

THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

AN COSANTÓIR



Óglaigh
na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



JAN/FEB 2026



LEADERSHIP

DF VALUES

[DEFEND OUR STATE]



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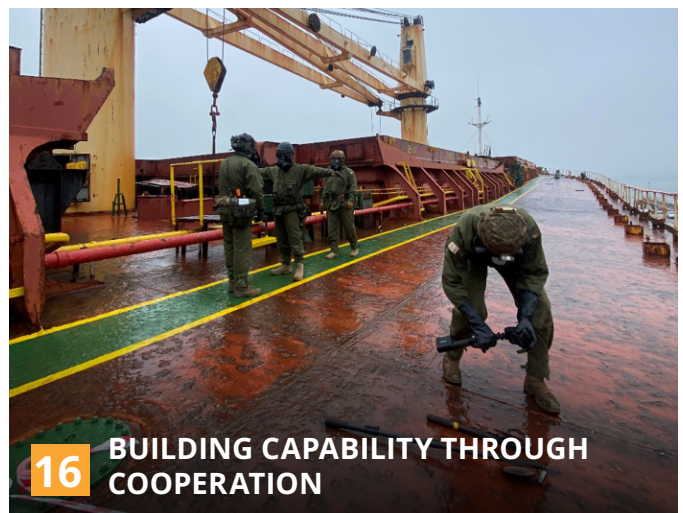
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From the editor

— A/Sgt Eric Ryan

January is when the noise stops and the work continues, as units across the Defence Forces bring their personnel to operational readiness for courses, overseas deployments, and the demands of the year ahead.

We kick off the year with this edition of An Cosantóir bringing Leadership, Values, Retirement, Operations abroad, Exercises, History and our Regular Features. We encourage readers of all ranks to contribute their experiences whether at home, abroad or on a course. We hope you enjoy this edition of An Cosantóir!

"Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them." — Colin Powell

AN COSANTÓIR



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Front Cover

Photo by - A/M McCormack 105 SQN
- OC 27 Inf Bn presenting a beret to a Recruit from the 69th Recruit Platoon

Back Cover

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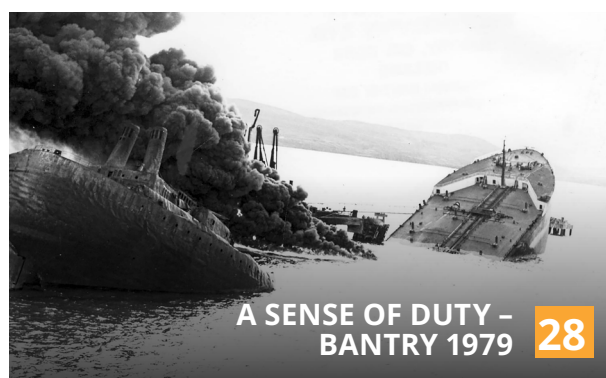
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THE BEST MILITARY COURSE I'VE ATTENDED

ARTICLE BY CAPT FIACHRA
MCGOLDRICK, 302 SQN, NO 3
OPS WING

In April this year, Lt Sean Murray (104 Sqn) and I were selected to attend the Squadron Officer School (SOS) of the Inter-European Air Forces Academy (IEAFA) in Kapaun Air station, Germany. This was a 6-week course based around development of leadership skills, but other than that we didn't know too much about what to expect. There had been a number of previous attendees on the course from the Air Corps, who spoke very highly of the course, camaraderie and overall experience.

Kapaun Air Station is based on the edge of Ramstein Air Base, in the southwest of Germany. This is where much of the academic and Professional Military Education (PME) training is conducted for the U.S. Air Force in Europe and Africa. Alongside the SOS, a similar course was being conducted for the NCO Academy (NCOA), with broadly similar aims and learnings, with nuances between the two cohorts.

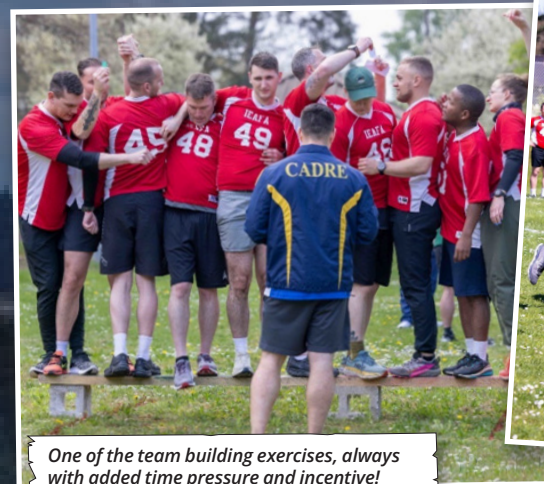
IAEFA: There were 44 students from 24 countries on course 25 Bravo (there are 3 courses per year – A, B and C) comprising all ranks and roles within an Air Force, from pilots to admin staff and loadmasters, fire crew, software analysts and base security personnel. There were also other force elements from countries that may not have an Air Force service such as ground-based air defence (GBAD) Units.

Theme: The overall theme of the course was

strengthening relationships between NATO countries, and NATO Partnership for Peace countries. This meant we had students from across Europe, the U.S. (who were stationed in Europe)

and some African countries. This course is a prerequisite for USAF personnel who wish to gain promotion to Major, but for the majority of the non-USAF students on the course, it was a chance to develop their professional military education.

Outline of Course: When the SOS and NCOA courses are conducted in the U.S., they are completely segregated. However, IEAFA received a special derogation to facilitate mixed rank learning. In order to achieve effective sharing of experiences and learning, rank in IEAFA was a formality where everyone was on first name terms. The course structure was generally 4-5 hours lectures per day, with additional physical activities. These always had a purpose – the first challenge we did had a basic set of constraints such as the group had to keep moving, follow the route and reach your objective by a certain time.



One of the team building exercises, always with added time pressure and incentive!

On the way, the group had to solve a puzzle that was given to us by the Directing Staff (DS). Within these challenges there were defined roles – team lead, navigator, etc. depending on the type of challenge. Each time we did one of these, the roles were rotated so it was a great opportunity to learn skills from the way other countries conduct these kinds of challenges. Importantly, there was always feedback given by the group to the leader and any other positions. Likewise, there was feedback to the rest of the groups about how they could be better followers.

One of the standout classroom-based events was the “4 Lenses” module. This was a morning where everyone was wearing civies (to try disassociating ourselves from rank, role, country or any other constraints we subconsciously

might have). The aim was to identify which of the four lenses or colours we fitted in with – Gold, Green, Orange and Blue, each with differing characteristics. This was similar to other personality

questionnaires I’ve done previously, but what elevated it was the way the “so-whats” were discussed. We discussed how people of different personality types want to be treated in different ways – some wanting more empathy, others wanting to know the exact reason for a task, and some wanting blunt clear direction etc. I had never really considered that not everyone wants to receive information and direction the way I would (who’d have thought?!), so it certainly gave me food for thought about how I interact with colleagues at home. The other useful part of this was that it highlighted imbalances

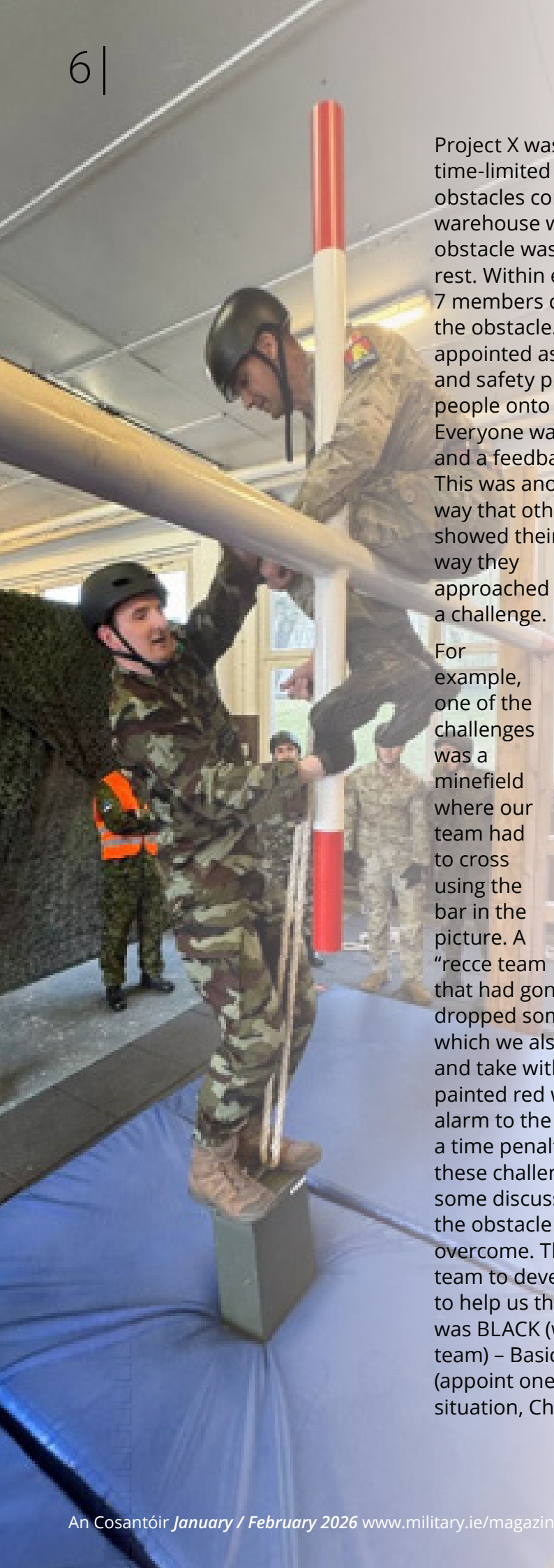
or areas that we were weak. Generally, people were strong in two categories that were fairly evenly matched. It was useful to know that going forward I’ll have to work on a certain side of my personality in order to be more adaptable (depending on what the situation/person I’m dealing with requires).

Assessment: There were two major events in the course – FLEX (Field Leadership Exercise) and Project X which was a scenario-based team problem solving. These were both completed in the Teams, with each team exercise performance contributing points towards an overall end of course competition. FLEX was a very entertaining way to explain, visualise and practice employment of air power through dodgeball. The aim of this was to achieve “superiority” over another team by knocking out a number of their bases/comm nodes etc. (after all, no comms no bombs). There were rules to this chaos – red balls were air-to-air only, green were air-to-ground only, yellow were Surface-to-Air-Missiles etc. Friendly fire was definitely a consideration, and there were two logistics personnel, or “loggies” on each team retrieving balls who were also subject to “incapacitation”. Directing each team was the JAOC director (Joint Air Operations Centre), who directed each player to a certain role, develop tactics and try to read the game. These games inevitably got competitive, but there was definite learning in how different tactics and strategies, while they might appear solid on paper, were ineffective in reality. It highlighted the importance of analysing and adapting to the situation unfolding in front of you, as opposed to rigidly sticking the pregame plan.



When it came to FLEX, national allegiances went out the window





Project X was a series of time-limited scenario-based obstacles conducted in a warehouse where each obstacle was hidden from the rest. Within each team, only 7 members could attempt the obstacle. The others were appointed as feedback lead and safety personnel (to push people onto crash mats). Everyone was a leader twice, and a feedback lead twice. This was another excellent way that other countries showed their training, and the way they approached a challenge.

For example, one of the challenges was a minefield where our team had to cross using the bar in the picture. A "recce team that had gone before us" dropped some ISR equipment which we also had to collect and take with us. Anywhere painted red would sound the alarm to the enemy (incurred a time penalty) so with all these challenges, there was some discussion as to how the obstacle would be best overcome. The DS got each team to develop an acronym to help us through this. Ours was BLACK (we were the black team) – Basic problem, Leader (appoint one), Analyse the situation, Choose COA, KILL!

There was a lot of emphasis on feedback after each event, and was really useful to see how other countries view your leadership and communication skills.

Learnings: There was also great emphasis on culture and differences – and how they impact on multinational operations and exercises. We had a module on cultural differences, and it was eye-opening to see some of the perspectives of other countries on certain topics,

but I suppose that was the point – we may strongly disagree on certain issues but still must overcome these differences to affect a successful mission outcome.



