area of mental health and wellbeing, all contributing towards the same goal of improving and enhancing the way that we support our people.

**Governance:** This objective will help us to maintain effective direction and oversight of mental health and wellbeing measures in the Defence Forces through the establishment of effective structures and appropriate research planning. We will examine and assess what we do, and we will report annually on how we are getting on.

**Resilience:** In this objective we hope to better equip our people to successfully experience and manage military life through awareness-raising, training and support through all phases of their careers. We will look at how best we can inform our serving personnel, their families and our veterans, so that they will have the tools they need, wherever they find themselves in their military experience.





After working together through physical and mental hardship sometimes we are more resilient working as a team

**Suicide:** Suicide is a global issue, and everyone can help in reducing its effects. Our strategy will help us to support personnel in preventing suicide through appropriate information sharing and training, informed decision making and the ongoing development of positive organisational culture in the Defence Forces.

**Stigma:** The Strategy will work towards removing barriers in the way of accessing support for mental health and wellbeing issues. We recognise stigma as a barrier to mental health support and will work to overcome and defeat it through education, leadership and the fostering of a positive and supportive military culture.

#### Critical Incident Stress

**Management:** We will examine and enhance how we support our personnel who experience traumatic or critical incidents during their military lives, and will work to ensure that our support is as good as it can be, and at the front of best practice.

#### A Comprehensive Approach:

Mental Health and Wellbeing covers all aspects of our lives. We will support the physical and mental wellbeing of all personnel of the Defence Forces through facilitating an active and healthy lifestyle, enabling and encouraging regular physical activity, and providing appropriate information and training on all aspects of a healthy lifestyle, including diet, exercise and general health.

**Military Families:** The Strategy recognises the importance of our military families. We will support the mental health and wellbeing of military families with training, education and information, so that they can get the best experience possible from the military service of their loved ones.

A model for clinical support: The Strategy will work to develop an effective person-centred model for clinical support that ensures the timely identification, referral, treatment and reintegration of personnel suffering from mental illness or disorder. This will help to reduce stigma and to provide the best possible outcomes for our people.

So whose job is it to implement the strategy?

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Support has convened a Mental Health and Wellbeing Standing Committee to implement the strategy over the course of the next few years. Each section of the Defence Forces that is directly associated with mental health and wellbeing has a representative on the Committee.

You will find our chaplains, occupational social workers, our psychiatrist, clinical psychologists, BPSSOs, our gender advisor, as well as health and safety, catering and physical education all represented on this team. This provides a strong and effective system of consultation and collaboration and will ensure that all the objectives identified in the strategy are achieved. The Standing Committee is chaired by OIC DF PSS, and reports to the Director of the Medical Branch who will in turn report to the Deputy Chief of Staff. This means that our progress will be monitored and observed, ensuring that we have the best support and guidance in getting to the end of the road.

Looking forward from here



We can achieve more if we work together

So there are exciting times ahead. It is hoped that the next three years will generate insights, form structures and enhance services in mental health and wellbeing in the Defence Forces in a way that we have not seen before. We will include everyone on the journey and keep our military people informed of our progress through normal channels as we go along. In the end mental health and wellbeing is the responsibility of us all! Lean orainn agus ar aghaidh linn anois!



# INTERNAL COMMS

Photos by DF FLICKR

## Introduction

Internal Communications Update is created by the Defence Forces Internal Communications Team. Our aim is to deliver accurate and timely information of interest to our members in order to increase awareness on current and future developments across the organisation.

Our segment in the An Cosantóir along with our online member's area on military.ie will allow information of interest to be distributed across the DF.

The member's area of military.ie is to enable our personnel to access information while off-site.

### General Staff Update from 8th and 26th of April.

The General Staff Convened on the 8th of April to review a range of updates and provide clarity for the Defence Forces General Framework for Living with COVID-19 related restrictions.

The force protection of all personnel remains the priority of the General Staff. There will be a new DF Framework for living with COVID-19 distributed before the 26th of April 2021.