Our team Patch

My key take aways;

1. Feedback (both positive and constructive) needs to be more widespread within the organisation
2. More emphasis should be placed on the soft skills of leadership and empowering subordinates
3. Leadership training doesn't have to be all day powerpoints!

This article was edited by An Cosantóir due to space constraints.

Moderated Panel on National Security, Elements of National Power (DIME) D H.E Laird Hindle, Ambassador of Canada to the Republic of Estonia. I Mr. Gints Amolins. Foreign News Editor/ The Latvian Television. M Maj Gen Ilmar Tamm, Comdr of the Estonian Defence League. E- Mr Louis Wierenga



COMMAND SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERS' COURSE (CSEL), BALTIC DEFENCE COLLEGE

A STRATEGIC NEXUS FOR ENLISTED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE
ARTICLE BY RSM DAVID O'REILLY

The 2025 Command Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course (CSEL) at the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) marked a pivotal advance in NATO and partner nations' professional military education (PME), equipping Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) with strategic competencies to confront Europe's evolving security challenges. Over three months, 28 participants from 18 nations including Ireland formed a diverse cohort that engaged with issues such as Russian aggression, hybrid warfare, energy resilience, and regional defence integration. More than an academic programme, CSEL served as a strategic enabler, strengthening multinational cooperation and readiness while embedding enlisted leadership within the broader framework of Baltic and European defence. This essay explores the course's structure, pedagogical approach, and strategic relevance, situating it within the wider context of European security dynamics and multinational defence integration.

The Baltic Defence College: A Multinational Beacon

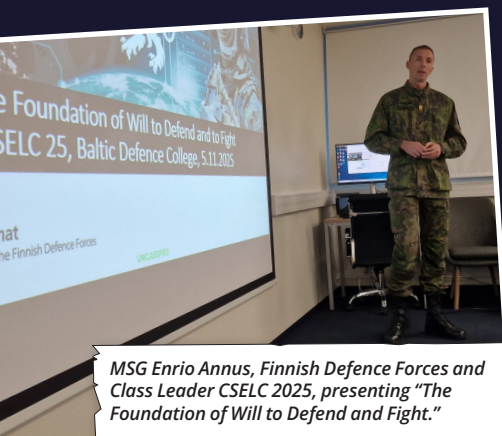
Established in 1999 and jointly managed by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, BALTDEFCOL has evolved into a premier institution for multinational military education. Its mission is not only to train officers and enlisted leaders but also to foster strategic dialogue across NATO and EU member states. In 2025, the college reaffirmed its role as a hub for cultivating leaders capable of navigating the complexities of modern European security.

The CSEL stands out as a flagship programme, designed to prepare SNCOs for leadership roles in environments marked by hybrid threats, technological disruption, and geopolitical volatility. By hosting participants from across Europe and North America, BALTDEFCOL reinforced its reputation as a centre of excellence for PME and as a platform for strengthening collective defence.

Reframing the NCO: From Tactical Executor to Strategic Advisor

Traditionally, NCOs have been viewed as the backbone of military operations, responsible for discipline, cohesion, and tactical execution. Yet the contemporary European security environment demands a recalibration of this role. Hybrid threats, combining cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and irregular warfare blur the lines between peace and conflict. Energy security, migration pressures, and the weaponisation of information further complicate the strategic landscape.

Against this backdrop, SNCOs are increasingly expected to act as strategic advisors, bridging the gap between commanders and the rank-and-file. They must shape institutional culture, contribute to policy implementation, and foster interoperability across multinational forces. The CSELN embodies this transformation, equipping



MSG Enrio Annus, Finnish Defence Forces and Class Leader CSELN 2025, presenting "The Foundation of Will to Defend and Fight."

enlisted leaders with the intellectual tools to "speak, plan, and act together" at operational and strategic levels.

Strategic Purpose and Vision

The CSELN is tailored to enable CSELN's to advise senior commanders effectively. In an era marked by Russian assertiveness, grey-zone tactics, and shifting geopolitical fault lines, particularly in the Baltic Sea region, the role of senior enlisted leaders has expanded beyond traditional domains. By

honing strategic thinking, communication and leadership skills the course ensures SNCO's can advise commanders and also lead across a range of scenarios, from military conflict to peacebuilding operations and interagency coordination.

Brigadier General Alvydas Šiuparis, Commandant of BALTDEFNOL, emphasised during the 2025 welcome ceremony that the course is not merely an academic exercise but a strategic investment in the human dimension of defence leadership. His remarks underscored the importance of cultivating a shared understanding of regional security challenges and empowering enlisted leaders to serve as strategic enablers within their respective defence establishments.

Educational Philosophy and Learning Environment

BALTDEFNOL's educational philosophy emphasises critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and practical application. The faculty comprises experienced military officers and civilian academics from across NATO and EU member states, ensuring a balanced and comprehensive approach.

The learning environment is deliberately inclusive and respectful, fostering open dialogue and cultural sensitivity. In a multinational setting, this ethos is essential for building trust and cohesion. Participants are encouraged to challenge assumptions, debate strategic concepts, and apply lessons to real-world scenarios.

Course Structure and Curriculum



RSM Paul Tuite presenting his Argumentative Essay titled "The transformation of The Irish Air Corps into the Irish Air Force. A Name change or a robust strategic change?" to a panel

The 2025 CSELN unfolded across four modules over three months:

Module 1: Online Foundation

Delivered virtually, this phase established a common academic baseline. Topics included Baltic regional security, global trends, academic writing, and critical thinking.

Module 2: Strategic Leadership

Conducted in BALTDEFNOL Tartu, Estonia, this module explored strategic leadership principles, decision-making, and the advisory role of CSELNs. A highlight was a field trip to Finland to study its comprehensive security model where Finnish defence leaders discussed their integration of civilian and military resources in a hybrid threat environment.

Module 3: National and International Security

This phase examined NATO and EU defence





Naisten Valmiusliitto, The Women's Readiness Association unites 10 member organisations engaged in voluntary national defence and overall security work which consists of over 100,000 women



CSELC 2025 gathered after the closing ceremony

policies, hybrid threats, and Baltic geopolitics. Participants attended the Annual Military History Conference, linking historical insights to contemporary challenges.

Module 4: Capstone and Graduation

Culminating in Vilnius, Lithuania, the capstone synthesised learning through tabletop exercises and collaborative projects. The joint graduation with the Senior Leaders' Course symbolised the integration of officer and enlisted leadership development.

Guest lectures from senior officers, academics, and policymakers enriched the curriculum, while the graduation panel on "Reinforcement of Defence and Regional Military Cooperation" highlighted the course's integrative ethos.

Multinational Cohesion and Strategic Dialogue

The multinational composition of the course was a cornerstone of its success. Engaging with peers from a wide range of NATO and partner countries, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and others, provided participants with diverse perspectives on strategic leadership and security challenges. For instance, a workshop on hybrid warfare became more dynamic when participants shared national experiences and approaches to countering non-traditional threats, deepening the collective understanding of the challenge.

Pedagogical Innovation and Academic Rigor

Academic rigor is a hallmark of BALTDEFCOL's approach. Participants produced analytical

papers, engaged in structured debates, and demonstrated mastery of strategic concepts. The emphasis on academic writing and critical thinking reinforced the intellectual demands of advisory roles.

The blended learning model combining online and residential phases reflected pedagogical innovation. Virtual modules ensured accessibility, while residential sessions facilitated immersive learning and peer-to-peer interaction. This approach balanced flexibility with depth, enhancing both accessibility and cohesion.

Ireland's Strategic Opportunity

Ireland's participation in the 2025 CSELC was particularly significant. As a non-NATO, EU member with a modest defence posture, Ireland faces unique challenges in aligning its capabilities with evolving strategic demands. The CSELC offered Irish SNCOs exposure to regional threat perceptions, strategic cultures, and operational practices.

For Irish participants, the course provided:

Strategic Literacy: Enhanced understanding of NATO/EU structures and regional dynamics.

Advisory Competence: Tools to serve as trusted advisors bridging strategic intent and operational execution.

Professional Networks: Enduring relationships with peers across Europe and North America.

Institutional Development: Foundations for Ireland's Joint Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course (JSEL), scheduled for Q2 2026.

These outcomes align with the recommendations of Ireland's Commission on the Defence Forces, which called for enhanced PME, leadership development, and

international engagement across all ranks.

European Strategic Challenges and the Role of Enlisted Leaders

The CSELC must be understood within the broader context of European strategic challenges. Russia's war in Ukraine has underscored the fragility of regional stability, while hybrid threats exploit vulnerabilities in cyber, energy, and information domains. The Baltic states, situated on NATO's eastern flank, face acute pressures that demand resilience and multinational solidarity.

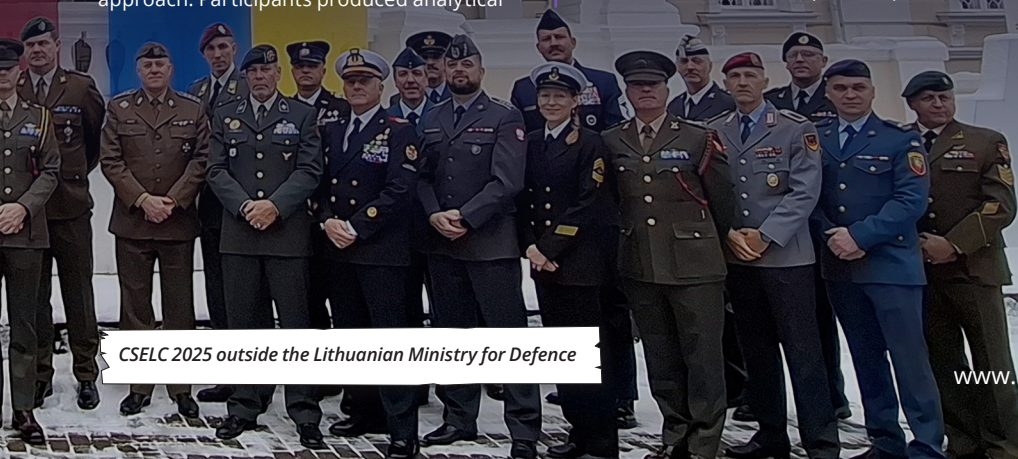
SNCOs trained through CSELC are uniquely positioned to address these challenges. Their ability to advise commanders, foster interoperability, and build trust across diverse forces enhances Europe's collective defence posture. By embedding enlisted leadership into strategic processes, the course contributes to whole-of-government coordination and strengthens deterrence.

Conclusion: Strategic Leadership from the Ground Up

The 2025 Command Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course at the Baltic Defence College represents a paradigm shift in professional military education. By equipping senior NCOs with intellectual tools, strategic awareness, and multinational fluency, the course transforms enlisted leaders into strategic enablers.

For Ireland, participation was more than symbolic—it was a strategic investment in the Defence Forces' future. As Europe grapples with evolving security challenges, empowering NCOs to operate at the strategic level will be essential to building agile, resilient, and credible forces.

Ultimately, the CSELC embodies the principle that strategic leadership must be cultivated from the ground up. By reframing the role of enlisted leaders, fostering multinational cohesion, and addressing Europe's pressing security challenges, the course strengthens not only the Baltic region but the wider European defence architecture.



CSELC 2025 outside the Lithuanian Ministry for Defence

EXERCISE COSAIN SOLAI

DEFENCE OF LIGHT

ARTICLE BY LT COLM MEADE

The 1 ACS (Armoured Cavalry Squadron) conducted Exercise Cosaint Solais as part of its unit training objectives focusing on the core concepts for 2025. This exercise presented the soldiers of 1 ACS with fictitious scenarios in order to enhance both basic reconnaissance skills and to improve the unit's ability to employ both mounted, dismounted and UAS assets to achieve its objectives. As part of these training objectives the 1 ACS endeavoured to foster an environment of mission command allowing all ranks to assimilate what has been asked of them and produce a tentative plan.

Scenario

Members of the 1 ACS received a warning order from the office of D ISTAR of a credible threat to the Irish electrical infrastructure from an unknown subversive group. Intelligence reports determined that the subversive group's intentions were to create political pressure, deny services to military installations and draw friendly forces into a reactive posture.

This prompted 1 ACS to enter a state of readiness and move to 30 min notice to move.

The Exercise

This exercise consisted of two main events in two separate training areas.



Windfarm view through the CRV Weapon system

Orders being delivered by Lt Sheehan



Phase one began with the use of Heli assets to insert Scout Reconnaissance teams to the Lullymore area of Kildare from the DFTC. Two Cavalry Scout Detachments were tasked with answering Commanders Critical Information Requirements (CCIR) on a Named Area of Interest 1001. For this action to be effective the scout soldiers needed to FIND the enemy and deliver accurate reporting to feed into the intelligence cycle. The use of indicators both positive and negative allow the scout teams to establish what the intentions and capability of the adversary was. This meant soldiers needed to utilise stealth, gain the required information and exfiltration from location, without being decisively engaged, in accordance with commander's reconnaissance guidance.

Phase Two consisted of a Squadron Red Level search in the Mowag CRVs which concluded in a dismounted direct action. This task exercised both mounted and dismounted elements of the 1 ACS in order to FIND, FIX and DESTROY all subversive elements in the confines of Mount Lucas Windfarm in Offaly, thereby preventing the destruction of critical infrastructure by adversary groups. An operation that required detailed planning, organisation, command and control and the ability to adapt as circumstance changed on the ground.

Conclusion

Exercise Cosaint Solais effectively exercised troops of the 1 ACS in the assimilation of orders, reconnaissance and security taskings, search techniques, and above all else allowed troops the manoeuvre space to perform under their own initiative while executing the cavalry mission command philosophy. Special thanks to Bord na Móna and private land owners in Lullymore Heritage for facilitating.



Mount Lucas Windfarm – Red Level Search

NATO MP COMMAND SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERS FORUM

ARTICLE BY RQMS ROCH RYAN



Capability display with attachment of winter camo

In NATO's evolving security landscape, building agile, interoperable forces demands more than advanced technologies or new doctrines. It requires empowered, strategically minded Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) who can shape mission outcomes at every level. The NATO Military Police Command Senior Enlisted Leader Forum (MPCSELF) exemplifies this principle – a focused platform advancing military policing standards while cultivating future strategic leaders across the Alliance.

The MPCSELF operates within the Military Police Community of Interest (MPCoI), where Senior Enlisted Leaders (SELs) have the opportunity to interact and cooperate on topics that enhance military policing with Allies and Partners around the globe. This is accomplished by identifying and sharing lessons learned and best practices, updating SELs on activities across the Military Police and Gendarmerie Type Forces (GTF) environment, providing common recommendations and inputs for relevant decision-making bodies, synchronising activities and operations, and identifying areas of improvement or sustaining current doctrines. A specific focus is placed on fostering cooperation and common activities,

enhancing mutual understanding, and developing multinational standards and procedures on MP and GTF matters.

Established in 2023 and first convened at the NATO Military Police Centre of Excellence (MP COE) in Bydgoszcz, Poland, the MPCSELF has rapidly expanded in scope and significance. Subsequent iterations in Prague (2024), co-hosted by the Czech Military Police, and in Oslo (2025), hosted by the Norwegian Military Police, attracted a record 32 senior NCOs (OR-8 and OR-9) from NATO and Partner for Peace (PfP) nations. This consistent growth signals the value and necessity of a senior enlisted led platform tailored to multinational military policing leadership.

The MP COE's role in facilitating and evolving the MPCSELF has been instrumental, ensuring the forum aligns with wider doctrinal, training, and capability objectives across the NATO MP community.

What sets MPCSELF apart from other Command Senior Enlisted Leader events is its focus on the specific realities of military policing in multinational operations with the five core Military Police functions to the fore, Mobility Support Operations, Security Operations, Detention Operations, Stability Policing and Police Functions. It recognises and includes Gendarmerie Type Forces (GTF), which are military or paramilitary units with police functions and capabilities, often providing law enforcement and public order missions. The forum enables senior MP and GTF NCOs to





RQMS Roch Ryan delivering a lecture for a SLC MP Cse for MP Senior NCO's

shape doctrine, foster leadership development, and enhance interoperability across allied and partner forces.

Central to the forum's effectiveness is its participatory model. Attendees are actively encouraged to shape the agenda and present peer reviewed proposals. In 2024, this approach led directly to the launch of a Junior MP NCO Course, now a foundational program for nurturing early career MP leaders within the NATO framework.

This course responds to an identified gap in the structured development of enlisted personnel and has been recognised as a priority by several nations. It reflects not only a shared commitment to professional growth but also the Forum's capacity to turn dialogue into action.

Looking ahead, the MP Working Group and its Senior Enlisted Leaders will continue to build on this momentum. The development of tailored training frameworks, increased collaboration in operational environments, and sustained support for capacity building among allies and partners remain central to our way forward.

The 2025 forum built on this momentum with a strategic level proposal from RQMS Roch Ryan, Military Police Group, Defence Forces Training Centre: a capstone Strategic Leadership Course for Senior MP NCOs. Completing the MP training continuum from junior to operational to strategic, this proposed course would prepare senior NCOs to operate within multinational staff structures and influence high level decision making. Presented by RQMS Ryan, to a forum representing over 900 collective years of Military Policing experience, the proposal demonstrated how even small nations can offer scalable, strategic contributions to the Alliance.

The proposal is now in the consultation and data gathering phase under the continued guidance of the MP COE. Follow up discussions and refinement are scheduled for mid-2026.

From an Irish national perspective, participation in MPCSELF offers unique strategic value. It provides Irish Military Police leaders with direct access to multinational best practices, strengthens our interoperability with NATO and Partner forces, and positions Ireland as a credible contributor to doctrine development and training evolution. Continued engagement not only enhances our national MP capability, but ensures Ireland remains connected to the future shape of military policing at the international level.

Beyond the formal sessions, MPCSELF has fostered a highly functional international network of Senior MP and GTF NCOs. Participants regularly engage between forums

to provide mutual support on doctrine development, training design, operational planning, and capability reviews. This informal professional network enhances responsiveness and reduces duplication of effort across allied and partner forces.

As a platform for aligning doctrine, standardising practices, and accelerating the growth of multinational MP and GTF leadership, MPCSELF has already demonstrated clear operational relevance. Its deliberations are poised to further inform NATO MP training, doctrine, and capability development processes.

Since 2024, MPCSELF has led to the creation of the Junior MP NCO Course and the development of a Strategic Leadership Course proposal both of which are now influencing MP training pathways and informing future course offerings across multiple NATO nations.

As one senior participant observed, "This forum is where strategy meets experience and where doctrine learns from the ground up."

Member nations are encouraged to amplify awareness of the forum's work through internal briefings, publications, and strategic communications. Strengthening institutional recognition will ensure MPCSELF continues to deliver lasting value across national and NATO structures.

As senior enlisted leaders, we contribute to strategic outcomes by advising, informing, and connecting decision makers with operational realities. The MPCSELF strengthens this role ensuring the Military Police and GTF community continues to evolve in line with NATO's most pressing challenges.

At its core, the MPCSELF is a force multiplier transforming individual experience into collective strategic advantage. By harnessing the insights of senior enlisted leaders across Allied and Partner nations, the forum directly supports senior decision makers and strengthens NATO's capacity to lead and police in complex operational environments.



Capability display

Iveco MP tactical vehicle

ENGINEERING INNOVATION IN MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS

CIS TTS Final Year Projects at SETU Carlow

CIS TTS (Trainee Technician Scheme) students complete a three-year Bachelor of Electronic Engineering (B Eng) degree in SETU Carlow. This programme places particular focus on Military Communications Systems. On completion of the degree, students then undertake a "CommTech" course which provides the necessary training and skillsets to carry out routine CIS Technical taskings throughout the organisation. As part of the third and final year of the degree course, the students take on a final year project.

The Final Year Project provides students with the opportunity to apply their engineering knowledge through the investigation, development and critical evaluation of a practical engineering challenge. It also aims to strengthen students' ability to plan, manage, document and clearly communicate a substantial engineering project, while fostering independence, initiative and professional responsibility.

At the commencement of the final academic year, students are assigned an individual project brief requiring the creation of an electronic engineering solution to a distinct problem. Where feasible, projects are encouraged to address challenges within a military or defence-related context.

Following the development of an initial concept, students must submit a project specification for review and approval before progressing further. This document outlines the specific real-world problem, the proposed technical approach and a detailed list of the electronic components required to realise the solution. The

specification must, as a minimum, include three electronic sensors, a microcontroller, a server and a database.

Assessment of the Final Year Project is conducted through a combination of oral presentations and submission of final project outputs. Presentations are delivered to a panel consisting of SETU academic staff and representatives from the CIS School. These are evaluated on clarity of structure, effective time management and quality of delivery.

The final project submission is assessed across several key areas:

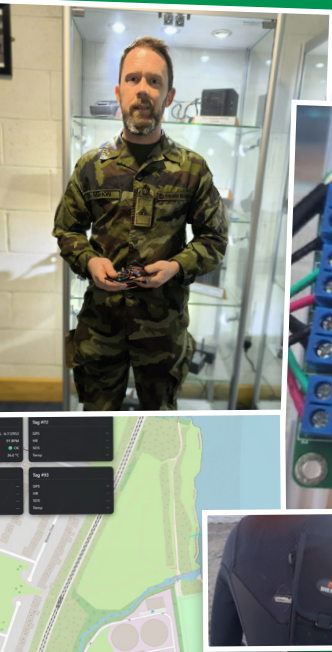
- Review and analysis of relevant historical and current literature.
- Development and presentation of a comprehensive project management plan.
- Technical design and practical implementation of the proposed solution.
- Innovation, technical capability and consideration of sustainability.
- Manufacturing and/or simulation processes, including validation and testing.
- Critical evaluation of results, methods and supporting literature leading to balanced conclusions.
- Quality, clarity and technical accuracy of the final written report.
- Overall commitment, engagement and contribution throughout the project.

CPL Aidan Clancy

The Smart Greenhouse Project has been developed to provide a self-sustaining system that monitors key environmental factors, including pH levels, water levels, soil moisture, and overall plant health. Sensor data is collected and stored in a central database, where it is displayed in real time on a web-based dashboard, allowing users to remotely monitor growing conditions and system performance.

The project was developed to demonstrate how automated and connected greenhouse systems can reduce reliance on manual oversight while improving efficiency and consistency in food production. By enabling continuous monitoring and data-driven decision-making, the system highlights its potential use in remote or overseas environments, such as military deployments, where traditional food supply routes may be limited or disrupted.





PTE Ben McMahon

AQUA-TRIC addresses the safety challenges faced during open-water swimming events, where visibility, distance, and delayed response can put athletes at risk.

The system uses a compact, wearable transponder equipped with GPS, heart-rate monitoring, and accelerometer and gyroscope sensors to track position and detect swimming strokes.

By identifying when a swimmer's shoulder breaks the water surface, the device intelligently triggers LoRa transmissions to ensure reliable long-range communication while conserving power.

This data is received by a shore-based system, giving event organisers real-time insight to support rapid decision-making and emergency response.

SGMN Paddy Hannon

The Mosquito Zapper addresses the problem of mosquito presence overseas, by providing an automated detection and neutralisation system. Using a camera, sensors, and a microcontroller, the system

identifies mosquito-sized targets and determines their position in real time. A dual-axis galvanometer then directs a focused UV laser to the target for neutralisation. This system reduces reliance on chemical repellents and manual intervention.



SGMN Derek Brady

The SyncWellness system addresses challenges related to stress awareness and early intervention in high-pressure environments. The wearable continuously monitors physiological indicators associated with stress, including heart rate, skin conductance, temperature, and movement.

Collected data is securely

transmitted to a mobile application, allowing users to track trends and access supportive wellness tools. An integrated buddy support system enables timely check-ins during elevated stress, while GPS functionality supports identification of previous stress-trigger locations for preventative awareness. Future development aims to expand adaptive support for individuals with ASD through environmental and ambience-based features.