The following decisions were provided by the General Staff:

- The 5th AR PO Course and the AR Potential NCO's Course will complete the field tactical training and assessment block in Kilworth Camp from 30 Jul to 15 Aug 21. This is subject to Government restrictions and COVID-19 situation.
- Planning for the conduct of these courses, to be led by D RES, is approved and should examine the use of any additional RDF personnel required to conduct these courses.
- In the meantime, D RES has submitted a proposal for the resumption of RDF Training Activities to DCOS (Ops) for consideration, this will be reviewed in line with ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. The follow updates and guidance were provided by the General Staff:

The follow updates and guidance were provided by the General Staff:

A revised DF Framework for living with COVID-19 (Ver 10) became affective from 26th of April

The DF is following Government advice in relation to the prioritisation of the vaccine. There are three DF cohorts that can be nominated for vaccination outside of the age related priority:

- DF pers working in COVID facing tasks.
- DF pers listed to deploy on an overseas mission.
- DF pers in the medically vulnerable categories - managed by Formation MOs and it is a medical in confidence matter.

The UN requirement to conduct pre-deployment quarantine for all pers (regardless of vaccination) remains in place.

CMU will conduct a review of the potential use of Antigen Testing for selected career courses in DFTC.



UNIFIL MRE

### Ceremonial:

On the 5th of May, the 105th anniversary of the execution of the leaders of the Easter Rising was held. The event was marked with a reduced ceremonial due to COVID-19 restrictions in Arbour Hill. There is a photo album available on the Member's Area. There will also be ceremonial for the National Famine Commemoration (16 May TBC) and the burning of the Custom House (3rd/4th weekend in May).



Captain Marie Carrigy reads the proclamation in front of the GPO on Easter Sunday

### Training/Courses:

The DF training environment continues to operate inside COVID-19 guidelines with essential training taking place.

The 36th Senior NCO Course and 11th Potential Officers course both commenced on the 26th of April in the NCO Training Wing and Cadet School respectively. These two courses will further develop experienced NCOs to be promoted to roles where they will have command authority.

Other courses starting in May and June to highlight include Orderly Room Cpls Course, MIF Course, MOUT Instructor Course, Basic Recce Course and Infantry Young Officers Course



Chief of Staff review of the 118 Inf Bn

To see what courses are starting in July onwards



to December, please go to the Member's Area or Military.ie. This list gives details on upcoming Career and Skills courses. Other courses are available however check with your Unit Orderly Room for a full list of courses.

The 96th Cadet Class were commissioned on the 26th of March in a behind closed doors event in Collins Barracks Dublin. A photo album is available through the Member's Area.

DFTC, 1Bde, 2Bde and the Air Corps Fitness Centre have supplied dates and information for upcoming fitness test dates. Most locations are testing for essential purposes ONLY which includes Overseas Qualification or selection for a course. Please check the Member's Area or your Unit Orderly room for more information.

All Formations and Branches are reminded of the importance of ensuring that the current Health and Safety guidelines, as issued by Government and Defence Forces are implemented and adhered to by all persons.

#### Overseas:

The 62 Inf Gp returned home from UNDOF on the 7th of April. The protocol for their return during level 5 COVID restrictions meant the group were transported from arrivals of Dublin Airport to Red Cow Hotel. All members took a COVID test before staying in isolation in the hotel overnight. Upon all members receiving a negative result the next day they



Commissioning Ceremony of the 96th Cadet Class

returned home or to their barracks where they continue their two weeks of isolation after travelling.

The 118 Inf Bn who are preparing to go to UNIFIL this month (May) have been busy completing their form up. The group was split over three locations (Custume Barracks in Athlone, Gormanstown Camp in Meath and McKee Barracks in Dublin) this insured the group of 352 personnel including 11 Maltese soldiers could complete their training while ensuring force protection from COVID-19. The group was visited by Ciaran Mullooly of RTE who had good coverage on TV, Radio and the RTE website. On April 13th the Chief of Staff visited Custume Barracks to conduct his review of the group. The 118 Inf Bn will go into isolation in the Glen of Imaal prior to their departure.

#### Content on the member's area of Military.ie

will find the most up to date Internal Communication information will be published.

The Public Relations Branch has launched its first monthly update video. The one minute ling video is available to watch on all Defence Forces Social Media channels as well as the MA.

The Chief of Staff addressed members of the Defence Forces in relation to the launch of the Joint Task Force and Operation FORTITUDE which was stood up just over a year ago. This is available by video and written letter.

Job Vacancies and opportunities: A page has been added to the Member's Area which includes open Expressions of Interest that serving members can apply for. For more information about job requirements or closing dates of the vacancies that are advertised, please check with your unit orderly room.

The Weekly Internal Communications Update is uploaded every Tuesday to the Member's Area of Military.ie. This will contain a summary from the previous week and also the JTF statistics highlighting the contribution of the Defence Forces to the fight against COVID-19.

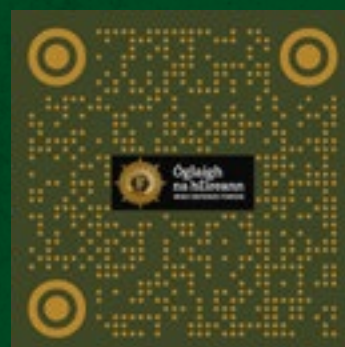
The Defence Forces have launched a Mentoring Programme. Junior Officers and NCOs with in the Defence Forces have the opportunity to become Mentees and gain mentorship by Senior Officers and Senior NCOs. ARCO have also made themselves available to become mentors for the programme. More information can be found on military.ie or by talking to your Formation Adjutant/Admin officer.

Sgt Tommy Devereux from the DF Physical Education School has provided content for our "Health and Wellbeing page" in physical fitness such as "Benefits of Physical Fitness and Mental Health", "Post COVID-19 recovery Tac Aid", "Walking into a Healthy Lifestyle", "Eating Disorders", "Mindset", "Tightness and Weakness" as well as five military style workouts.

Link to the following photo albums can be found on the Member's Area:

- Chief of Staff review of the 118 Inf Bn.
- 1916 Leaders Commemoration Ceremony.
- Air Corps Vaccination Flights.
- UNIFIL MRE.
- 62 Inf Gp homecoming from UNDOF.
- 1916 Commemoration 2021.
- Commissioning Ceremony of the 96th Cadet Class.

To view more information on all the above please go to The Member's Area of Military.ie. Scan the QR code to straight the Member's Area.



If there is Defence Forces Internal Messages you wish to have published here or on Military.ie please email [feedback@defenceforces.ie](mailto:feedback@defenceforces.ie) and/or [internalcomms@military.ie](mailto:internalcomms@military.ie)





■ Lt Paul Murphy hurling with Kilkeny

# LT PAUL MURPHY, 3 INF BN

By Tony O'Brien  
Photos by Lt Paul Murphy

Lt Paul Murphy has dedicated his life to the Army; it's where he sees his long-term future. But that doesn't mean this All-Ireland medal winner has forgotten about his other love: hurling.

The former Kilkeny All-Star player has retired from the county team after a glittering career which brought him four All-Ireland medals and four All-Star awards, as part of Brian Cody's all conquering squad. "When the Championship starts and I see Kilkeny line out, then I expect I'll think about being there and how things would go etc," Paul (32) says as he speculates about how the Cats will do in 2021.

In the meantime, however, he is enjoying what he calls his newfound "freedom". "I did notice all the free time I have, the freedom to make decisions about how I can use my time. I don't have to set aside a load of time for training, I can think about other things". Apart from planning for a December wedding to Eadain, Paul is concentrating on Army life and his work with the 3rd Infantry Battalion in James Stephens's Barracks in Kilkeny.

"Like all young fellahs at age 17/18 I was thinking about what I would like to do," he recalls, "I felt I wanted to do something in what we will call public service, with the Guards uppermost in my mind." But chatting with a friend led Paul to look at the Army, and what he heard he liked, even though there was no history of military involvement in his family. "I decided that the Army was for me." The Danesfort, Co Kilkeny, man adds: "I joined as a recruit in 2008 and gradually moved up the ranks. I took a Potential Officer Court in 2018 and was commissioned in 2019."

Three overseas postings later, Paul remains enthusiastic about Army life. "I'm looking forward to the future and my Army career. The Army has been great for me, I have really enjoyed all of the different experiences." Recalling his last time in the Lebanon – when COVID restrictions hit and the scheduled return home was postponed – Paul says: "On

a normal day we would be out patrolling in towns, engaging with local leaders and mayors. Now this was something we didn't want to bring in to their communities so we had to take a huge step back and stop our meetings with them."