Global Recognition

Five third year final year projects were submitted by SETU for consideration in the Global Undergraduate Awards (GUA) 2025 with one student, Pte Ben McMahon, receiving the award for 'Best Undergraduate Engineering Project on the island of Ireland' in the Global Undergraduate Awards (GUA) 2025. This took place on the 09 Oct 2025 at the Royal Irish Academy.

ARTICLE BY CAPT
DÓNAL CLARE

BUILDING CAPABILITY THROUGH COOPERATION

WORKING IN CONFINED SPACES COURSE

Rotation of Search Pairs and conduct of systematic decontamination

*Students practice Breathing Apparatus
Pre-Entry Tests in Collins Barracks*



*Search Pair conduct advanced search
of the Forecastle of MV Matthew*

The School of Military Engineering recently ran an Advanced Search Working in Confined Spaces (WICS) course which took place in Collins Barracks, Co. Cork in September 2025. 15 Students participated, including seven (07) members of the Corps of Engineers and eight (08) international students from Cyprus, Spain, and Italy. The training was organised under the European Defence Agency (EDA) Military Search Capability Building Project (Cat B), which continues to foster collaboration and interoperability among European partners. For context, a "Confined Space" refers to any place, including any substantially enclosed space (e.g. vessel, bund, tunnel, container, cellar) that are deemed high risk due to the hazards posed by the presence of explosive atmospheres,

harmful gases/ vapours, excess (or absence) of oxygen or excessively high temperatures. In a military context, these spaces tend to be dark, narrow, complex labyrinths – extremely hazardous environments to an Advanced Search Team that also tend to be ideal hiding places for any potential adversary.

The recent course follows a long-standing partnership between the Defence Forces and our European counterparts, with recent joint EDA training activities held as recently as July 2024 during a large Military Search Exercise in Cyprus, part of which featured Confined or limited access exercise areas that required specialist and advanced Engineer assets.

The Working in Confined Spaces course provided participants with the technical knowledge and practical skills necessary to safely and effectively search, manoeuvre, and operate in restricted environments. These skills are not only mission-critical but also directly enhance the safety of personnel conducting search, rescue or tasks that involve countering any explosive threat(s).

Engineer Operations in Confined Spaces

Modern operational environments demand highly trained personnel capable of working in challenging and high-risk conditions including, but not limited to, confined spaces. Developing and maintaining Advanced Search Capabilities such as Working in Confined Spaces and Roped Intervention Search, Access and Rescue (RISAR) ensures that personnel remain prepared for complex and often dynamic missions, whether in domestic security operations, overseas deployments, or multinational crisis response. Operating within this environment could also be expected in any response or recovery efforts in the likes of Gaza or Ukraine, by way of recent examples.

The mindset required to operate for extended periods, or at short notice, can be demanding of the modern Irish Sapper – particularly from a psychological perspective. In ancient Irish Mythology, those dark, enclosed, rarely entered caves and abysses were believed to be a crossing point into the Otherworld or a gateway into the dangerous and unknown – such as the ancient Warrior Nera who was said to have transcended into the Otherworld to battle evil spirits through Uaimh na gCait (Oweynagat Cave) Co. Roscommon in defence of Queen Medb. Bringing myth into reality, our modern Sappers must prepare prior to each entry and appreciate the psychological shift needed to enter environments where visibility, mobility and sensory feedback are reduced as part of High Risk Advanced Search (ESSC) Operations.

During the exercise serials in the Cork

Harbour Area, the students donned all equipment which included breathing apparatus, gas detection equipment, camera equipment, PPE, decontamination kit, communication equipment and other Specialist Search kit – and prepared to enter these areas. It was in the isolated prison of the dark that teamwork, intuition, communication and leadership were all tested and refined through assimilation and a demanding exercise scenario. The scenario in this case revolved around the actions of an unlawful anti-state actor and their efforts to conceal weapons, documents and advanced surveillance/surveying equipment on board a cargo vessel and nearby tunnel locations that had been seized as part of a high profile seizure at sea as well as other areas in Cork Harbour area. Fort Davis was also utilised to good effect as part of a realistic exercise serial where students were lowered down via high directional line by attached Engineer Rope Operators through a narrow, high level entry point.

Benefits of International Collaboration

Training alongside colleagues from other nations builds more than just technical skills — it fosters mutual understanding, trust, and interoperability. By working with partners from Cyprus, Spain, and Italy, participants gained exposure to different techniques, domestic (and EU) legislation and operational experiences, which enriched the collective knowledge of the group. It was found that Corps of Engineers participants could consistently offer their knowledge gained from recent and similar activities such as UNIFIL, UNDOF, domestic ATPC operations and other ongoing capability development efforts such as Rope Rescue training as led by Capt Bryan Dwyer (SME) where School of Military Engineering and Engineer Field Company personnel have made professional leaps forward in training, equipment and safety awareness in close cooperation with industry and other training partners. These parallel efforts and recent operational experiences have complimented one another well for all training efforts

across the spectrum of Advanced Search operations.

Such multinational training ensures that when our Defence Forces personnel operate as part of affiliated forces, they can integrate seamlessly and contribute effectively. Shared standards, common procedures, equipment crossover and personal bonds forged during training greatly improve the effectiveness of future joint operations.

Looking Ahead

Just as Uaimh na gCait Cave once symbolised a liminal passage between worlds, every entry into a confined space arena represents the crossing of a threshold: from routine to risk, from certainty to the unknown – and, with the correct preparation, back out again. As threats evolve, so too must the training and skills of those tasked with addressing them. Maintaining cutting-edge expertise in advanced search disciplines such as Confined Space Operations and Roped Intervention, Search and Access (RISAR) is essential. The Defence Forces Corps of Engineers, through continued engagement with the European Defence Agency and our international partners, remain committed to developing and sustaining these critical capabilities and technical proficiencies.

Note: On the above theme of warriors, this course would not have been possible without the leadership and keen eye of Comdt John Murphy (a recent addition to the First Line Reserve). Having completed a WICS Instructor Course with the Swedish Armed Forces in 2021, Comdt Murphy has overseen and developed the concept of Advanced Search in High Risk Scenarios such as Working in Confined Spaces in the Defence Forces. The School of Military Engineering, on behalf of the wider Corps of Engineers, wishes to thank Comdt John Murphy for his vision, drive and ever professional input – “Is fearr coinneal a lasadh na mallacht a chur ar an dorchadas” (“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”)



Search Pair 1 are lowered into Tunnels in Fort Davis by Corps of Engineer RISAR Team (Att)

DF VALUES CHAMPIONS 2024

Overall Values Champion – Fr Paul Murphy

“Fr Paul Murphy displayed and lived all the DF values at various times since his attack. From physical courage during the attack and his subsequent recovery and rehabilitation, loyalty to his fellow members of the DF, moral courage and integrity to forgive the perpetrator, to selflessness in deploying with his unit to UNIFIL so soon after the attack. He embodies our DF Values and has lived them over the last number of months and displayed each one to both members of the DF and the public. Through his actions he has done more for the positive perception of the DF and promoted our true culture and identity among the general public.”

“Whether providing counselling to soldiers coping with the mental and emotional toll of deployment or offering a listening ear to those in need of support, Fr Murphy has made a profound impact on countless lives”

“Fr Paul shows unmatched dedication to inductees, families and personnel serving overseas, his selfless service, guidance and positive attitude make him a prime example of the Best of the DF, He is an ambassador for the DF and Ireland.”

Physical Courage – Sgt John Ainsworth – 1 Cn Cois

Sgt John Ainsworth displayed exceptional physical courage and quick thinking during a critical incident while off duty. On 24 June 2024, while driving with his son, he observed a man falling backwards into the water at Galway Commercial boat club, in apparent distress. Without hesitation Sgt Ainsworth stopped

his car, instructed his son to call emergency services and jumps into the water to rescue the man. Demonstrating both bravery and composure he reached the individual swiftly, stabilised him and ensured his safety until emergency personnel arrived. His actions undoubtedly prevented a drowning and exemplify the highest standards of courage, decisiveness and selflessness under pressure. Despite being off duty, his instinct was to act immediately placing himself at significant personal risk in order to preserve the life of another.

Integrity – NS team LÉ Aoibhinn Lt (NS) Patrick McGovern, AS Alan Hourigan, AS Daithí Sheehan

While on patrol off the SE coast in August 2024, the team boarded a RHIB and proceeded to an area where a body of a man, matching the description of a missing kayaker, had reportedly been seen. They proceeded close to the shore in very difficult weather conditions, in order to effect a recovery of the body from the water. They succeeded in removing the body from the water and placed it into a body bag on-board the RHIB. The process was difficult as the deceased had sustained damage from rocks and marine life in the area overnight. The team showed incredible integrity, professionalism and respect throughout the recovery in the public setting.

The team accompanied the remains to the lifeboat station, gave statements to An Garda Síochána and assisted with the preparation of the remains for transport by a local undertaker. They further received a request to meet with the family of the deceased man, who was a UK national on holiday in the region



A/B Alan Hourigan – LÉ AOIBHINN



Pte Patrick Murphy - OBTS



Sgt Ian McGee - 2BAR



Fr Paul Murphy



Cpl Michael O'Brien - 1 BAR

with his family. The team met with the family and answered all questions on the recovery and it was a very emotional process. The family later contacted the NS and outlined how grateful they were for their actions.

Respect – Sgt Mick Meehan CMU/125 Inf Bn UNIFIL

Nominated across many categories Sgt Meehan is described as showing our core values throughout his service overseas with 125 Inf Bn. Referred to as the pillar of the Medical Section, he was credited with being a tremendous leader who maintains professionalism to his trade and expertise. "Throughout all phases of pre deployment training, and throughout the mission itself he has shown the highest levels of respect to all he came in contact with. He is a great role model for his peers but also a great mentor to the younger generation of medical personnel"

Loyalty – Pte Patrick Murphy OBTS

Pte Murphy was nominated by his Unit members for Loyalty. He was described as being loyal to his unit, his work friends and the Defence Forces and is always willing to help. He holds the rank of Private but as a result of his loyalty, service and experience in his unit, he gives and is sought out for advice to all ranks. He consistently demonstrates loyalty within the OBTS going above and beyond to support his fellow comrades.

He was described as the most valuable staff member within OBTS and as a tireless worker demonstrating unit loyalty and

unwavering dedication to his team. He accepts responsibility and applies his own high standards when dealing with high value stock and specialist equipment. When a new staff member arrives Pte Murphy will naturally but subtly supervise and offer advice such is his loyalty to the small team in OBTS.

Selflessness – Sgt Ian McGee 2 BAR

In September 2024 Sgt Ian McGee assisted in an RTA in Co Meath. A school bus with 27 children and a driver left the road and overturned into an adjacent field. Being one of the first people on-scene Sgt McKee took charge of managing the accident site and co-ordinating the other attendees who had also stopped. He firstly had to identify a means to disable the engine to stop the wheels from continuing to turn. Using his limited knowledge of mechanics he did this successfully. He then broke a back window to safely evacuate the young passengers from the vehicle and triaged the injured while also administering first aid. His composure and courage to take action in very challenging circumstances was noted by NAS officers who attended the scene and who recognised the skills and leadership demonstrated by Sgt McGee. His selfless actions in those crucial moments exemplifies the professionalism and best of the DF.

Moral Courage – Cpl Michael O'Brien, 1 BAR

During a Potential NCOs course Cpl O'Brien demonstrated exceptional moral courage when he recognised and acted upon unfair and inappropriate treatment of fellow students. His actions exemplified the DF values and highlighted his commitment to fairness, respect and the well-being of his peers. Despite the potential risk to his own position and standing, in witnessing a situation where individuals were being treated unfairly, contrary to the standards expected of DF instructors, he reported the issue through proper channels ensuring the matter was addressed. By taking this step he showed unwavering commitment to upholding the principles of fairness and mutual respect. His actions required significant moral courage being a fellow student on a career course and could have resulted in him being in a vulnerable position. However, he prioritised the welfare of his fellow students and the integrity of the course over any potential personal risk. His decision to speak out against injustice is a shining example of moral courage.