He added: "It was a big concern for us that it would change



■ Lt Paul Murphy (then Pte) front right, Chad 2009





(L to R) Lt Paul Murphy, Sgt John Daly, Sgt Diarmuid O'Dwyer, CQMS Chris Cummins, Comdt Tony Bolger, Capt JP Zammit, Sgt Ken Nagle. 115 Bn UNIFIL

how the local population saw us. So we locked ourselves down very quickly and brought in special measures. Masks are normal now but we wore masks pretty much straight away because it was a symbol that we were doing everything we could not to bring it into the villages.

They eventually arrived home to a very changed scenario nine months later. "When we left everything was wide open and normal but when we came back there was social distancing, people were wearing masks and there were less people on

the road. We landed in Dublin airport and it was a ghost town with only us walking through the airport."

Combining an Army life – including those overseas postings – with top-level, inter-county hurling was tricky but Paul managed to deftly combine the two. As it turned out, his first tour to Chad in 2009, his platoon commander was none other than Stephen Malumphy, the then Waterford captain!

Like so many of his comrades, Paul was affected by COVID in terms of getting home from his posting in Lebanon early last year which did help with his GAA calendar. He was due to come home in May which meant he would miss pre-season training, the league and the first two rounds of the Leinster Championship.

"The restrictions kicked in by March so we realised our leave was not going to happen and we didn't know when it would," he recalls. He eventually arrived back in July, two months later than originally scheduled. Paul got stuck in to training straight away and although, as he readily admits, his club form at the time wasn't great, once he donned the famous black and amber, his hurling quality quickly returned and he starred again for Kilkenny.

But even then he was looking ahead and realised his playing career was nearing an end. "I'd a fair idea that this might be my last season but I hadn't told anyone. It was a tough decision to come to but one I had to make on my own." A foggy night in Croke Park was where he made up his mind. "We were losing a 10 or 11 point lead and when they were looking into the stand, it wasn't me they were looking for. So when the match was over, I just said 'right, that's it'".

As to Kilkenny's chances of repeating the kind of success he enjoyed with the team, Paul is optimistic but admits that it is Limerick who are setting the standards these days. "They are the ones to beat but Kilkenny have some very good players and I think we will do well, but it will be tight."

But Paul hasn't said goodbye to the GAA altogether: he still lines out with his local club Danesfort and has no plans for retirement.



Major Gen Tony McKenna, Lt Paul Murphy and Brig Gen Paddy Flynn during a visit of General Staff to UNIFIL in 2020





# STRENGTHENING THE NATION

## RESISTANCE: A NECESSITY PART 1

By  
Sgt Mick Lennon  
Photos by  
Sgt Mick Lennon



Troops moving over uneven terrain under external load

Typically, military personnel are neither required to be marathon runners nor powerlifters, but somewhere in between. A jack of all, or multiple components, so to speak.

Obviously, military duties in this context doesn't mean patrolling your beat, (although two hours of that will require some aerobic ability). Here I mean more physical tasks involving pushing, pulling, digging, carrying, repetitive lifting, loaded marches, and tasks that require force, or power to be generated quickly,

like moving from a stationary, often times prone, position to sprinting, or jumping over an obstacle.

A lot of these activities will have to be performed while wearing or carrying some level of external load, and this external load undoubtedly has a detrimental effect on an individuals ability to function efficiently.

In part one of this article I'm focussing mainly on developing foundation strength, and to a certain extent reactive strength and muscular or strength endurance. In part two, at a later date I hope to cover more on reactive strength, maximal strength, and power. Now by strength, I'm more concerned with an individuals relative strength, or the maximum force that a person can exert in relation to their own bodyweight. This is crucial when tasks requiring fast powerful movements need to be performed.