Guest of honour at the recent DF Values Awards, Mr Jonathan Shackleton is the cousin of the Kildare born Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. He is the family historian for the Irish Shackleton's, and has accompanied 45 groups on trips to the Antarctic in the past 25 years as historian, guide and photographer. He is a contributor to multiple talks and events

on the Antarctic and Shackleton's explorations. He is also the author with John MacKenna of "Shackleton - An Irishman in Antarctica" about Ernest Shackleton with emphasis on the Shackleton family. Most recently he was the invited guest at the opening of the Shackleton Experience in Athy, Co. Kildare



Sgt John Ainsworth - 1 CN COIS



Lt (NS) Patrick McGovern - LÉ AOIBHINN



Sgt Mick Meehan - CMU

SHACKLETON

EXPERIENCE

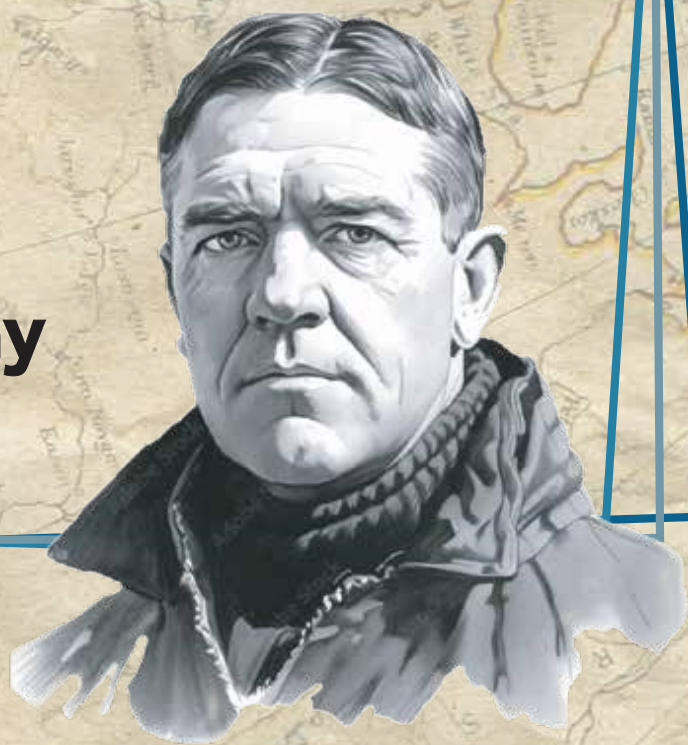
Discover the extraordinary world of Kildare-born polar explorer Ernest Shackleton at the Shackleton Experience, Athy, Co. Kildare

Visitors of all ages can trace Shackleton's journey to the vast polar ice caps through interactive experiences and captivating exhibits

**Open
Tuesday - Saturday**

ShackletonExperience.ie

Café / Gift Shop / Visitor Centre



A DISTINGUISHED NAVAL CAREER CELEBRATED

COMMODORE MICHAEL MALONE STANDS DOWN



A Stand Down Parade took place at Haulbowline Naval Base involving a full muster of all NS personnel to mark the stand down of Commodore Malone.

Commodore Michael Malone joined the Irish Naval Service in 1981 as a Marine Engineering cadet and was commissioned as an Officer in 1983. He graduated from Cork Regional Technical College in Marine and Plant engineering in May 1985 and graduated from the Royal Naval Engineering College, Marine Engineering Application Course, Plymouth, UK in December 1986.

He holds an MA in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies from National University of Ireland, Maynooth and is a graduate of the Defence Forces Senior Command and Staff Course. He has also studied at the Pearl Harbour Naval Shipyard where he completed the International Shipyard Managers Course.

He has held a wide variety of appointments both afloat and

ashore over the last 44 years. At the rank of Captain, he held the appointment of Officer Commanding Naval Support Command with responsibility for all Human Resources, Logistics, Electronic and Engineering functions within the Naval Service.

Commodore Malone was Programme Manager for the design and building of the Irish Navy's P60 Class Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), having previously been the project lead for the LE NIAMH, P50 Class Large Patrol Vessel (LPV) during her build. The P60 OPV programme has witnessed the delivery of four 90-metre OPVs to the Irish Navy during the period 2015-2018.

Commodore Malone was promoted to his present rank and into the appointment of Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service (FOCNS) on 26 December 2017.

The Irish Naval Service thank him for his long service and wish him all the best in retirement.

READY, INTEGRATED, PROFESSIONAL

ARTICLE BY LT SHANE CURRAN

PRE-HOSPITAL CARE IN THE MEDICAL CORPS 2025

2025 was a year of increased operational tempo and complexity for the Medical Corps. As a standing capability of the Defence Forces, the Medical Corps provides timely, continuous, and reliable medical support to operations both on the island of Ireland and overseas. This support spans a broad spectrum of care, including primary healthcare, mental health services, physiotherapy, dental services, pre-hospital emergency care, and the delivery of medical training.

According to NATO, interoperability is defined as the ability of different systems, organisations, and nations to work together coherently, effectively, and efficiently. In line with this principle, the Medical Corps has developed and strengthened close professional relationships with civilian partners, particularly the National Ambulance Service (NAS).

Throughout 2025, there was a deliberate and sustained effort to enhance interoperability with the NAS. This included Medical Corps personnel completing paramedic training through the NAS College, participation in joint inter-agency exercises, and the deployment of Medical Corps assets alongside NAS teams. These activities reinforced shared clinical standards, improved mutual understanding, and ensured that both organisations could operate seamlessly together in demanding operational environments.

Readiness and Professional Standards

The Medical Corps maintained the capability to deploy on a continuous basis, ensuring preparedness to operate across all operational environments at short notice. This capability extended across routine operations, exercises, and periods of crisis or surge demand. Readiness, therefore, was not simply a matter of availability, but a sustained organisational mindset embedded across the Medical Corps.

Professional standards within the Medical Corps are underpinned by a dual-framework approach encompassing both military

discipline and command structures, and clinical governance as defined by regulatory bodies such as the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council. Adherence to these clearly defined standards is fundamental to building trust, both within the Defence Forces and with external partners.

Throughout 2025, the Medical Corps maintained alignment with both military and civilian professional standards. Within the military domain, the Medical School continued to develop and deliver tactical medical training as part of EUMAM Ukraine. Concurrently, the Medical School delivered PHECC-aligned continuing professional development courses for Medics, basic medical training for inductees, and Battlefield First Aid courses as part of pre-deployment training. In parallel, eleven (11) Medical Corps personnel completed the Paramedic programme with the NAS, with a further five (5) commencing training. Medical Corps personnel also completed a significant number of operational shifts, responding to approximately 323 emergency calls ranging from acute medical presentations to traumatic injuries.

This commitment to readiness and professional standards provides the foundation upon which effective interoperability is built, enabling the Medical Corps to integrate seamlessly with civilian partners in complex and time-critical environments.

Interoperability as a Core Capability

Interoperability is not simply the ability of different organisations to work together; rather, it is the deliberate alignment of training, procedures, and professional standards to ensure collective effectiveness. For the Medical Corps, interoperability is therefore an operational requirement, particularly within complex multi-agency environments where coherent and efficient joint action is essential.

This requirement applies not only during structured training events, but equally during routine operations and live incidents, where effective coordination cannot be improvised.



The value of this deliberate approach to interoperability was demonstrated in November 2025, when the Medical Corps participated in a planned mass casualty exercise involving the NAS, the Medical Corps, and Air Corps Emergency Aeromedical Service assets at Carnagh Range. While it is not possible to plan for every specific scenario, structured planning and rehearsal remain indispensable, allowing personnel to develop a strategic mindset and, at a tactical level, enhance situational awareness and experience of operating in complex multi-agency environments.

Such exercises also demonstrate professional alignment through the use of shared clinical language, procedures, and decision-making frameworks. Although differences in command-and-control structures exist between organisations, repeated joint training and exercises reduce friction, support timely decision-making, and ensure these differences do not impede effective operations during live incidents.

When interoperability functions effectively, it directly enhances patient safety, improves coordination between responders, and strengthens outcomes during time-critical emergencies. In this context, the NAS represents the Medical Corps' most frequent and operationally

significant civilian partner, translating interoperability from concept into daily practice.

Interoperability in Practice

The NAS has become a routine operational partner of the Medical Corps, supported by a service level agreement. This agreement allows suitably qualified Defence Forces personnel to crew Defence Forces ambulances and undertake operational shifts, with crews tasked through the National Emergency Operations Centre. Consequently, in December 2025, the NAS requested Defence Forces assistance during a period of surge demand, with Defence Forces crews providing cover over a ten (10) day period and responding to 45 emergency calls. This level of integration is enabled by prior joint training and shared professional standards.

This cooperation directly enhances patient safety and continuity of care. Where Defence Forces assets have been deployed in support of the NAS, the burden on NAS crews has been reduced and response times to incidents improved. In parallel, Defence Forces personnel maintain critical clinical skillsets and are better prepared to operate in Defence Forces environments, both domestically and overseas. The presence of Defence Forces crews responding to incidents in uniform also plays a role in building public trust

and confidence in both organisations. This partnership reflects a broader approach within the Medical Corps, where professionalism, preparation, and integration underpin how it operates with partners across the operational spectrum.

Conclusion

2025 saw a considerable increase in operational tempo for the Medical Corps, a trend that is expected to continue into 2026 and beyond, with an increased focus on interoperability, professionalism, and service delivery. The Medical Corps is a standing operational capability of the Defence Forces, providing continuous, timely, and reliable medical support across all operational environments.

The credibility of the Medical Corps is underpinned by its professionalism, driven by disciplined standards, robust governance, and thorough preparation. Interoperability is embedded as a cornerstone of Medical Corps operations and is developed deliberately and rehearsed as a matter of routine. This interoperability enhances national resilience and public safety, particularly during periods of surge demand. The Medical Corps remains committed to maintaining readiness and delivering professional medical support in service of the Defence Forces and the wider community.

PEOPLE OF THE DF

TRAINING INSTALLATION - 1 BTC



1 BRIGADE
TRAINING
CENTRE

Brigade Training Centres are the units where soldiers are made and career courses sculpt leadership, the emphasis on excellence and exacting standards remains essential. Training environments set the tone for discipline, resilience, and the development of capable leaders who will shape the Defence Forces for years to come.

Historically, women have not been predominant in these training institutes, and they still represent only a fraction of the community. To have four women involved in training soldiers and mentoring junior leaders is a meaningful first, so we took a moment to recognise the value they bring as colleagues, leaders, and equals in the workplace.

NAME:
LAURA HARRIS

RANK:
SGT

SERVICE:
15 YEARS

UNIT:
1 BTC



NAME:
JACQUELINE SHEEHAN

RANK:
CPL

SERVICE:
25 YEARS

UNIT:
1 BTC



WHAT PART OF THE TRAINING ENVIRONMENT DO YOU MOST ENJOY?

I enjoy the variety that the unit offers and the small working group that we have. Everyone helps everyone.

HOW IS THE BTC ENVIRONMENT DIFFERENT TO UNIT LIFE?

We are fortunate in the way we are allowed to forecast our plans for the year ahead allowing for our own planning in our personal lives.

HAVE YOU LEARNT ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF WHILE WITH THE BTC?

Yes, I have learned to concentrate and push on my strengths. I have learned to adapt different instructional methods to use.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS AN IMPORTANT QUALITY AS A LEADER?

One of the most important qualities I would think is adaptability. To adjust to changing circumstances and new challenges we are faced with in the DF today.

ANY ADVICE FOR NCO'S THINKING OF A FUTURE IN A TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT?

Ask questions and ask for help if you need it! Take the time to prepare before doing something and be confident.

WHAT'S AN IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY FOR ANY INSTRUCTOR?

Nobody knows everything, we are always learning and finding new ways to do things. Experience speaks volumes so learn from other instructors.



WHAT PART OF THE TRAINING ENVIRONMENT DO YOU MOST ENJOY?