### Why train for strength?

- Resistance training is the most effective method for developing musculoskeletal strength suitable to meet the physiological burden of an increased external load.
- Specific adaptation to imposed demands (SAID). This basically means that your body will adapt to whatever demands you place upon it. If you are completely sedentary then your body will be slow and weak. If you just run, then you will become good at running but will be most likely weak and injury prone, however if you combine running with resistance training you will become more resilient and a better, more efficient runner for it.
- Strength and power capacity are vital to long-term health and resilience because stronger soldiers are not only better able to withstand and recover from the demands of the profession, but also have decreased injury rates because of the protective effects resistance training confers on tendon, ligament, and bone.
- A stronger individual has an increased ability to lift and carry heavy things, move heavy objects or individuals out of the way, and absorb impact from heavy, fast moving objects or individuals.

• Lack of strength has serious health implications later in life. Regular resistance training throughout life can improve quality of life later on by limiting loss of mobility and strength, (through muscle atrophy or wastage), as a person ages.



An outdoor timed circuit



Mick seen here demonstrating the Rotation reverse lunge



Mick seen here demonstrating the Kettlebell Deadlift

### Anatomical Adaptation:

Anatomical adaptation through circuit training is a perfect way to begin resistance training, as it helps ensure that all limbs and joints are exercised and conditioned in preparation for more intense and demanding training to come. It also emphasises the importance of learning to use your own bodyweight as a form of resistance. An anatomical adaptation phase helps reduce the risk of injury by providing an opportunity to perfect exercise technique, screen for and correct imbalances, and increase volume. It is important to do this type of training before starting a program aimed at developing maximal strength.

### Guidelines:

Training Variable	Beginner	Experienced
Number of exercises:	4-6	4-8
Reps:	6-8 or 15-20 secs	8-12 or 15-30 secs
Rest between exercises:	20-60 seconds	20-120 seconds
Rest between circuits:	2-4 mins	2-4 mins
Sessions per week:	1-3	2-4
Phase duration:	4-10 weeks	1-6 weeks
Types of exercises:	Developmental Functional	Auxiliary Developmental Functional Supplementary
Intensity:	Bodyweight initially. Not to technical failure	Light to Moderate Loads 60-75%

### Exercise Classification:

- Primary/Critical: Main compound lifts, e.g. Back/Front Squat, Deadlift, Bench Press, Olympic Lifts.





Troops on a loaded march

• Auxiliary: Variations of primary lifts, e.g. RDL, Good Morning, Hip Thrust, Military Press, Incline Press, D/ Bell Press, Bent Over Row variations, Chin/Pull-ups, K-Bell Snatches or Cleans.

• Developmental: O/ Head Squat, Single Arm K-Bell Squat, Goblet Squat, Carries, Split squat variations, Single Arm or Alternating Presses, Banded

or assisted Chins, Renegade rows, TRX row.

• Functional: Bodyweight Compound exercises (Push-up, Multi-planar lunges, Single leg squat, Bridge Variations), Nordics, Single leg RDL, Crawls, Face Pulls, Pull-aparts, Reverse Flyes, Core Anti-Extension (Plank, Dead-Bug), Anti-Rotation (Plank with limb raise), Anti-Lateral Flexion (Side Plank), Landing based (Extensive) Plyometrics, Med Ball Throws.

• Supplementary: Isolation exercises, (e.g. Curls, Calf raises), Glute and shoulder prehab.

The above lists are not exhaustive.

It is important, also to ensure that you include exercises that require movement in each of the planes of movement.

• Sagittal: This plane divides the body down the midline into two equal halves, left and right. Most exercises performed are in this plane, e.g. squats, deadlifts, lunges, chin-ups

• Frontal: Divides the body into front and rear halves. Lateral movements such as Lateral Squats, Lateral raises, Hip Abduction and adduction.

• Transverse: Divides the body into upper and lower halves. Movements involving rotation such as, rotational med-ball throws, T-spine rotation, kettlebell rotational deadlift, woodchops.