I love the variety. We could be running a course that has over 50 students and takes place over the course of several months with lots of different elements such as a PNCO course or it could be a one-week PMS Unit Level Users Course with 10 students. You interact with all ranks and units of not only the Army but also the NS and AC which keeps the training environment really interesting.

HAVE YOU LEARNT ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF WHILE WITH THE BTC?

Instructing and being a student on various courses over the years has taught me the type of techniques that allow me to learn more effectively. In turn it makes me more aware of how other people learn in different ways and I can tailor my lessons to reflect that diversity of learning styles and hopefully make my instruction more effective.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS AN IMPORTANT QUALITY AS A LEADER?

I think one important quality of a leader is the ability to communicate an idea clearly, so that everyone involved understands not only the overall concept, but also their role and the role of others within it.

ANY ADVICE FOR NCO'S THINKING OF A FUTURE IN A TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT?

Apart from the obvious stuff like know your subject matter and general physical fitness, I think it is really helpful long term to get familiar with how courses are administered e.g. how they are created and advertised, how do you book lands, ranges, rations and ammunition etc. Find out where all the relevant information can be found e.g. Training Syllabi, TI's, TC's, Admin Instructions etc. There's a lot of planning and work that takes place behind the scenes before a course is even advertised or a list of student names is released and if you're tasked with organising some aspect it's good to know where to find the correct information.

FAVOURITE QUOTE?

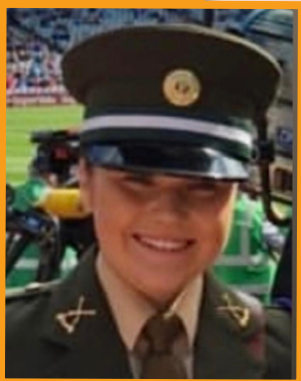
"It's pays to keep an open mind, but not so open your brain falls out." – Carl Sagan

NAME:
VICKIE CUSACK

RANK:
CPL

SERVICE:
6 YEARS

UNIT:
1 BTC



WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO WORK WITH 1 BTC?

I wanted to join 1BTC because I enjoy learning new things and constantly developing myself, and this unit gives me the chance to do that while also passing knowledge on to others. I get a real sense of satisfaction from teaching and helping people improve, and I've found it rewarding to see individuals grow in confidence and ability especially during recruit and PNCO courses.

HAVE YOU LEARNT ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF WHILE WITH THE BTC?

The BTC has taught me that it's okay to be out of your comfort zone sometimes that's where the best learning and growth happens. Embracing challenges has helped me build confidence and improve as an instructor.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS AN IMPORTANT QUALITY AS A LEADER?

In my opinion an important quality as a leader is the ability to listen and understand. When people feel heard and supported, they're more motivated and willing to put the best forward.

ANY ADVICE FOR YOUR 18-YEAR-OLD SELF?

Be patient and stay committed. Progress takes time, and every experience teaches you something valuable. Take things in your stride, don't get down by setbacks, and remember that challenges are just part of the journey. Keep asking Questions, take on new challenges and always keep learning.

FAVOURITE QUOTE?

If you learn one new thing a day, It's a good day.



NAME:
DAISY BYRNE

RANK:
CPL

SERVICE:
6 YEARS

UNIT:
1 CIS



HOW IS THE BTC ENVIRONMENT DIFFERENT TO UNIT LIFE?

For me the training environment is very different to unit life. In unit life your focused on maintaining your own standards, completing tasks, and operating as part of an experienced team, but in the training environment the focus is all about developing others, constantly guiding, supporting and setting the standard and tone for soldiers progressing or new inductees, it requires more leadership and patience as you're not just doing your job your teaching it and leading by example every step of the way.

HAVE YOU A FAVOURITE LEARNING ANECDOTE YOU COULD SHARE?

One of my favourite learning moments was seeing the students reach a checkpoint during their navigation exercise, you could see the mix of relief and pride on their faces that moment when all the teaching, practice, and preservice clicked into place it wasn't about just navigation it was about building their confidence, and belief in their own ability.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS AN IMPORTANT QUALITY AS A LEADER?

I believe it is important to have a calm approach, balanced with a stern attitude and a positive mind-set. Staying calm under pressure sets the tone for others, while being firm ensures standards are being upheld. But just as important as bringing positivity, because I feel motivating and encouraging those around you builds trust, confidence and a stronger team over all.

WHAT'S AN IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY FOR ANY INSTRUCTOR?

Understanding that everyone learns differently and what works for you may not work for another, and that its your job to adapt your approach, some needs more guidance than others and space to figure it out some respond to pressure and some respond more to encouragement.

FAVOURITE QUOTE?

Growth beings when your comfort zone ends.



FOSTERING CULTURAL CHANGE IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

ADDRESSING HARMFUL INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOURS THROUGH THE SERR PROGRAMME

ARTICLE BY COLIN FALLON (PSW), LUCY DENNEHY (SOSW) AND ANNE O'NEILL (SOSW)

To grow, thrive, and remain relevant in an evolving world, all organisations must remain open and responsive to change—whether driven by internal dynamics, external pressures, or a combination of both. For the Defence Forces, these influences have converged in a strategic initiative focused on improving interpersonal dynamics within the workforce. Central to this initiative is a renewed emphasis on dignity, respect, and equality in daily professional interactions, particularly in response to instances where these values are violated (Fitzgerald, 2022).

Safety & Respect – A Basic Right

Contemporary social issues such as bullying, sexual harassment, and sexual violence are widespread across society. As a large national organisation, the Defence Forces inevitably reflect some of these broader societal challenges. Consequently, behaviours and communications that are predatory, misogynistic, sexist, or harassing can, and unfortunately do, infiltrate our unique workplace setting (Parker et al., 2020). When this occurs, the dignity and wellbeing of our personnel are compromised. It is therefore imperative that the Defence Forces provide clear, accessible internal procedures, while also ensuring personnel have access to appropriate military, criminal, and civil justice mechanisms (Kaufman, 2018). The overarching objective is to create a safe and respectful working environment—one that minimises the risk of harmful behaviours and actively counters them when they arise.

This responsibility transcends position, rank, gender, or personal bias. Every member of the Defence Forces must recognise and uphold their duty of care in all interpersonal interactions (Hershey & Berman, 2019). Since October 2021, a range of measures have been introduced to tackle cultural toxicity and raise awareness organisation-wide. These initiatives carry a clear message: involvement with inappropriate behaviour is unacceptable. Loyalty to colleagues must not come at the expense of integrity, nor should it result in covering up or denying instances of misconduct,

harassment, or abuse (Edwards et al., 2021).

Procedures for addressing violations of interpersonal conduct are becoming increasingly robust, transparent, and accessible—marking a significant shift from past practices. Additionally, support structures and pathways for redress and recovery internally and externally have been expanded to assist those impacted by toxic behaviours (Parker et al., 2020). As these awareness-raising efforts become embedded in our organisational culture, the potential for secondary victimisation—through exclusion, retaliation, or lack of cooperation—diminishes (Cortina, 2021). Personnel are increasingly empowered to reject toxic conduct and to support affected individuals. Furthermore, there is growing recognition of the importance of bystander intervention as a shared personal and professional responsibility (Meyer & Mosher, 2022).

"Staying in the Green"

This cultural transformation is encapsulated in the concept of "Staying in the Green"—a commitment to consistently appropriate and respectful behaviour and communication, across all settings (Edwards et al., 2021). While the Defence Forces cannot deny past instances of offending behaviour, nor the harm and trauma inflicted upon serving members, we can and must drive cultural change. Through ongoing education, awareness, and a collective commitment to zero tolerance, we are forging a new organisational norm—one in which such behaviours are unequivocally unacceptable (Fitzgerald, 2022).

One key initiative supporting this transformation is the Sexual Ethics and Respectful Relationships (SERR) Programme, which represents a critical element in the broader strategy for cultural reform. The SERR Programme aims to promote awareness, ethical conduct, and respectful interpersonal relationships within the Defence Forces, reinforcing the commitment to personal safety, dignity, and respect for all personnel (Fitzgerald, 2022). It is a significant cultural reform initiative within the Defence Forces, developed in direct response to the institutional challenges



highlighted by the “Women of Honour” report (Department of Defence, 2021). This report revealed longstanding issues of sexual harassment, assault, and organisational silence, prompting urgent reflection and reform. In response, the Defence Forces drew upon an established international model pioneered in New Zealand - a country that had similarly faced scrutiny over the treatment of women in its military (Bryant, 2019). The New Zealand model provided a structured and research-informed framework for addressing harmful behaviours and reshaping cultural norms within defence institutions. Building on this foundation, the SERR Programme was adapted to suit the unique context of the Irish Defence Forces and piloted under the direction of (then) Assistant Chief of Staff (ACOS) Brigadier General Rossa Mulcahy, marking a significant commitment at senior leadership level to drive change from the top down (Fitzgerald, 2022).

Currently, the SERR Programme is led by the Personal Support Service (PSS), with Senior Occupational Social Workers and Brigade Personnel Support Service Officers (BPSSOs) playing a central role in its delivery. These professionals are actively enhancing the programme by incorporating contemporary research and methodologies, particularly through their completion of the National University of Ireland Galway's Active Consent Programme. Co-facilitation by senior occupational social work and BPSSO staff brings expertise from different professional backgrounds, with the value of the military knowledge and experience adding particular depth to the workshop content.

This collaboration allows for the integration of evidence-based approaches to sexual ethics and consent education, ensuring that training remains current, relevant, and effective. Moreover, ongoing feedback from personnel participating in the training is being used to refine and improve its content

and delivery, ensuring it responds meaningfully to the lived experiences of members across the Defence Forces.

The workshop is carefully structured to engage participants while providing clear, actionable knowledge that aligns with military culture, legal standards and ethical considerations. The primary goal is to enhance the understanding of members of the Defence Forces about the fundamental principles of respectful relationships, consent and sexual ethics and to explore ways of implementing these to a high standard in their everyday working lives. The workshop balances a formal approach with interactive engagement to encourage meaningful reflection and discussion in a non-judgemental setting.

The SERR programme includes both theoretical knowledge and tips for practical application. An overview of Irish law regarding sexual consent, sexual harassment and misconduct is provided. Discussion around how this applies within a military setting is facilitated by the use of hypothetical vignettes. Small group exercises are carried out and discussion around arising themes takes place within the larger group. A key element is the traffic light model, which categorises behaviours based on their level of acceptability and legality (Kaufman, 2018). ‘Red’ behaviours include criminal acts such as rape and sexual assault, while ‘orange’ denotes behaviours such as bullying and sexual harassment, which, although not always criminal, are undoubtedly unacceptable. ‘Yellow’ encompasses misconduct such as inappropriate jokes or comments, often overlooked but harmful nonetheless. In contrast, ‘green’ signifies respectful, inclusive, and appropriate communication and conduct – behaviours that the Defence Forces seek to promote and normalise.

Through this model, personnel are provided with a clear, accessible framework to understand, identify, and respond to inappropriate or harmful actions (Edwards et al., 2021).

Another central component of the programme involves critical reflection on Defence Forces culture and values, examining

how certain traditions, norms, or hierarchies may unintentionally perpetuate or excuse problematic behaviours. This includes open discussions around gender, power dynamics, and groupthink (Hershey & Berman, 2019). Participants explore these issues through the lens of Bystander Theory, which encourages active intervention and shared responsibility. The training is interactive and immersive, incorporating group discussions, psycho-educational content, group exercises, videos, and structured feedback (Parker et al., 2020).

A central principle of the workshop is the wellbeing and safety of its participants. Ensuring confidentiality and a safe space are essential, particularly for those who may have had personal experiences with sexual misconduct themselves. Given the subject matter, personnel are informed about available resources for reporting misconduct or seeking help both within the organisation and outside it. Facilitators remain available to support attendees during or after the workshop, should assistance be needed.

Participant Experience

Feedback from participants is sought through anonymous forms completed at the end of the workshop and participants are invited to contact the facilitators directly with any additional comments they would like to make:

“The use of videos and group discussion made the training interesting and enjoyable.”

“It was great to have a space to discuss these issues openly and to be able to ask questions. Hearing other people's perspectives was really useful.”