#### Example AA Circuit:

Movement Category	Beginner	Experienced
Explosive/Plyometric	Linear Jump x 5	Kettlebell Swing x 5
Knee Dominant	Counter-Balance Squat x 8	Goblet Split Squat x 8/8
Push	Push-ups x 20 seconds	Half Kneeling Single Arm Kettlebell O/head Press x 8/8
Pull	TRX or Inverted Row x 8	Chin-up or Pull-up x 8 or 60% max. <b>If 8 is your max chin-ups, perform 5</b>
Hip Dominant (Hinge)	Glute Bridge x 6 (3-5 second hold at top)	Kettlebell Deadlift x 8
Core	Side Plank x 15-20 seconds each side	Suitcase Carry x30 seconds
Core/Prehab	IYTW X 6/6/6/6	Band Pull-apart x 8-12

Circuits can either be timed, 30 seconds per station for example, with a 1:1-2 (30:30-1 min) work:rest ratio between exercises to allow for maintenance of exercise technique due to less fatigue, or for reps (Density Circuit), or a combination as above.

**Density Circuits**, are sequenced with one exercise from each movement category mentioned above. For explosive or

plyometric exercises perform 5 reps, and for all others, 8 reps using a 10-12RM (70-75%), i.e. a weight you could perform 10 or 12 quality reps with and no more. Weighted carries will have to be performed for time or for a set distance. The idea is to perform all reps for 3-4 rounds, as quickly as possible, or complete as many rounds as possible in a given time frame, e.g. 30 minutes, with minimal rest between exercises.

#### Sample 3 day week:

Movement Category	Day1	Day2	Day3
Explosive/Plyometric	Linear Hop x 5/5	Med Ball Side Toss x 5/5	Lateral Bound x 5/5
Knee Dominant	Rotational Reverse Lunge x 8/8	Goblet Squat x 8	Goblet Lateral Squat x 8/8
Push	Alternating D-Bell Bench Press x 8/8	Half Kneeling Single Arm Overhead Press x 8/8	Incline D-Bell Press x 8
Pull	Single Arm Bent-over Row x 8/8	Chin/Pull-up x 8 or 60% Max or Lat/Band Pull-down x 8/8	Suspension Trainer/Inverted Row x 8
Hip Dominant (Hinge/Knee Flexion)	Kettlebell Deadlift x 8	Single Leg Deadlift x 8/8	Gym-Ball or Slidepad Hamstring Curl x 8
Core/Prehab	Band Face-Pull x 8	Dead-Bug x 8/8	Band Pull-Apart x 8
Core/Prehab	Farmers Carry x 25-50m	Plank w Shoulder Tap x 8/8	Band Pallof Press x 8/8

#### Progression:

Progressive overload is an important principle of training, meaning in order for your musculoskeletal system to continue to adapt to training you must consistently increase the demands you place on it. If you stay at the same level or intensity of training for too long your body will just become used to it and progress will stall.

Progress can be made by:

• Initially during anatomical adaptation by increasing volume (number of reps) or time (30-35-40 seconds per station). A lot of early progress is made through motor learning which is basically your body getting better at performing a particular exercise through repetition.

• **(PMRS)** Ensure you start the exercise with the **Proper posture**, perform the correct **Movement pattern** through the desired range of motion, and add **Resistance** only when you can demonstrate good posture and movement control. **Speed** can be manipulated if required only after P & M are sufficient and resistance used is appropriate to current strength levels.

• Progressively increasing intensity of an exercise by increasing the weight used, or progressing to a more difficult variation.

• Changing the tempo of an exercise, lowering into a push-up or squat more slowly, or pausing (isometric hold) before pushing back up.

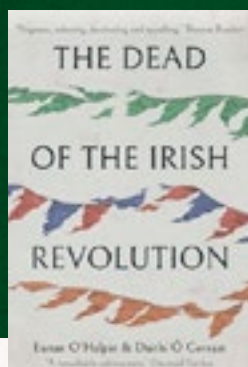
• Increasing the number of circuits.

• Moving onto a more intense phase of training, e.g. maximal strength.

• Ensuring adequate recovery (sleep, nutrition, 48 hours between intense full body workouts).



## BOOKS

**Author:****Eunan O'Holpin & Daithí Ó Corráin****Publisher: Yale University Press****ISBN: 9780300123821****Pages: 720****Price: €50.00**

## The Dead of The Irish Revolution

The deaths of over 3,700 people killed by both paramilitaries and state forces as part of the bloody and traumatic events of the modern Troubles in Northern Ireland were commemorated in the monumental work *Lost Lives*. It was researched and written over several years by David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, Chris Thornton and David McVea and was last re-printed 12 years ago.