“These are issues everyone needs to know about and understand, everything was clearly presented and well covered.”

“This workshop makes people aware that the culture has changed and that things are not always acceptable. Dinosaurs and Jurassic Park should be a movie, not a work environment.”

By engaging personnel in meaningful dialogue, integrating clear knowledge, ethical reflection and practical applications, the SERR workshop is proactively helping to strengthen awareness and accountability within the Defence Forces. Getting on board with creating a culture of respect and dignity not only fulfils our legal obligations - it is a cornerstone of a professional and ethical military environment.

Full details of all references are available on request from the An Cosantóir Office



A SENSE OF DUTY BANTRY 1979

A SENSE OF DUTY BANTRY 1979, front cover of the book.

The ferry departed from the naval pier in Cobh, Co. Cork, shortly after 1800hrs on the evening of 7th November 2025. It was a crisp, cool Friday, with a bright full moon rising over the town from the east. On board the ferry was a group of invited guests, all retired divers from the Naval Service and Garda Síochána. Meanwhile, at the Naval Base in the Wardroom Mess, another smaller group of divers awaited the arrival of their colleagues. After an eight-minute journey across the harbour, the ferry berthed alongside the Naval Base, all guests disembarked safely and made the short walk to the Wardroom Mess. When the two groups finally met, it marked the beginning of a unique night for the Naval Service, the Garda Síochána, and the Defence Forces. This gathering marked the first time in 46 years that this group of divers would be together in the one place at the same time.

Bantry Bay and the Betelgeuse

Early on the morning of Monday 8th January 1979, the large bulk oil tanker, Betelgeuse, lay alongside the offshore jetty of the oil storage terminal on Whiddy Island, located at the eastern end of Bantry Bay, West Cork. The previous day, the tanker finished discharging a portion of its cargo of Arabian crude oil, amounting to around 120,000 tonnes. To rebalance and properly trim the ship following the discharge, ballasting operations had been ongoing throughout the day and had just been completed.

Shortly after 00.30hrs, a catastrophic buckling event occurred in the hull. This buckling broke the ship's back, ripped apart some cargo tanks, causing internal explosions that initiated fires both onboard and in the waters beside the ship. Shortly thereafter, at approximately 0108hrs, a colossal explosion took place, ultimately leading to the ship's utter destruction.

In the aftermath of the explosions and the resulting fires, fifty individuals lost their lives. This included all forty-one crew members of the ship, the ship's baker's wife, seven Irish Gulf Oil employees on the terminal jetty, and an English cargo inspector. Following the subsequent search for survivors: 21 people were recovered from the waters around the stern of the ship and the north shore of Whiddy Island, while 29 remained missing.

Two diving teams would be dispatched to the scene. The Garda diving team arrived on the Tuesday 9th, with the Naval diving team arriving the following Tuesday, 16th January. Diving operations commenced in earnest. The two teams comprised of six divers each. The Garda team was led by Sgt Paddy Morrissey, and the Naval team by Lt (NS) Dan O'Neill.

For the next 21 days, two teams would dive in the waters surrounding the last berthing dolphin, Dolphin 22, to locate and recover any remaining missing bodies. These 12 divers would push themselves to their limits, both physically and mentally, in extremely dangerous conditions with insufficient equipment. As one diver aptly described the task, it was "deep, dark, dirty, and dangerous".

The diving depths often approached the limits of their training





Group photo of Garda and Naval diving teams Bantry 1979. Bow of the Betelgeuse in the background.

From Left to Right: Paddy Morrissey, Gerry Duffy (in front), John Harrington (behind Gerry), George Jefferies (Martin Carroll behind George), Jim Brennan (behind Martin), Tommy Lavery, John Walsh, Noel Garrett, Donie Gibbons, Mick Carr. Not in the picture is Dan O'Neill.



Group Photo of FOCNS Commodore Mick Malone and recipients of the Commendations. Naval Base Wardroom 7th November 2025.

From Left to Right: George Jefferies, Jon Garrett, Ger Buckley, Mick Carr, Dan O'Neill, Bernie Morrissey, Cmdr. Mick Malone, Gerry Duffy, Tommy Lavery, John Walsh, Jim Brennan. Unable to attend, Donie Gibbons and Martin Carroll.

and certifications, and more frequently than not, these depths were exceeded. Their gear was designed for recreational diving rather than search and recovery operations.

When conducting such operations—whether on land, at sea, or in the air—there is always a certain level of risk involved. These divers confronted those risks daily and with every dive. If the environment posed a potential threat, there was also the possibility of equipment failure at the most inopportune moments.

One notable instance occurred early in the mission involving a naval diver. Although he successfully completed a near-uneventful free ascent from depth, it served as a stark reminder for the rest of the team that conditions at depth can change dramatically and swiftly. To be clear, a “near-uneventful free ascent” does not imply that everything was fine; it only means that the diver emerged safely without losing his life.

Ultimately, despite their incredible efforts and dedication to their mission over the 21 days, only three more bodies were recovered. Diving operations were, for some unknown and sudden reason, concluded at the end of January.

Commendation Night

I wrote the book, *A Sense of Duty: Bantry 1979*, published in May 2025, to document the diving operations conducted by those divers in the aftermath of the disaster. It was an unprecedented task for both groups of divers, and I wanted to record all experiences and efforts. However, I also aimed to achieve something else: to secure some form of formal recognition for them from either or both of their respective organisations, even after 46 years. As the saying goes, “big wheels turn slowly”. However, Commander Roberta O'Brien of the Naval Service and retired Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service, Commodore Mick Malone, proved me wrong.

One day, while having coffee at the National Maritime College of Ireland with Roberta, I brought up the idea of pursuing

retrospective recognition for their efforts. She agreed and took the proposal to the Flag Officer. To my surprise, when Roberta returned to Naval Headquarters a couple of days later, she was told that the Flag Officer fully supported the concept. “Commander, make it happen!” he said. And she did!

On Friday 7th November 2025, FOCNS hosted a select dinner to honour all divers involved, both Naval and Garda, and to formally present ‘Certificates of Commendation’ in recognition of their roles in the conduct of operations during the search and recovery operations. Present at the dinner from the Naval team: Dan O'Neill, George Jefferies, John Walsh, Gerry Duffy, Martin Carroll (represented by his wife, Josie) and Noel Garrett (represented by his son, Jonathon). From the Garda team: Mick Carr, Jim Brennan, Tommy Lavery, Donie Gibbons (represented by Mick Carr), John Harrington RIP (represented by Geraldine Buckley), and Paddy Morrissey RIP (represented by his wife, Bernie).

Present also, Lt Col Peadar Ó Catháin OC 1 Bde Arty Regiment and Collins Bks Cork, Naval Diving staff Lt (NS) Jason Croke and CPO Dáithí Shanahan, Fleet Officer Operations Cdr Tony O'Regan and Wardroom Mess President, Lt Cdr Cian Ryan. Representing An Garda Síochána were Chief Superintendent Vincent O'Sullivan and Superintendent Donie Crowley.

It was a quiet, intimate, and uniquely special evening. It was the first time that personnel from two separate State security organisations were collectively recognised for their service on a joint operation in this way. Short speeches were delivered, and following dinner, the Flag Officer presented Certificates of Commendation on behalf of the Naval Service to the divers or their representative family members.

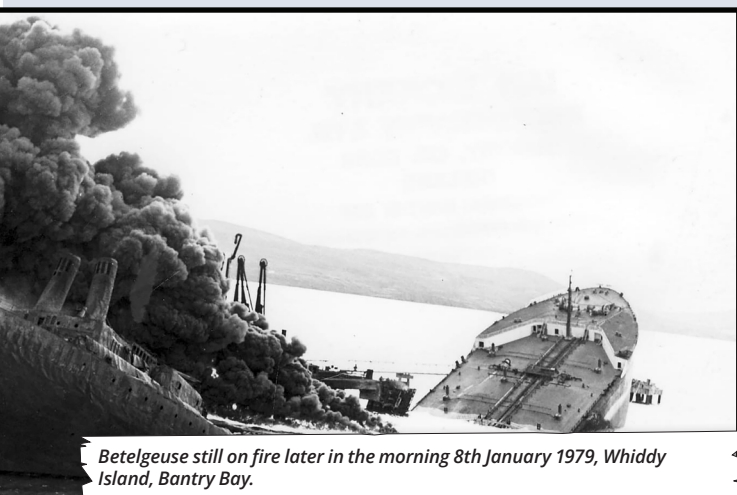
In finishing this article, my good friend Commander Tony O'Regan has allowed me to rob some lines from his speech on that night:

‘Today, after 46 years, your commands recognise your unbroken resolve and your sense of duty. The public may see the news reports, but within the Naval Service and AGS, we know the truth: you defined what it means to be elite units. The professionalism you demonstrated in those freezing depths is now the benchmark against which every future clearance diver will measure their own capacity for courage. To conclude, you are more than heroes; you are the living heritage of the Naval Diving Section and Garda Water unit. I personally salute you. We in the Naval Service salute you for your legendary status, earned not in fair seas but in the deepest darkest hour of need. Carry this honour. You have earned the gratitude of an entire nation’.

The book, *A SENSE OF DUTY BANTRY 1979*, was written and published by Martin Buckley, retired Naval Service, Chief Petty Officer, Diving.

This is a true story, it is their story, I only wrote it.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sense-Duty-Bantry-Bay-1979-ebook/dp/B0FC3PTKB3>



Betelgeuse still on fire later in the morning 8th January 1979, Whiddy Island, Bantry Bay.



Photo: Ian Vickery

ON PARADE



A/RSM Garvey and Sgt Jim Sweeney at their conferring ceremony receiving Diplomas in Criminology and Psychology from City College



Ordinary Seaman Alex Costello from the Dublin Unit of the NSR recently completed his first patrol onboard the LÉ William Butler Yeats



The Naval Service had the pleasure of welcoming the promotions of Warrant Officers Brendan Madden and John McCormack. Both joined the Naval Service in 1985 and will now take up key appointments in the Office of Naval Development and the Naval Fleet Replacement Office



On New Year's Eve, 2/Lt Ava Johnson achieved the extraordinary feat of completing a 100 km run around the Gormanston Camp running track in just 12 hours! 2/Lt Johnston was proud to present Women's Aid with a cheque for €3,650



Comdt Joanne McCarthy (AR) being presented her new rank markings by Col Ray O'Lehan

On Saturday 17 January 2026, 127 Infantry Battalion (IRISHPOLBATT) conducted its monthly memorial ceremony in Tibnin, South Lebanon, honouring those who have lost their lives in the service of peace



Members of the Air Corps Recruit Platoon partaking in battle PT



A member of the Air Corps pictured during AW139 crew drills in Baldonnell



1 Bde Army Reserve conducted their annual planning seminar on Sunday 11 January 2026 in Collins Bks, Cork



A ceremony was held on January 15th in EUROCORPS HQ, Strasbourg, France, to mark both the stand-down of the European Union's (EU) Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) Battlegroup 2025 (F)HQ and the lowering of the Tricolour following two years of service at EUROCORPS Headquarters

ON PARADE



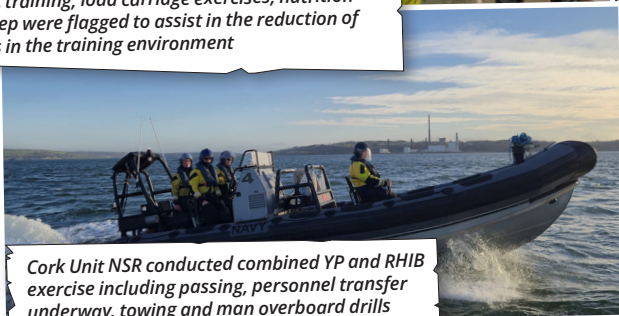
NS Reserve OC Limerick Unit and OC Waterford Unit visited Murphy Marine, Co. Kerry to review progress on the build of YP02 and YP03



As part of the IRL-UK Army Staff talks, Prof Julie Greeves (Research Director and Principal Physiologist British Army HQ) briefed DF personnel on her research in the British Army training environment to reduce injuries. Upper and lower body resistance training, aerobic training, load carriage exercises, nutrition and sleep were flagged to assist in the reduction of injuries in the training environment



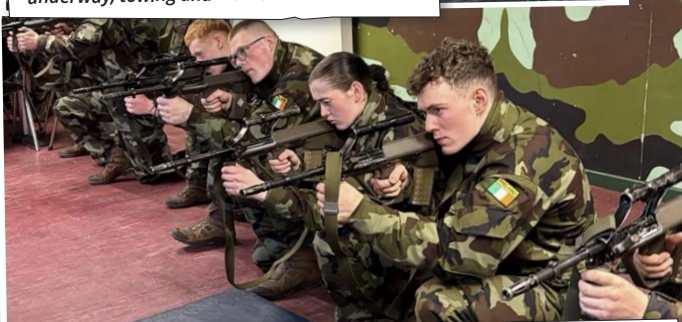
Members of the 65th Ammunition Examiners course recently completed live disposal of 'blinds' to qualify them to Conventional Munitions Disposal Level 1



Cork Unit NSR conducted combined YP and RHIB exercise including passing, personnel transfer underway, towing and man overboard drills



OC 7 Inf Bn Lt Col Courtney and BSM McKenzie welcome their newest 3 Star soldiers to 7th Battalion after their passing out parade



7th Battalion Recruits on TOET's getting ready for the ranges



The DFTC Christmas fun run raised €800 for the Curragh Family Resource Centre



Chief Petty Officer Hull Artificer Keith Mallon, along with Hull Artificer staff assigned to Fleet Support Group, oversees the installation and commissioning of state-of-the-art Epilog CO₂/Fiber laser engraving and cutting technology. This equipment will enhance maintenance and fabrication capabilities in direct support of the Fleet.