Not long after *Lost Lives* was first published in 1999 it was reported to be the most stolen book in Belfast. Seamus Kelters, the second named author mostly understood that this was a sign of the book's egalitarian appeal; that *Lost Lives'* goal, which was simply to record every death caused by the Troubles, was recognised, and appreciated as much by thieves as it was by professors!!

*Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* is still seen as a "non-contentious" and objective record of the life and circumstances of the death of each of the victims of the Troubles. The Irish Government in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Executive is considering buying the rights to the out-of-print *Lost Lives* and making it available online as a cross-community memorial. It remains one of the absolute key references used by authors, academics, and students in examining the tragedy of the Troubles as it unfolded.

In "The Dead of the Irish Revolution," Eunan O'Holpin and Daithí Ó Corráin have published a highly significant work that is in effect the War of Independence equivalent of *Lost Lives*, and they have succeeded admirably. Preeminent historians of the Revolutionary period (1916-1921) have acknowledged the significant contribution that this work makes in advancing our understanding of this era. Diarmaid Ferriter calling *The Dead of the Irish Revolution* "an indispensable reference work" while Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh in his view posits this work as "a remarkable feat of close scholarship and calm exposition, based on an exhaustive mining of a wealth of primary sources."

The publication of this work is particularly timely given the series of commemorations, often contentious, coalescing around the centenary of this period, the aborted

commemoration of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) at Dublin Castle in 2020 being a case in point. So even at this remove, the foundation of our own modern state (and indeed the establishment of the Northern Ireland state) amidst the crucible of violence and counter-violence perpetrated by both sides, remains highly contentious and much debated.

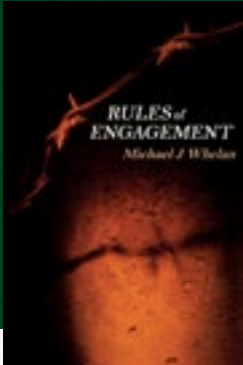
How many died? We know now it as being enumerated at 2,850, the first half of 1921 being the bloodiest, with nine people being killed alone on New Year's Day that year and approximately a thousand dying up until the Truce of 11 July 1921. But the real strength of this work, is in documentation the individual tragedies of all the deaths encompassed within this Revolutionary period; for this reviewer two separate incidents had a particular resonance. From my own hometown of Navan was the killing of Thomas Hodgett, Navan's postmaster, taken from his house in Academy Street on the night of Thursday 17th February 1921. He was shot in the chest and his body was thrown from Pollboy Bridge, where the river Boyne meets the Blackwater, no one was ever charged with his killing, allegedly by rogue members of the RIC. Today a plaque on the bridge records his death. Equally on being posted to Murphy Barracks, Ballincollig, County Cork following commissioning in April 1984 I knew nothing of the story of three 'Boy' members of the Band of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, who absconded from Ballincollig Barracks, were abducted shortly afterwards, and shot by member of the 3rd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade. Matthew Carson was 18, Charles Chapman was 17 and John Cooper a mere 16 years of age. Unlike Thomas Hodgett, no plaque in Ballincollig records these 'Boy' bandmen.

Equally, Ferriter has pointed out that this was a conflict that witnessed what we today refer to as "Collateral Damage," the deaths of non-combatants; for between January 1917 and December 1921 of the 2,344 who died due to the raging political violence, 919 or 39 per cent were civilians. Some of the violence was intertwined with deep seated grievances and resentments that coalesced around issues of land, economic and social privilege, that often in turn led to a potent mix of sectarianism and intimidation. Back in 2017, the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, Dr Paul Colton called for sensitivity and honesty when commemorating the centenaries of both the War of Independence and the Civil War period. He was no doubt reflecting on the deaths of 13 Protestants killed in April 1922 after the Truce in his Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross including the Bandon Valley of West Cork, where these killings took place. Both sides in the conflict also had extremely uncomfortable questions to answer in numerous well-documented incidents of gratuitous violence including sexual that was meted out to women. This work has made a significant contribution in giving the perspective of hindsight on the key yet vexed question of justification for all the individual deaths encompassed within this work; and in turn allows the reader to try and come to terms with the much-contested age-old rubric of who was right and who was wrong?