Major General John Whittaker has been appointed as the new Deputy Chief of Staff (Operations) by the Minister of Defence and Government



Commodore Darragh Kirwan has been appointed as the Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service (FOCNS)



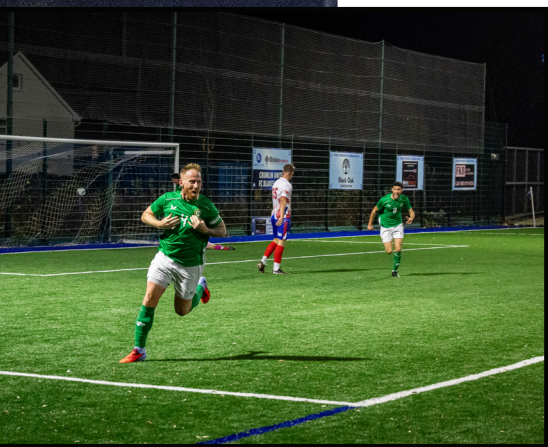
DF SOCCER

DF Soccer had a very busy Q4 of 2025 with a 4 week men's camp with high quality training and games. We played the Irish Colleges (1-2), then we travelled to France for a CISM challenge game (0-1), on our return we played the Irish Amateur's (2-2) and a double header men and women's game against the UK with the Women's losing 0-2 despite an excellent performance and the Men's drawing 2-2 before losing on Pens.

Despite the results not being what we wanted it was a

huge step forward for both teams in terms of progress in terms of training and performances as we look forward into 2026.

2026 is a huge year for DF Soccer as our men and women's teams prepare for CISM World Cup Qualification tournaments in Holland and Germany respectively. We also have the Cunningham Cup in the summer and for the first time in our history we are invited to play in the historic Kentish Cup in September 2026. The Kentish Cup is running since 1919 post WWI



between the UK, Holland and France. It is a huge honour for us to be invited.

On top of the above we are returning to bringing coaches courses back to the DF from grassroots up and the continuing great work by the referee committee in terms of developing our referees to the highest standard. And

at committee level we will be finalising our next 3 year strategic development plan.

DF ATHLETICS

The DF hope to send a male and female team to the CISM World Cross Country Championships in Greece from 25 Feb to 02 Mar - this has not been approved yet! DF Track and Field outdoor championship will be held in Kilkenny. The dates are still TBC. The DF Cross Country 2026 will be held in DFTC on 4 Nov. DF Athletics have received an invite to the AGS Cross Country event on 18 Feb and hope to enter a team.

There will be no DF Indoor Athletics this year.

BS



BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU

To wrap up 2025 we handed out a few awards, Lt Ciarán Feeney and Cpl Jamie Martin both got club man of the year awards for all their hard work in the development of the club.

Airman Balti took home rookie of the year and Pte Dylan O'Donovan was given Competitive Player of the Year due to his multiple wins at international competitions.

We had our AGM which was a great success and laid out the road map for 2026. We have also been lucky to be invited by the UK Armed Forces to compete in a competition in May.

For more updates follow us on Instagram and the Connect App @Defenceforcesbjj



FROM THE ARCHIVES

AN COSANTÓIR VOLUME 58, ISSUE 02, MARCH 1998

THE Third Infantry Battalion celebrated its 75th anniversary in January 1998. The call had gone out in late 1997 for all former 'Bloods' to rally to the battalion colour for the commemorations. A programme of events, which centred on a reunion of past members both retired and still serving, was organised for January 23rd.

The Third Infantry Battalion is the oldest infantry battalion in the Defence Forces, tracing its foundation to General Routine Order (GRO) Number 16 dated 24th of January 1923 which listed the infantry battalions that were to be formed as part of the reorganisation of the army at that time. The first Northern Division, scattered over the Donegal Command was to be redesignated the Third Infantry Battalion. Alone of the battalions listed the Third has retained unbroken service to this day. The Battalion was originally a unit of the 9th Western Brigade with companies dispersed over Roscommon, Longford, Sligo and Leitrim.

In January 1927 'The Bloods' were ordered to entrain for the Curragh and their association with the Curragh remains to this day, although broken by periods during the Emergency spent in Kilkenny, Waterford and various other locations in the south-east.

The programme for the anniversary celebrations com-

menced with the Commanding Officer's parade and trooping of the battalion colour. A prayer service was conducted by Fr PJ McEvoy, Rev Marsden and Fr McGreal with prayers for all past and present Bloods. This was followed by a drill display and pipe band recital. A number of retired Bloods stepped into the breach at this stage to support the pipe band and an excellent recital was held. A display of old army uniforms and equipment was modelled by some of the new Bloods later in the day. A notable feature of the day was a special postal cancellation which was provided at the Curragh Post Office to commemorate the anniversary.

In the address given by Brigadier General Frank Colclough, the GOC commented on the Battalion's success in Defence Forces competitions during 1997 when they retained both the Platoon-in-attack and 81mm Mortar titles.

Visitors to Connolly Barracks will be familiar with the sight of a 6-pounder anti-tank gun mounted on a platform at the north end of the square. As part of the anniversary celebrations the GOC unveiled a plaque at the east side of the square where a Panhard M3 armoured personnel carrier is now mounted. Just as the 6-pounder monument reflects the central role of the Battalion in the introduction of that weapon to the



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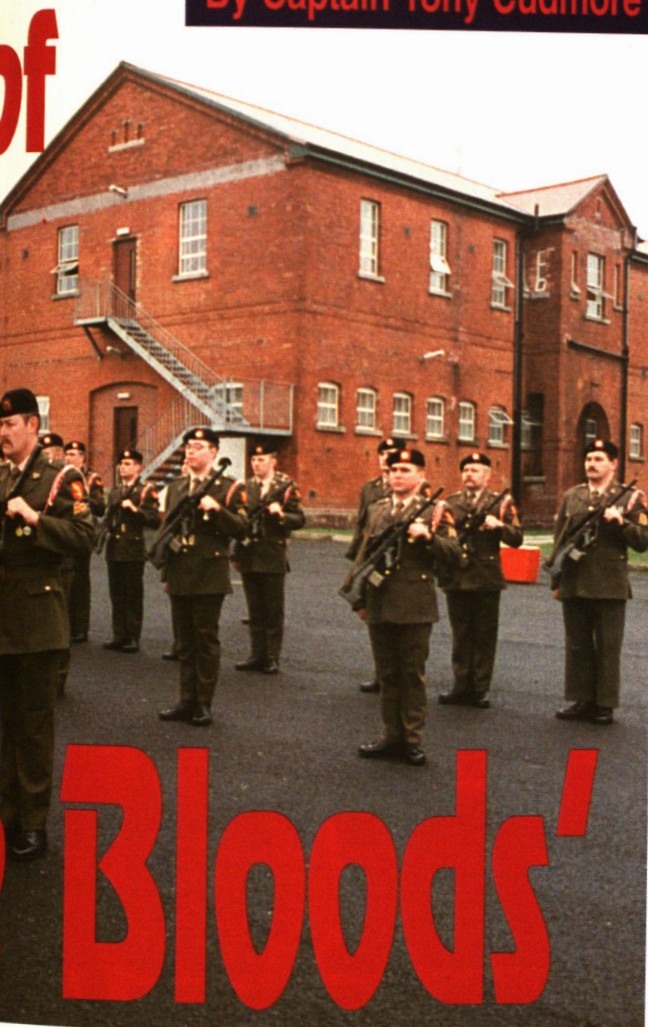
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By Captain Tony Cudmore



army in the 1940s, so too the Panhard represents the continuing central role that the Battalion plays in the development of APCs within the Defence Forces. The Unit has been designated as the first battalion to maintain a fully equipped APC company and furthermore will conduct end-user trials on new APCs as part of the replacement procurement process.

Before lunch OC 3 Inf Bn, Lt Col John Meenan, launched the battalion's Infantry Run. This competition is based on the one currently competed for in Unifil. The run features six-man teams (each comprising one officer, two NCOs, and three privates), competing as individuals, who undergo a 12km cross-country run, and judging distance, observation, message memory, and marksmanship tests.

On the day three teams competed, representing HQ, 'B', and Support companies. An excellent race ensued with 'B' Company taking the battalion title for 1998.

Following the competition a perpetual trophy was presented to Colonel Travers, School Commandant, The Infantry School, together with an invitation to all infantry battalions to compete in an inter-battalion competition later this year.

Various other events took place in the afternoon including

the launch by Lt Col Meenan of a publication on recent events within the Battalion entitled '3 Inf Bn in Transition 1996-1998'. This was followed by an address by former OC Brigadier General Mangan, who outlined the highlights of his service with the Unit.

The unveiling of photographs in both Officers' and NCOs' Messes and presentations to former COs rounded off the day's formal events.

That evening activities moved to the Standhouse Hotel where a Gala Band concert was held featuring the Band of the Curragh Command together with the 3 Inf Bn Pipe Band and supported by guest artists including Paul Hennessy and Philomena Breslin.

Following the concert, supper was served and the popular band The Deputies with Johnny Peters played till late. This ensured that the commemorations continued into the 24th – the date of the original GRO!

For the Battalion the day was a tremendous success and thanks are due to all (Bloods and non-Bloods alike!) who supported and assisted throughout. The celebrations however do not stop there as details of the inter-battalion infantry run are presently en route to battalions throughout the country, who are invited to share this celebration with us later in the year.



Colour. Photo: Sgt Bobby Lipsett

the anniversary celebrations are (l-r): Lt Col Dan Rea, Col (now Brig Gen) Carl Dodd, Brig Gen Heskin (ACS), Maj Gen Patrick Nowlan (QMG), Brig Gen Frank Colclough (GOC Curragh), Col Mangan (GOC East), Col Desmond Travers, and Col John Vize. Photo: Sgt Paddy Flood

last in front of the Panhard M3 monument on Connolly Square. Photo: Sgt Bobby Lipsett

of 3 Inf Bn on parade. Photo: Sgt Paddy Flood

Lt Col John Meenan, hands over the Infantry Run perpetual trophy to Col Desmond Travers, School Commandant, The Infantry School. Photo: Sgt Paddy Flood

Run winning team from 'B' Coy. Back row (l-r): Cpl Donal McAllister, Cpl Mick Smith, Capt Jack O'Connell, Ptes Dedan O'Connell, James Duggan, and Michael Byrne. Photo: Sgt Bobby Lipsett





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