Review by Dr Rory Finegan (Comdt. Retd.)



## BOOKS



**Author: Michael J Whelan**

**Publisher: Doire Press**

**ISBN: 9781907682704**

**Pages: 80**

**Price: €12.00**

## Rules of Engagement

In recent decades, a new generation of American soldier-writers has emerged, as a consequence of the post-9-11 long-running military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan. Notable figures include Kevin Powers, author of the novel *The Yellow Birds*, Phil Klay author of the short-story collection *Redeployment*, and poet Brian Turner author of *Here, Bullet*. Across the Irish diaspora, Richard Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, an exploration of roles played by Australian troops as slave-labour railroad-builders in Burma during the World War II, was a recent winner of the Booker Prize. In addition to bearing witness through fiction and poetry to lives lived in warfare, the above writers also engage with the complicated lives of their characters, men primarily, and with the long tradition of Anglophone writing set among the military.

Ireland's neutrality has meant that Irish troops have not engaged in overseas wars; instead, from the Belgian Congo to the present, Irish troops have served under the United Nations flag on many peacekeeping missions. Michael J. Whelan's *Rules of Engagement* follows his earlier volume *Peacekeeper* (2016): it is clear from both volumes that in Whelan the Irish Defence Forces has found its laureate.

Whelan joined the Irish Defence Forces in 1990 serving as a UN Peacekeeper in South Lebanon and with the Peace-Enforcement in Kosovo. Currently, he is the Keeper of the Irish Air Corps Military Aviation Museum & Collection and an advocate for members of the Irish military forces—living and deceased, active and retired. As is the case in the United States, Irish veterans also can fall on hard times, and be easily forgotten:

**'The State often basked  
in the glory of his deeds  
but the broadsheets  
never tried to know him.  
Some wondered if he realised  
when he tucked himself tight  
against the shop-front last night  
That it would be his last?'**

In addition to work chronicling his own experiences serving

overseas, are Whelan's accounts of recent Irish naval service in the Mediterranean rescuing migrants from rafts and boats, and air service in Africa. Near the book's close is a poignant elegy for the journalist Lyra McKee as a reminder of the roles played by the media, and civilians, in fostering peace.

As he points out in "Rotating," an observation of Irish UN Peacekeeping troops who are waiting at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell, to be flown to South Lebanon, Whelan's purpose as a poet writing about members of the military is to speak to and for their experience, and to recall each as an individual who serves in an army: 'In each of these uniforms was a life, a family, a story. They were going into the brutality of the world and each one was a poem never to be written, giving their all when there was always more to give. I am glad of some things my country did.'

Whelan is a gifted observer of places and people, and also of the natural world. Throughout *Rules of Engagement*, flight is an important descriptive and metaphorical presence: flights of refugees, peacekeepers, birds, helicopters, and airplanes. It is common, as in "Hanger" for example, to find sparrows sharing space and being set in juxtaposition to airplanes, "Except for a sparrow/that came upon the scene, I am the only one ..." The poetic vision, therefore, is a holistic one where the work the peacekeepers perform is explored as well as the environments they leave, when they depart Ireland, and embrace on arrival at their UN posts.

The voice one hears most in these poems is that of the intelligent and empathetic outsider who strives for poetic mediation in the manner that Seamus Heaney sought in his own work when confronting conflict. As Heaney revealed in his work, Whelan also discovers that "the poor and the innocent too are taken by the sword." Though they are engaged in important work in South Lebanon and elsewhere and they see much that horrifies them, the peacekeepers' hearts are more often at home in Ireland as they recall loved-ones left waiting:

**'All I wanted was to make the world  
a happier place, a place for her dreams  
but in reality she had always been  
creating my dreams, making the world  
a better place for me.'**

In this regard, Whelan's work is also an account of Irish diasporas—intense periods spent away from Ireland while serving with the United Nations. On a national level, Irish service with the UN is a neutral nation's effective use of soft power. On a literary level, *Rules of Engagement* is a finely crafted and fully realised bringing to life of the experiences Irish peacekeepers. Until Michael J. Whelan began this important poetic project, the Irish military were largely absent from contemporary writing.

Review by Professor Eamon Wall





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